

Kurt Vonnegut's SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE
adapted by Eric Simonson

GENRE: Comedy/Drama
LENGTH: Full-length, 85-95 minutes
CAST: 3 females, 12 males
(12-23 actors possible: 2-3 females, 10-20 males)
SET: Spare. The setting can be suggested through light and sound.

Based on Kurt Vonnegut's classic novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five* introduces us to Billy Pilgrim, a man who becomes "unstuck in time" after he is abducted by aliens. In a plot-scrambling display of virtuosity, we follow Pilgrim simultaneously through all the phases of his life. Concentrating on his (and Vonnegut's) shattering experience as an American prisoner of war who witnesses the firebombing of Dresden, this satirical and horrifying anti-war story carries a unique poignancy – and humor.

"The show moved me so much I couldn't speak for ten minutes after."
—The Chicago Reader

"Skillfully pared down by Eric Simonson, *Slaughterhouse-Five's* short vignettes become hot stage moments that come and go with cinematic swiftness."
—U.S.A. Today

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(OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE)

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Cast of Characters

MAN
BILLY PILGRIM
YOUNG BILLY PILGRIM
BOY BILLY PILGRIM
GERMAN SOLDIER #1
WILD BOB
TRALFAMADORIAN
OPTOMETRISTS
G.I. #1
CHETWYNDE
KILGORE TROUT
BARBARA
GRANDMA
DOTTY
VALENCIA
MOTHER
MONTANA WILDHACK
GERMAN WOMAN
LILY RUMFOORD
ROLAND WEARY
FATHER
TRALFAMADORIANS
REGGIE
YOUNG GERMAN
HOWARD W. CAMPBELL
SCOUT
PAUL LAZZARO
BERTRAM COPELAND RUMFOORD
RADIO HOST
HOB0 SOLDIER
EDGAR DERBY
ADDAMS
GERMAN
SOLDIER#2
FRITZ
ELIOT ROSEWATER
OLD GERMAN

Notes on Scenery

As much as possible, time and place should be suggested through the use of light and sound.

Production Notes

The first production of this play was at Steppenwolf Theatre in 1995. At the time, I was interested only in adapting to the stage, as honestly as I could, what I thought Kurt Vonnegut was after in his book. I didn't put any limits on my imagination. The result was a production that required a lot in the way of expense (a very large cast, for one) and technical support.

After 1995, there were a couple productions licensed here and there. Occasionally I would drag out the Steppenwolf draft and noodle with it, trying to make it leaner, more economical—more producible. In 2007, two theatres, Godlight in New York, and Risk Initiative in Dallas (under the artistic direction of Marianne Galloway) contacted me directly about producing the play. They provided me with the final push I needed to finish the rewrite I'd been working on.

The New York premiere from Godlight Theatre, under the imaginative direction of Joe Tantalo, was economy at it's finest. A versatile cast on a bare stage with a few costumes and no props whatsoever, performed the play in minimalist fashion, making the utmost of the audiences imaginations. By way of my rewrites and Mr. Tantalo's resourcefulness, the cast size was winnowed down from nearly 25 to 10. In this construct, *all* the female roles were taken on by one actor, the versatile Deanna McGovern. And she was wonderful, though I think for clarity's sake, I would recommend using at least two female actors. And I suppose one or two more male actors wouldn't have hurt, but ultimately the decision on how to divvy up the roles should be left to the director.

One other significant change from Chicago was splitting the Billy Pilgrim role into three roles (boy, young man, older man) rather than two (boy and man). This is what I'd originally intended when I handed in my first draft to Steppenwolf, but along the way I decided to make the adult Billy one actor in order to take advantage of

the gifts of Steppenwolf's Rick Snyder, the brilliant actor who played him. Upon rethinking the role years later, though, I had reservations. I thought three Billys would have made it easier to shift from scene to scene; from one part of the stage to the other. So I changed it back for the Godlight and Risk Initiative productions, and this proved to be a good call. Not only were scene transitions made effortless, but the very idea of the three Billys on stage at the same time reinforced the idea of one man living out many parts of his life at the same time. This visual manifestation of one of Vonnegut's central themes came to be, I think, one advantage the play had over the book.

—Eric Simonson

Acknowledgments

Slaughterhouse-Five was originally produced by Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Artistic Director, Martha Lavey; Managing Director, Michael Gennaro) on September 18, 1996. The production was adapted and directed by Eric Simonson; scenic design by Neil Patel; costume design by Karin Kopischke; lighting design by Scott Zielinski; sound design and original music by Michael Bodeen and Rob Milburn; film and media design by John Boesche; fight choreography by Nick Offerman; dialect coaching by Susan Philpot. The production stage manager was Laura Koch. The cast was as follows:

SOLDIER	Orion Barnes
MAN	Robert Breuler
ROSEWATER, ENSEMBLE	Matt DeCaro
WEARY, ENSEMBLE	Matt Doherty
MOTHER, GRANDMOTHER, GERMAN WOMAN	Deanna Dunagan
LAZZARO, BARBERSHOP QUARTET, ENSEMBLE	Raul E. Esparza
SOLDIER, BARBERSHOP QUARTET	Tom Farnan
YOUNG BILLY	Nicholas Friedman
ENGLISHMAN, VOICE, BARBERSHOP QUARTET	Jeffrey Hutchinson
SOLDIER	Romanos Isaac
MONTANA, ENSEMBLE	Soseh Kevorkian
DERBY, ENSEMBLE	Rich Komenich
SOLDIER	Phillip J. Lee
REG, CAMPBELL, BARBERSHOP QUARTET	David New
SOLDIER	Paul Pierro
SOLDIER, CADDY	David Perry
BARBARA, LILY	Jennifer Roberts
VALENCIA, ENSEMBLE	Sharon Sachs
SOLDIER	Gabriel Sigal
SOLDIER	Chris Simpson
BILLY PILGRIM	Rick Snyder
SOLDIER	Chas Vrba
KILGORE TROUT, ENSEMBLE	Will Zahrn

Acknowledgments (continued)

Slaughterhouse-Five was revised and produced by Godlight Theatre (Joe Tantalo, Artistic Director) at the 59E59 Theatres in New York City from January 11–February 17, 2008. The production was directed by Joe Tantalo; production design by Maruti Evans; original music and sound design by Andrew Recinos; choreography by HaChi Yu; fight choreography by Josh Renfree. The assistant director was Daniel Swern; production stage manager Nick Tochelli and stage manager, Amy Vonvett. The cast was as follows:

MAN Ashton Crosby
BILLY PILGRIM Gregory Konow
YOUNG BILLY PILGRIM Dustin Olson
BOY BILLY PILGRIM Darren Curley
GERMAN SOLDIER #1, WILD BOB,
TRALFAMADORIAN, OPTOMETRIST,
CHETWYNDE, TROUT David Bartlett
BARBARA, GRANDMA, DOTTY,
VALENCIA, MOTHER, MONTANA,
GERMAN WOMAN, LILY Deanna McGovern
WEARY, FATHER, TRALFAMADORIAN,
OPTOMETRIST, REGGIE,
YOUNG GERMAN, CAMPBELL Nick Paglino
SCOUT, TRALFAMADORIAN,
LAZZARO, OPTOMETRIST,
RUMFOORD Aaron Paternoster
RADIO HOST, HOBO SOLDIER,
OPTOMETRIST, DERBY,
ADDAMS, GERMAN Michael Shimkin
SOLDIER#2, TRALFAMADORIAN,
OPTOMETRIST, FRITZ,
ROSEWATER, OLD GERMAN Michael Tranzilli

Acknowledgments (continued)

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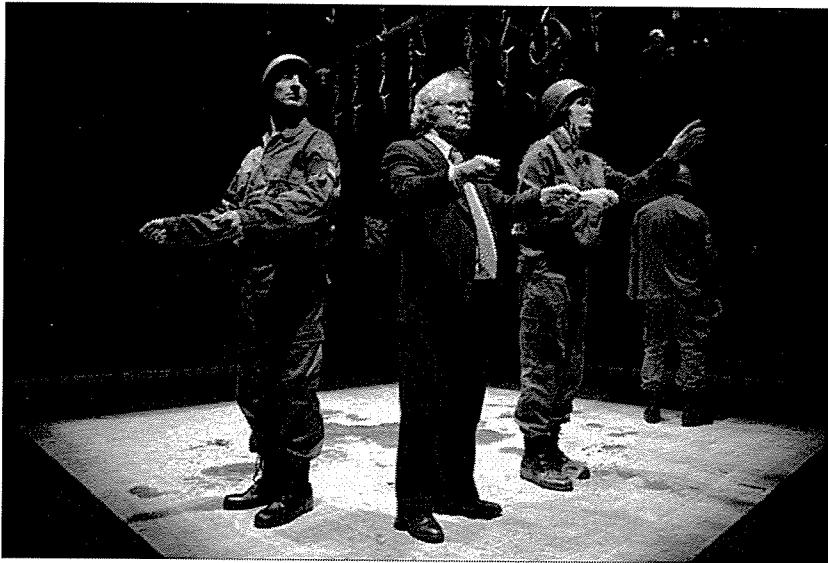
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adapted by Eric Simonson

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Slaughterhouse-Five was commissioned by
Steppenwolf Theatre Company

Martha Lavey, Artistic Director
Michael Gennaro, Managing Director



Michael Shimkin, Ashton Crosby, and Dustin Olson in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Godlight Theatre, New York City (2008). Photo: Donata Zanotti

KURT VONNEGUT'S SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE (OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE)

adapted by Eric Simonson

(Lights come up on a MAN, sitting at a desk—off the main playing space—late at night. He's drinking from a glass tumbler. He regards us.)

MAN. All this happened, more or less. The war parts, anyway, are pretty much true. One guy I knew really was shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really did threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. And so on.

(Lights change.)

I really did go back to Dresden in 1967. It looked a lot like Dayton, Ohio, more open spaces than Dayton has. There must be tons of bone meal in the ground... I went back there with an old war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare, and we made friends with a cab driver, who took us to the slaughterhouse where we had been locked up at night as prisoners of war. His name was Gerhard Muller. He told us that he was a prisoner of the Americans for a while. His mother was incinerated in the Dresden fire-storm. So it goes... He sent me a postcard at Christmas-time.

(He rises, pulls a postcard from his desk, or a back wall; reads:)

I wish you and your family also as to your friend Merry Christmas and a happy New Year and I hope that we'll meet again in a world of peace and freedom in the taxi cab if the accident will.

(Back to us.)

I like that very much: "If the accident will." ...When I got home from the Second World War twenty-three years ago, I thought it would be easy for me to talk and write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to do was report what I had seen. But not too many words about Dresden came from my mind then.

And not many words come now either, when I have become an old fart with his memories and his Pall Malls, with his sons full grown... On the way to Dresden, there was a Lufthansa plane that was supposed to fly from Philadelphia to Boston to Frankfurt. O'Hare was supposed to get on in Philadelphia and I was supposed to get on in Boston, and off we'd go. But Boston was socked in, so the plane flew straight to Frankfurt from Philadelphia. And I became a non-person in the Boston fog, and Lufthansa put me in a limousine with other non-persons and sent us to a motel for a non-night... The time would not pass. Somebody was playing with the clocks, and not only the electric clocks, but the wind-up kind, too. The second hand on my watch would twitch once, and a year would pass, and then it would twitch again.

(MAN produces a book—it's the bible.)

There was nothing I could do about it. As an Earthling, I had to believe whatever the clocks said—and the calendars... I looked through the Gideon Bible in my motel room for tales of great destruction.

(Reads:)

The sun was risen upon the Earth when Lot entered Zoar. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.

(Closes the book.)

So it goes.

(Beat.)

Those were vile people in both those cities, as is well known. The world was better off without them. And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she did look back, and I love her for it, because it was so human. She was also turned into a pillar of salt. So it goes.

(Beat.)

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore.

(Lights change.)

What you are about to see is jumbled and jangled because it was written by a pillar of salt, and because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everyone is supposed to be dead and never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds.

(Bird tweets...followed by a sound effect we will come to know as "TIME SHIFT": perhaps a sharp sucking sound, or an immense and powerful machine traveling at top speed. Celestial music underscores the following:)

RADIO VOICE. *(As from a tinny radio:)* Everything I am telling you is true. I have become unstuck in time. I have no control over where I'm going next.

MAN. Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

RADIO VOICE. On my daughter's wedding I was kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians and taken to their planet *[Overlap starts here...]* which is many man light years away from here. I've spent a lot of time there.

MAN. Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun *[...and ends about here]*. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows which part of his life he is going to have to act in next.

RADIO VOICE. I'm never missed on Earth, because years there is only a micro-second here on Earth.

MAN. Billy insisted mildly that everything he said was true. He said he had been kidnapped by the Tralfamadorians on the night of his daughter's wedding. He hadn't been missed, he said, because the Tralfamadorians had taken him through a time warp, so that he could be on Tralfamadore for years, and still be away from Earth for only a microsecond.

(Music fades; lights reveal BILLY PILGRIM, age 46, sitting at a table, talking into a microphone—we're in a radio studio. A RADIO HOST listens.)

BILLY. I have come unstuck in time.

MAN. One day, without warning, Billy went to New York City, and got on an all-night radio program devoted to talk.

(Lights dim on MAN.)

BILLY. I have no control over where I go next and I never know what part of my life I'm going to act in next.

RADIO VOICE. Are the Tral—Tral—

BILLY. Tralfamadorians.

RADIO VOICE. They're a part of this...*production?*

BILLY. They're not *responsible*. They just help me understand the true nature of time. The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies, he only *appears* to die.

RADIO VOICE. Er—

BILLY. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments, past, present and future, always have existed and always will exist. It's just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is over it's gone forever. When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in that particular moment, but that the same person is just fine in plenty of other moment. Now, when I say to myself hear that someone is dead, I simply shrug and say what the Tralfamadorians say about dead people. So it goes.

(Knocking, followed by a TIME SHIFT: 1968, Ilium, New York. Lights shift to BARBARA, Billy's 22-year-old daughter, pounding her fist on a door, holding a newspaper and a bag of groceries.)

BARBARA. Father! Daddy, open up?!— Oh my —

(She knocks again. Harder.)

Daddyyyy! I know about the newspaper! It's okay, I'm not angry... I know you're there. I can hear you typing!

(We hear typing. BARBARA 'hmphs' and goes round to the back of the house, while the lights shifts to BILLY, pounding away at a typewriter. He stops, reads:)

BILLY. The Tralfamadorians are friendly, and they can see in four dimensions. They pity Earthlings for being able to see only three.

(He types.)

Tralfamadorians are about two feet high, and green, and are shaped like plumbers friends. At the top of each shaft is a little hand with a green eye in its palm.

BARBARA. *(Off-Stage:)* Father. Where are you?

BILLY. They have beautiful things to teach Earthlings, especially about time.

BARBARA. *(Off-Stage:)* Daddy!

BILLY. I will explain what those wonderful things are in my next letter.

(BARBARA appears, sighs relief—though she's always a little nervous.)

BARBARA. Why didn't you answer when I called?

BILLY. I didn't hear you.

BARBARA. Don't lie to me, Father. You are making a laughing stock out of yourself and everybody associated with you. Father, father, father, what are we going to do with you? Are you going to force us to out you where your mother is?

BILLY. What is it about my letter that makes you so mad?

BARBARA. It's all just crazy! None of it's true!

(Reads from the paper:)

I was kidnapped by Tral—Tral—

BILLY. Tralfamadorians—

BARBARA. —on the night of my daughter's wedding. I wasn't missed because the—Whatever's had taken me through a time warp.

(Whips down the paper in disgust.)

BILLY. It's all true.

BARBARA. There is no such planet!

BILLY. It can't be detected from Earth, if that's what you mean. Earth can't be detected from Tralfamadore, as far as that goes. They're both very small, and they're very far apart.

BARBARA. Where did you get this creepy name, Tralfamadore?

BILLY. That's what the creatures living there *call* it.

BARBARA. Oh, God.

(She claps her hands in frustration—it's her frustration tick.)

May I ask you a simple question?

BILLY. Of course.

BARBARA. Why is it you never mentioned any of this before the airplane crash?

(Sound of a plane spiraling out of control. BILLY's eyes wander out.)

BILLY. I didn't—

(Plane gets louder.)

I—I didn't think time was right.

(Enormous Crash / TIME SHIFT: 1944, Germany. YOUNG BILLY, 21, in ratty army fatigues limps through winter woods with two other American G.I.s: ROLAND WEARY, chubby and moon-faced, and a SCOUT.)

MAN. Billy says he first came unstuck in time in December, 1944, long before his trip to Tralfamadore. Billy was a chaplain's assistant in the war. The American Army was in the process of being destroyed by the Germans in the famous Battle of the Bulge.

(The SCOUT and WEARY exit off, with YOUNG BILLY trailing. A shot rings out. YOUNG BILLY freezes and stares out like a deer in the headlights.)

WEARY. *(From off:)* Get out of the road, you dumb motherfucker!

(WEARY runs on and tackles YOUNG BILLY enthusiastically.)

Saved your life again, you dumb bastard.

YOUNG BILLY. You guys go on without me.

WEARY. Not a chance. We're gonna save your hide whether you like it or not.

(Sound of artillery from way off.)

YOUNG BILLY. You guys go on without me.

(Artillery / TIME SHIFT: 1930, Ilium, New York. BILLY'S FATHER, in swim trunks, enters carrying BOY BILLY by the scruff of his swim trunks.)

FATHER. You're going to learn to swim by the method of sink or swim. I'm gonna throw you in the deep end and you're going to damn well swim.

(He throws BOY BILLY's complacent body offstage. There's a splash.)

That's it. That's it Billy Boy!

(He waits.)

Billy?

(Silence.)

Billy?!

(He dives in. splash / TIME SHIFT: 1944, Germany. The SCOUT enters, followed by YOUNG BILLY and WEARY, who shuttles between them like a sheep dog.)

WEARY. *(To YOUNG BILLY:)* Close it up, keep it closed!

(To the SCOUT:)

I got him going, we're right behind you.

(To YOUNG BILLY:)

Close it up, you bastard!

(The SCOUT stops, and hunkers down.)

Here he is, Buddy. He don't want to live, but he's going to live anyway. When he gets out of this, by God, he's gonna owe his life to the Three Musketeers!

(The SCOUT stares at WEARY blankly. WEARY kicks YOUNG BILLY.)

YOUNG BILLY. You go on.

WEARY. What?

YOUNG BILLY. You guys go on without me. I'm all right.

WEARY. You're what?

YOUNG BILLY. I'm okay.

WEARY. Jesus, I'd hate to see someone sick.

MAN. Roland Weary had been unpopular in his hometown of Pittsburgh. He had been unpopular because he was stupid and fat and mean, and he smelled like bacon no matter how much he washed. He was always being ditched in Pittsburgh by people who did not want him with them. It made him weary to be ditched.

(WEARY produces a ten-inch trench knife with brass knuckle spiked rings for a handle. He presses the spikes against YOUNG BILLY's cheek.)

WEARY. How'd you like to be hit with this? HMMMMM?

YOUNG BILLY. I wouldn't.

WEARY. Know why the blades triangular?

YOUNG BILLY. No.

WEARY. Makes a wound that won't close up.

YOUNG BILLY. Right.

WEARY. Shit, what do you know? What the hell they teach you in college?

YOUNG BILLY. It was Optometry —

WEARY. What?

YOUNG BILLY. Eye doctor. I studied to be an eye doctor. I wasn't in school long.

WEARY. Joe College. There's more to life than what you read in books. You ever heard of the Iron Maiden.

YOUNG BILLY. No.

WEARY. It's a medieval torture instrument, a sort of boiler shaped like a woman on the outside, lined with spikes. The front has two hinged doors. You put the criminal inside and then close the doors slowly. There're two special spikes where his eyes are. On the bottom there's a drain to let out all the blood.

(Gun shots, way off. Voices.)

I'll bet you don't even know what a blood gutter is.

YOUNG BILLY. The drain at the bottom of an Iron Maiden?

WEARY. It's the little groove in the side of a blade of a sword or bayonet. You want to know what the worst torture is?

YOUNG BILLY. I don't know.

(Gun shots, nearer. Strauss' "Skater's Waltz fades" up, slowly, underneath.)

WEARY. You stake a guy out on an anthill in the desert, see? He's facing upwards —

(YOUNG BILLY looks out, smiles.)

—and you put honey all over his balls, and you cut off his eyelids so he has to stare at the sun till he dies.

MAN. Billy was having a delightful hallucination. He was wearing dry, warm, white sweat socks, and he was skating on a ballroom floor. This wasn't time-travel. It was the craziness of a dying young man with his shoes full of snow.

SCOUT. You guys better find someone to surrender to. I'm not gonna wait around for you anymore.

(He runs off.)

WEARY. Hey! Wait!

(WEARY gets up and trips. He gets up again and bullets zing all around him—he drops to the ground. Music gets louder. Lights fade to a pin spot on YOUNG BILLY, still hallucinating. Music crescendos, people cheer, hoot and holler. TIME SHIFT: 1958, Ilium. BILLY—on the other side of the stage—stands at a podium which reads: Lion's Club. A little League Coach, ADDAMS stands upstage and waits. An Audience laughs.)

BILLY. And just before dinner I remarked to my table "You are what you eat." Which I thought nothing of till I overheard Russ Johnson cancel his order for rump roast.

(More laughter.)

But enough chatter. It gives me great pleasure to introduce tonight's speaker. He's coach my boy in little league—I daresay he's coached practically every son of every father in this room at one time or another. Roy—nice, warm welcome for Roy Addams. Welcome to the Ilium Lion's Club.

(Applause. ADDAMS approaches the podium.)

ADDAMS. Thank-you, Mr. President. It's an honor to be here. Honest to God, I'd consider it an honor to be *water* boy for these kids.

(TIME SHIFT: 1932, Ilium. BILLY'S GRANDMA, in a wheel chair, pushed by BOY BILLY. "The Skater's Waltz" can be heard through a tinny nursing home P.A. System.)

GRANDMA. How...

(He stops.)

BOY BILLY. How what, Grandma?

(She weeps.)

GRANDMA. How did I get to be so old?

(TIME SHIFT: 1961, Ilium. BILLY, drunk and 39, leads DOTTY, also drunk, by the hand into a dark laundry room. There's music from a hi-fi off—"The Skater's Waltz"—and party sounds throughout.)

DOTTY. What did you want to talk about?

BILLY. It's alright.

(BILLY undoes his pants.)

DOTTY. How come they call you Billy and not William?

BILLY. Business reasons.

DOTTY. What?

(She giggles as BILLY gropes Dotty's dress.)

MAN. That was true. His father-in-law, who owned the Ilium School of Optometry, who had set Billy up in practice, was a genius in his field and as rich as Croesus. He told Billy to encourage people to call him Billy—because it would stick in their memories. It would make him seem slightly magical, since there weren't many Billy's around.

(Lights dim on BILLY and DOTTY.)

Billy had framed a prayer on his office wall which expressed his method for keeping going, even though he was unenthusiastic about living.

(A projection appears on the back wall—or he says:)

GOD GRANT ME
THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT
THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE
TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN,
AND THE WISDOM ALWAYS
TO TELL THE
DIFFERENCE

A lot of patients who saw the prayer on Billy's wall told him it helped *them* to keep going, too. Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future.

(The projection fades. TIME SHIFT: 1944, The War. WEARY is standing above YOUNG BILLY, whipping him with Young Billy's coat.)

WEARY. After all I've done for you! You shouldn't even be in the army!

(YOUNG BILLY convulses with laughter. Two GERMAN SOLDIERS appear behind WEARY.)

You think it's a joke?! You think it's funny, huh? Well, you're gonna love what's coming next, College Boy.

(He goes to the other side of YOUNG BILLY to kick in the face as the GERMANS raise and cock their rifles. WEARY freezes.)

GERMAN SOLDIER #1. Stop there, American. Hands up. You too, off the ground.

(YOUNG BILLY just lies there. They frisk them. GERMAN #1 finds Weary's knife.)

Nice playthings you have.

(To his comrade:)

Deises Schweinchen will das wohl an mir ausprobieren. Schö, nisht? *[I think this fat little pig would like to try this out on me. Isn't it a pretty thing?]*

(He tears open Weary's overcoat and shirt, pulls out a Bible and a postcard.)

Take off your shoes.

(WEARY's scared stiff.)

Now!

(WEARY gets to work, whimpers. GERMAN #1 throws the Bible to the ground, stares at the postcard.)

What a lucky pony, eh? And what a lucky lady.

(To GERMAN #2:)

Don't you wish you were that pony?

GERMAN SOLDIER #2. Ist das möglich? *[Do you think it's possible?]*

(GERMAN #1 gives Weary's shoes to GERMAN #2.)

GERMAN SOLDIER #1. Kriegsbeute. Es gehört alles dir mein junge. *[Spoils of war. All yours, Man.]*

GERMAN SOLDIER #2. Danke.

GERMAN SOLDIER #1. *(Pulls WEARY up off the ground.)* Get up off the ground, you little pig.

(YOUNG BILLY whimpers uncontrollably. TIME SHIFT: 1967, Ilium, Billy's house. BILLY stands in the darkness, wearing pajamas, holding a half-empty bottle of champagne like a dinner bell.)

WOMAN'S VOICE. *(Off-Stage:)* Billy...

(VALENCIA, Billy's wife, enters holding Billy's bathrobe.)

VALENCIA. Billy?

WOMAN'S VOICE. What?!

VALENCIA. Ah!

(Sees BILLY, sighs.)

There you are. I woke up and you weren't there.

(She helps BILLY on with his robe.)

BILLY. What time is it?

VALENCIA. You'll catch your death of cold.

BILLY. It was a beautiful wedding.

VALENCIA. I think Barbara was happy. Look at this place. I wish we had a servant.

BILLY. People just aren't interested in careers in domestic service anymore.

VALENCIA. What dear?

BILLY. Where have all the years gone?

(Pause.)

VALENCIA. I'm going back to bed, Honey. Don't stay up too late.

(She exits. BILLY weeps. A phone rings, BILLY goes to it, answers.)

BILLY. Hello?

(Lights come up on MAN, at his desk—he holds a phone to his ear.)

Hello...

(MAN hangs up. Dial tone. BILLY replaces the receiver, then crosses to a chair and weeps again. There's a magnificent, deep hum which starts low and increases in volume. The stage brightens significantly—the noise and lights are terrific. Suddenly, they cut out; BILLY disappears. Everything's quiet for a moment.)

MAN. *(Reads from a book:)* Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds by Charles MacKay.

(American POWs, including WEARY and YOUNG BILLY, are led on stage by GERMAN SOLDIERS.)

History in her solemn page informs us that the Christian crusaders were but ignorant and savage men. Romance, on the other hand, dilates upon their piety and heroism and the great services they rendered to Christianity. Now what was the result of all these struggles?

GERMAN SOLDIER. Halt!

MAN. Europe expended millions of her treasures, and the blood of two million people, and a handful of quarrelsome knights retained possession of Palestine for about two hundred years.

(YOUNG BILLY and WEARY march side by side. WEARY weeps uncontrollably. YOUNG BILLY bumps into WEARY, who falls into a GERMAN SOLDIER, who hits him with the butt of his rifle.)

WEARY. Ow!

GERMAN SOLDIER. Stay in line, Little Pig!

WEARY. *(To YOUNG BILLY:)* Walk right, Asshole!

YOUNG BILLY. Sorry.

(He steps on him. WEARY screams; GERMAN SOLDIER hits him again.)

Beg your pardon.

(WEARY whimpers.)

MAN. MacKay tells us that the Children's Crusade started in twelve-thirteen, when two monks got the idea of raising armies of the children in Germany and France, and selling them in North Africa as slaves.

(GERMAN SOLDIER confers with a PHOTOGRAPHER, who crosses downstage and readies for a photo. GERMAN SOLDIERS move along the line of American POWs.)

Thirty-thousand children volunteered, thinking they were going to Palestine. Pope Innocent the Third thought they were going to Palestine, too, and was thrilled. "These children are awake while we are asleep!" He said.

GERMAN SOLDIER. Americans, move forward!

(They do. The GERMAN SOLDIERS pose in front of them.)

MAN. About half of them drowned in shipwrecks. The other half got to North Africa where they were sold.

(PHOTOGRAPHER takes a flash photo.)

GERMAN SOLDIER. Americans, listen to me. We will be dividing you according to your rank. Do not move once you have been put into a place or you will wind up in the wrong boxcar.

(The GERMANS sort the Americans.)

WEARY. My feet.

(An American Colonel, WILD BOB, sidles up next to a young G.I.)

WILD BOB. You one of my boys? What was your outfit? You from the Four-fifty-first?

(He goes down the line to YOUNG BILLY.)

You one of my boys? You from the Four-fifty-first?

YOUNG BILLY. Four-fifty-what?

WILD BOB. Infantry regiment.

YOUNG BILLY. Oh.

WILD BOB. *(Raising his voice, coughing:)* It's me Boys! It's Wild Bob! God be with you, Boys!

(YOUNG BILLY and the other POWs are packed into box cars.)

GERMAN SOLDIER. Come, come Americans. Stehen sie hier in limieren. *[Get in line.]*

WILD BOB. It's alright Boys! You have nothing to be ashamed of. There are dead Germans all over the battlefield who wish to God they had never heard of the Four-fifty-first!

(A POW who looks like a HOBO, mutters to YOUNG BILLY:)

HOBO SOLDIER. I been hungrier than this. I been in worse places than this. This ain't so bad. This ain't nothing at all.

(WILD BOB is being ushered into a boxcar.)

WILD BOB. After the war, I'm going to have a reunion in my home town and we're going to barbecue whole steers. God be with you, Boys!

YOUNG G.I. You too.

MAN. That was me. I was there. So was my old war buddy, Bernhard V. O'Hare.

WILD BOB. *(From the boxcar:)* If you're ever in Cody, Wyoming, just ask for Wild Bob!

(Sound of a train whistle. The boxcar doors clang shut. TIME SHIFT: 1968, a spaceship on its way to Tralfamadore. BILLY floats above the stage, sitting in a yellow barcalounger. Below him, YOUNG BILLY and the AMERICAN SOLDIERS wait in the boxcar. They look as though they might be frozen in time.)

VOICE. Welcome aboard, Mr. Pilgrim. Any questions?

BILLY. Why me?

VOICE. That is a very Earthling question to ask, Mr. Pilgrim. Why you? Why us, for that matter? Why anything? Because this moment simply is. Have you ever seen bugs stuck in amber?

BILLY. Yes.

VOICE. Well, here we are, Mr. Pilgrim, trapped in the amber of this moment. There in no why.

BILLY. Where am I?

VOICE. Trapped in another blob of amber, Mr. Pilgrim. We are where we have to be just now—three hundred million miles from Earth, bound for a time warp which will get us to Tralfamadore in hours rather than centuries.

BILLY. How...how did I get here?

VOICE. It would take another Earthling to explain it to you. Earthlings are great explainers, explaining why this event is structured as it is, telling how other events may be achieved or avoided. I am a Tralfamadorian, seeing all time as you might a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. All time is all time. It does not change. It does not land itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I've said before, bugs in amber.

BILLY. You sound to me as though you don't believe in free will.

VOICE. If I hadn't spent so much time studying Earthlings, I wouldn't have any idea what was meant by free will. I've visited thirty-one inhabited planets in the universe, and I have studied reports on one hundred more. Only on Earth is there any talk of free will.

(Celestial music. The lights shift from BILLY to MAN.)

MAN. The hold of the flying saucer was crammed with stolen merchandise from Sears-Roebuck which would be used to furnish an artificial habitat in a zoo on Tralfamadore.

(Lights change.)

The Tralfamadorians introduced an anesthetic into Billy's atmosphere now, which put him to sleep. The terrific acceleration of the flying saucer as it left Earth twisted Billy's slumbering body, distorted his face, dislodged him in time, and sent him back to the war.

(1944, The War. YOUNG BILLY stands in the slow-moving boxcar, wedged between a couple other G.I.s. A smallish G.I., PAUL LAZZARO, cradles WEARY, who's delirious with pain.)

LAZZARO. It's gonna be okay, Pal. You just hang in there. Paul Lazzaro's gonna see you through this.

WEARY. All on account a that bastard over there.

LAZZARO. Don't you worry about him. I'll take care of him, maybe not right this minute, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not till a couple years from now, but he'll get his.

WEARY. I don't want to be the one that dies.

LAZZARO. Nobody does, Pal.

G.I. #1. Goddam it, Pilgrim, get the hell away from me! I want to sleep!

BILLY. Where can I sleep?

(He tries to move.)

G.I. #1. Not here.

LAZZARO. Stay the fuck away from here, you bastard. I'll kill you.

HOBOSOLDIER. *(From another corner of the boxcar:)* This ain't bad. I can be comfortable anywhere.

WEARY. I can't see. My God, I can't see.

LAZZARO. That's cause it's dark, Buddy.

WEARY. Oh.

HOBOSOLDIER. You think this is bad? This ain't so bad.

LAZZARO. Alright Boys, who killed my Pal here? Who killed Roland Weary?

THREE or FOUR SOLDIERS. Billy Pilgrim.

LAZZARO. That's right, Billy Pilgrim.

(Train whistle. TIME SHIFT: 1968, New York. BILLY at the radio station, on mic. The sound partially filters through to Man's portable radio.)

BILLY. The Universe does not look like a lot of brighter little dots to the creatures from Tralfamadore. The creatures can see where each star has been and where it is going, so that the heavens are filled with rarefied, luminous spaghetti. And Tralfamadorians don't see human beings as two-legged creatures either. They see them as great millipedes—"with babies' legs at one end and old people's legs at the other."

(Feedback. TIME SHIFT: 1968, The War. The sound of a freight train pulling into a rail yard. A freight door opens, reveling YOUNG BILLY. He's bracing himself against a metal bar. A German Officer, FRITZ, and other GERMAN SOLDIERS bark orders.)

FRITZ. Raus aus dem zugwagene, Amerikaner! Raus mit euch! Raus! *[Out, of the boxcars, Americans! Out, out!]*

GERMAN SOLDIER #2. Out, Americans! Come, come.

(The G.I.s pour out of the car. YOUNG BILLY is herded into a line; WILD BOB is dead, carried out on a stretcher.)

G.I. #1. If you're ever in Cody, Wyoming, just ask for Wild Bob.

(The HOBOSOLDIER, is carried out on a stretcher. He's barely alive.)

HOBOSOLDIER. This ain't so bad. You think this is bad?

FRITZ. Get rid of him.

(They take the HOBOSOLDIER off.)

HOBOSOLDIER. You think this is bad?

(They're off. A GERMAN SOLDIER has been handing out second hand overcoats to those who need them. He gives BILLY a woman's coat.)

FRITZ. Gibts noch tote? *[Any more dead ones?]*

GERMAN SOLDIER #1. Ich denke nicht. [*I don't think so.*]

(*Gunshot offstage. The G.I.s look it that direction: the Germans are oblivious.*)

G.I. #1. You think this is bad? This ain't so bad.

FRITZ. (*Re YOUNG BILLY:*) Ach, Er sieht schön, nicht war? [*Oh, doesn't he look beautiful?*]

GERMAN SOLDIER #1. Er erinnert mich an ein Mädchen aus meiner Heimatstadt. [*He reminds me of a girl I used to know back home.*]

(*They laugh. Not far from them, a GERMAN SOLDIER #2 punches G.I. #1 with his the butt of his rifle.*)

G.I. #1. Why me?

FRITZ. Vy you? Vy anybody.

(*A dog barks in the distance. TIME SHIFT: 1963, Ilium. Golf course. Four Optometrists watch silently as BILLY prepares to putt.*)

OPTOMETRIST. Easy Billy.

(*BILLY swings and makes the putt. The others clap. BILLY reaches down to retrieve the ball and swoons. The Optometrists, stunned for a moment, rush to catch him, pick him up and take him off, mumbling directives as they go.*)

MAN. (*Holding up a book:*) The French author Louis-Ferdinand Celine was a brave French soldier in the First World War—until his skull cracked. After that he couldn't sleep and there were noises in his head. Time obsessed him. There is an amazing scene in *Death on the Installment Plan* where Celine wants to stop the bustling of the street crowd. He screams on paper...

(*Reading:*)

Make them stop, don't let them move anymore at all. There, make them freeze, once and for all, so they won't disappear anymore!

(*TIME SHIFT: 1968, spaceship to Tralfamadore. BILLY holds a copy of "Valley of the Dolls." The TRALFAMADORIAN is still heard, not seen.*)

BILLY. Is there some other reading matter around?

TRALFAMADORIAN. Only Tralfamadorian novels, which I'm afraid you couldn't begin to understand. There's one on the table behind you.

(*BILLY reaches round his chair, and finds an odd-shaped kind of book.*)

How did you like *Valley of the Dolls*?

BILLY. It was pretty good in parts. These clumps of symbols, they might be telegrams?

TRALFAMADORIAN. Exactly.

BILLY. They are telegrams?

TRALFAMADORIAN. There are no telegrams on Tralfamadore. But you're right—each clump of symbols is a brief, urgent message describing a situation, a scene. We Tralfamadorians read them all at once, not one after the other. There isn't any particular relationship between all the messages, except that the author has chosen them carefully, so that, when seen all at once, they produce an image of life that is beautiful and surprising and deep. There is no beginning, no middle, no end, no suspense, no moral, no causes, no effects. What we love in our books are the depths of many marvelous moments seen all at one time.

(*TIME SHIFT: 1932, The Grand Canyon. Lights shift to BOY BILLY with his MOTHER and FATHER at the precipice of the Grand Canyon. A PARK RANGER stands off to one side.*)

FATHER. Well, there it is, The Grand Canyon.

MOTHER. It was worth the trip. Oh God, was it ever worth it.

(*BOY BILLY takes a step back.*)

What the matter, Billy? You're not frightened, are you?

(*BOY BILLY wets his pants.*)

FATHER. (*To the RANGER:*) Do many folks commit suicide by jumping in?

RANGER. Yes Sir, about three a year.

MOTHER. William.

FATHER. What?!

MOTHER. (*Whispering:*) Billy's had an accident.

FATHER. Christ!

(*He yanks BOY BILLY off. TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War. YOUNG BILLY and the G.I.s, tired, cold, dirty and demoralized, are led to the outside of a shed.*)

FRITZ. Halt! Wait here. Stand where you are.

(*Nothing happens at first, then a door bursts opens and several ENGLISH OFFICERS march in, singing:*)

ENGLISH OFFICERS.

HAIL! HAIL! THE GANGS ALL HERE

WHAT THE HELL DO WE CARE?

WHAT THE HELL DO WE CARE

HAIL! HAIL! THE GANG'S ALL HERE

WHAT THE HELL DO WE CARE NOW?

(*They break ranks and welcome the G.I.s enthusiastically. One of them, COLONEL CHETWYNDE, goes to YOUNG BILLY, who's standing next to an older G.I., whom we'll soon find out is EDGAR DERBY.*)

CHETWYNDE. Welcome, Old Boy... Hello, can you hear— Can You hear me?

(*YOUNG BILLY just stands there, weak-kneed, in his funny, too-small coat.*)

My God—what have they done to you, Lad? This isn't a man. It's a broken kite. Are you really an American?

YOUNG BILLY. Yes.

CHETWYNDE. And your rank?

YOUNG BILLY. Private.

CHETWYNDE. What became of your boots, Lad?

YOUNG BILLY. I don't remember.

CHETWYNDE. Is that coat a joke?

YOUNG BILLY. Sir?

CHETWYNDE. Where did you get that thing?

YOUNG BILLY. (*Thinks hard.*) They gave it to me.

CHETWYNDE. Jerry gave it to you?

YOUNG BILLY. Who?

CHETWYNDE. The Germans gave it to you?

YOUNG BILLY. Yes.

CHETWYNDE. Oh Yank Yank Yank. That coat is an insult.

YOUNG BILLY. Sir?

CHETWYNDE. It was a deliberate attempt to humiliate you. You musn't let Jerry do things like that.

(*He looks at DERBY.*)

Welcome Yank, make yourself at home. Hope everything suits you.

DERBY. (*Shakes his hand.*) Thanks. Derby, Edgar Derby.

CHETWYNDE. We only got word twelve hours ago you were coming. Since then we've been busy at work, mopping, cleaning, cooking. There's quite a set up of fresh food for you in the next room.

DERBY. That's just great.

(*An ENGLISH SOLDIER dressed as Cinderella—complete with wig, tutu and silver painted combat boots—comes into view. He chats with the other Soldiers.*)

CHETWYNDE. We haven't done badly. Three years ago when food was still getting through to us, a clerical error had caused the Red Cross to ship us five hundred parcels every month instead of fifty. We still have tons of canned meats, powdered milk, marmalade, tobacco, chocolates. Plus which we get on famously with the Ger-

mans. You'll be in the shed just across the way, but if you want to play ping pong or billiards, that's over there, through that door.

DERBY. (*Notices Cinderella.*) Looks like one of your men needs a little attention.

CHETWYNDE. Oh, he's Cinderella. Reggie, come here, Man.

(*REGGIE crosses to them.*)

Part of this evening's festivities. Reg, I was just about to tell these Yanks about your little skit tonight. Reggie wrote it and he's going to play the lead.

REGGIE. Goodness me, the clock has struck. Alack-a-day and fuck my luck.

(*CHETWYNDE and DERBY laugh. YOUNG BILLY shrieks with laughter and then faints. The others look at him, stunned, then pick him up and carry him to a bed as we transition to a hospital room. TIME SHIFT: 1948, Lake Placid, New York, Veteran's Hospital. BILLY'S MOTHER sits smoking a cigarette. ELIOT ROSEWATER, a fleshy man in his 30s, lies in a bed next to YOUNG BILLY. He's reading a book. There's a thunder storm going on outside.*)

MAN. Springtime in 1948. Three years after the end of the war. A ward for nonviolent mental patients in the Veteran's Hospital near Lake Placid.

MOTHER. Some day I'm going to come in here and Billy is going to uncover his head, and do you know what he's going to say?

ROSEWATER. (*Puts down his book.*) What's he going to say, Dear?

MOTHER. He's going to say, "Gee, it's good to see you Mom. How have you been?"

ROSEWATER. Today could be that day.

MOTHER. Every night I pray.

ROSEWATER. That's a good thing to do.

MOTHER. People would be surprised if they knew how much in this world was due to prayers.

ROSEWATER. You never said a truer word, Dear.

MOTHER. Does your mother come to see you often?

ROSEWATER. My mother is dead.

MOTHER. I'm sorry.

ROSEWATER. At least she had a happy life as long as it lasted.

MOTHER. That's a consolation, anyway.

ROSEWATER. Yes.

MOTHER. Bill's father is dead, you know.

ROSEWATER. A boy needs a father.

MOTHER. He was at the top of his class when this happened.

(*Beat.*)

What are you in for?

ROSEWATER. I shot a fourteen-year-old fireman whom I mistook for a German Soldier.

MOTHER. Oh.

ROSEWATER. The authorities tell me it's quite alright that I did so, but I thought it would be a good idea to check myself in anyway.

MOTHER. Billy committed himself too.

ROSEWATER. Is that right?

MOTHER. A "mental collapse" is what the doctor's call it.

ROSEWATER. Maybe he was working too hard.

(*MOTHER digs in her purse for another cigarette and ROSEWATER goes back to his reading. Lights shift partially to MAN, who holds up another book: a dog-eared old paperback.*)

MAN. Elliot Rosewater was holding a book he wanted to read, but he was much too polite to read and talk, easy as it was to give Billy's mother satisfactory answers. The book was *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension* by Kilgore Trout. It was about people whose diseases were all in the fourth dimension, and three-dimensional

Earthling doctors couldn't see those diseases at all, or even imagine them. One thing Trout said that Rosewater liked very much was there really were vampires and werewolves and goblins and angels and so on. But they were in the fourth dimension. So was William Blake, Rosewater's favorite poet, according to Trout. So were heaven and hell.

MOTHER. Listen to that rain.

ROSEWATER. Okay.

MOTHER. I don't want to keep you from your reading.

ROSEWATER. Not at all.

MOTHER. Billy's engaged to a very rich girl.

ROSEWATER. That's good. Money can be a great comfort sometimes.

MOTHER. It really can.

ROSEWATER. Of course it can.

MOTHER. It isn't much fun if you have to pinch every penny till it screams.

ROSEWATER. It's nice to have a little breathing room.

MOTHER. Her father owns the optometry school where Billy was going. He also owns six offices around our part of the state. He flies his own plane and has a summer place up on Lake George.

ROSEWATER. That's a beautiful lake.

(Huge thunder clap; Lights goes out. It's completely dark.)

MOTHER. Oh, dear.

(TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War. CHETWYNDE enters holding a candle.)

CHETWYNDE. Is there anyone there?

DERBY'S VOICE. Over here, Sir. My candle went out.

(CHETWYNDE crosses to DERBY, who's sitting next to YOUNG BILLY in bed.)

CHETWYNDE. How's the patient?

DERBY. Dead to the world.

CHETWYNDE. But not actually dead.

DERBY. No.

CHETWYNDE. How nice...to feel nothing and yet get full credit for being alive.

(DERBY stands to attention.)

No, no—please, as you were. With only two men for each officer, and all the men sick, I think we can do without the usually pagantry between officers and men.

(DERBY relaxes, but remains standing. CHETWYNDE gestures off.)

The men seem to be getting their fill.

DERBY. They haven't had a decent meal in two weeks, Sir.

CHETWYNDE. Well, they're certainly getting one now.

(Beat.)

You seem older than the rest.

DERBY. I'm forty-five years old, Sir.

CHETWYNDE. Are they letting people in at that age now?

DERBY. No Sir, not usually. I had to pull some political wires to get in. I teach high school back home. I have a son who's a Marine in the Pacific theatre.

(DERBY shows him a photo.)

CHETWYNDE. You know, we've had to imagine the war here, and we have imagined that it was being fought by aging men like ourselves. We had forgotten that wars were fought by babies. When I saw those freshly shaved faces, it was a shock. "My God, my God," I said to myself, "It's the Children's Crusade."

DERBY. Yes, I suppose it is.

CHETWYNDE. (*Takes DERBY by the arm.*) Come on, Old Boy, and get something to eat.

(*He leads him off; DERBY stops.*)

Oh, don't worry about him. I gave him enough morphine to last him well into the morning. He's not going anywhere.

(*They're off. Darkness. TIME SHIFT: 1948, Veteran's Hospital. VALENCIA, now in her 20s, eats a Three Musketeers bar as she pages through a magazine. A toilet flushes off. ELIOT ROSEWATER enters holding a book. He gets back into his bed as YOUNG BILLY wakes.*)

YOUNG BILLY. Hello.

VALENCIA. Do you want some candy, Billy?

YOUNG BILLY. No thanks. Is my mother gone?

VALENCIA. Yes. How are you feeling?

YOUNG BILLY. Much better, thanks.

VALENCIA. Everybody at the optometry school's sorry you're sick and they hope you'll be well soon.

YOUNG BILLY. When you see 'em, tell 'em hello.

VALENCIA. I promise I will. Is there anything I can bring you from the outside?

YOUNG BILLY. No. I have just about everything I want.

VALENCIA. What about books?

YOUNG BILLY. I'm right next to one of the biggest private libraries in the world. What are you reading this time, Mr. Rosewater?

ROSEWATER. It's *The Gospel from Outer Space*, by Kilgore Trout. It's about a visitor from outer space. The visitor from outer space makes a serious study of Christianity to learn, if he could, why Christians found it so easy to be cruel. He concluded that at least part of the trouble was slipshod storytelling in the New Testament. He supposed that the intent of the Gospels was to teach people,

among things, to be merciful, even to the lowest of the low. But the Gospels actually taught this:

(*Reads:*)

Before you kill someone, make absolutely sure he isn't well connected.

(*To YOUNG BILLY:*)

The flaw in the Christ stories, according to the visitor from outer space, was that Christ, who didn't look like much, was actually the son of the most powerful being in the Universe. The readers understood that, so when they came to the crucifixion, they naturally thought:

(*Reads:*)

Oh boy, they sure picked the wrong guy to lynch this time!

(*To YOUNG BILLY:*)

And that thought had a brother:

(*Reads:*)

There are right people to lynch.

(*To YOUNG BILLY:*)

Who? People who aren't well connected. The visitor from outer space then made a gift of a new gospel which made Jesus a nobody. The people amused themselves by nailing him to a cross one day, then, just before the nobody died, the voice of God came crashing down. He told people he was adopting the bum as a son, and God said this:

(*Reads:*)

From this point on, I will punish horribly anybody who torments a bum who has no connections.

(*YOUNG BILLY and VALENCIA stare blankly. ROSEWATER tosses the book aside.*)

Forget books. To hell with them.

VALENCIA. That sounded like an interesting one.

ROSEWATER. Jesus! If Kilgore Trout could only write!

(Looks at the book in disgust.)

I don't think Trout has ever been out of the country. My God—he writes about Earthlings all the time and they're all Americans. Practically no one on Earth is an American.

VALENCIA. Where does he live?

ROSEWATER. Nobody knows. I'm the only person who ever heard of him, as far as I can tell. No two books have the same publisher, and every time I write him in care of a publisher, the letter comes back because the publisher has failed.

(Beat.)

Congratulations on your engagement ring.

(She holds out her hand.)

VALENCIA. Thank you. Billy got that diamond in the war.

ROSEWATER. That's the attractive thing about war. Absolutely everybody gets a little something.

VALENCIA. Billy?

YOUNG BILLY. Hm?

VALENCIA. You want to talk about our silver pattern?

YOUNG BILLY. Sure.

(Shows him a catalogue.)

VALENCIA. I've got it narrowed down pretty much to either Royal Danish or Rambler Rose.

(YOUNG BILLY studies the page.)

YOUNG BILLY. Rambler Rose.

VALENCIA. It isn't something we should rush into. I mean, whatever we decide on, that's what we're going to have to live with for the rest of our lives.

(He looks again.)

YOUNG BILLY. Royal Danish.

VALENCIA. Colonial Moonlight is nice, too.

(He looks.)

YOUNG BILLY. Yes, it is.

(TIME SHIFT: 1968, Zoo-Cage on the Planet Tralfamadore. BILLY stands near his Barcalounger.)

TRALFAMADORIAN. Mr. Pilgrim.

BILLY. Yes?

TRALFAMADORIAN. One of our audience members would like to know if you are happy here on Tralfamadore.

BILLY. About as happy as I was on Earth.

TRALFAMADORIAN. Don't you mind being confined to a geodesic dome 446,120 ga-zillion miles away from your home?

BILLY. It's not so bad.

TRALFAMADORIAN. What's the most valuable thing you've learned on Tralfamadore so far?

BILLY. How the inhabitants of a whole planet can live in peace! As you know, I am from a planet that has been engaged in senseless slaughter since the beginning of time. I myself have seen the bodies of schoolgirls who were boiled alive in a water tower by my own countrymen, who were proud of fighting pure evil at the time. And I have lit my way in a prison at night with candles from the fat of human beings who were butchered by the brothers and fathers of those schoolgirls who were boiled. Earthlings must be the terrors of the universe! If other planets aren't now in danger from Earth, they soon will be. So tell me the secret so I can take it back to Earth and save us all: How can a planet live in peace?

(Sound of enormous disapproval.)

Would—would you mind telling me what was so stupid about that?

TRALFAMADORIAN. We know how the universe will end and Earth has nothing to do with it, except that it gets wiped out too.

BILLY. How...how *does* the universe end?

TRALFAMADORIAN. We blow it up experimenting with new fuels for our flying saucers. A Tralfamadorian test pilot presses a starter button and the whole universe disappears.

BILLY. If you know this, isn't there some way you can prevent it? Can't you keep the pilot from pressing the button.

TRALFAMADORIAN. He has always pressed it, and he always will. We always let him and we always will let him. The moment is structured that way.

BILLY. So...I suppose that the idea of preventing war on Earth is stupid, too.

TRALFAMADORIAN. Of course.

BILLY. But you *do* have a peaceful planet here.

TRALFAMADORIAN. Today we do. On other days we have wars as horrible as any you've ever seen or read about. There isn't anything we can do about them, so we simply don't look at them. We ignore them. We spend eternity looking at pleasant moments—like today in the zoo. Isn't this a nice moment?

(BILLY considers this.)

BILLY. Yes.

TRALFAMADORIAN. That's one thing Earthlings might learn to do, if they tried hard enough: ignore the awful times, and concentrate on the good ones.

BILLY. Um—

(Blackout.)

TRALFAMADORIAN. Time for bed, Mr. Pilgrim.

BILLY. Good night.

(TIME CHANGE: 1948, Cape Cod Honeymoon Suite. An audible wail comes from off. YOUNG BILLY turns on a lamp next to his bed.)

YOUNG BILLY. Honey?

(Another low long sob, followed by the flush of a toilet. VALENCIA emerges from behind a door. She's dressed in a frilly, sexy nightgown.)

What's the matter?

VALENCIA. I'm so happy.

YOUNG BILLY. Good.

(She gets into bed with him.)

VALENCIA. I never thought anyone would marry me.

YOUNG BILLY. Um.

VALENCIA. I'm going to lose weight for you.

YOUNG BILLY. What?

VALENCIA. I'm going to go on a diet. I'm going to become beautiful for you.

YOUNG BILLY. I like you just the way you are.

VALENCIA. Do you really?

YOUNG BILLY. Really.

(She snuggles close to him.)

VALENCIA. That was nice. Thank-you.

YOUNG BILLY. You're welcome.

VALENCIA. *(After a beat.)* Do you ever think of the war?

YOUNG BILLY. Sometimes.

VALENCIA. I look at you sometimes and I get the feeling that you're just full of secrets.

YOUNG BILLY. I'm not.

VALENCIA. You must have secrets about the war. Or, not secrets, I guess, but things you don't want to talk about.

YOUNG BILLY. No.

VALENCIA. I'm proud you were a soldier. Do you know that?

YOUNG BILLY. Good.

VALENCIA. Was it awful?

YOUNG BILLY. Sometimes.

(YOUNG BILLY *pulls away.*)

VALENCIA. What's the matter?

YOUNG BILLY. Nothing. I just had a thought.

VALENCIA. What is it?

YOUNG BILLY. Everything was beautiful and nothing hurt.

VALENCIA. Really?

YOUNG BILLY. Just a thought.

VALENCIA. Would you talk about the war. If I wanted you to.

YOUNG BILLY. It was like a dream. Other people's dreams aren't very interesting.

VALENCIA. I heard you tell Father one time about a firing squad.

YOUNG BILLY. Um.

VALENCIA. You had to bury him?

YOUNG BILLY. Yes.

VALENCIA. Did he see you with your shovels before he was shot?

YOUNG BILLY. Yes.

VALENCIA. Did he say anything?

YOUNG BILLY. No.

VALENCIA. Was he scared?

YOUNG BILLY. They had him doped. He was sort of glassy-eyed.

BARBARA. (*Off, far away:*) Father!

(*Knocking.*)

VALENCIA. And they pinned a target on him?

YOUNG BILLY. A piece of paper.

BARBARA. (*Off, closer:*) Daddy!!

(*More knocking.*)

YOUNG BILLY. (*Sits up.*) Wait.

VALENCIA. Wait what?

(*TIME SHIFT: 1968, Ilium, Billy's House. BARBARA enters, carrying her newspaper and bag of groceries. BILLY follows close behind, holding a few sheets of paper.*)

BARBARA. If you're going to act like a child, maybe we'll just have to treat you like a child.

BILLY. (*Stops.*) That's not what happens next.

BARBARA. We'll see what happens next. Why is it so cold in here? Is the heat on?

BILLY. The heat?

BARBARA. The furnace.

(*Hands him the bag.*)

Here, I picked up some food on the way over. There's a cooked chicken in there for you. Oh God, if we leave you alone here you'll freeze to death. Go to your bedroom. I'll be up with your electric blanket in a minute

(*Sees his papers, takes them.*)

What's this.

BILLY. For the paper.

BARBARA. (*Reading:*) I have come unstuck in time.

BILLY. My next editorial.

BARBARA. Oh Father! What are we going to do with you? Go on upstairs.

BILLY. (*He doesn't move.*) Alright.

BARBARA. I'll call the furnace man.

(*She exits. TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War, Prison Hospital. REGGIE and CHETWYNDE carry in an unconscious LAZZARO.*)

REGGIE. Doesn't weigh much more than a chicken. If I'd known I was fighting a chicken, I wouldn't have fought so hard.

CHETWYNDE. Yes.

(*They toss him in the bed next to YOUNG BILLY. DERBY is asleep in a chair.*)

REGGIE. Weak, self-pitying—a pack of sniveling, dirty, thieving bastards.

(*Gesturing towards DERBY.*)

CHETWYNDE. Not all, Reg.

REGGIE. Yes, well.

(*FRITZ enters.*)

CHETWYNDE. Wie gehts, freunde?

FRITZ. Is everything alright? You're not hurt, are you, my friends? I am sorry you have ever had to deal with these Americans. I promise it won't be more than a day or two. Then they will all be shipped to Dresden as contract labor.

REGGIE. The sooner the better, if you ask me.

CHETWYNDE. (*Points to a book FRITZ carries.*) What's that you've got there with you, Fritz?

FRITZ. Oh, this is something I wanted to show you. It's by a fellow named Howard W. Campbell. Maybe you know him already. He is quite famous as a playwright.

CHETWYNDE. Is he English?

FRITZ. American. Would you like to hear a little of his monograph?

CHETWYNDE. Why not?

FRITZ. (*Reads:*) America is the wealthiest nation on Earth, but its people are mainly poor, and poor Americans are urged to hate themselves. To quote the humorist Ken Hubbard, "It ain't no dis-

grace to be poor, but it might as well be." It is in fact a crime for an American to be poor, even though America is a nation of poor.

(*YOUNG BILLY wakes; props himself up to listen.*)

Every other nation has folk traditions of men who were poor but extremely wise and virtuous, and therefore more estimable than anyone with power and gold. No such tales are told by the American poor. They mock themselves and glorify their betters.

CHETWYNDE. That explains a lot. Reggie, I'll just...

(*He starts to exit.*)

Cheerio, Fritz.

REGGIE. Must get back to the children.

CHETWYNDE. Someone should.

(*He's off; FRITZ continues while REGGIE sits on the end of Young Billy's bed and fills a pipe.*)

FRITZ. The meanest eating and drinking establishment, owned by a man who is himself poor, is very likely to have a sign on its wall asking this cruel question: "If you're so smart, why ain't you rich?"

(*YOUNG BILLY faints. FRITZ and CHETWYNDE look at him. TIME SHIFT: 1968, Tralfamadore Zoo-Cage; BILLY in his bar-calaunger.*)

TRALFAMADORIAN. Billy Pilgrim.

BILLY. Yes.

TRALFAMADORIAN. We have a surprise for you.

BILLY. What?

TRALFAMADORIAN. We thought you might want some companionship. You will be happy to know we've broken all attendance records at the zoo today.

(*MONTANA WILDHACK, beautiful, 20s, appears asleep, and in a bikini. She wakes.*)

MONTANA. Where am I?

BILLY. Everything is alright. Please don't be afraid.

MONTANA. The last thing I remember, I was sunning myself by the swimming pool, and then —

(She looks around for the first time.)

AHHHHHHH!

(A dark blue nightscape instantly envelops the stage. BILLY switches on a lamp.)

What happened to the lights?

BILLY. The Tralfamadorians simulate an Earth night sky. They think it will calm you.

(Pause.)

You're very beautiful.

TRALFAMADORIAN. Billy Pilgrim?

BILLY. Yes?

TRALFAMADORIAN. Are you going to mate now?

(TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War, Prison Hospital. DERBY reads to YOUNG BILLY, who's awake. LAZZARO has an arm sling—he's awake too, and listening.)

DERBY. Yet the youth smiled, for he saw that the world was a world for him, though many discovered it to be made of oaths and walking sticks. He had rid himself of the red sickness of battle. The sultry nightmare was in the past. He turned with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies, fresh meadows, cool brooks—an existence of soft and eternal peace.

(YOUNG BILLY shifts uncomfortably.)

Do you want me to stop?

YOUNG BILLY. No, it's good. What is it again.

DERBY. *Red Badge of Courage* by Stephan Crane.

YOUNG BILLY. Oh.

(REGGIE enters, passing through.)

REGGIE. Hello, Chaps.

(To LAZZARO:)

How's the arm holding up, then?

LAZZARO. Fuck off.

(REGGIE stops.)

I'm going to have you killed after the war.

REGGIE. Oh?

LAZZARO. You made a big mistake. Anybody touches me, he better kill me, or I'm gonna have him killed.

(REGGIE smiles.)

REGGIE. There is still time for me to kill you, if you really persuade me that it's the sensible thing to do.

LAZZARO. Why don't you go fuck yourself?

REGGIE. *(As he exits:)* Don't think I haven't tried.

(And he's off.)

LAZZARO. I'm going to have revenge, and that revenge is going to be sweet. It's the sweetest thing there is. People fuck with me, and Jesus Christ are they ever fucking sorry. I laugh like hell. I don't care if it's a guy or a dame. If the President of the United States fucked around with me, I'd fix him good. You should have seen what I did to a dog one time.

DERBY. A dog?

LAZZARO. Son of a bitch bit me. So I got me some steak, and I got me the spring out of a clock. I cut that spring up in little pieces. I put points on the ends of the pieces. They were sharp as razor blades. I stuck 'em into the steak—way inside. And I went past where they had the dog tied up. He wanted to bite me again. I said to him "Come on, Doggie, let's be friends. Let's not be enemies any more. I'm not mad." He believed me.

DERBY. Yeah?

LAZZARO. I threw him the steak. He swallowed it down in one big gulp. I waited around for ten minutes. Blood started coming out of his mouth. He started crying and rolled on the ground, as though the knives were on the outside of him instead of on the inside of him. Then he tried to bite out his own insides. I laughed, and I said to him "you got the right idea now. Tear your own guts out, Boy. That's me in there with all those knives."

(Beat.)

Anyone ever asks you what the sweetest thing in life is, it's revenge.

DERBY. Do you plan to feed that fellow clock springs and steak?

LAZZARO. Shit.

DERBY. He's a pretty big man.

LAZZARO. Size don't mean a thing.

DERBY. You're going to *shoot* him.

LAZZARO. I'm gonna *have* him shot. He'll get home after the war. He'll be a big hero. The dames'll be climbing all over him. He'll settle down. A couple of years'll go by. And then one day there'll be a knock on the door. He'll answer the door, and there'll be a stranger out there. The stranger'll ask him if he's so-and-so. When he says he is, the stranger'll say "Paul Lazzaro sent me." And he'll pull out a gun and shoot his pecker off. The stranger'll let him think a couple seconds about who Paul Lazzaro is and what life's gonna be like without a pecker. Then he'll shoot him once in the guts and walk away.

(Beat.)

I could have anybody in the world killed for a thousand dollars plus traveling expenses. I have a list in mind.

DERBY. Who's all on your list?

LAZZARO. Just make fucking sure you don't get on it. Just don't cross me, that's all.

(Beat.)

And don't cross my friends.

DERBY. You have friends?

LAZZARO. In the war? Yeah, I had a friend in the war. He's dead.

DERBY. That's too bad.

LAZZARO. Yeah. He was my buddy in the boxcar. His name was Roland Weary. He died in my arms.

(He points to YOUNG BILLY with his healthy hand.)

He died on account of this silly cocksucker here. So I promised him I'd have this silly cocksucker killed after the war.

(LAZZARO erases with his hand anything YOUNG BILLY might be about to say.)

Just forget it, Kid. Enjoy life while you can. Nothing's gonna happen for maybe five, ten, fifteen, twenty years. But lemme give you a piece of advice. Whenever the doorbell rings, have somebody else answer the door.

(Lights shift to MAN.)

MAN. Billy Pilgrim says now that this really is the way he is going to die. As a time traveler, he has seen his own death many times, has described it to a tape recorder. The tape is locked up with his will and some other valuables in his safe deposit box at the Ilium Merchants National Bank and Trust. He says "I Billy Pilgrim, will die, have died and will always die on February thirteenth, 1976." At the time of his death, he says, he is in Chicago to address a large crowd on the subject of flying saucers and the true nature of time.

(TIME SHIFT: 1976, Chicago. Lights come up to reveal BILLY, center stage, speaking into a microphone. He addresses a huge crowd. He is 54 years old.)

Billy is speaking before a capacity audience in a baseball park, which is covered by a geodesic dome. Billy predicts his own death within an hour.

BILLY. *(At the mic:)* It is high time I was dead. Many years ago, a certain man promised to have me killed. He is an old man now, living not so far from here. He has read all the publicity associated

with my appearance in your fair city. He is insane. Tonight he will keep his promise.

(Protests from the crowd.)

No, no, no, please. If you protest, if you think that death is a terrible thing, then you have not understood a word I have said. In closing, I would like to offer this salutation, something I learned from the Tralfamadorians. Hello, farewell, hello farewell

(More rebukes from the audience.)

No, no. It is time for you to go home to your husbands and wives and children, and it is time for me to be dead for a little while...and then live again.

(A loud shot rings out. Screams from the crowd; BILLY's body recoils and slumps. Two or three men in suits and sunglasses rush in and whisk off BILLY's limp body. TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War, Prison Barracks. G.I.s settle down for a meeting. Amongst the hubbub, LAZZARO mumbles to an uninterested G.I.:)

LAZZARO. Yeah, she says she doesn't want me, the stuck up bitch. But when I get home, she's gonna regret she ever said a bad word against me.

(CHETWYNDE circles around and waits for the group to settle. The group is unresponsive, even sleepy. YOUNG BILLY has arrived at the door.)

G.I. #1. Close the fucking door. Were you raised in a barn?!

(YOUNG BILLY's stunned for a moment, then he closes the door behind him.)

LAZZARO. *(Still mumbling:)* I got a list in my head.

CHETWYNDE. Lads lads lads—can I have your attention, please? I hope you don't mind me giving you a piece of advice on personal hygiene. If you stop taking pride in your appearance, you will very soon die. I have seen several men die in the following way. They ceased to stand up straight, then ceased to shave or wash. Then ceased to get out of bed, then ceased to talk, then died. There is this much to say to be said for it. It is evidently a very easy and painless way to go. I, when captured, made and kept the following vows to

myself. To brush my teeth twice a day, to shave once a day, to wash my face and hands before every meal and after going to the latrine, to polish my shoes once a day, to exercise for at least half an hour each morning and move my bowels, and to look into a mirror frequently, frankly evaluating my appearance particularly with respect to posture.

(Beat.)

I envy you lads.

(Someone laughs. YOUNG BILLY notices Reggie's silver combat boot resting to one side. He looks around, then takes the boots and exchanges them for his decrepit ones.)

You lads are leaving this afternoon for Dresden, a beautiful city I'm told. Dresden is an open city. It is undefended and contains no war industries or troop concentrations of any importance. Now.

(Beat.)

I think it's best you elect a leader amongst yourselves. Someone capable, able to serve as spokesman for the lot of you, make decisions and so forth. Are there any nominations.

(Silence.)

Any nominations at all.

(Still nothing.)

Well then, I nominate Edgar Derby. In the brief time I've known him, I find him to be a gentleman of exceptional maturity and, as far as I can tell, a long experience in dealing with people. Anybody else? Any other nominations? Well then, the nominations are closed. All in favor of Edgar Derby as leader of your group, say 'aye.'

TWO or THREE. Aye.

CHETWYNDE. Congratulations Private Derby.

(Smattering of applause.)

Go ahead and say a few words.

(DERBY stands.)

DERBY. I'd like to thank the Colonel for his good advice. I mean to follow it exactly. I'm sure that everyone else will do the same. My primary responsibility, as I see it—

LAZZARO. Take a flying fuck at a rolling donut hole.

DERBY. —As I see it, is to make damn well sure that everybody gets home safely.

LAZZARO. Take a flying fuck to the moon!

(TIME SHIFT: 1968, Ilium, Airport Tarmac. A prop plane roars off stage. A group of OPTOMETRISTS, BILLY, and VALENCIA run on, carrying suitcases.)

VALENCIA. Come on Billy, you'll miss your plane!

BILLY. I'll be back Monday morning.

VALENCIA. Tell them next time they have to have the convention in Ilium!

BILLY. I will!

(The wives leave as the Optometrists circle around and form the cabin of the plane. It takes off as four of the Optometrists form a barbershop quartet and start to sing:)

QUARTET.

IN MY PRISON CELL I SIT

WITH MY BRITCHES FULL OF SHIT

AND MY BALLS ARE BOUNCING GENTLY ON THE FLOOR

AND I SEE THE BLOODY SNAG

WHEN SHE BIT ME IN THE BAG

OH, I'LL NEVER FUCK A POLACK ANY MORE

(They drink and laugh. The plane hums in the background.)

OPTOMETRIST. Sing that other Polish song I like so much.

QUARTET.

ME AND MIKE, VE VORK IN A MINE

HOLY SHIT, VE HAVE A GOOD TIME,

VUNCE A VEEK VE GET OUR PAY

HOLY SHIT, NO VORK NEXT DAY

BILLY. *(While they sing, to an OPTOMETRIST:)* I saw a Pole hanged.

OPTOMETRIST. What?

BILLY. *(Above the engine roar:)* I saw a Pole hanged. In Dresden. He was hanged for having intercourse with a German woman.

OPTOMETRIST. I can't hear you!

(He laughs, looks back at the QUARTET.)

Come on Billy. Sing!

(BILLY stares out, lost. The plane hum sputters, then spins out of control. The Optometrists are oblivious.)

QUARTET.

WAIT TILL THE SUN SHINES NELLIE,

WHILE THE CLOUDS GO DRIFTING BY.

BILLY. You guys go one without me.

(The plane spiral gets louder, the singing continues, perhaps, as a sound cue, but the Optometrists are now panicking, holding on to whatever they can. BILLY shuts his eyes as the sounds fades to nothing, and the lights go to a tiny spot on just his face. He whispers.)

You guys go on without me.

(Huge explosion, blackout. A bird tweets. Lights come up on MAN. Sound of marching.)

MAN. Listen. Billy Pilgrim says he went to Dresden, Germany the day after his morphine night in the British compound hospital.

(DERBY appears in a separate light.)

DERBY. Dear Margaret: We got to Dresden after only two days on the train. Don't worry, it will never be bombed. It is an open city. The other day, there was an election and guess what.

(Lights come up full on the G.I.s marching. They are being led by a very OLD GERMAN and a very YOUNG GERMAN. YOUNG BILLY is wearing his fur coat and silver Cinderella boots.)

MAN. The Americans arrived in Dresden at five in the afternoon. The boxcars were opened, and the doorways framed the loveliest city that most of the Americans had ever seen. The only other city I'd seen was Indianapolis, Indiana.

YOUNG BILLY. Edgar, look.

MAN. Their eyes were filled with images of Dresden: gigantic fountains, church spirals that reached for the skies, even a ring of enormous golden cupids that circled a clock tower every time the hour was struck.

DERBY. Dresden.

OLD GERMAN. Halt!

(They halt. The OLD GERMAN counts the men.)

DERBY. *(To himself.)* Dear Margaret: Dresden is one of the most beautiful cities I've ever seen. Nothing's been touched here. It's like there hasn't even been a war.

OLD GERMAN. This way.

(They march.)

YOUNG G.I. Oz.

MAN. That was I. That was me.

YOUNG GERMAN. Stay in line!

MAN. Dresden had not suffered so much as a cracked window-pane. Steam radiators still whistled cheerily in Dresden. Streetcars clanged. Telephones rang and were answered. There were theatres and restaurants. There was a zoo.

YOUNG GERMAN. Halt.

(They halt. The OLD GERMAN addresses the group.)

OLD GERMAN. Americans. This is your new home. Look around you and memorize this place.

(BILLY wanders in, dressed as he was when he left for the Optometrists convention. He stops and watches the scene before him.)

If you ever get lost in the big city, you must know your address. In English it is Slaughterhouse Number Five, but you must know it in German as well. Repeat after me: Schachthof-funf.

G.I.s. *(Unsure.)* Schlachthof-funf.

OLD GERMAN. Schlachthof-funf!

G.I.s. *(Better.)* Schlachthof-funf!

(Sound of a plane spiraling out of control as the lights fade—huge explosion. BILLY collapses. TIME SHIFT: 1968, Vermont Hillside. A RESCUER, dressed in a winter parka, rushes to BILLY's side. The G.I.s remain, partially lit.)

RESCUER. *(Off.)* Hey! This one's still alive!

(Another RESCUER rushes to them.)

RESCUER. He's trying to say something.

BILLY. *(Barely audible.)* Schlauchthof-funf.

G.I.'s. Schlauchthof-funf.

(The RESCUERS carry off BILLY's limp body. The G.I.s gradually take on work chores as the scene changes to inside a warehouse.)

MAN. Billy wasn't time traveling now; he was remembering a true event in his life. Another true thing Billy saw while he was unconscious on that Vermont hill-side was the work that he and the others had to do in Dresden during the month before the city was destroyed.

(A GERMAN WOMAN enters with cleaning supplies, which she hands to YOUNG BILLY and DERBY. They scrub the floor.)

They washed windows and scrubbed floors and cleaned lavatories and put jars into boxes and sealed cardboard boxes in a factory that made malt syrup.

(YOUNG GERMAN enters wheeling a covered push cart, which he parks to one side.)

GERMAN WOMAN. Wo warst du? *[Where were you?]*

YOUNG GERMAN. Wir habe uns verlaufen. *[I got lost.]*

GERMAN WOMAN. Sind sie night viel zu jung um in Armee zu sein? *[Aren't you awfully young to be in the army?]*

YOUNG GERMAN. Yah.

(She looks DERBY up and down.)

GERMAN WOMAN. Aren't you awfully old to be in the army?

DERBY. Yes, I am.

(She looks at YOUNG BILLY.)

GERMAN WOMAN. What are you supposed to be?

YOUNG BILLY. I'm just trying to keep warm.

GERMAN WOMAN. All the real soldiers are dead.

(Beat.)

This kitchen must be cleaned. Do not eat the syrup. It is for ladies who are pregnant. If you eat the syrup, it is the same as stealing the vitamins away from the unborn babies.

(She and the YOUNG GERMAN leave.)

DERBY. That guard is the spitting image of one of the kids I used to teach back home.

YOUNG BILLY. He is?

DERBY. Could be his twin. He was best friends with my kid.

(DERBY looks weak with worry. He and YOUNG BILLY resume their cleaning. BILLY stops—he picks up a spoon from the floor.)

YOUNG BILLY. A spoon.

(He goes to the cart, uncovers it and dips the spoon into a huge vat, pulling out a spool of syrup. He eats it and nearly faints with satisfaction. He dips his spoon again, whispers:)

Edgar!

(DERBY sees the syrup, crosses over. He gobbles it up, then looks at YOUNG BILLY. He starts to weep. Bells peel in the distance. TIME SHIFT: 1968, Ilium, Billy's House. BILLY holds typing paper and a bag of groceries; BARBARA holds her newspaper.)

BARBARA. Father, what are we going to do with you?

BILLY. I don't know.

BARBARA. You know who I could just kill?

BILLY. Who could you kill?

BARBARA. That Kilgore Trout.

(Lights shift to the other part of the stage where we see KILGORE TROUT, holding a stack of newspapers, and a BOY with a canvas bag slung over his shoulders. They're standing in an alley off a suburban street. It is 1963.)

TROUT. Now get off your butt and get your daily customers to subscribe to the fucking Sunday edition, too. Whoever sells the most Sunday subscriptions during the next two months will get a free trip for himself and his parents to Martha's Vineyard for a week, all expenses paid.

BOY. Mr. Trout, if I win, can I take my sister too?

TROUT. Hell, no. You think money grows on trees?

BOY. I quit.

TROUT. Quit?! Why?!

BOY. The work is too hard and the hours are too long and I don't make enough money.

TROUT. What are you? Some kind of gutless wonder?

MAN. This was the title of a book by Kilgore Trout, *The Gutless Wonder*.

TROUT. Don't be stupid. Do you know how many millionaires there are out there who started out carrying newspapers?

BOY. Yeah, but I bet they quit after a week. It's such a royal screwing.

(He throws down his bag at Trout's feet and exits.)

TROUT. Wait! At least stay till I find another boy!

(He's gone. TROUT sighs, then gets to work at folding newspapers.)

MAN. *The Gutless Wonder* was about a robot who had bad breath, who became popular after his halitosis was cured. But what made the story remarkable, since it was written in 1932, was that it predicted widespread use of burning jelly on human beings. It was dropped on them from airplanes. Robots did the dropping. They had no conscience, and no circuits which would allow them to imagine what was happening to the people on the ground. Trout's leading robot looked like a human being, and could talk and dance and so on, and go out with girls. And nobody held it against him that he dropped jellied gasoline on people. But they found his halitosis unforgivable. But he cleared that up and he was welcomed to the human race.

(The BOY re-enters as BILLY enters to cross from the opposite side.)

BOY. Mr. Trout!

(BILLY stops.)

I forgot my last weeks pay.

TROUT. Buzz off.

BOY. *(As he exits:)* Blow it out your ass.

BILLY. Mr. Trout?

TROUT. *(Startled:)* Yes?

BILLY. Are you Kilgore Trout?

TROUT. *(Suspicious:)* Yes.

BILLY. The—the writer?

TROUT. The what?

BILLY. There's a writer named Kilgore Trout, I—

TROUT. There is?

BILLY. You never heard of him.

TROUT. Nobody—nobody ever did. I've never in my life seen a book of mine advertised, reviewed or for sale. All these years, I've been opening the window and making love to the world.

BILLY. Mr. Trout—

TROUT. Look, I've got to deliver these.

BILLY. Let me help.

TROUT. Huh?

BILLY. I'll help.

(He does.)

You must surely have gotten letters. I've felt like writing you letters many times.

TROUT. One.

BILLY. Was it enthusiastic?

TROUT. It was *insane*. The writer said I should be President of the World.

BILLY. Was it from Elliot Rosewater?

TROUT. Maybe. Yeah, I think so.

BILLY. That's my friend who told me about you. I met him in a hospital. He's a very nice man.

TROUT. My God, I thought he was about fourteen years old.

BILLY. A full grown man—a captain in the war.

TROUT. He *writes* like a fourteen-year-old.

(Church bells chime in the distance.)

BILLY. Mr. Trout, will you come to my house for a party? My wife and I are celebrating our eighteenth wedding anniversary.

(The bells get louder. TIME SHIFT: 1968, The War, The Slaughterhouse. The OLD GERMAN appears in a separate light.)

OLD GERMAN. Americans. I have someone I'd like you to hear. Perhaps some of you know him by name.

(Lights glow up on the G.I.s, who sit, waiting on the floor.)

He is a famous playwright and radio man from your own country, though he has lived in Germany most of his life. I am sure you will find what he says interesting. Howard W. Campbell.

(HOWARD CAMPBELL enters. He wears a cowboy hat and boots, a western style shirt and pants—or perhaps an entire body stocking—decorated with stars and stripes and swastikas. He points to parts of his “uniform”.)

CAMPBELL. Blue is for the American sky. White is for the race that pioneered the continent, drained the swamps, and cleared the forests and built the roads and bridges. Red is for the blood of American patriots which was shed so gladly in years gone by.

(He looks them over.)

I know you’re all very tired. I also know maybe you’re not getting the nutrition you deserve. If you join the Free American Corps you can have steaks and mashed potatoes and gravy and mince pie every day. Once the Russians are defeated, you will be repatriated through Switzerland.

(Waits for a response.)

You’re going to have to fight the communists sooner or later. Why not get it over with now?

(DERBY stands. He crosses to CAMPBELL and assumes a fighter’s stance.)

DERBY. You know what you are? You’re a snake—no. I take that back. Snakes can’t help being snakes, and you, who can help being what you are, you’re lower than a snake, or a rat, or a blood-filled tick.

(CAMPBELL smiles.)

Don’t talk to me about America. You don’t know anything about it. We’re not here because we wanted to sell out to some tyrannical fascism. America is democracy and justice and opportunity and fair play for all. And there isn’t a man here who wouldn’t gladly die for those ideals. Together, with the Russians, we’re going to crush the disease of Nazism, which wants to infect the whole world.

(Air raid sirens—loud. They all look up and around for a moment, then scramble for an exit. TIME SHIFT: 1963, Ilium, Billy’s House. TROUT, animated and happy, stands talking with BARBARA. He juggles a small plate piled high with appetizers, and a drink. Billy and Valencia’s eighteenth wedding anniversary party—complete with the BARBERSHOP QUARTET—can be heard in full swing in the next room.)

BARBARA. I’m afraid I don’t read as much as I ought to.

TROUT. We’re all afraid of something. I’m afraid of cancer and rats and Doberman pinchers.

BARBARA. I should know, but I don’t so I have to ask. What’s the most famous thing you ever wrote?

TROUT. It was about a funeral for a great French chef.

BARBARA. That sounds interesting.

TROUT. (Making it up as he goes along:) All the great chefs in the world were there. It’s a beautiful ceremony. Just before the casket is closed, the mourners sprinkle parsley and paprika on the deceased.

BARBARA. Did that really happen?

TROUT. Of course it happened. If I wrote something that hadn’t happened, and I tried to sell it, I could go to jail. That’s *fraud*.

BARBARA. I’d never thought about that before.

TROUT. Think about it now.

BARBARA. It’s like advertising. You have to tell the truth in advertising, or you get in trouble.

TROUT. Exactly. The same body of law applies.

BARBARA. Do you think you might put *us* in a book sometime?

TROUT. I put everything that happens to me in books.

BARBARA. I guess I better be careful what I say.

(BILLY enters and nervously plays with a small, gift-wrapped box.)

TROUT. That’s right. And I’m not the only one who’s listening. God is listening too. And on Judgment Day he’s going to tell you all

the things you said and did. If it turns out they're bad things instead of good things, that's too bad for you, because you'll burn forever and ever. And the burning never stops hurting.

(BARBARA gasps in horror. TROUT laughs uproariously—a bit of food flies out of his mouth and onto BARBARA's chest.)

BARBARA. Oh!

(An OPTOMETRIST enters.)

There he is!

(Party guests, most of them OPTOMETRISTS, and all of them wearing glasses, swarm the room.)

OPTOMETRIST. Billy! There you are!

VALENCIA. We'd wondered where you'd wandered off to.

BILLY. Here I am,

OPTOMETRIST. *(Clinking his glass:)* Attention, attention Everybody! On behalf of myself and the four-eyed bastards, I'd like to propose a toast to the happy couple. Eighteen years of wedded bliss.

(They toast and cheer.)

BARBARA. Congratulations, Daddy!

(The QUARTET sings as the others clear the floor for BILLY and VALENCIA to approach one another.)

QUARTET.

GEE, BUT I'D GIVE THE WORLD TO SEE THAT OLD GANG OF
MINE

SO LONG FOREVER, OLD FELLOWS AND GALS,
SO LONG FOREVER OLD SWEETHEARTS AND PALS,
GOD BLESS 'EM

(BILLY stops. Then swoons. It looks like he may be having a heart attack. The QUARTET stops singing. Someone finds a chair for BILLY and another fans his face. VALENCIA rushes to his side.)

VALENCIA. Oh my God, Billy, are you alright?

BILLY. Yes.

VALENCIA. You look awful.

BILLY. Really, I'm okay. No please, enjoy the party.

(The GUESTS cautiously resume their reveling. VALENCIA stays with BILLY as TROUT approaches him with an intense curiosity.)

VALENCIA. You look as though you'd seen a ghost.

BILLY. No.

TROUT. Can I make a suggestion? You saw through a time window.

VALENCIA. What?

TROUT. He suddenly saw the past or the future. Am I right?

BILLY. No.

(BILLY rises and absent-mindedly takes the small box from his pocket. He hands it to VALENCIA.)

VALENCIA. For me?

BILLY. Yes.

VALENCIA. Oh my God.

(She opens it; screams.)

It's a sapphire ring! Thank-you thank-you thank-you.

(She runs screaming into the crowd.)

BARBARA. My God Mommy, you've already got the biggest diamond anyone's ever seen outside a movie!

(BILLY drifts away from the crowd, lost in thought. TROUT continues to observe him.)

TROUT. Billy?

BILLY. Oh.

TROUT. You ever put a full-length mirror on the floor, and then have a dog stand on it?

BILLY. No.

TROUT. The dog will look down, and all of a sudden he'll realize there's nothing under him. He thinks he's standing on thin air. He'll jump a mile.

BILLY. He will?

TROUT. That's how you looked—as though you all of a sudden realized you were standing on thin air.

(BILLY starts to exit, looking a little disoriented. TROUT follows him. BILLY stops.)

BILLY. No, please. Enjoy the party.

(TROUT exits. Lights dim to focus on BILLY as we hear muffled explosions in the background. The guests now turn to reveal they are the G.I.s and German Guards in a Dresden Fallout Shelter. BILLY watches his younger self huddle next to DERBY. The QUARTET are now four German Guards. CAMPBELL talks to one of them, softly.)

CAMPBELL. *Zurzeit, habe ich nichts mehr zu sagen. Ich meine... das heist...ich habe radio gerne. Mann muss allerdings die Leidenschaft dazu bringen. Wie kann ich sonst effective seine? [It's getting to the point I've run out of things to say. I mean, I enjoy radio, but I must be passionate about what I'm doing or else how can I be effective?]*

GERMAN GUARD. Ja, ja.

(The YOUNG GERMAN enters.)

YOUNG GERMAN. Ich sehe nichts als Flammen. Lauter flammen. *[All I can see is flames. Fire everywhere.]*

(Beat.)

GERMAN GUARD. Sehen sie jemand? *[Can you see anyone?]*

YOUNG GERMAN. Nur tote. *[No one alive.]*

(They look at each other. It looks as though they might be imitating the BARBERSHOP QUARTET, whom we now hear singing quietly, off.)

QUARTET.

GEE, BUT I'D GIVE THE WORLD TO SEE THAT OLD GANG OF MINE.

SO LONG FOREVER. OLD FELLOWS AND GALS,

SO LONG FOREVER SWEETHEARTS AND PALS.

GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

(More explosions. MONTANA enters paging through a style magazine.)

MAN. There was a fire out there. Dresden was one big flame. The one flame ate everything organic. Everything that would burn.

(TIME SHIFT: Tralfamadore. MONTANA is six months pregnant. The explosions slowly fade, but the G.I.s and GERMAN GUARDS remain.)

MONTANA. Billy Boy.

(BILLY crosses to her. MONTANA holds him.)

Tell me a story. Tell me a story, Billy Boy.

(He thinks.)

BILLY. Dresden was destroyed on the night of February thirteenth, 1945.

(Lights shift slowly, as the G.I.s and GERMAN SOLDIERS line up the Americans and quietly march them off.)

We came out of our shelter the next day. There were four German guards who remind me now of a barbershop quartet, fellows I knew, optometrists. They died in a plane crash. So it goes. The Germans had put us in a stockyard. That's where we lived, and when we were bombed, all the fenceposts were gone, the roofs and windows, all gone. And there were little logs all around. Those were people caught in the fire storm. All these buildings that used to form cliffs around the stockyard had collapsed, their wood consumed, they had tumbled against one another until they locked at last in low and graceful curves.

(Pause.)

MONTANA. Wanna lie down for a bit?

(BILLY looks up.)

BILLY. Could we please have a little privacy?

(The stage goes to a dark blue nightscape. MONTANA leads BILLY offstage.)

MAN. The curves were smooth only when seen from the distance. The people climbing them learned that they were treacherous, jagged things.

(TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War. G.I.s, YOUNG BILLY, and DERBY, led by the GERMAN GUARDS, stand amongst the rubble that was Dresden. It looks like the moon.)

Nobody talked much as the expedition crossed the moon. There was absolutely nothing to say. One thing was clear: absolutely everybody in the city was supposed to be dead.

(Beat.)

Billy's story ended very curiously in a suburb untouched by fire and explosions. The guards and Americans came at nightfall to an inn which was open for business.

(An INNKEEPER enters, talks to a GERMAN GUARD.)

INNKEEPER. Ich gehe in die Stadt, um den Umfang des Schadens zu sehen. [I was just on my way into the city. I wanted to see how much damage there was.]

GERMAN GUARD. Ja.

INNKEEPER. Kommen mehrere? [Are there more people coming?]

GERMAN GUARD. Auf dem weg haben wir keinen Lebendigen gesehen. [On the way here we didn't see a living soul.]

INNKEEPER. Sage ihnen sie sollen rein gehen und ein bett finden. [Tell them to go inside and find a bed.]

OLD GERMAN. Go inside, Americans. Find a bed.

(The GUARDS and G.I.s march past the INNKEEPER. A couple of beds are wheeled on stage.)

INNKEEPER. Wer kein Bett soll auf dem Boden Schlafen. [Anyone who cannot find a bed should sleep on the floor.]

(Then...)

Welcome, Americans. Welcome.

(TIME SHIFT: 1968, Vermont Hospital. BILLY, in one bed, is recovering from his plane crash. In a bed next to him, BERTRAM COPELAND RUMFOORD—70s, Harvard professor—works on his next book with his 23-year-old wife, LILY. She wears a mini skirt and holds a stack of research.)

BILLY. (Delirious:) You guys go on without me.

LILY. He scares me.

RUMFOORD. He bores the hell out of me. All he does in his sleep is quit and surrender and apologize and ask to be left alone. I could carve a better man out of a banana.

LILY. What's the matter with him?

RUMFOORD. Plane crash. They had to operate on his brain. He was the only survivor out of thirty-six people. Just my luck.

(Back to work.)

Did you get the Truman announcement like I asked you to?

LILY. Yes.

RUMFOORD. Read it to me.

LILY. (Protesting:) Bertie.

(He glares.)

Alright, Honey.

(Reads:)

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima. That bomb had more power than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British "Grand Slam," which is the largest bomb yet used in the history of warfare. It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe.

BILLY. If you're ever in Cody Wyoming, just ask for Wild Bob.

RUMFOORD. Why don't they let him *die*?

LILY. I don't know.

RUMFOORD. That's not a human being anymore. Look at him! That's life, according to the medical profession. Isn't life wonderful?

LILY. I don't know.

(Back to work.)

RUMFOORD. Americans have finally heard about Dresden, but now a lot of them know how much worse it was than Hiroshima.

LILY. Who cares.

RUMFOORD. I do for one, Honey. I didn't get around to mentioning Dresden once in my twenty-seven volume history of the war. Didn't need to. I've got to put something about it in my single volume edition. From the official Air Force standpoint. It'll all be new.

LILY. Why would they keep it a secret so long?

RUMFOORD. For fear that a lot of bleeding hearts might not think it was such a wonderful thing to do.

BILLY. *(Waking:)* I was there.

RUMFOORD. What did he say?

LILY. He said he was there.

RUMFOORD. He was where?

LILY. I don't know. *(To BILLY:)* Where were you?

BILLY. Dresden.

LILY. *(To RUMFOORD:)* Dresden.

RUMFOORD. He's simply echoing things we say.

LILY. Oh.

RUMFOORD. He's got echolalia now.

LILY. Oh.

BILLY. I was in Dresden when it was bombed. I was a prisoner of war.

(RUMFOORD sighs, impatient.)

Word of honor. Do you believe me?

RUMFOORD. Must we talk about it now?

BILLY. We don't ever have to talk about it. I just want you to know. I was there.

LILY. I believe him.

(Beat.)

RUMFOORD. It had to be done.

BILLY. I know.

RUMFOORD. That's war. That's the way it's been. That's the way it always will be.

BILLY. I know. I'm not complaining.

RUMFOORD. It must have been hell on the ground.

BILLY. It was.

RUMFOORD. Pity the man who had to do it.

BILLY. I do.

RUMFOORD. You must have had mixed feelings, there on the ground.

BILLY. It was alright. *Everything* was alright. And everybody has to do exactly what he does. I learned that on Tralfamadore.

(RUMFOORD looks at him. TIME SHIFT: 1945, The War. YOUNG BILLY and the other G.I.s work amongst the flattened rubble that used to be Dresden. GUARDS shout orders. G.I.s carry on—or, better yet, pull up from below—corpses and wheelbarrows of stone and concrete.)

YOUNG GERMAN. Erich, wenn wir hier fertig sind, sollen wir diese Gruppe zu der anderen strassenseite bringen. [*Erich, when we're finished here, take this group to the other side of the city.*]

GERMAN GUARD. Ja.

YOUNG GERMAN. (To **YOUNG BILLY**.) Kommen sie! You, come here and help these boys!

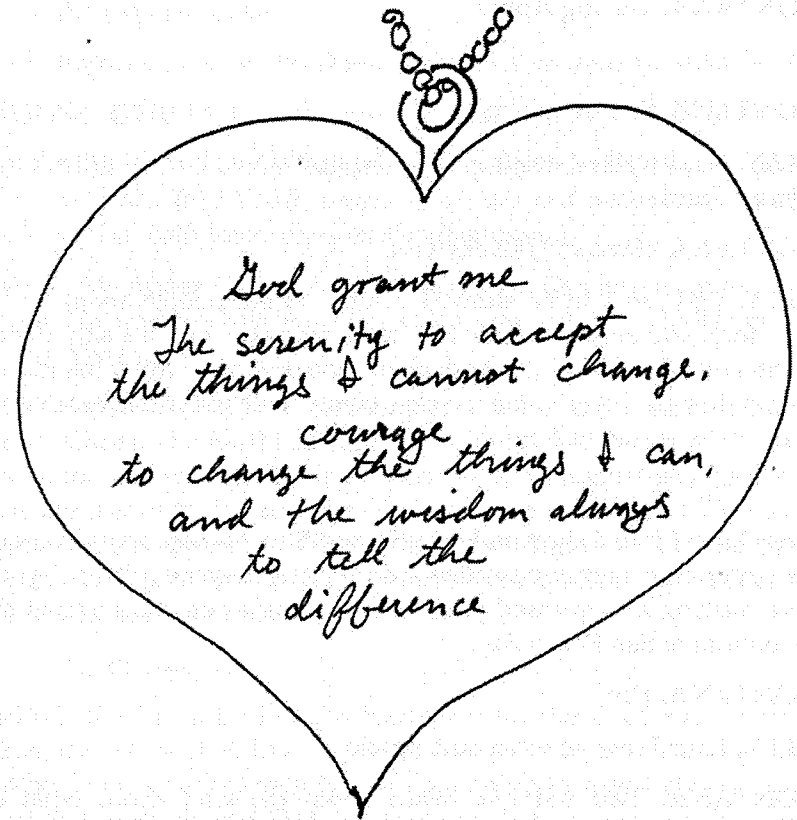
(**YOUNG BILLY** helps put the corpses in a pile. From now to the end of the play, the excavation work continues. More corpses pile up; more piles of rubble accumulate. Lights shift to **MAN** at his desk, who turns on his radio, then draws on a sheet of paper.)

BILLY. (From the radio.) In time, Montana Wildhack the movie star came to love and trust me. I didn't touch her until she made it clear she wanted me to. After she had been on Tralfamadore for what would have been an Earthling week, she asked me if I wouldn't sleep with her. Which I did. And it was heavenly.

(**MAN** turns off the radio.)

MAN. There was a silver chain around Montana Wildhack's neck. Hanging from it, between her breasts, was a locket containing a photograph of her alcoholic mother—a grainy thing. It could have been anybody. Engraved on the outside of the locket were these words:

(The image below is projected against the back wall, or **MAN** simply says the inscription:)



(**MAN** tacks the paper onto a wall behind him, or tapes it on a desk lamp. **TIME SHIFT**: 1968, Tralfamadore. **MONTANA** nurses a baby while **BILLY** sits, lost in thought.)

MONTANA. Time traveling again?

BILLY. Hm?

MONTANA. You've been time tripping again. I can always tell.

BILLY. Um.

MONTANA. Where did you go this time? It wasn't the war. I can tell that, too.

BILLY. New York.

MONTANA. The Big Apple.

BILLY. Hm?

MONTANA. See any plays?

BILLY. No. I walked around Times Square some, bought a book by Kilgore Trout.

MONTANA. (*Sarcastic:*) Lucky you.

BILLY. I got on a radio show. I wanted to tell people about Tralfamadore; and about the true nature of time and why it's silly to be frightened of death. I told them about you and me. I think the radio people thought I was someone else, some other guest that was supposed to be on instead of me.

(*Beat.*)

After, I went into a shop on Forty-Second Street where I saw you on the cover of a magazine called 'Midnight Pussycats.' It said you were missing and guessed you were wearing a cement overcoat at the bottom of San Pedro Bay.

MONTANA. Hm.

BILLY. Then I saw you in a blue movie.

MONTANA. Yes, and I've heard about the war, about what a clown you were. And I've heard about the high-school teacher who was shot. He made a blue movie with a firing squad.

(*She moves the baby from one breast to another. Silence for a bit, then she looks up.*)

They're playing with the clocks again.

(*BILLY smiles. He's happy. MONTANA sings:*)

AWAY IN THE MANGER
NO CRIB FOR A BED
THE LITTLE LORD JESUS

LAY DOWN HIS SWEET HEAD
THE CATTLE ARE LOWING
THE BABY AWAKES
BUT LITTLE LORD JESUS
NO CRYING HE MAKES

(*Lights come up on the Dresden; the G.I.s continue their work.*)

YOUNG GERMAN. Come, come. Back to work.

(*BILLY steps out of Tralfamadore through the war, where he passes YOUNG BILLY. He crosses to a chair and microphone—a radio station. Both scenes carry on simultaneously.*)

MAN. My father died many years ago now. Of natural causes. So it goes. He was a sweet man. He was a gun nut, too. He left me his guns. They rust.

BILLY. (*Into the mic:*) On Tralfamadore, there isn't much interest in Jesus Christ. The Earthling figure who is most engaging to the Tralfamadorian mind is Charles Darwin—who taught that those who die are meant to die, that the corpses are improvements. The same general idea appears in *The Bog Board* by Kilgore Trout. The flying saucer creatures who capture Trout's hero ask him about Darwin. They also ask him about golf.

(*Lights change.*)

MAN. If what Billy Pilgrim learned from the Tralfamadorians is true, that we will all live forever no matter how dead we may seem to be, I am not overjoyed. Still, if I am going to spend eternity visiting this moment and that, I'm grateful that so many of those moments are nice.

(*Two men enter the Radio Studio and gingerly escort BILLY from the room.*)

One of the nicest moments in recent times was on my trip back to Dresden with my old war buddy O'Hare. We took a Hungarian Airlines plane from East Berlin. The pilot had a handlebar mustache. He looked like Adolphe Menjou. He smoked a Cuban cigar while the plane was being fueled. When we took off, there was no talk of fastening seat belts.

(Beat.)

When we were up in the air, a young steward served us rye bread and salami and butter and cheese and white wine. The folding tray in front of me would not open out. The steward went into the cockpit for a tool, came back with a beer can opener. He used it to pry out the tray. There were six other passengers. They spoke many languages. They were having nice times too. East Germany was down below, and the lights were on. I imagined dropping bombs on those lights, those villages and towns.

(Beat.)

"If you're ever in Cody Wyoming," I said to O'Hare lazily, "just ask for Wild Bob."

(Beat.)

People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to anymore.

(Lights come up full on the "excavation." It's beautiful sunny day; corpses continue to pile up.)

Billy Pilgrim was meanwhile traveling back to Dresden, too, but not in the present. He was going back to 1945, two days after the city was destroyed. Now Billy and the rest were being marched into the ruins by their guards. I was there. O'Hare was there. Authorities told us what to do. We were to borrow picks and shovels and crowbars and wheelbarrows from our neighbors. We were to march these implements to such and such a place in the ruins, ready to go to work.

(DERBY finds a teapot in the rubble.)

DERBY. *(Whispering:)* Hey Billy!

(YOUNG BILLY walks over to him. DERBY shows him the teapot.)

Look, not a scratch on it.

(YOUNG BILLY smiles, then goes back to work, while DERBY stuffs the teapot inside his coat. A GERMAN GUARD sees this and tells the YOUNG GERMAN, who calls over Another Guard.)

MAN. Billy found himself paired as a digger with a Maori, who had been captured at Tobruk. The Maori was chocolate brown. He had whirlpools tattooed on his forehead and cheeks. Billy and the Maori dug into the inert, uncompromising gravel of the moon. The materials were loose, so there were constant little avalanches.

(The GERMANS interrogate DERBY.)

Many holes were dug at once. Nobody knew what there was to find. Billy and the Maori and others helping them with their particular hole came at last to a membrane of timbers laced over rocks which had wedged together to form an accidental dome. They made a hole in the membrane. There was darkness and space under there. A German soldier with a flashlight went down into the darkness, was gone a long time. When he finally came back, he told a superior on the rim of the hole that there were dozens of bodies down there. They were sitting on benches. They were unmarked. So it goes.

(YOUNG BILLY and another G.I. are handed shovels and ordered to stand by. The GUARDS with DERBY force him to drink a vial of morphine.)

The superior said that the opening in the membrane should be enlarged, and that a ladder should be put in the hole so that the bodies could be carried out. Thus began the first corpse mine in Dresden. There were hundreds of corpse mines operating by and by. They didn't smell bad at first—they were like wax museums. But then the bodies rotted and liquefied, and the stink was like roses and mustard gas. So it goes.

(DERBY is dragged to a spot next to the pile of corpses. A GUARD tacks a piece of paper on DERBY's chest: a target.)

The Maori Billy worked with died of the dry heaves, after having been ordered to go down in the stink and work. He tore himself to pieces, throwing up and throwing up. So it goes. So a new technique was devised. Bodies weren't brought up anymore. They were cremated by soldiers with flamethrowers right where they were. The soldiers stood outside the shelters, simply sent the fire in.

(DERBY stands alone, delirious. YOUNG BILLY and YOUNG MAN—Man's younger self—stand by and wait with their shovels. A GUARD stands a distance away from DERBY, aims his rifle.)

YOUNG GERMAN. Achtung. Feuern. [Ready. Fire.]

(The GUARD shoots. DERBY falls onto the pile of corpses. BILLY drops to his knees and weeps.)

MAN. So it goes.

(MAN gets up from his desk and cautiously steps on to the main playing area. YOUNG MAN looks up, recognizes MAN. They stare. To us...)

And somewhere in there was springtime. The corpse mines were closed down. The soldiers all left to fight the Russians. In the suburbs, the women and children dug rifle pits. Billy and the rest of his group were locked up in the stable in the suburbs. And then, one morning, they got up to discover that the door was unlocked. World War Two in Europe was over.

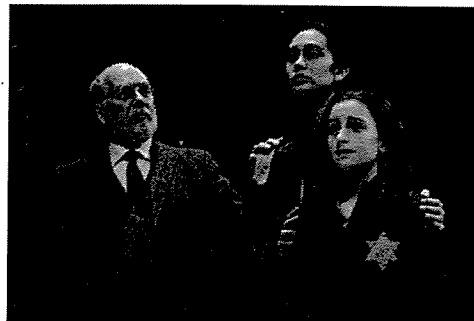
(MAN crosses to YOUNG MAN, who offers his shovel. MAN takes this—and perhaps the Young Man's hat and/or coat—and puts himself in the place of YOUNG MAN, who steps off the playing area and watches the scene from a distance. YOUNG BILLY is still on the ground, weeping.)

Billy and the rest wandered out onto the shady street. The trees were leafing out. There was nothing going on out there, no traffic of any kind. There was only one vehicle, an abandoned wagon drawn by two horses. The wagon was green and coffin-shaped. The birds were talking. One bird said to Billy Pilgrim...

(A bird tweets, clearly, sweetly, off in the distance. BILLY looks up in the direction of the bird. MAN bows his head as the lights fade to black.)

End of Play

Full-length plays from Playscripts, Inc.



Korczak's Children

by Jeffrey Hatcher

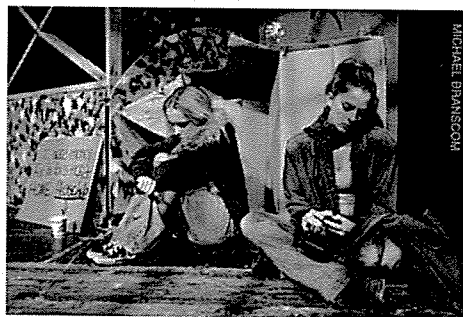
Drama
100-120 minutes
13 females, 15 males
(20-28 actors possible)

World War Two. The Nazi Occupation of Poland. Dr. Janusz Korczak – writer, educator, physician, and passionate advocate for children – tries to keep the 400 Jewish boys and girls of his famed Warsaw orphanage alive and hopeful in the face of unbelievable deprivation and terror. But there are rumors of a change in the ghetto. And Korczak knows time may be running out. Against the rules of the ghetto, he permits his orphans to stage a magical play – *The Post Office* – to teach them about the one adult subject he has not yet broached with them: death. As the play is rehearsed, the rumors become reality, and Korczak must decide who can be saved and who must go on the final journey together.

The Disappearance of Daniel Hand

by Dan O'Brien

Drama
100-120 minutes
5 females, 3 males
(8-15 actors possible)



Have you ever wanted to disappear? Daniel Hand disappeared, but he left behind some clues: a note, some video artwork, and a school full of conflicting impressions and theories. When Shannon, an aspiring filmmaker, starts shooting a documentary about the enigma of her missing classmate, she learns he was an athlete, honors student, artist, drug user, and perhaps a religious fanatic. Can she believe all the labels the other students are trying to slap on him? Is Daniel, Shannon, or anyone what everyone perceives them to be?

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About the Author

Eric Simonson is a member of Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre, and has been writing and directing for theatre, film and television since 1988. His plays and adaptations, which include *Bang the Drum Slowly* and *Work Song* (with Jeff Hatcher), have been performed all over the U.S. and in Japan. Mr. Simonson received a Tony nomination for his direction of the play *The Song of Jacob Zulu*; and an Academy Award for his short documentary *A Note of Triumph* in 2006. In 2005 he received the Princess Grace Statue Award for sustained achievement. He currently resides in L.A. with his son Henry.

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