

Will Work 4 Food



A Play in Two Acts

by Zalman Velvel

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Buddy-41, vagabond, highly intelligent, well-spoken

Brigette-22, single mother, highly emotional

Daddy-late 40's, Brigette's father, huge, eerie, and violent

In addition, there are voices of **Assorted Drivers** heard offstage

TIME

The play starts in the present, and then proceeds over a period of 2 1/2 weeks.

PLACE & SET

The play takes place in Southwest Florida and has 3 simple sets :

(1) Northbound on-ramp to Interstate 75 - a stop sign with an I-75 insignia, and some bushes. There is also the Southbound on-ramp to I-75 indicated by a stop sign and insignia. They are both downstage, on opposite sides on the stage.

(2) The backyard of Buddy's house – 2 chairs, a small table, a garden and fruit trees

(3) The inside of Buddy's house - a sofa bed, a table, a chair, and a Coleman lantern

During the play, Buddy and Brigette will sit on the front of the stage, and speak to the audience.

SUMMARY OF SCENES

ACT ONE

Scene 1: Present, 8 AM, Northbound on-ramp to I-75

Scene 2: 6 PM, same day, at Northbound on-ramp, then Buddy's backyard.

Scene 3: 2 AM next morning, Buddy's house

Scene 4: 10 AM, Southbound on-ramp to I-75

ACT TWO

Scene 1: An hour later, Buddy's house

Scene 2: 8 days later, 8AM, Northbound on-ramp to I-75

Scene 3: 10 AM, Buddy's house

Scene 4: a week later, Buddy's backyard

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

(**BUDDY, 41, ENTERS.** He is carrying a large, worn briefcase, and wearing old, but clean clothes. There is a stop sign, downstage, with "I-75 / North to Tampa" written on it, indicating an on-ramp to the interstate is in the background. Buddy sits at the edge of the stage. There are a few bushes in back of him, hiding him from traffic. Buddy opens his briefcase and removes a bag with "Frank's Diner" printed on it. He looks around, then talks to a member of the audience.)

BUDDY

Mmmmmmm mmm, what a delight!

It's a pleasure to have a cup of Frank's coffee in the morning.

Fresh ground beans, real cream. Oh, I love it! Mmmm!

Would you like a sip? It's really good.

No? How about if I add a little brightener?

(Takes a pint from his briefcase)

Anisette! (spoken like an Italian) Anisette. The Italian nectar. Perfect!

Now would you like to partake?

No? Perhaps just the Anisette? Here, help yourself. Go ahead.

No? As you wish.

(Sticks his face into the bag and inhales)

Mmm mmm! I love the aroma of a fresh Kaiser roll.

Permit me - examine this:

To a casual observer, this is a simple egg and cheese combination.

But it's not! No. What you see before you is artistry.

Look here, on this side. The correct amount of butter. Not margarine.

Creamery butter. Not an imposter. The real McGinty.

Now, let's observe the other side.

Two eggs, properly cooked. A delicate hint of fresh pepper. A pinch of salt.

Last, but not least, melted cheddar cheese for richness.

Place them together - rapture!

If only other artists could create such pleasure in their audience.

Frank is the Michelangelo of breakfast food.

BUDDY cont'd

How thoughtless of me. Are you hungry? Would you care for half?
No? Well, let me know if you change your mind.

[The sounds of traffic begin.]

Ah, work calls. Morning rush hour has commenced. I'll save the remainder for later.

[Buddy takes work coveralls from his briefcase, and wears them over his clothes.]

Please note, that for every profession, there is a proper uniform.
I think of it as a ... costume, designed for a role.

[Buddy removes a piece of cardboard from the briefcase and begins unfolding it.]

Next, each craft has its tools.
Mine are simple, yet the message is profound.

[Buddy displays the sign. It says, "WILL WORK 4 FOOD".]

Note how I wrote it. Doesn't the style say - quit school after the eighth grade?
I labored hard for that effect. There were several prior drafts. Three I believe.
And note the substitution of a number for a word.
Now, the finishing touch. Observe!

Posture ... and ... demeanor.

[Buddy holds sign to his chest, bends slightly, and forces a pathetic look on his face.]

This is not easy for me. I have a joyful nature.
However, business is business.

Please, don't look at me that way.
I know what you're thinking. You see me offer to work for food, yet I ate breakfast
right in front of you.

Is that what's on your mind? Of course it is.
And do you know how I respond? Are you ready for my reaction?
Well, here it is, so listen carefully. You will find it most illuminating.

I lie.

BUDDY cont'd

That's right. I lie, I deceive, I falsely advertise.
Oh, sir, that look! It says, you scum of the earth, you should be thrown in jail.
Sir, if we were to throw everyone who falsely advertises in jail,
The entire Board of Directors of Coke AND Pepsi would be serving life sentences.
Does anyone really believe that carbonated sugar water is going to change their life?

So I am not the slightest bit embarrassed to do this. Do you doubt me? Then observe.
Call me a liar. Go ahead. Call me a liar.
Go ahead, say it! Say "Liar! Liar! Pants on Fire!"

Come on, say it, give vent to your feelings.
Everyone! "Liar! Liar! Pants on Fire!"
Again! "Liar! Liar! Pants on Fire!"

Now, is my face the slightest bit red? Of course not.

Listen to me, now. Honesty is a false Messiah. It brings only pain.
It pales in comparison to the finest ingredient that God placed in man.

What ingredient, you ask? Do you have to think about it? Have I not shown you?
Why, generosity, of course! Did I not offer you half of my breakfast?

Well, it's evident from your expressions, some of you are still unconvinced.
If it pleases you to sneer at me for being a liar, then proceed at your pleasure.
But please, make this important distinction - I am a benevolent *generous* liar.
And because of that, you may still find yourself seeking my companionship.

[Buddy hides his briefcase in the bushes.]

Well, I must go to work now. Should we happen to meet back here sometime in the afternoon hours, and good fortune has rewarded me, let's share a bottle of wine, a Chianti perhaps, and recount pleasant memories. Take it easy now, and God bless.

[The sound of a car stopping is heard.]

FIRST DRIVER

(offstage, throwing out a bill)

I don't have any work for you, but maybe this will help. Here, pal.

BUDDY

Yes, that is most helpful. Thank you, sir, and have a fine day.

[The car is heard driving off. Another car stops after a short while]

SECOND DRIVER

(offstage, handing out change)

You poor man. All I have is change. I hope you don't mind.

BUDDY

The thought is what counts. Thank you, madam, and have a blessed day.

[The car is heard driving off. Another car stops after a short while.]

THIRD DRIVER

(offstage)

Here.

BUDDY

(Reaching out off stage)

Thank you sir, for sharing the remainder of your apple with me.

[The car is heard driving off. Buddy looks at a half-eaten apple, then rolls it away]
Only his mother knows where his mouth has been.

[Another car stops after a short while]

FOURTH DRIVER(offstage)

Hey you! Come here!

[BUDDY WALKS to EXIT]

BUDDY

Yes, sir.

FOURTH DRIVER(Like he is talking to the retarded)

Do you know how to ... wash dishes? You know ... soapy soapy?

BUDDY

Soapy soapy?

FOURTH DRIVER

Clean plates ... plates you eat from and pots ... pots you cook in.

BUDDY

Yes, plates and pots.

FOURTH DRIVER

I'll give you a good meal ... some YUM YUM ... for soapy soapy ... Good, huh?
Lot's of good yum yum ... okay?

BUDDY

Yum yum? Sir, do you think me retarded?

FOURTH DRIVER

Hey look, pal. Your sign says you will work for food. I got food.
Do you want to work for it or not?

[**BRIGETTE, 22, ENTERS.** She is wearing tight cut-off jeans and a long-sleeve shirt. She is carrying a cardboard sign that says, "Will Work For Food, Too".]

BUDDY

Yes, I will work ... but only under certain conditions.

FOURTH DRIVER

What?!

BUDDY

Look, I appreciate your offer ... but no, I decline.
Perhaps you'd prefer, instead, to leave a token of your generosity?

FOURTH DRIVER

Oh yeah, I'll leave you something, freeloader.
Four words - eat rat shit and die!

BUDDY

I'll have you know rat shit counts for two words.

FOURTH DRIVER

It's hyphenated, you asshole!

[**The car peels rubber as it leaves.**]

BUDDY

You are judged by your vocabulary, sir, and yours is most degrading to you!

[Buddy goes back to the bushes and sips some of this coffee. When he does this, Brigitte moves over to his spot. When Buddy returns, he sees Brigitte standing at his spot and flinches]

BUDDY

May I help you?

BRIGETTE

No.

BUDDY

You are aware, are you not, that you are standing at my place of business?

BRIGETTE

You turned down your meal ticket, so I'm up next.

BUDDY

Up next? Oh no, This will never do.

BRIGETTE

Hey, give me back the sign!

BUDDY

The fact that it is your sign is not in dispute.
What is in dispute is that this is MY place of commerce.
I have clients who regularly come by here.

BRIGETTE

What the hell are you talking about? Are you saying you own this space?

BUDDY

Yes. And I will return your sign when you agree to leave it.

BRIGETTE

This is a free country. I don't have to agree to anything. Give me back my sign!

BUDDY

Stop!

BRIGETTE

Then give it back!

BUDDY

STOP, I SAID!

BRIGETTE

THEN GIVE IT BACK!

BUDDY

Oh, for the love of mercy ... would you look at that.

BRIGETTE

What?

BUDDY

The driver of that blue Eldorado is my best customer.
Every time I see him, he floats ten dollars my way. Ten dollars.
Now, you have given him the impression that I battle with young women.
Do you see the damage you've done!?

Why do you flinch when I come near you?
I don't intend you any harm. I'm a gentle and thoughtful man.
Here, take your sign back.

BRIGETTE

Just keep your distance and we'll get along.

BUDDY

Tell me, is there not some way we could work this out fairly?
Do you have to stand at my little spot? Why don't you develop one of your own?

BRIGETTE

I'm not looking to cut into your take.

BUDDY

No?

BRIGETTE

I want a job. I want to work.
But nobody gives you a chance ... You make some mistakes, and that's it ...

BUDDY

Mistakes?

BRIGETTE

Never you mind about it.

BUDDY

Of course.

BRIGETTE

I saw you standing here yesterday, and I thought. "That's a pretty good idea."
But it isn't. It's dumb. Forget the sign. I'm outa here.

[BRIGETTE THROWS HER SIGN DOWN & EXITS, CRYING]

BUDDY

YOUNG LADY! YOUNG LADY! Yes, you. Would you please come back here.

[BRIGETTE ENTERS]

BRIGETTE

What?

BUDDY

There is another alternative. Here, take your sign back. **STOP!**

BRIGETTE

What?

BUDDY

Don't wipe your tears off!

BRIGETTE

My face is a mess!

BUDDY

Yes, and it's Providence knocking on your door.

BRIGETTE

Who's Providence, and what door is she knocking on?

BUDDY

What I mean is, leave your tears alone, and place yourself, along with this sign, by the southbound on-ramp on the other side. Do you see where I am pointing?

BRIGETTE

Yes ... But I don't want to beg. I really want a job.

BUDDY

I am constantly offered diverse forms of employment.
Most are short term, but occasionally one of a more permanent nature arises.

BRIGETTE

I know you're speaking English, but I don't understand you.
Did you used to be a lawyer?

BUDDY

Okay. Listen carefully.
When you use your sign, you will mostly be offered contributions.
Occasionally, you will be offered jobs. Most will be for only a few hours.
You will earn more by taking contributions, like me, but that is your choice.
There will be, however, occasional offers of a steady job.

BRIGETTE

Really?

BUDDY

Yes. Really.

BRIGETTE

Okay, now! Is there anything special I should I do?

BUDDY

Yes. First, and most important, stand on the driver's side of the roadway.
Then posture yourself like so ... and then change your demeanor.
Now you try it.
Posture ... bend ever so slightly lower.
Now demeanor ... a little more pathetic ... yes, better.

No go and meet your destiny.

BRIGETTE

Hey, thanks.

BUDDY

What are you doing?

BRIGETTE

I'm trying to shake your hand.

BUDDY

Oh ... very well.

[They touch and there is a change in Buddy]

BRIGETTE

Well, see ya!

BUDDY

Yes.

[BRIGETTE walks to other side of stage, the Southbound on-ramp]

BUDDY

What an odd sensation ... Should I? ... No ... Perhaps? No ... Oh, whatever!
YOUNG LADY!

BRIGETTE

Yeah?

BUDDY

If you're still around here in the late afternoon, and ...

BRIGETTE

What?

BUDDY

I said, if you're still around here ...

BRIGETTE

I can't hear you! Wait a minute ...

[BRIGETTE walks across the stage back to Buddy]

BRIGETTE

Now what did you say?

BUDDY

I am inviting you to a dinner ... should you still be here in the afternoon.

BRIGETTE

Oh ... and what else?

BUDDY

Well, perhaps a bottle of wine.

BRIGETTE

And what else?

BUDDY

Well, some pleasant conversation.

BRIGETTE

And what else?

BUDDY

Excuse me?

BRIGETTE

What happens after you feed me, get me drunk, and romance me?

BUDDY

Romance? I believe I used the words 'pleasant conversation'.
Young lady, there was no innuendo in my proposal.

BRIGETTE

Why do you keep calling me young lady?

BUDDY

Because you are obviously young, and you are a ...

BRIGETTE

I'm 22. What makes you think you're so mature? What are you, 30, 31?

BUDDY

I'm 41.

BRIGETTE

Wow, I didn't think you were that old!
The last old guy who offered me dinner, wanted me to tie him up naked,
and then tickle his balls with an ostrich feather.

BUDDY

Excuse me?!

BRIGETTE

How disgusting!

Do you really think an ostrich feather would tickle?

BUDDY

Excuse me, young lady. I'm sure you've had a myriad of interesting experiences ...

BRIGETTE

My name is Brigitte.

BUDDY

Yes, it would be something like that, wouldn't it?

BRIGETTE

Hey, it's my real name, not my street name.

BUDDY

Of course.

BRIGETTE

Well, what's your name?

BUDDY

Buddy.

BRIGETTE

Buddy what?

BUDDY

Buddy will suffice.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, okay. Right.

BUDDY

Look, it was obviously a mistake to invite you to dinner.

You mistook my intentions, not knowing I am celibate.

We clearly have very little in common, so why

BRIGETTE

You're famous?

BUDDY

Famous? Who said anything about being famous?

BRIGETTE

You said you were a celebrity.

BUDDY

I said I was celibate.

BRIGETTE

What's that?.

BUDDY

One who chooses to not partake of copulation.

BRIGETTE

Copu- what?

BUDDY

Sexual intercourse.

BRIGETTE

YOU'RE A VIRGIN!?

BUDDY

I believe I used the term celibate - the element of choice is implicit in the definition.

BRIGETTE

Imagine that?! 41 and never been with a woman! (Giggles) Well, I wouldn't want to be around when it happens. I'll bet the shock will kill you.

BUDDY

Yes, of course. Don't you have an appointment at the offramp over there?

BRIGETTE

Okay, I can take a hint.

Imagine that?! 41 and still a virgin!

[BRIGETTE EXITS]

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

[It is 6 PM at the on-ramp to I-75. **BUDDY** is by the bushes. He removes coveralls.]

BUDDY (to audience)

One must take care not to soil one's costume.

You know, these are excellent workpants - \$1.75 at the Goodwill store.

And now, the summing up of the day's labor.

5 .. 10 ..15. God bless the five dollar people. Big hearted.

(Removes the anisette from the briefcase and drinks)

A long life to five dollar people. I drink to your good health.

(To audience) Want a taste? Go on, help yourself. No?

Shall we continue the accounting?

...16.. 17 ..18 ... Don't make me lose count now.... 29... 30...

As you can see, most givers are of the one dollar variety.

Observe. One dollar. Neat, clean. You need help, here is a dollar.

One dollar people, I toast to you. You are the bedrock of this fine country.

And then 25 ..50..75 ... one. 25 ...50..75.. two. 25 ... 50...

What is this?

A slug?

Is there no *respect*?

All in all, a prosperous day, don't you think? 32 dollars and 50 cents.

And one slug.

Here. Go ahead, tip one back and let loose ... No?

Is this some sort of AA convention?.

[BRIGETTE ENTERS carrying a brown paper bag]

BRIGETTE

You got some racket here, Buddy !

Look at this pile! I made over a hundred dollars!

BUDDY

Indeed!

BRIGETTE

I cried so much my eyelids got stuck together.

BUDDY

You will, of course, keep our good fortune a secret.
We do not need others siphoning away this harvest.

BRIGETTE

How did you do?

BUDDY

Not as well as you, but more than sufficient for my needs.
Well, have a pleasant evening.

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes?

BRIGETTE

Where are you going?
I thought we were supposed to get together at the end of the day.

BUDDY

I remember extending an invitation.
However, there was a miscommunication as to my intent.

BRIGETTE

I bought a bottle of Jose Cuervo.

BUDDY

Put that bottle away!

BRIGETTE

Okay!

BUDDY

That's all we need is for customers to see us with a bottle.
The sign does not say, "Will Work for Tequila."

BRIGETTE

Oh ... yeah ... I'm sorry ... I guess I wasn't thinking.

BUDDY

Now, please, don't become sensitive.

It was a most gracious offer, one that I would enjoy partaking of.

Come, follow me. I know a place where we can sit.

[They walk slowly to a table and chairs on another part of the stage]

BRIGETTE

Buddy ?

BUDDY

Yes, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

I want to ... well ... Look, you don't know me, I mean ... at least I think I mean ...

Oh damn! Why is this so hard to say?

BUDDY

Perhaps it is better left unsaid.

It is my experience that words are not necessary all of the time.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, talk is cheap.

BUDDY

To some people. To others, words are the currency of immortals.

BRIGETTE

Boy, you sure are one of a kind.

BUDDY

And I thank you for the compliment. I'm sure you are one of a kind, too.

[They arrive at the picnic table]

Now, have a seat Fair Brigitte .

BRIGETTE

Who's back yard is this?

BUDDY

Mine.

BRIGETTE

You own the house, too?

BUDDY

Own? Well, it would be accurate to state, I am in possession of it.
Possession is nine tenths of the law, therefore I own 90% of it.

BRIGETTE

Buddy, cut the crap! I don't need to get arrested right now.
So you own it, right?

BUDDY

Sit down, Fair Brigitte, and tell me more about how your day went.

BRIGETTE

Buddy!

BUDDY

Were you offered labor, or simply contributions?

BRIGETTE

BUDDY!

[BUDDY EXITS. Brigitte does not sit down.]

BUDDY, I WANT AN ANSWER! I WON'T SIT DOWN UNTIL I GET ONE!

BUDDY(offstage)

Stubbornness is not a flattering character trait.

BRIGETTE

BUDDY!

BUDDY(offstage)

BRIGETTE! Please, keep a civil tone.
This property, and my possession of it, is my own affair.

BRIGETTE

BUDDY, God damn it, get out of the tree and talk to me!

[BUDDY ENTERS with 2 limes]

BUDDY

Look at these! Have ever seen limes of this proportion?

BRIGETTE

Look, if you won't tell me the truth, I'm going.
I can't get into trouble right now, Buddy. I can't.

BUDDY

Brigette, you worry needlessly. There will be no trouble.

BRIGETTE

Are you sure?

BUDDY

Yes. Now, let's sit down and open your bottle and converse.
I have not had feminine company in a while, and I find the prospect invigorating.

BRIGETTE

What does that mean? Does it have something to do with a vibrator?

BUDDY

A vibrator? No. It means refreshing.

BRIGETTE

Well, a vibrator can be refreshing.

BUDDY

Brigette, please ...

Let me see, I have a pocket knife somewhere ... yes here it is.
Let me cut these limes into wedges.

BRIGETTE

Well, refreshing or not, if you try anything funny, I will ... I will ... I will take that knife of yours, and ...

BUDDY

Yes? Please continue. You were going to threaten me, were you not.

BRIGETTE(smiling)

I was going to say, 'cut off your balls'.

BUDDY

And you find my castration amusing?

BRIGETTE

I realized you don't have any more use for them than I do, you being a celebrity.

BUDDY

The correct word is ... oh, was that an attempt at humor?

Shall I understand that to mean we have resolved my ownership question?

BRIGETTE

(sitting down finally)

It means I'll cut the limes, you open the Tequila.

BUDDY

Yes, a fine division of labor.

BRIGETTE

Here.

BUDDY

(Smacking his lips)

Oh yes. An excellent blend of flavors.

BRIGETTE

If you do that one more time, I'll scream.

BUDDY

Excuse me?

BRIGETTE

You were smacking your lips.

BUDDY

It was difficult not to. The lime is quite tart, is it not?

BRIGETTE

Then don't suck on it!

BUDDY

My dear Brigitte, you are perilously close to ruining this celebration. Why?

BRIGETTE

Someone I hate smacks his lips that way.

BUDDY

Therefore?

BRIGETTE

Therefore I don't like to hear it! Look, could we drop it!

BUDDY

Certainly.

BRIGETTE

And could you pass me the God damn bottle!

BUDDY

Certainly.

BRIGETTE

You have your secrets, I have mine.

BUDDY

Of course.

BRIGETTE

Why are you staring at me?

BUDDY

I'm waiting for you to pass the bottle back to me.

BRIGETTE

Oh ... here.

BUDDY

Was that a tolerable Tequila consumption noise?

BRIGETTE

I don't know what you said, but at least you didn't smack your lips.

BUDDY

I do try to be sociable.

BRIGETTE

What? Why are you staring at me again? You have the bottle!
Look, I'm sorry. I really am. I'm not normally like this.

BUDDY

You're generally more congenial company, I presume.

BRIGETTE

Can't you talk less weird? I only understand about half of the words you use.
What does congenial mean?

BUDDY

Well ... friendly.

BRIGETTE

Why can't you say friendly then? Why do you have to say congenial?

BUDDY

I like the sound of certain words, and the subtext those sounds add to the meanings.
There is a delicate flavor added by nuances in -

BRIGETTE

STOP! You're doing it again.

BUDDY

Yes, of course. I was doing it again.

BRIGETTE

Can't you make me understand you by using simple words?

BUDDY

Is there a particular letter count that you do not want me to exceed? This is
conversation, not texting.

BRIGETTE

Hey, I'm not stupid!

BUDDY

I did not mean to insinuate that you were.
Brigette, I noticed you have a fresh bag of pretzels in your satchel.
Were you going to share them also?

BRIGETTE

Yes. I forgot ... Here.

BUDDY

Before I begin, is there any particular way of eating a pretzel that offends you?

BRIGETTE

No.

BUDDY

Fine. Then I shall commence.

BRIGETTE

I'm sorry for getting on your case about smacking your lips. I'm edgy lately.

BUDDY

I see.

BRIGETTE

It's not like PMS or anything.

I'd hate to go through what I'm going through, with PMS on top of it.

You really don't know who I am, do you? I'm not what you see right now.

BUDDY

Oh, and what are you, then?

BRIGETTE

You don't want to know.

BUDDY

Do you turn vampire at darkness? Shall I braid garlic cloves around my neck?

BRIGETTE

This is not funny! I'm being serious now!

BUDDY

Of course. My apologies for the inappropriate attempt at humor. Please, continue.

BRIGETTE

No. I don't want to talk about it.

BUDDY

If that is what you wish.

BRIGETTE

I don't have to tell you. I can have my secrets.

BUDDY

If you prefer.

BRIGETTE

You can't force me to tell you anything!

BUDDY

Nor would I try.

BRIGETTE

We can just sit here and be two people sharing Tequila and pretzels.

BUDDY

Nothing more than that is necessary.

BRIGETTE

I'm a bitch, aren't I?

BUDDY

No. You merely need coaching in the art of companionship.
You have the most desirable ingredient.

BRIGETTE

(patting her behind)

Yeah, I'm sitting on it.

BUDDY

No, I was referring to generosity.

BRIGETTE

Me, generous?! Boy, do you have the wrong girl? No way.

BUDDY

The evidence at this table proves otherwise.

BRIGETTE

Hey, it was free money. It wasn't like I worked for it.
Oh, I shouldn't have said that. Sorry.

BUDDY

You're sorry for what?

BRIGETTE

You know - for insulting you.

BUDDY

How did you insult me?

BRIGETTE

Well ... you know.

BUDDY

No, I don't.

BRIGETTE

Never mind. Pass the bottle.

BUDDY

Here. Is it that you think me a 'bum'?

BRIGETTE

I said I was sorry.

BUDDY

Young lady, I'm anything but a bum.
How is it the smallest words provoke the most irritating responses?
I provide a valuable service for the money I am given.

BRIGETTE

You provide a service? If you wiped their windshields, that would be a service.

BUDDY

Oh, so to your facile mind, and theirs, I am a bum.
The fault is in your thinking, not with me.
Facile means simplistic.

BRIGETTE

Oh, now I'm the simpleton! You beg for handouts and I'm *facile*?

BUDDY

The truth is I give people a sense of satisfaction with their lives.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, right. Here, have a drink.

BUDDY

There is not a person who passes me on their way to the treadmill they call 'work' who doesn't think, "Thank God that isn't me!"

BRIGETTE

And you call that a service?

BUDDY

Something is given by one human being to another, and money is exchanged.

BRIGETTE

That's bullshit! And you're proud of that?!

BUDDY

Proud? I don't think about it in terms of pride.

I think there isn't a person who passes by me, that I would trade places with.

You will begin to think that way, too.

BRIGETTE

ME? No way! This is only temporary. I need a real job.

BUDDY

Oh, I see. A real job. Like moving sheets of paper from one place to another?

Or answering telephones?

Perhaps, selling perfume at a shopping mall is a real service to mankind?.

BRIGETTE

Yeah. Those are real jobs.

BUDDY

Brigette, my dear , you should go easy on that Tequila.

BRIGETTE

Buddy, my dear, mind your own damn business.

BUDDY

Of course .. excuse me for minute.

[BUDDY EXITS]

BRIGETTE

Oh, wittle baby got his feelings hurt ...

[BUDDY ENTERS holding a hoe]

BUDDY

No, fair Brigitte, you didn't hurt my feelings.

I wanted to get up and move about.

My garden needed weeding, so I took the opportunity to exercise.

BRIGETTE

Garden? You don't seem the garden type.

BUDDY

On that point, I would agree with you.

I find myself amazed at my affection for these fruit trees, and this small patch of soil.

I am astonished I have remained here so long.

BRIGETTE

How long have you lived here?

BUDDY

Longer than any other place.

BRIGETTE

None of my business?

BUDDY

Exactly.

BRIGETTE

Are those watermelons?

BUDDY

Yes. They should ripen soon.

BRIGETTE

I love watermelon!

BUDDY

Yes, it is a most prodigious fruit.

BRIGETTE

Does prodigious mean it has a lot of pits?

BUDDY

No ... it means ... well ... big.

BRIGETTE

Then can't you say big, damn it!

BUDDY

Of course. Watermelon is a big fruit. How does that sound?

BRIGETTE

It sounds better ... why are you laughing at me? You better stop laughing at me!

BUDDY

Brigette, I was not laughing at you.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, well I don't see anyone else here.

BUDDY

That's precisely it. You don't see anyone besides yourself.
For your edification, I was laughing at myself. I was amused at my nature.
I love the earth and the life upon it, yet I have never felt the need to produce more.
Now I find myself looking forward to passing this meager patch each morning.
I find myself tending to the needs of this new life, pleased to be assisting it.

BRIGETTE

God, you're weird!

BUDDY

I would prefer that you use the term eccentric.

BRIGETTE

I'm too drunk to use your stupid words.

BUDDY

Yes, I've noticed.

BRIGETTE

I like the way I feel now. It's painless.

BUDDY

It is your right.

BRIGETTE

Damn right it is! Well, go on. Keep talking.

BUDDY

I didn't think you were interested.

BRIGETTE

I was interested. I just wasn't understanding.

BUDDY

Perhaps we will begin to understand each other as time goes by.
It is possible.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, and then as soon as I trust you, you'll try something funny.

BUDDY

Funny?

BRIGETTE

Sooner or later, you all start to squeeze things.

BUDDY

What things?

BRIGETTE
(sticking out her chest)

These things ... for instance.

BUDDY
No, it would be safer to squeeze the limes you're cutting.

BRIGETTE
Look, you just keep your distance, and we'll get along fine.

BUDDY
Brigette, I'm curious.
Do you still want to get a permanent job after what you learned today?
Do you think you'll make a hundred dollars a day doing other things?

BRIGETTE
Yes. I need something I can point to that says I'm a responsible person.

BUDDY
I see. A responsible person.

BRIGETTE
Could we change the subject?

BUDDY
Certainly.

BRIGETTE
What are you doing now?

BUDDY
Putting aside my hoe.

BRIGETTE
Are we done talking?

BUDDY
For now.

BRIGETTE
Where are you going?

BUDDY

Inside the house.

BRIGETTE

What about me?

BUDDY

You may remain here a while longer, and then leave at your behest.

BRIGETTE

Behest? Jesus, nobody says behest. What does it mean?

BUDDY

It means you may leave whenever you feel like it.

BRIGETTE

So you're going to leave me outside here, alone?

BUDDY

Yes, if that is what you'd like.

BRIGETTE

You're not going to invite me inside for a cup of coffee or something?

BUDDY

I don't have coffee, nor a stove to heat it with.

BRIGETTE

What about the 'or something'?

BUDDY

No, I cannot offer that either.

BRIGETTE

God, you are different.

Will I see you out there tomorrow?

BUDDY

No. I have enough funds for a while.

I would ask that you continue to use your side of the interstate. The southbound side.

I wouldn't want my clients to think I relinquished my territory.

BRIGETTE

Okay, sure.

BUDDY

Well, until we meet again.

BRIGETTE

Thanks for listening to me, Buddy.

BUDDY

It was my pleasure.

BRIGETTE

I want us to be friends. Can we be friends?

BUDDY

We already are, aren't we?

ACT ONE

SCENE THREE

[It is 2 AM inside Buddy's house. He is sitting in an old chair. There is an old table with tape holding it together next to him with a Coleman lantern on it, and he is reading a book by the light. A few feet away is sofa-bed. The windows are covered with sheets. The feeling is Spartan, not dirty.]

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.]

(Buddy stands, turns off the lantern, walks to door and waits in the dark.)

[THE KNOCKING BECOMES LOUDER AND MORE INSISTENT.]

BUDDY(Whispers)

Who is it?

BRIGETTE(Crying)

Brigette .

BUDDY

(Opens the door quickly and pulls her inside)

Have you taken leave of your senses?!

BRIGETTE(Sobbing hysterically)

I'm ... sorry ... I ... had ... nowhere ... else ... to go ...

Please ... don't ... be ... angry ...

BUDDY

Why do you come banging on my door at this hour!?

BRIGETTE(more hysterical)

I'm ... sorry ...

BUDDY

Come away from the door! I said, come away from the door!

BRIGETTE

Don't ... pull ... on ... me !

BUDDY

Stand here while I relight the lantern.

Did I not ask you to remain standing where you were?!

BRIGETTE

Sor ... ry ...

BUDDY

There. Now we can see ... Good God, what happened to your face?

BRIGETTE

Don't ... look ... at ... me .. that ... way ...

BUDDY(tender now)

Of course. Forgive me for staring.
Does it hurt? Yes, of course it hurts.

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

Would ... you ... hold ... me?

BUDDY

Hold you?

BRIGETTE

Please ...

BUDDY

Well ... I'm not sure ... I mean ...

BRIGETTE

Please?

BUDDY

Very well. How would you have me do it?

BRIGETTE

Open ... your ... arms ...

(She wraps herself around him desperately)

Now ... close ... your ... arms ..

BUDDY

Yes, this is holding you, all right.

BRIGETTE

Thank ... you ... for ... being ... here ...

BUDDY

Yes ...

BRIGETTE

Thank ... you ...

BUDDY

Yes ... Brigitte ?

BRIGETTE

Yes?

BUDDY

Have you been held long enough?

BRIGETTE

No!

BUDDY

I see. You will inform me when you are sufficiently held, won't you?

BRIGETTE

Yes, Buddy.

BUDDY

Do you think it will be soon?

BRIGETTE

Yes, Buddy.

BUDDY

We really must examine you.

BRIGETTE

No! Not yet!

BUDDY

When you are ready, of course.

BRIGETTE

Please ... don't ... rush .. me ...

BUDDY

No, we won't rush you.

Perhaps we could move closer to the light?

BRIGETTE

Don't look at me.

BUDDY

Only a glance.

BRIGETTE

No questions.

BUDDY

No questions.

Tsk tsk, look at your eye. It will be closed my morning.

BRIGETTE

Don't let go of me!

BUDDY

Yes, of course. How thoughtless of me to let go.

Do you hurt anywhere else?

BRIGETTE

My arm.

BUDDY

Let's try moving it, shall we?

BRIGETTE

It hurts ... when I ... move it ..

BUDDY

It feels okay ... perhaps a little swollen there.

BRIGETTE

Ow!

BUDDY

Sorry. It's hard to properly examine you this way.
Perhaps if we let go of each other for a little while ...

BRIGETTE

No!

BUDDY

For just a little while, say, thirty seconds.
Then if you still need it, I will resume holding you.
Let's try it, shall we? Good ...

BRIGETTE

One one thousand, two one thousand ...

BUDDY

Yes, I imagine you can keep count.

BRIGETTE

Five one thousand ... six ...

BUDDY

Let's see the other arm

BRIGETTE

Nine one thousand ... Ten, one thousand ...

BUDDY

Looks okay, there. How are your legs?

BRIGETTE

Eighteen one thousand ... They're okay ... Nineteen one thousand ...

BUDDY

Have we surveyed all the damage? Anyplace else it hurts?

BRIGETTE

In the back ...

BUDDY

I see ... turn around, and let's ...

BRIGETTE

No! ... you can't see it. It's inside.

BUDDY

Oh ...

BRIGETTE

Don't look at me that way.

BUDDY

It was a look of concern, Brigitte, not judgment. Are you hurt anyplace else?

BRIGETTE

My breast.

BUDDY

Oh.

BRIGETTE

I ... I think it's bleeding.

BUDDY

Perhaps you should finish examining yourself in the bathroom.

BRIGETTE

It's more than 30 seconds, Buddy.

BUDDY

When you come out of the bathroom, Uncle Buddy will hold you again.

BRIGETTE(laughs)

What did you say?

BUDDY

I said, when you finish in the bathroom, I will hold you.

BRIGETTE

No, you said Uncle Buddy will hold me - Uncle Buddy - I heard you.

BUDDY

It's not that funny!

BRIGETTE

Uncle Buddy?! Yes it is. Uncle.

I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I'm trying not to laugh, but I keep on laughing.

Uncle Buddy ...

BUDDY

The bathroom is there. There is a candle and matches inside, and a towel on the rack.

[**BRIGETTE EXITS.** She speaks offstage until noted.]

BRIGETTE (offstage)

Well, at least you have water.

BUDDY

Yes, I arranged to bypass the water meter.

BRIGETTE(offstage)

It's cold!

BUDDY

One gets used to it ... Are you all right?

BRIGETTE(offstage)

I'm all right in back. Sore, but still functional.

BUDDY

Good.

BRIGETTE(offstage)

My breast is still bleeding a little, but it'll be all right.

Oh my God!

BUDDY

What?

BRIGETTE(offstage)

Look at my eye!

BUDDY

I wish I could offer you some ice, but as you can see, there is no electricity.

[BRIGETTE ENTERS]

BRIGETTE

Well, time to hold me again, *Uncle Buddy*.

What's wrong? Why are you turning away?

BUDDY

I am not used to the feelings you arouse, and the embarrassment you cause me.

BRIGETTE

I'm sorry. I won't call you Uncle Buddy anymore.

BUDDY

I wish you would stop touching me.

BRIGETTE

But aren't we friends?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

Then why can't I hug my friend anymore?

BUDDY

Why is it necessary to touch so often?

BRIGETTE

I don't know. It feels good, doesn't it?

BUDDY

Not to someone who doesn't need that much tactile reinforcement.

BRIGETTE

Tacky what? Never mind. Whatever it means, I won't touch you anymore. Okay?

BUDDY

Fine.

BRIGETTE

So this is how you live? A chair, a table, and a sofa bed?

BUDDY

Yes. I have Spartan needs.

BRIGETTE

Looks like a lot of stuff you found out on the street ... or the Salvation Army.

BUDDY

Yes, that is exactly what it is. What are you doing?

BRIGETTE

I'm sitting down on the bed.

BUDDY

Why?

BRIGETTE

Because you're sitting on the only chair.

BUDDY

You look like you're about to fall asleep.

BRIGETTE

Well, I am tired.

BUDDY

No, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

No what? I didn't ask you anything.

BUDDY

You were about to ask.

BRIGETTE

Please, Buddy?

BUDDY

I'd rather you did not.

BRIGETTE

Please?

BUDDY

Have you no other place to go? You must have other friends.

BRIGETTE (she stands up and goes to Buddy)

Not anymore. None.

BUDDY

Must you let loose those tears at the slightest difficulty?

BRIGETTE

Please don't make me go back there!

BUDDY

Brigette, you're touching me again ... now you're hugging me again ...

BRIGETTE

Help me, please ... Please, Buddy.

BUDDY

Oh ... very well, you may stay until morning.

BRIGETTE

Thank you! Thank you!

BUDDY

Yes, yes ... Brigitte?

BRIGETTE

Yes?

BUDDY

Please control the touching.

BRIGETTE

Oh ... sure. I'll be no trouble, I promise.

BUDDY

(to himself) You'll be plenty of trouble.

What are you doing?

BRIGETTE

I'm lying down.

BUDDY

Yes, I can see that. On *MY* bed.

BRIGETTE

It's the only bed here, isn't it?

BUDDY

So where shall *I* sleep?

BRIGETTE

There's plenty of room next to me.

BUDDY

Oh no, that will never do.

BRIGETTE

Why not?

BUDDY

You know very well why not.

BRIGETTE

Your virginity is safe with me.

BUDDY

Are you making fun of me?

BRIGETTE

Well, maybe I am teasing you ... just a little.

BUDDY

Well, cease doing it. I am celibate by choice.

BRIGETTE

Sure. I forgot.... Oh, excuse me. I didn't mean to yawn at you.

BUDDY

I am the freest soul on God's green earth!

BRIGETTE

Yes. A free soul.

BUDDY

I am not some stallion in heat, manipulated by soft flesh, a sweet smell, and lust.

BRIGETTE

Yes ... no stallion.

BUDDY

I cannot sleep standing up like a stallion either.

BRIGETTE

So lie down.

BUDDY

This is preposterous ... I shouldn't be doing it ...
Very well ... move over ... move over, please ... Brigitte?

BRIGETTE (she is sleeping)

Mmmm?

BUDDY

You must allow me more room ...
Brigitte? ... Brigitte? Oh, never mind. I'll shift you.

BRIGETTE

Good night, Uncle Buddy. Kiss, kiss.

BUDDY

When she's not crying, she's touching. When she's not touching, she's hugging.
When she's not hugging, she's kiss-kissing. How did this happen?

BRIGETTE

NO! ... STOP! ... NO! NO! ... NO!

BUDDY (whispers)

Brigette!

BRIGETTE

Why was your hand over my mouth? I felt like I was choking!

BUDDY

You were screaming.

BRIGETTE

Oh, I had the worst nightmare! I was running ...

BUDDY

You don't have to tell me.

BRIGETTE

Oh, but I want to. I was running and running, but I wasn't going anywhere.
It was like my legs were stuck to the ground
Then my clothes were torn off. One minute, they were on, and the next, I'm naked.
And then this snake started chasing me.
It had a condom on its head like a cap.

BUDDY

Brigette, please! That's enough.
It's over now, so you can go back to sleep.

BRIGETTE

But it was so real!
Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes?

BRIGETTE

Could you ...

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

How can you say no so fast You don't know what I was going to ...

BUDDY

I'm not going to hold you.

BRIGETTE

Please?

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

Just until I fall asleep again?

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

Please? I'll be asleep in no time. Please!

BUDDY

Very well ... but just for a short while.

BRIGETTE

Thank you. ... You're so warm ... and snuggily.
I feel sleepy already. Good night, Buddy. Kiss kiss.

BUDDY

I'll never sleep in this condition now.

Look at her. Like a kitten. Look at me.
Look at this tent I have suddenly constructed.

(looks up) You're testing me, aren't you?

Well, it will not work. I can will it gone ... see?

[Buddy turns off the lantern]

ACT ONE

SCENE FOUR

[It is 10 AM, the next morning, at the Southbound on-ramp to I-75. **BRIGETTE IS HOLDING HER SIGN.** She is wearing sunglasses that hide her black eye. **A DRIVER HOLDS OUT A BILL.**]

DRIVER(offstage)

Here ... let me help.

BRIGETTE

Thank you.

TWENTY DOLLARS!

Thank you! What a nice way to start off the day!

SECOND DRIVER (offstage)

HEY YOU! SWEETHEART! OVER HERE! WORK ON THIS!

BRIGETTE

Will you look at that?!

YOU HAVE THE UGLIEST ASS I'VE EVER SEEN!

PULL YOUR PANTS BACK UP BEFORE YOU MAKE ME PUKE.

He must have been dropped him on his head when he was a baby. Sweet Jesus!

[THERE IS THE SOUND OF A CAR STOPPING, BRAKES SQUEALING]

THIRD DRIVER(offstage)

Hey you! Come here.

BRIGETTE(at edge of stage)

Yes?

THIRD DRIVER

Can you clean house?

BRIGETTE

I can clean a house so fine it'll sparkle.

THIRD DRIVER

Well, get in!

BRIGETTE(hesitates)

Just clean house, right?

THIRD DRIVER

That's what I said.

BRIGETTE

Well ... okay.

[BRIGETTE EXITS. THE CAR STARTS UP.]

BRIGETTE(offstage)

STOP THE CAR! I SAID STOP THE CAR!

STOP THIS GOD DAMN CAR OR I'LL SCRATCH YOUR EYES OUT!

THIRD DRIVER

Okay. Okay! Take it easy.

[DADDY ENTERS. He is well-dressed, middle-aged, and physically intimidating. He looks in complete control of himself, but his voice has an eerie quality to it.]

[BRIGETTE ENTERS]

BRIGETTE

YOU SAID CLEAN YOUR HOUSE, YOU DIRTY SON OF A BITCH!

I'VE GOT YOUR LICENSE NUMBER.

I'M GOING TO REPORT YOU TO THE POLICE!

YOU'RE A PERVERT! A DISGUSTING PERVERT!

JESUS H. CHRIST! What a morning! What else can happen?

DADDY

Brigette.

BRIGETTE

What do you want?

DADDY

I waited up for you last night.

BRIGETTE

I told you I wasn't coming back.

DADDY

Where were you?

BRIGETTE

Out.

DADDY

Out where, Brigitte?

BRIGETTE

I don't have to account to you.

DADDY

Did you go back to your 'friends' on the street? Well, did you? DID YOU?!

BRIGETTE

No.

DADDY

Then where? You know I can find out, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

I stayed with a new friend.

DADDY

Who was that?

Well, we can finish this discussion at home.

BRIGETTE

No. You keep away from me.

DADDY

Do you think this is the way to put things right?

Begging for food?

BRIGETTE

Someday, someone will stop and give me a job. A real job.

DADDY

Yes, we just saw what 'real jobs' you will be given. Now, come along with me.

BRIGETTE

Keep away from me. I mean it.

DADDY

Brigette, I'm sorry ... I won't be that way again.

BRIGETTE

I'm sorry won't work anymore. Look at what you did to my eye.
There's been too many "I'm sorry's," ... and too many black eyes.

DADDY

What about Vanessa?

BRIGETTE

I'll be back for her.

DADDY

You can't take care of her. You never could.

BRIGETTE

We'll see about that.

DADDY

With your record, you'll never get full custody again. You need me.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, well we'll see about that, too.

DADDY

No judge will ever give a child to a ...

BRIGETTE

DON'T YOU SAY IT! JUST DON'T YOU SAY IT!

DADDY

Lower your voice!

BRIGETTE

Yes, we don't want anyone to hear, do we?

DADDY

Who would believe you?

BRIGETTE

Yeah, we'll see about that, too.

I'm clean now.

Look at my arms. See?

Soon I'll have a job. Someone will give me a chance. That's all I need. A chance.

[BUDDY ENTERS, unnoticed by both of them.]

DADDY

Brigette, you're going to come home with me now and stop this!

I said I was sorry. It will never happen again. Now, let's go!

BRIGETTE

Let go of me! Take your hands off of me, Daddy!

I'll scream. I mean it. I'll scream.

HELP! SOMEBODY HELP ME! HELP! SOMEBODY PLEASE HELP ME!

DADDY

Stop that!

BUDDY

Excuse me.

DADDY

Go away. This is a private family matter.

BRIGETTE

Buddy! Tell, him to let go of me.

BUDDY

Yes, of course. You must let go of her.

[Brigette struggles against Daddy's grip and frees herself. She hides behind Buddy]

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Buddy. (tries to shake hands)

BRIGETTE

Daddy doesn't like touching other men. Only children. Right Daddy?

DADDY

Brigette!

BRIGETTE

Buddy, tell him to leave me alone.

BUDDY

Sir, I realize you are family members, and entitled to privacy-

DADDY

Look, Buddy, or whoever you are. Crawl back to wherever it is you came from.

BRIGETTE

Buddy, don't listen to him. He's going to hurt me when we get home.

DADDY

Brigette, we're leaving now. Let go of him.

BUDDY

Sir, please.

DADDY

Stay out of this, bum.

BUDDY

Please don't call me that. I am no bum.

DADDY

Why are you still coming between my daughter and me?

BUDDY

Brigette, do you wish to accompany your father?

BRIGETTE

No!

BUDDY

Well, there you have it. She desires to remain here, therefore, ...

[DADDY BACKHANDS BUDDY, THEN PUSHES HIM OFFSTAGE]

BRIGETTE

Buddy!

DADDY

Mind your own business and stop interfering, bum!
Now let's go, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

NO! LET GO OF ME!

DADDY

You forced it to be this way.

[BUDDY ENTERS AGAIN]

BUDDY

Sir, you have no right to do this.

DADDY

You again.

BUDDY

Yes. I must insist that you ...

[BUDDY GETS PUNCHED HARD IN THE STOMACH AND BENDS OVER]

BRIGETTE

Buddy!

DADDY

That is your second, and last, warning not to interfere.

BUDDY(dazed and still bent over, gasping for breath)
Yes, and a wiser man would have heeded the first, given your strength.

BRIGETTE

Buddy, please help me. Please.

DADDY

Brigitte, you're making me angry now.

BRIGETTE

Daddy, don't take off your belt.

DADDY

You have brought this on yourself.

BRIGETTE

No. No! NO!

[DADDY DRAGS BRIGETTE TO THE BUSHES AND BEGINS BEATING HER WITH HIS BELT. BRIGETTE IS OBSCURED BY THE BUSHES THE AUDIENCE ONLY SEES DADDY RAISING & LOWERING HIS BELT]

BRIGETTE (offstage)

Please stop hitting me ... please ... stop ...

[Buddy, shakes his head, then stands up on rubbery legs. He searches for a makeshift weapon, and **comes upon a large stick** lying on the ground. He walks up behind Daddy, who is beating Brigitte, and **whacks him on the head. DADDY FALLS DOWN UNCONSCIOUS.** Brigitte is curled up into a fetal position, her arms protecting her against the belt. **BUDDY & BRIGETTE ARE OFFSTAGE]**

BUDDY

Now, sir, you left ME no choice.

Brigitte, you must get up. BRIGETTE?

BRIGETTE

Daddy, don't hit me anymore. Daddy. Please

BUDDY

Brigitte, it's Buddy.

Here, take my hand. You must stand up.

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes, it's Buddy. Give me your hand.

BRIGETTE

Where's Daddy? Did you kill him? I hope you killed him!

BUDDY

No, he's not dead.

DADDY

Mmmmmmmmm...

[BUDDY AND BRIGETTE ENTER]

BRIGETTE

Ow! My ankle! I can't stand on it.

BUDDY

Put your arm around my shoulder. Brigitte, please!

DADDY

MMMMmmmmmm..

BRIGETTE

I'm trying! It hurts!

BUDDY

Brigitte, hold onto me, tight. Brigitte, stop dragging your leg!

BRIGETTE

I'm trying!

[BUDDY CARRIES BRIGETTE A SAFE DISTANCE FROM DADDY]

BUDDY

Brigitte, I must set you down for a moment. Your father hit me quite hard.

BRIGETTE

He's an animal! I hate him! I wish you killed him!

BUDDY

Brigitte, you must stop that kind of talk.

(To himself) This is insane. I shouldn't get involved in this.

[Brigitte does not stand up again until the end of this scene]

Okay, Brigitte, let's get you up again. You need medical attention. There's a hospital--

BRIGETTE

I don't want a hospital. That's how he found me last time. No hospital! No!

BUDDY

Okay ... then there is a women's shelter down by the old airport.

BRIGETTE

No! No shelter! No doctors! I want to stay with you!

BUDDY

Brigette, you can't stay with me, anymore.

BRIGETTE

Why not?

BUDDY

Because, I can not get involved in this. This is not how I live my life.

BRIGETTE

I won't be any bother. I'll give you all the money I collect.

BUDDY

No. You must learn to protect yourself.

BRIGETTE

Protect myself? You saw how strong he is. He'll beat me raw again with his belt.
He'll bite me until I bleed.
He'll stick things inside me until I scream.

BUDDY

I will not listen to you! I will not hear you!

BRIGETTE

Then he'll start on Vanessa. She's four years old.
He started on me when I was five.
First, he'll bring her into his bed to sleep with her.
Then the games will start. Innocent little games - at first.
I know you hear me, Buddy.
You can put your hands over your ears, but I know you hear me.

BUDDY

Call the Police, for God's sake!

BRIGETTE

The Police!? You really don't know who I am, do you?
Do you read the papers?
I'm the junkie who sold her child - for a dime bag.

BUDDY

Sold your child ... No, you couldn't do that.

BRIGETTE

Yes I could!

I sold everything else and I needed it so bad.

I felt like I was dying.

I needed it! You can't know how it is.

BUDDY

What cesspool have you pulled me into here?

BRIGETTE

Yeah, you're right. My life is shit. I come from a cesspool.

But my daughter's life will not be like mine.

Whatever it takes, whatever it means, I'm getting her from him.

Buddy, please. I'm begging you. Please. Help me!

BUDDY

No. I never bargained for this.

BRIGETTE

I'm begging. Please. Please!

Please let me stay with you until I get my life right.

DADDY

MMMMmmm.... Brigitte? Brigitte, where are you?

BRIGETTE

Buddy, please?

Buddy, where are you going? Buddy?!

[**BUDDY EXITS.** The stage lights go down. **BUDDY ENTERS** and sits on the stage, talking to the audience.]

BUDDY

You think I'm a coward, don't you?

I'm a selfish monster in all your eyes, am I not?

I can feel this loathing directed at me as a physical, palpable wave.

Well, you're wrong! You're all wrong! I left her there, and felt absolved.

BUDDY cont'd

Blameless. Guiltless.

It was not my problem. I did not cause it. It was not my responsibility to help.

Do you see me now as I truly am?

Do you understand that I left her there because I am free?

I am not restricted by outdated chivalry.

I am not bound by confused moral structures.

Do I need to sacrifice for another to prove *my* worth as a human being? I do not!

And I am not chastised by your guilt producing stares!

I AM FREE !

I live each day as if it were a treasure.

I enjoy my life as I see fit.

Nobody controls me, nobody owns me.

Nobody usurps my life except God Almighty, and He cannot be bothered with the trivialities of my existence.

BRIGETTE(from the shadows)

Buddy?!

DADDY (from the shadows)

Brigette?

BUDDY

So I left her there. That is correct. I left her there.

That pathetic tortured soul - to be destroyed by her father.

[**BUDDY EXITS** from the audience]

[The lights come up. **BUDDY ENTERS** on stage. He picks Brigitte up.]

BUDDY

But, then I returned. My return astounded me as much as my leaving astounded you.

[**BUDDY and BRIGETTE EXIT**]

INTERMISSION

Will Work 4 Food

by Zalman Velvel

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

[It is an hour later in Buddy's house. **BRIGETTE IS LYING ON THE SOFA-BED**, in her underwear, with a large towel covering her. Buddy is treating the cuts and bruises on the parts of her arms and legs showing outside the towel.]

BRIGETTE

OW!

BUDDY

Sorry.

BRIGETTE

That hurts, Buddy!

BUDDY

All I have is alcohol, and alcohol burns. It can't be helped.
How is your ankle?

BRIGETTE

It's throbbing.

BUDDY

Let me have another look at it.
Does this hurt?

BRIGETTE

Ow!

BUDDY

Sorry.
I don't feel any breaks. I think you've sprained it, that's all.
You may have injured some ligaments.
You should have it X-rayed, just in case.

BRIGETTE

No! No hospitals and no doctors.

BUDDY

As you wish. Brace yourself, I'm using the alcohol again..

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes?

BRIGETTE

Can we talk while you do that?

BUDDY

Of course.

BRIGETTE

Do you think God will ever forgive me for what I did? Daddy says no.

BUDDY

Are you Christian?

BRIGETTE

Yes.

BUDDY

Then you believe in a merciful and forgiving God.

BRIGETTE

Do you want to hear about what happened?

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

Why not?

BUDDY

Haven't we had enough serious matters for one day?

BRIGETTE

Yeah, I guess so.

BUDDY

Let's concentrate on your healing, shall we?

BRIGETTE

Sure ... Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes?

BRIGETTE

Can I ask you one serious question before we stop getting serious?

BUDDY

Brigette.

BRIGETTE

Please?

BUDDY

Where did you learn to say please that way?

BRIGETTE

Please?

BUDDY

How do you achieve that irresistible pleading tone?

BRIGETTE

Please, Buddy?

BUDDY

Proceed at your will, fair Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

Did you leave me back at the Interstate because of what I told you?

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

Then why?

BUDDY

I don't believe you would understand my reply.

BRIGETTE

Yes I would.

BUDDY

Well, suffice it to say, I left ... because I wanted to assert my right to do so.

BRIGETTE

You were right.

BUDDY

You understand?

BRIGETTE

No, you were right when you said I wouldn't understand. I don't.

BUDDY

Brigette, brace yourself. This is going to hurt.

BRIGETTE

Go ahead... Mmmmmmmmm

BUDDY

Okay, done for now.

BRIGETTE

Buddy, can I just ask you one more serious question?

The last one didn't count because I didn't understand your answer. Please?

BUDDY

Proceed.

BRIGETTE

Why did you come back?

BUDDY

Now that is an excellent question. The answer is I don't know.

BRIGETTE

You don't know? I can't believe that. You know everything else.

BUDDY

Well, on that subject, I am confounded ... it means I'm stumped.

BRIGETTE

I wouldn't have left you there if *your* father was beating you.

BUDDY

My father? No. He would never have mistreated me like that.

BRIGETTE

But say he did. Say he was beating you with a whip. Say he was whipping you over and over again, with this big bullwhip. And you were bleeding from big red oozing welts. I mean, blood was dripping off of you. And your skin was coming off like tissue paper. And you were screaming so loud that ...

BUDDY

Enough! I can imagine the circumstances. Get to your point.

BRIGETTE

Well, I would have taken something - like that baseball bat over there - and bashed his head in. I mean, squashed it flat like a bloody pancake.

BUDDY

Yes. I can well imagine.

BRIGETTE

Maybe that's why you came back, huh?

BUDDY

No. Whatever the reason, my helping you had nothing to do with whether you would have helped me or not.

BRIGETTE

Well, then I don't understand.

BUDDY

And neither do I, which brings us back to my original statement.

BRIGETTE

No, I can't accept that. I want to understand. Buddy, make us both understand.

BUDDY

Brigette, we are reaching a critical point here.

BRIGETTE

Then talk to me, Buddy. Please. Talk to me.

BUDDY

I was referring to your towel.

BRIGETTE

What about my towel?

BUDDY

The remainder of your wounds are under it.

BRIGETTE

So take it off.

There. (she is wearing a bra and panties)

You don't have to turn away. You can look at my body. I don't mind.

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

Buddy? Buddy, what's wrong?

BUDDY

Brigette, please cover yourself.

BRIGETTE

Oh ... I understand now.

My body disgusts you.

You like men's bodies better, don't you?

BUDDY

Brigette, your body does not disgust me!

And I am ***not*** homosexual!

BRIGETTE

Then why can't you look at me?
When I was an exotic dancer, men wanted to look at every part of me.
I couldn't bend over far enough.
Some would try to lick me, in the weirdest places.

BUDDY

Brigette!

BRIGETTE

What?

BUDDY

I am still a man! I have a man's feelings.

BRIGETTE

You do?

BUDDY

Yes. I differ in that I control my feelings.

BRIGETTE

You mean you have *those* kind of feelings for me?

BUDDY

Well ... yes. When I let myself.

BRIGETTE

And you can't control them?

BUDDY

NO. I can control my feelings.

BRIGETTE

Buddy it doesn't look like your succeeding. You better fix your pants .

BUDDY

No need. I will soon return to equilibrium.
I am in control..... Yes, I have established control.
Move over a bit, Brigitte, and we will finish with your wounds.

BRIGETTE

How's this, Buddy?

BUDDY

Brigette, you are wasting your energy being coquettish. I am in control now.

BRIGETTE

Just checking your 'equilibrium'. You really can control yourself, can't you?

I could never do that. My feelings are just there.

Pow! I have them. Bam! They're out.

Then I just go with them.

BUDDY

Yes, and that quality makes you extremely vulnerable to manipulation from others.

BRIGETTE

Whatever you say ... you know, you have a gentle touch, Buddy.

BUDDY

I have had a lot of practice dressing wounds.

BRIGETTE

Where?

BUDDY

I was a medic, in the war.

BRIGETTE

Which war?

BUDDY

It doesn't matter. It was just another war where young men were ordered by old men, to kill other young men.

BRIGETTE

Go on. When you talk, it takes my mind off the pain.

I think it's beautiful to hear your voice while your hands heal my body.

Talk to me some more, Buddy.

BUDDY

About what?

BRIGETTE

About something you care about.

BUDDY

Well, I care about a great many things.

BRIGETTE

Tell me about something you love.

BUDDY

Love? Hmmmmm Well, I love freedom. Do you wish me to talk about freedom?

BRIGETTE

No. Talk about something with flesh and blood.

For instance, when you went off to war, did you have a girl?

BUDDY

I had a lady friend, yes.

BRIGETTE

What did she look like?

BUDDY

It was more than 20 years ago, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

Can't you remember what she looked like?

Like what color hair did she have?

BUDDY

I think it was ... hmmm... blonde?

BRIGETTE

Was it platinum, chestnut, or dirty blonde?

BUDDY

I only remember that it was blonde.

BRIGETTE

Was she skinny or fat? Did she have big hips or small hips?

BUDDY

She was average.

BRIGETTE

Was she petite?

Did she have big boobs?

You don't remember that either?!

Well, she was probably better looking than me, huh?

BUDDY

No, I believe you are more attractive than she was.

BRIGETTE

Really!? Did you love her?

BUDDY

I don't know.

BRIGETTE

I can't believe you said that! How could you not know if you loved her?

BUDDY

Brigette, I don't think about her. Not at all.

BRIGETTE

What happened? Why didn't you get married?

BUDDY

When I returned from the war, she found another.

BRIGETTE

She was cheating on you?! Did you catch her at it?

Did you hit her?

BUDDY

No, of course not. I don't hit women.

BRIGETTE

Well, what did you do?

BUDDY

I left.

BRIGETTE

That's it?

BUDDY

There was no longer any reason to remain.

BRIGETTE

Poor Buddy. That's a sad story. You got drafted, went off to war, and lost your girl.

BUDDY

I wasn't drafted. I enlisted. There hasn't been a draft since Vietnam.

BRIGETTE

You? No, I can't believe that.

BUDDY

It's true.

I was 18 and sure of what was right and wrong.

Medics were needed to drag the wounded to helicopters and field hospitals.

I became a medic.

By the time I was your age, I had seen a lifetime of pain and suffering.

More than you can imagine.

BRIGETTE

Ow!

BUDDY

Well, perhaps not more than you can imagine.

BRIGETTE

Why did you stop talking?

BUDDY

There is no more. I went into the war a young man. I came out changed.

BRIGETTE

Oh, you went to war, carried around bleeding, ripped up bodies, came out changed, and there is nothing more to talk about?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

I swear, when I get up, I'm going to get that baseball bat and shove it up your ass! God you piss me off! How did you come out changed?

BUDDY

If you stop being belligerent, I will extrapolate.
It means you should be nice if you want me to answer.

BRIGETTE

Okay, I'm going to be nice. In fact, I'm going to be totally different.
I'm going to take all my energy and concentrate real hard.
I'm going to make myself think like you, feel like you, and understand you so good you'll think I was inside you, holding you tight.

Talk to me, Buddy. Tell me how the war changed you?

BUDDY

Our combat platoon had fifty soldiers ... special ops ... brave kids, all of them.
There was a firefight. We were outnumbered. They called in artillery.
It was total chaos ... half died from enemy fire.
The other half died from friendly fire.

I was the only one who made it out alive.
Well - how should I put this - it put the smell of death forever in my nostrils.

(BUDDY STANDS UP)

After the war, my life became too precious to waste.
I wanted to turn up the flame ... live it fully ... live it free.

Live it for everyone who died that day.

BRIGETTE

Wow!

BUDDY

Wow?

I give you the essence of my being, the distillation of my driving force,
and all you can say is wow?

BRIGETTE

I said 'wow' because I felt it.

BUDDY

Felt what?

BRIGETTE

Like you.

BUDDY

How did it feel?

BRIGETTE

Like ... like ... you!

BUDDY

And you understand?

BRIGETTE

Oh yes.

BUDDY

And you think the same way?

BRIGETTE

Oh no. Completely the opposite.

BUDDY

That's ridiculous! How can you feel like me, and still think completely the opposite?

BRIGETTE

It isn't ridiculous! I stopped calling you weird, so you better stop calling me names!
If you lived my life, you'd feel like me.

BUDDY

And how would I think in that case?

BRIGETTE

You wouldn't think. You would feel.
Life is feeling, not thinking.

BUDDY

This is getting nowhere!

BRIGETTE

There you go. Somebody disagrees with you, and you run away.

BUDDY

You are the most frustrating woman!

BRIGETTE

Oh! OH! Buddy?!

BUDDY

What's wrong?

BRIGETTE

My ankle is throbbing. It's traveling up my leg!
Buddy, do you think you could message it for me?

BUDDY

No, I don't think so.

BRIGETTE

Temptation again?

BUDDY

Precisely.

BRIGETTE

Don't you ever give in to temptation?

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

You should try it some time. It feels good.

BUDDY

You gave in to many temptations. Did it make you happy?

BRIGETTE

Don't punish me. Not now.
I know I've been bad.
Worse than bad. Evil.

How come you didn't ask me about my father?
In case you were wondering, Vanessa is not his.
I don't know who her father is.

BUDDY

Oh ... well, I thought it would upset you to talk about it.

BRIGETTE

But I want to talk about him.

BUDDY

Then talk about him if you must.

BRIGETTE

Buddy, if I tell you things - sick, evil things - will you promise to keep it a secret as long as you live?

BUDDY

Brigette, do you think such a promise is necessary?
Do you think you are the only one who has ever sinned?

BRIGETTE

Promise me!

BUDDY

Very well. I promise.

BRIGETTE

Hold my hand ... please?

BUDDY

Why?

BRIGETTE

Because I have to talk about it now.
I can't stop myself. I have to get it out of me.

Buddy, lie down with me ... so I can show you how it is to feel like me.

BUDDY

No.

BRIGETTE

I'll show you sin so good it'll feel like living and dying at the same time.

BUDDY

No!

BRIGETTE

I'll show you why you came back for me.

BUDDY

You don't know why I came back for you.

BRIGETTE

Yes I do. I've known it all along.

BUDDY

Then tell me.

BRIGETTE

No, you have to feel it. The words aren't important. The feelings are.

That's it ... lie down ... next to me ... put your arm around me.
Hold me ... tighter ... Now listen to my story.

BUDDY

I will lie here, and I will listen, but I will not give in.

BRIGETTE

Yes, Buddy.

[THE LIGHTS GO DOWN. BUDDY EXITS]
[BUDDY ENTERS, sits on the front of the stage, and talks to the audience]

BUDDY

Sir, you think it happened, don't you? You know what I mean.
And you, madam? Are you of the same opinion? Well you are wrong!

I laid in that bed, with that passionate and desperate young woman, and I listened.
That was all!

There was no embrace other than her holding onto me.
There was no kiss, no caress. The only intercourse was spiritual - the exchange of thoughts. One human being spoke, the other listened.

One human being spoke of a childhood filled with pain and abuse.
The shame was deep. A cesspool of human degradation.
The other, listened.

One human being spoke of a sexual awakening that grew into an erotic rampage.
Sex for revenge, sex for money, sex for sex's sake.
Yet the prodigious quantity of sex could not obliterate the underlying pain.
The other, listened.

One human being spoke of selling one's own child.
Of feeling guilt and shame so terrifying that the thought of suicide was a blessing.
The other, listened.

One human being wept until the tears dried up, hurt until nerves turned cold,
despaired until life did indeed become a series of feelings, all revolving around pain
and humiliation.
The other human being listened.
And began to feel. Yes feel. And that feeling, combined with human thought, led to
understanding. That understanding opened a door to a new world, and that world
assaulted my defenses.

When Brigitte was done, purged of the pain, she fell asleep. Then I left that bed.
That's right, I left her again.
I left her as free and celibate as when we first met.
And there is where you are once again, wrong!

I walked fast and furious, mile upon mile, as proof of my power over my own life.
I left her because I still have a choice, and control.
I refuse to accept any other goal other than what is compatible with my free will.

So when this human being speaks, please do me the courtesy of listening, as another
human being, and not jumping to conclusions.

[**BUDDY EXITS** the audience]

[**BUDDY ENTERS** the stage, and stares at Brigitte in bed.]

BUDDY(to audience)

When I returned from my walk and the celebration of my celibacy, she was awake.
She was lying there, her arms outstretched, her body an open gift to me.
There was nothing further to explain.
I understood her.
She understood me.

Then with our bodies ... we did everything we could imagine!

And it was WONDERFUL!

As she predicted ... the first explosion electrified me!

The latter bursts were softer ... sweeter.

A woman's body is the lushest garden on God's green earth.
The parts of woman are so .. so ... so WONDERFUL!
The texture of her skin, the soft curves.
Ladies, be proud, for you are a masterpiece of artful creation.
Surely one of God's finest works. Thank you, God, for the creation of woman!

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Will you look at me? A blabbering fool going on about a woman!

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

Were you talking with someone?

BUDDY

No, merely thinking out loud.

BRIGETTE

Buddy?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

Would you come back to bed and hold me?

BUDDY

Certainly.

BRIGETTE

How do you feel?

BUDDY

Wonderful. I seem to be using that word quite often, now.
How about you, my darling?

BRIGETTE

I'm sore in another place, now.

How is your thing, by the way?

BUDDY

My thing? What kind of word is thing?

BRIGETTE

Okay, how is your dick?

BUDDY

My dick? No, dick will never do!

BRIGETTE

Okay, how is little Buddy?

BUDDY

Little Buddy? You and I must construct another expression for my manhood.

BRIGETTE

God, you are so infuriating! How is your manhood, God damn it!?

BUDDY

Brigette, dear. Infuriating? Where did you get that excellent word from?

BRIGETTE

I heard it in a movie. Are you impressed?

BUDDY

Yes. Now let's see if we can find a word as perfect, for my manhood.
How do I feel? ... hmmm ... Well-tuned ... like a fine engine.

BRIGETTE

Would you like me to call it your *fine engine*?

BUDDY

Why, yes. I like that. My fine engine. Yes, indeed!

BRIGETTE

Last night, you put a lot of mileage on your fine engine.

BUDDY

You know, I find myself enjoying ribald conversation.

BRIGETTE

Does that mean you like talking dirty?

BUDDY

Dirty? Nothing we did was dirty ... it was the most clean fun I've ever had.

BRIGETTE

Yes ... Buddy, hold me some more.

BUDDY

Of course.

[THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR]

BRIGETTE(whispers)

Don't answer it.

BUDDY

I had no intention of doing so.

[THE KNOCK BECOMES LOUDER]

BRIGETTE

It's him. I know it's him!

BUDDY

How would he know?

BRIGETTE

He has people watching.

They saw you outside, followed you, and then called him.

What are we going to do?

BUDDY

Well, first, you better get dressed.

BRIGETTE

Hand me my clothes. I'll dress in the bathroom.

[BRIGETTE EXITS to bathroom, wrapped in a sheet. Buddy grabs baseball bat.
KNOCKING BECOMES LOUD, DOOR IS KICKED OPEN. DADDY ENTERS.]

DADDY

Brigette?

BUDDY

Sir, you have no right to break in here!

DADDY

Where is my daughter?

BUDDY

Sir, I repeat. You have no right --

DADDY

Brigette!

BUDDY

Lower your voice.

It's early and people are still asleep.

DADDY

BRIGETTE!

BRIGETTE (offstage)

Go away, Daddy. You don't belong here.

DADDY (to Buddy)

You! I'll kill you with my bare hands!

BUDDY

Put your hands down!

I said, put your hands down or I'll beat you senseless with this bat.

Now turn around and leave the way you entered.

If you ever raise a hand to her again, you will be slow-witted the rest of your miserable life.

DADDY

I won't leave without my daughter.

BUDDY

Your daughter does not want to go with you, a fact she has made abundantly clear.

DADDY (pathetically)

Brigette ...

[BRIGETTE ENTERS]

BRIGETTE

Daddy, please ... go home.

DADDY

Brigette, Vanessa won't sleep unless you are with her.

BRIGETTE

Then let me take her with me.

DADDY

Never!

BRIGETTE

She's my daughter, Daddy!

DADDY

The court has made her my daughter.

BRIGETTE

No Daddy, she's your granddaughter.
I'm your daughter. I'm your daughter!

DADDY

How can you stay here, with him?
We have a nice home together. Come back with me.

BRIGETTE

No. I'm staying here.

DADDY

I can't bear the thought of you and him ... together. You!

BUDDY

You have been given fair warning.

DADDY

Let me get my hands on you!

(Buddy hits Daddy in the stomach with the bat. Daddy is barely phased.
Daddy grabs the bat away from Buddy.)

BRIGETTE

(sees Daddy reach out and grab the bat)

Buddy, watch out!

DADDY

(beats Buddy with his own bat)

Now, let's see who gets beat with this bat.

(Daddy grabs Buddy, throws behind the sofa bed, and beats him)

BRIGETTE

DADDY! Stop hitting him! He's bleeding!
Stop kicking him! Daddy, stop! STOP!

DADDY

How does your own blood taste, bum?

BRIGETTE

Daddy, Please ... please ... stop!

Daddy, I'll go with you if you stop!

Do you hear me? I'll go with you! I said I'll go with you.

DADDY (to Buddy)

If I ever see you around her again, I'll kill you.

Do you hear me, bum?!

BRIGETTE

Daddy, I want to go home now. Let's go home now. Let's see Vanessa.

Come on, Daddy. Let's leave.

DADDY

Leave?

Yes, let's leave.

Keep away from her, you!

BUDDY

Brigette? ... No ... don't ...

[BRIGETTE AND DADDY EXIT]

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

[It is 8 AM, eight days later, at the Northbound on-ramp to I-75. **BRIGETTE ENTERS** holding a new sign that says, "Hungry child at home, WILL WORK 4 FOOD". She is wearing sunglasses. She sits downstage and talks to the audience from in front of the bushes.]

BRIGETTE

How's my eye look?
It's been over a week. You think I still need these sunglasses? Yes? No?
I hope I'm not bothering you. I just want to talk.

Mind if I smoke?
I started smoking again. I don't know why.

Buddy's gone.
I went over to his house, and there was no sign of life.
Just that crummy old furniture.
I mean, I think he's gone, but who can tell for sure?
Even when he's living there, the place still looks deserted.

I think smoking makes me look more mature. What do you think? Yes? No?
Think it'll hurt me find a job?
Ah, I don't give a damn. I don't have to find a job now.
My life isn't so bad.
Vanessa makes me happy to get up in the morning.
We eat Sugar Pops together, then watch cartoons.
Daddy takes her to daycare before he goes to work.
It's not like I have to spend a lot of time Mommying her.

I come here after they leave.
If nothin's doin' here, I go back home and watch the soaps.
The talk shows take me to dinner time.
We look like a normal family, eating supper together, and then watching tv.
I read to Vanessa before she goes to sleep. She loves it when I read to her.
Night time is the tough part.
He finds some excuse to come into my room, and then the games start.
I close my eyes and pretend it's Buddy. Sometimes, it almost works.

BRIGETTE (cont'd)

Am I disgusting you with this?
Look, I'm sorry. I need to get it off my chest.
Buddy got me used to talking. Now that he's gone, I still have the need.
This talking thing is like a drug.

Look, I know my life is shit. It was shit before, and it'll be shit tomorrow.
No one is gonna save me, least of all some old bum named Buddy.
You think Buddy is his real name? Probably not.

Ah, look at it this way.

A 100 years from now, we'll all be dead, and no one will give a damn?

Look, I gotta go. You don't want to hear more of this.
Thanks for listening.

[Brigette stands and walks to Buddy's side of Interstate, the Northbound side]

DRIVER(offstage, shouting)

HEY HOOCHIE MOMMA! WORK ON THIS! HA HA HA HA HA !

BRIGETTE(to audience)

Yeah, right.
The jerks don't bother me anymore.
I used to flick them off. Now, I just shake my head. It takes less energy.

[A DRIVER PULLS UP offstage and holds out a 5 dollar bill]

SECOND DRIVER

Here, little mother. For you.

BRIGETTE

FIVE DOLLARS!
Thanks Gramps. I appreciate the thought, I really do.
Do you think you have any work for me?
You sure? I could clean house. I'm a great house cleaner. No?
Hey, I could do yard work! If you have a lawnmower, I could ...
Well, thanks anyway, Gramps.
Here, you keep the money. Really. Thanks anyway.

[**BUDDY ENTERS** by the bushes. He is limping and carrying his briefcase]

BUDDY

Hello, Brigitte.
It is a glorious morning, is it not?

BRIGETTE

(after a long pause)

Yeah, right.

BUDDY

(Taking coveralls from case)

Please pardon me while I don my work clothes.
(looks around and whispers) Would you like an egg and cheese sandwich?
I purchased one for you. Come over here and join me.

BRIGETTE

No.

BUDDY

No?

BRIGETTE

I said no, didn't I? What part of no didn't you understand?

[Buddy leaves his briefcase by the bushes and walks up Brigitte]

BUDDY

Have I done something to offend you?

BRIGETTE

Yeah, right. Look, would you do me a favor and go away?

BUDDY

Excuse me?

BRIGETTE

I was here first, and you're scaring away my customers.

BUDDY

I beg your pardon.
These are my customers.
This is my spot.

BRIGETTE

Not anymore.

It was your spot last week, but after EIGHT DAYS, it became my spot.
Statue of limitations.

BUDDY

Statue of limitations? Oh, you're saying my rights have expired?
No. I was unavoidably detained.

BRIGETTE

Right!

BUDDY

What has come over you?

BRIGETTE

Don't touch me! I'm warning you!

BUDDY

Would you like me to explain my absence, not that I should have to?

BRIGETTE

Explain! What's to explain? You got what you wanted and you left.

BUDDY

I got what I wanted? Your father broke two of my ribs and gave me a concussion.
Why would you think I wanted - oh, you were referring to --

BRIGETTE

Save the phony tape and gauze story for the suckers.

BUDDY

You think I applied this?

BRIGETTE

Oh, Buddy, give it up!

BUDDY

I've been in the hospital for a week, spitting up blood and walking into walls, while you have expropriated MY spot, and have given MY customers the mistaken impression WE do not take money anymore, and YOU ...

BRIGETTE

WE do not take money anymore because *I* do not take money anymore.

BUDDY

And what do YOU do?

BRIGETTE

I WORK, like the sign says.

BUDDY

The sign merely creates an illusion, a perceived reality.

BRIGETTE

I don't understand you when you use those big words, and you know it.

BUDDY

It means it is foolish to toil for money when it can be gained with so little effort.

BRIGETTE

Don't you call me a fool! I'll punch you in your phony broken ribs!

BUDDY

I can see that wisdom is wasted upon you.

BRIGETTE

DON'T YOU WALK AWAY FROM ME, YOU ... YOU ... BUM!

BUDDY

You, of all people, should not to call me that!

BRIGETTE

BUM!

BUDDY

I said don't call me that, and you repeat yourself.

BRIGETTE

BUM!

BUDDY

You are trying to get me angry, aren't you?

BRIGETTE

BUM!

BUDDY

You will not be successful.

BRIGETTE

BUM! BUM! BUM!

[BUDDY EXITS]

YOU BIG BUM!

YOU WERE A LOUSY LAY, ANYWAY!

[BUDDY ENTERS]

BUDDY

Excuse me.

BRIGETTE

You heard me.

BUDDY

Why were you casting aspersions as to my lack of sexual prowess?

BRIGETTE

I didn't 'cast aspersions', or whatever the hell that means. I stated a fact.

You were a lousy lay. Boring.

Now, would you please leave. I'm trying to find a job.

BUDDY

Truly, was I inept? ... it means lousy.

BRIGETTE

Wait a minute, let me think about it - the memory is hazy.

There was not much to get excited about or remember.

Okay, it's getting clearer.

Yeah, you were inept - it means lousy.

BUDDY

Oh BULLSHIT!

BRIGETTE

Did you say bullSHIT? I'm shocked.

BUDDY

You are trying to anger me. I won't listen anymore.

BRIGETTE

Why would I try to get a lousy lay like you angry? I don't care that much.

BUDDY

Stop it now!

BRIGETTE

Stop what?

BUDDY

Stop ... hurting ... my ... feelings.

BRIGETTE

You don't have any feelings. Just big words and a phony game.

BUDDY

On the contrary, I have a great many tender feelings for you.

BRIGETTE

'On the contrary, I have a great many tender feelings for you'.

BUDDY

Don't mock me.

BRIGETTE

'Don't mock me'.

BUDDY

Brigette.

BRIGETTE

'Brigette'.

BUDDY

Have it your way.

BRIGETTE

'Have it your way'.

BUDDY

I want you to know something.

I waited 41 years to make love to a woman.

You were that woman.

It was a wonderful experience, one I will always cherish.

I thought you felt the same.

BRIGETTE

Give me a break!

BUDDY

I'm a blind fool.

The truth is you find me a 'lousy lay'.

Either way, I want to thank you, dear Brigitte, for the privilege of making love to you.

[BUDDY EXITS]

BRIGETTE

Say it right, you son of a bitch.

'I want to thank you for the privilege of USING you'.

That's what you meant, you son of a bitch!

YOU SON OF A BITCH!

ACT TWO

SCENE THREE

[Two hours later, at Buddy's house. **BUDDY ENTERS** from the bathroom. He is packing a suitcase. **THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.** Buddy grabs his bat.]

BRIGETTE

Buddy?
(More knocking) Buddy?
Buddy, please open up.

BUDDY

Brigette ... come in.

[BRIGETTE ENTERS]

BRIGETTE

Are you leaving?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

Where are you going?

BUDDY

North. Perhaps to the Carolinas.
If you intend to ask if I will return, the answer is no.

BRIGETTE
(snaps her fingers)

Just like that, huh?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

That's not a very big suitcase.

BUDDY

I travel light. I don't need much.

BRIGETTE

You don't need anything.

BUDDY

The less one needs, the richer one is.

BRIGETTE

'The less one needs, the richer one is'.

BUDDY

Please do not mock me further.

BRIGETTE

Well, stop talking to me like I'm stupid.

And stop feeding me your crap. "The less one needs the richer one is."

Like it's better to be poor than rich?

Nobody rich would agree with you. Nobody poor, neither.

BUDDY

You were taught to need more. One should learn to need less.

BRIGETTE

How does 'one' learn to need nothing, like you, Professor?

BUDDY

One sticks to the basics. Food, clothes, shelter --

BRIGETTE

Oh shut the hell up! You make me sick!

You don't know what the hell you're talking about!

I have a baby daughter.

She needs me. I need her.

How does 'one' learn not to need her?

BUDDY

Brigette, let go of my shirt, please ... thank you.

Perhaps you don't give birth to her in the first place.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, well surprise! She's here. Now what?

BUDDY

It's not my problem.

BRIGETTE

That's no answer! Come on, professor. Give me a real answer.
A shrug is not an answer.

Never mind. You're right. It's not your problem. You have no problems.

BUDDY

I believe I have everything I need.

BRIGETTE

Sure, everything.

BUDDY

You may dispose of whatever remains here however you please.
The garden is ready to be picked, so help yourself.

BRIGETTE

Maybe now you can tell me whose house this is?

BUDDY

It belonged to a widow who died intestate.

BRIGETTE

What happened to her intestines?

BUDDY

(Laughs) No, it means she had no will. She also had no relatives.
You will have perhaps another six months, maybe a year, before the state determines what to do with this house.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, sure.

BUDDY

Well, vaya con Dios, as they say down south.

BRIGETTE

Could you at least give me an answer before you go?

BUDDY

Did you ask a question?

BRIGETTE

I've been asking it since I got here. Why do you think I came back here?

BUDDY

Is that the question?

BRIGETTE

No!

BUDDY

Why do you cry at the slightest provocation?

BRIGETTE

Because you hurt me!

BUDDY

I, hurt *YOU*!?

BRIGETTE

Yes!

BUDDY

How in God's name did I --

BRIGETTE

WHY ARE YOU LEAVING, YOU SON OF A BITCH?

BUDDY

I gather that is the question? Yes?

BRIGETTE

You know it is!

BUDDY

Because ... well ... because ... never mind. This is pointless.

BRIGETTE

No! Tell me why. I'm not letting you go until you do. (she blocks the door)

BUDDY

My dear Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

Tell me.

BUDDY

My sweet Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

Tell me the truth!

BUDDY

Perhaps the answer is in the question.

BRIGETTE

What the hell does that mean?

BUDDY

It means I'm a son of bitch, so I'm leaving. That's what son of a bitches do. We leave.

BRIGETTE

It's not fair! You just up and leave and go where ever you please, and I can't.

BUDDY

But, Brigitte, you can leave any time you want.

BRIGETTE

And leave my daughter with him? No way!

BUDDY

She'll survive. You did.

BRIGETTE

No. No way!

She will not go through what I had to.

No.

That will not happen again.

BUDDY

Well, there we have it.
Brigette, please, step aside. I cannot pass through you.
Thank you.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, go ahead and leave.

BUDDY

Have a good life.

BRIGETTE

Oh yeah. A wonderful life.

BUDDY

Well, good bye.

BRIGETTE

Yeah, good bye.

[BUDDY EXITS]

BRIGETTE

In case you were wondering, I lied about your 'masculinity.'

[There is a long pause. **BUDDY ENTERS**]

BUDDY

Excuse me?

BRIGETTE

I thought you were leaving.

BUDDY

I was ... but then I heard you mention something about my ... masculinity.

BRIGETTE

Oh that. Yeah, I lied when I said you were a lousy lay.

BUDDY

Oh?

BRIGETTE

Okay, I said it. Now you can go.

BUDDY

Could you be a bit more descriptive please?

BRIGETTE

What? I admitted I lied. Isn't that enough?

BUDDY

Does that mean you ... liked ... me ... us ... together?

BRIGETTE

Liked you? Yeah, you could say that.

I mean, at first, you were funny.

BUDDY

Funny?

BRIGETTE

You were so quick! No, I've seen quick, and you were beyond quick.

You were - what's a good word for real quick?

BUDDY

Exuberant?

BRIGETTE

You mean they have a word for it?

It says in the dictionary that exuberant is someone who pops off in your hand?

BUDDY

I did not 'pop off'!

BRIGETTE

Well, the cork sure popped out of something!

Oh Buddy, don't look so hurt. Everyone is exuberant their first time.

By the third time, you were getting real good.

BUDDY

I was?

BRIGETTE

By the morning, you were incredible.

BUDDY

Excuse me? Did you say 'incredible'?

BRIGETTE

Sure, I said it! You were the best man I ever did it with.

BUDDY

Really? The best?

BRIGETTE

No doubt about it. That was one of the main reasons I was crying.
I knew I was going to miss you so much in bed.
I was going to miss your hands. You touched me in all the right places.
Do you remember those places?

BUDDY

Yes.

BRIGETTE

And your lips. You are a great kisser.

BUDDY

Do you think so?

BRIGETTE

Oh yes. And your thing. I mean, your 'fine engine'.
You're an expert with that fine engine. You could be a stud, if you wanted to.

BUDDY

A stud?

BRIGETTE

You're so good you could get paid for it. Hell, I'd pay you for it, if you weren't leaving. Yes, sir, it's a shame you're leaving.
I'm going to miss you lying next to me, I'm gong to miss ... well, you know... All those things we did.
Buddy, please give me one last hug before you go, to remember you by.

BUDDY

Why did you hug me like that?

BRIGETTE

It's just a friendly hug good-bye. Would you like another? Here ...

BUDDY

Please stop.

BRIGETTE

Okay. Well, good bye.

BUDDY

Yes, Good bye, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

I'll miss you.

[BUDDY EXITS. The lights dim on stage.]

[When the lights come up, BRIGETTE IS LYING ON THE MATTRESS, crying.]

[DADDY ENTERS]

BRIGETTE(not turning around)

Still can't make up your mind, can you, Bud - oh, it's you.

DADDY

I thought we had an agreement.

BRIGETTE

What are you doing here?

DADDY

Where is he?

BRIGETTE

He's gone.

DADDY

I see you haven't stopped begging either.

(He tears her cardboard sign into pieces)

BRIGETTE

Don't rip ... that was mine. You had no right to do that.

DADDY

I'm your father. I have every right.
I forbid it!

BRIGETTE

Did I ever tell you how much I hate it when you when you talk to me this way?

DADDY

You don't hate me.

BRIGETTE

Yes, I do.
I hate the way you talk!
I hate the way you dress! I hate the way you look!
I hate the way you smack your lips when you eat. It's disgusting!
But, most of all, I hate when do those sick things to me!
I HATE YOU!

DADDY

Let's go.

BRIGETTE

No. I want to stay here for a while.

DADDY

I leave you alone too much. That's why you lie to me and beg on the streets.
I'm going to hire a housekeeper. Then you won't be able to act this way.

BRIGETTE

You mean hire a guard, don't you?

DADDY

Knowing you, she'll probably have to act like a guard.

BRIGETTE

Wouldn't it be easier to put me back in jail?

DADDY

Let's go.

BRIGETTE

No! Answer me first.

Wouldn't it be easier to put me back in jail?

Then you'd always know where I was, wouldn't you?

DADDY

This conversation is over.

BRIGETTE

But you couldn't play your little night games with me if I was in jail, could you?

DADDY

You better stop this.

BRIGETTE

Or what?

DADDY

You'll force me to punish you.

BRIGETTE

Daddy, don't unbuckle your belt.

DADDY

Once again, you've brought it on yourself.

BRIGETTE

No, Daddy, you like it. It gets you all hot and bothered.

DADDY

Shut up, you whore.

BRIGETTE

It's the only thing that gets you going, isn't it?

That's why momma left, isn't it?

DADDY

She left because she was no good, like you.

BRIGETTE

Let's set the record straight.
She left because you couldn't get it up like a normal man.

DADDY

You don't know what you're talking about.

BRIGETTE

I'm tired of being beaten, Daddy. I'm tired of being afraid. I'm tired of the lies.
Put your belt back on Daddy. There will be no more beatings.
There may be a killing, but there will be no whipping.

DADDY

What are you doing with that? Where did you get that gun?

BRIGETTE

I have my own money. I bought it from a dealer out in Dunbar.

DADDY

Give it to me.

BRIGETTE

Oh, I'll give it to you, all right.
You raise that belt one more time and I'll give it to you.

DADDY

You're evil.

BRIGETTE

Yes, Daddy, I'm evil. And you made me that way!

DADDY

No, you were born evil. Like your mother.
And I will whip the evil from you.

BRIGETTE

Daddy, stop. I'm warning you.

[Brigette fires the gun]

Now, do you believe me?
Maybe it's better if I take you down. Then Vanessa will be set free.

DADDY

Give me the gun, Brigitte.

BRIGETTE

Sure, Daddy. Here it is. Come and get it.

[Daddy raises his belt and Brigitte shoots again]

DADDY

You shot me ... you bitch, you shot me!

BRIGETTE

Yes, and it felt ... wonderful. You will not beat me anymore.

You will not touch me anymore. You will leave my child alone.

DADDY

You'll never get her now.

BRIGETTE

And neither will you, Daddy.

DADDY

Let me get my hands on you.

BRIGETTE

Daddy!

[Brigitte shoots again, wounding Daddy fatally]

Get away from me! Give me back the gun!

DADDY

(empties the gun into Brigitte)

You'll never get away from me.

BRIGETTE

Daddy ... daddy ... dad ... da ...

[BRIGETTE DIES]

[BUDDY ENTERS]

BUDDY

Brigette? I'm back! Brigitte!

Oh my God! What have you done, you bastard!?

(He administers mouth to mouth resuscitation)

Brigette, breathe! Breathe! Please, God, breathe!

DADDY

Go away ... go ... away go ... away ...

[DADDY DIES]

[The stage goes black]

ACT TWO

SCENE FOUR

[A week later, in Buddy's backyard. He is holding a diary with papers folded inside it]

BUDDY

Brigette was laid to rest yesterday.
Her father was buried by her side.
It was a simple funeral.
When the others left, I said good-bye to her privately.
I said good-bye to him also.

Then I urinated on his grave.

Yes, I know it was course and immature, but the action fit the emotion perfectly.

She kept this diary.
The police discovered it when they searched her belongings.
The thoughts she had! A daily trip to hell.
She knew something terrible was going to happen.
She made out a will and kept it inside here.

She also made a Declaration of Guardianship.
Her last thoughts were of her daughter ... and me.

Yes, me.
She wrote of loving me, loving me deeply ... from the part of herself that was good.
And in this Declaration, she left the care of her daughter to me.

What was she ever thinking of?
Isn't it truly absurd. How can I care for the little one?

Look at me!
I'm a vagabond, a lover of thoughts, a free man.
Yes, I am generous.
But I do not possess the generosity that raising a child demands.

What could she have been thinking of?

BUDDY cont'd
(Buddy pulls out another legal looking document from the diary)

The child care authorities want me to transfer custody to them.
I sign their simple document, and I am relieved of all responsibility.
Look at it. Barely a page. A slip of paper.
I scratch my name, and I am done.
(Buddy takes out a pen, then puts it back in his pocket)

No. Perhaps later. There is no need to rush.

I visited Vanessa at the foster home.
She has Brigitte's eyes ... and her mother's smile. That sweet little smile!
I picked her up and held her.
I could not stop myself.
I held her in my arms and I felt Brigitte's spirit come to life again until ...

She bit me.
The little tigress actually drew blood!
Look, the teethmarks are still there.

Yet, when they came to take her, she would not stop hugging me.
She was like her mother that way, too.

Did I love Brigitte? Do you wonder that? Look at me! There's your answer.

(Buddy begins crying)

Forget my words, examine the veracity of my tears.
I'm a fool, a hypocrite, a charlatan.
I have become a greedy wretch, hungry for affection.
My consuming need has become my poverty.
The finest feeling I have ever had, call it love if you will, was stolen from me.
Do you understand me now?

My life is a lie. It was not solitary freedom I craved.
When I felt love, I felt free.
Give me a moment.

Now how can I care for that little girl? What do I know?
I know how to deceive, how to incite generosity, how to trick.
Are these parental virtues?

BUDDY cont'd

No, the little one will be better cared for by others.
She will be well loved ... won't she?

My thoughts of taking care of her are absurd!
She is not my blood, not my charge.
When I sign this paper, I will once again be free.

But ... I'll go see her one last time ... to make sure.

She's going to be trouble. I know it. Children are so selfish.
I know I will live to regret this.

So why am I rushing to see her?
If she doesn't bite me again, perhaps there is hope.

Brigitte, what have you done to me?!

(Buddy stands, and looks out)

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you.

You have been a kind and generous audience.

[BUDDY EXITS]

THE END

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