DANCELAND. A PRODUCTION RECORD.

by

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ABSTRACT.

The thesis is a record of the writing and rehearsal process which led to the British premiere of the full length Canadian play, Danceland, at The Old Red Lion Theatre, London, in November of 1994. The first chapter is a discussion of the dramatic theories and historical research which informed the initial creative writing process. The second chapter is the final draft of the play itself. The third chapter is a record of the rehearsal and production process, as well as an overview of the major dramaturgical problems which the actors, director and designers encountered during rehearsals of the play. A full cast and crew list and the reviews from the British press are contained in the appendices.

The playwright's "experiment" which sits at the heart of this production record is that Aristotle's idea of "place" is essential to the creation of an indigenous, Canadian dramatic literature. The writing process, however, is only the beginning of the translation of drama from the page to the stage; and it is this final, rehearsal and production process which demands that all dramatic theory be placed within the context of believable characterization and dramatic action.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE.

THE ALCHEMY OF PLAYWRIGHTING:

1. A Prologue

Saskatchewan lies across the northern frontier of The Great Plains like a blanket, the place where the last strands of prairie eventually give way to the muskeg, scrub and granite of the Canadian Shield. It is a Euclidian landscape with a Siberian climate and an often tight-lipped Presbyterian culture, and it is the last place in the world I would have expected to find echoes of jazz, bootleggers, and arsonists, the ghosts of Depression era American gangsters, rumours of community-sanctioned murder, and Danceland, one of the largest dancehalls on the continent.

Danceland sits in the bottom of a glacial valley that cuts like a scar across the rolling hills of the potash country south of Saskatoon. Driving through the countryside at dawn, you can chase the shadow of your car as it races along ahead of you, and at dusk you can watch through your rear view mirror as it stretches out behind you for a mile. In the winter, the snow takes on the colours of the sky and the sun, silver, blue, pink and mauve. In the spring the landscape is a

verdant green; the heat of summer burns it to an irredescent gold. A person is the tallest thing in this landscape. You can see the earth curve downward, a hundred miles in any direction.

The first time I dropped down into that ancient glacial valley, on a sunswept day in early February of 1987, I knew instinctively that I had found an astonishing source of myth and history; an almost eerily deserted landscape which seems to beckon to me like some kind of personal Manawaka, a Canadian Natchez Trail. Since then, the valley and its surrounding villages have become the crucible of place in which I set much of my recent work, including my full length play, Danceland.

You fall four hundred metres in a minute once your car crests the inclined curve at the top of the valley, and then you sight blue, blue water. Little Manitou, Saskatchewan, named for the native God, Manitou, the maker of everything, slices like a scimitar, a knifewound through the earth's mantle that cradles a salt lake fourteen miles long and less than a mile wide, bubbling up from the depths of an immense, subterranean sea. As you rumble across the gravel

causeway at the lake's north end, the fetid smell of the salt marsh wraps around your face like an unwanted lover's hand, invading your mouth and nose and eyes. And then you see Danceland, built on a pier halfway down the southern shore of the lake, its elegant Art Deco curves and whitewashed exterior riding astride the shoreline like a swan.

The lake was a sacred place of healing for the Assiniboine and Cree nations. They would not fight their wars in the valley, but would travel beyond it for that purpose. Legend has it that the lake's healing properties were discovered by a party of Assiniboine warriors, who were travelling north to do battle with their northern rivals, The Cree, when a dozen of them were struck with an outbreak of smallpox. The Assiniboines made a camp for their sick at the edge of the lake, and left them with horses and supplies before carrying on to war. One of the afflicted warriors, in a delirium, wandered into the salt lake to cool his fever, and then fell asleep, face up in the shallow, saline water. When he awoke, his fever had abated and he made his way back to the camp where he proceeded to carry the other sick men into the lake,

where they, too, were cured. The legend goes on to relate how, healed and empowered by the lake, the Assiniboine warriors proceeded to catch up to their war party and lead it to victory over The Cree.

This story may or may not be true, but it is a compelling one. The legend was appropriated by the first homesteaders in the area, and was used as a foundation for a brief flowering of culture and commerce in the early part of the century.

The book, Prairie Reflections: Watrous, Venn, Manitou Beach, Renown, Amazon and Districts (published in 1983 by The Watrous and District History Committee), which is based on oral histories of the area, provides invaluable insight into the patterns of early European settlement of the region.

The valley surrounding Little Lake Manitou was first homesteaded in 1905 by John J. Maclachlan, on the west side, and by Edwin Evison on the east. The streets in town are named after the family members, Roy Street, Elizabeth Street, Albert Street and John Street, to name a few. These streets, in turn, are bisected by streets named for Prairie cities, Winnipeg Street, Saskatoon Street, Regina Street. The town does not look like much, now, but in 1910 it was a prime

piece of real estate, lying as it does, at the junction of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway from Winnipeg, and the CPR line from Moose Jaw to Saskatoon and Edmonton; both of these lines connect south, to Chicago, New York and Denver.

With the CPR cannibalising the country for the benefit of its grand hotels and destination resorts at Banff and Jasper, the GTPR sensed a good business opening and offered John Maclachlan $75,000 for his property. Their intention was to build a luxury hotel and health spa on the shores of the lake, and market it as a destination resort. Maclachlan, being a feisty Scotsman, turned them down and developed it himself. This property became known as "the main beach", and it was not long until his neighbor, Evison, started up the rival, "east beach" subdivision in 1910-1911.

By the 1920's what had started out as a family operation of a two and a half story bath house with twelve rooms for bathers, two lavatories, a waiting room and a real estate office, blossomed into a fully fledged resort, the Atlantic City of its day, hosting summer retreats and parties for up to four hundred and fifty employees of the T. Eaton Company and The Hudson's Bay, who would arrive from Edmonton or

Winnipeg or Toronto by train. It boasted five dancehalls, auto liveries, seventy seven cottage homes, The Whitmore Hotel, Brown's Muskikee Wapui Sanatorium, The Maitou Hotel, Martin's Tourist Hotel, The Hiawatha Hotel, two drug stores, moving picture shows at The Empire Theatre, Ethier's Gasoline and Service Station, a barber shop, three grocery stores, four ice cream parlours, candy stores, and two hot bath houses. People came by train from New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia, Denver, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, and Edmonton. The rivalry between the "east beach" and "the main beach" was intense. The Hiawatha Hotel burned to the ground five times in ten years. American tourists, escaping the shackles of prohibition, demanded entertainment, jazz bands, dancehalls, and Canadian whiskey.

The town roared until that black Friday in 1929, when Wall Street crashed and Canada's Yankee Trader masters started throwing themselves out of office tower windows, and the gods refused to send the rains for ten years, and the wind swept up from the desert south of the border, stripping a metre of the richest topsoil on the continent off the face of the earth, depositing it in the muskeg, hundreds of miles to the north.

Today, Danceland and the village of Little Manitou, stand like the statue of Ozymandias, humbled at the western edge of the sky, a monument to this country's colonial obsession with American culture. An architectural metaphor if I ever saw one, Danceland stands, defying time, reflected in the blue, blue lake, a winged figure threatening to set sail across the eye of the gods.

2. The Idea of Place.

The idea that place sits at the heart of fiction is not a new one, stemming as it does from sources as diverse as Sophocles' Athens, Chekhov's Moscow, Ibsen's Oslo, James Joyce's Dublin, Samuel Beckett's darkly humourous netherworld of light, shadow and emptiness; in America, the list of places continues, especially in the southern gothic tradition of Tennessee Williams, Truman Capote and Harper Lee; in Sam Shepard's Southern California and in Lou Reed's New York; in William Faulkner's Yokanatawptha County and Eudora Welty's Natchez, Mississippi. In Canada, one thinks of Margaret Laurence's Manawaka, Michel Tremblay's Montreal, George F. Walker's East End Toronto, or

Judith Thompson's Kingston. In fact, place as an element of fiction is one of Aristotle's formative "unities", the other two being time and action, so my discovery of it should not have rattled me to the core the way it did. But it did. Finding a place, in this instance, Little Manitou, was like an epiphany in my ongoing struggle as a playwright.

Place, like time, gives me a specific, localized frame in which to set the dramatic action. It gives me, literally, a place to start a story, and a place to end it; it also tells me a lot about what happens in the middle. Who lives there, what are they doing, and why?

When you start writing, you are invariably told by both instructors and well-meaning friends to "write about what you know". This is undoubtedly good advice, but if I had taken it as dogma when I started working on Danceland, I might have ignored the voyages of discovery which are made possible through simple acts of imagination. Most of us can imagine other worlds; we can read, we can travel, we can learn about other places, other things, other people. Yes, we must write about "what we know", but we must not limit ourselves to a day to day, documentary accounting of existence.

To write is to create, on the page, a fictional, yet believable world which is populated by believable creatures who are engaged in believable action. This world may be called Transylvania, Mars or The Kingdom of Heaven, but from Kafka to Kerouac, at the very least, fiction is the result of somebody attempting to transport us to other realities through the simple act of storytelling. Writing, like reading and listening, is rooted in the interaction of the storyteller and his audience. Between us is where we light our symbolic fire of myth, symbol and ritual, and it is this communal fire of the imagination, of dreams, possible worlds, which unites us in small groups, in tribes and in nations. Stories, in short, are the bedrock of culture. They are the vehicle with which we engage in social travel. When we write, when we read, when we listen, we can be transported, and when we return from these voyages of the imagination, we can be changed.

To accept the act of storytelling as a foundation of culture, is to accept responsibility for the stories you choose to tell. If storytelling really is the stuff of fire, then we must fight to keep the flame alive, to allow it to warm us and penetrate the

darkness which surrounds us, and to avoid being pulled, like so many moths, into its flames. The words and stories of Goethe, Milton and Shakespeare are a thin shield from the words and stories of the dark Messiahs among us who long to unleash the dogs of war, intolerance and hatred. Yet, while the pen may be mightier than the sword, a well motivated swordsman can take a vicious whack out of an unarmed poet, and that is probably another reason why great cultures owe their very existence to common myths and stories; common beliefs are a great unifier of people, and the best way to share and uphold those beliefs, whatever they might be, is by handing down, through story, through history, the wisdom and experience of previous generations. It also goes a long way toward explaining why despots like Stalin, Hitler, Pinochet, and Pol Pot dedicated such frightening amounts of energy to the wholesale slaughter of poets. (The recent execution of Nigerian playwright and poet, Ken Siro-Wiwa, is another tragic example.)

There is a much more humane way to temper the storyteller's power: the application of informed criticism. Critics are with us for a reason. They exist to call our stories, as well as our intentions

and abilities as storytellers into question. At best, they can guide all of us, storyteller, reader or listener toward a richer understanding of the story at hand, and at their worst they operate as cynical tour guides on a decadent ride through consumer journalism. The dull ache of history may well be written by the victors, but reviews are written by critics, and they can sting.

To write a story, in any literary form, be it a novel, a poem, an essay, a libretto or a play, is to embark on a long and perilous journey.

3. The Genesis Of The Play.

My own journey started the day after I got home to Saskatoon, from that first car trip to Little Manitou. Three characters immediately presented themselves to me: an elegant woman in her mid thirties who sang at Danceland; a little girl in a flowered skirt and a pair of cast off boy's brogues; and an older man with silver hair, who sat in a wheelchair, his legs covered with a blanket. I did not know how, or even if they were related to each other, but I could see them clearly in my mind's eye. The woman wanted to sing to

me, the older gent regarded me with a certain degree of cynicism and distaste, and the little girl would not speak to me at all. I was not sure how to start, how to begin crafting these images into a story, so I did two things. I wrote a poem about the landscape at Little Manitou, and I started visiting the local history room of The Saskatoon Public Library. The poem soon mushroomed into a larger series of landscape poems, and my notebook filled with a wealth of detail, including the curious local story that the Depression era American gangster, John Dillinger, had spent some time here in the early 1930's, hanging out at the dancehalls at Little Manitou, and that he was rumoured to have committed a still unsolved murder in the nearby town of Bienfait. I immediately seized on this notion and went off again, shuffling through the yellowed papers of the archives, searching for the truth; what I found instead was that the truth does not necessarily square with the facts, and facts almost never stand in the way of a good story.

John Dillinger may or may not have been present in South Central Saskatchewan during this period, but his criminal exploits had seized the popular imagination of people all across the American and the Canadian west.

He was stealing from the banks, which in turn were foreclosing on small businesses and farms. By early 1934, he had become a popular symbol of resistance at a time when a spirit of revolution was threatening to take hold on the North American continent. Unions were mobilizing, workers were marching, thousands of men were interned in labour camps and, when a union organizer at the coalmine in Bienfait, Saskatchewan, was shot dead, rumours flew that the killing must have been the work of John Dillinger, who might have crossed the Canadian border in search of a hideout. It is true that the city of Moose Jaw, a hundred miles to the south, had, indeed, been an operational centre for the American bootleg whiskey trade. Yet, a more likely explanation of the Bienfait incident, is that the union leader was murdered by police at the behest of the mine owners and the rumour of Dillinger's involvement had been floated as a kind of alibi. After all, if you cannot trust the police to protect you, who can you trust?

Alternately portrayed in the popular press as either an elegant ladies' man or an agent of Satan, Dillinger's image refracted through the lens of urban

myth to become a kind of modern day Satyr, some kind of libidinous goat-man, a devil with a twelve inch penis. Indeed, a persistent urban legend, still being told today, involves his mutilation at the hands of an F.B.I. agent, who supposedly used his pocket knife to slice off Dillinger's male member just to make sure he was dead, and the supposed display of Dillinger's posthumously honoured anatomical relic, preserved in a bottle of formaldehyde, on a shelf at The Smithsonian Institute's archives in Washington, D.C.

Surely this kind of mutilation legend is worthy of a religious martyr like Saint Sebastian; in any case, the state hunted John Dillinger like an animal. When they found him, they killed him. While it is quite possible that he really was just a murderous thug, it must have been what he symbolized, the stories he inspired, the jeering of the people in the face of the state, that made him far more dangerous than the usual perpetrators of spectacular bank robberies and garden variety homicides. America was, and is, rich in stories of legendary criminals, but few of them have inspired as much folklore as John Dillinger.

My problem, as a playwright, then, was how to treat this charismatic character, who obstinately demanded to be in my play. In the first draft of Danceland, I attempted the obvious, and placed Dillinger in the central role. The draft was an unmitigated failure, reminiscent in its better passages of the worst dialogue in a bad Jimmy Cagney movie. And then it struck me that what had made Dillinger such a powerful threat in real life, and such a potentially compelling dramatic hero in my play, was not his presence, but his abscence and the implied violence of his imminent arrival. Terror, after all, lives in the mind of the victim. I realized that I was not after a portrait of the man himself; I was now more involved in an attempt to evoke his almost mythological stature. John Dillinger was, indeed, one of the last Satyrs in the world, sacrificed on the altar of the modern age. The mysterious way in which he infiltrated the popular imagination of his day had nothing to do with documentary accounts of his gruesome ride through the American Midwest. Rather, it lay in the convivial, fraternal lies that passed for conversation in Chicago whorehouses, in booze cans, in the lyrics of dope addled jazz singers, and in the whispers of rural

fathers to their sons, "He got away again. Those goddamned bankers deserve it".

The play did not want an historical figure as a central character, what it wanted was a male antagonist, somebody other than Dillinger; an almost demonic storyteller; a loquacious and charming local liar who could weave Dillinger's presence in and out of the play like some kind of phantom, a bogeyman whose presence was so palpably dangerous that sometimes the storyteller might even frighten himself.

That is how the character of Murray came to be born. His first words to me, long since excised from the text of Danceland were, "Sorry I'm late, I was down in the basement; it's dark down there and I mighta bumped my head on a post". At once humourous and sly, and always rooted in an animalistic sexuality, Murray flooded into the play, unifying the action with his lies, and when he would get caught in a lie by one of the other characters he would make up a new one on the spur of the moment, even more monstrous than the one before, and all the time believing that once a lie is spoken it forms the complete and gospel truth. Murray is a chameleon, but his particular talent lies in

changing the colour of the world to hide the unchanging nature of his own skin. To Murray, lying is a sin, and therefore, in a world where everybody lies, the worst crime is to get caught. The play became, over the next few drafts, a search for truth, a cry from the heart from its new protagonist, the torch singer, Lily, whose search is for passion in a world where men and commerce have killed the ancient gods. As I worked on the piece, the dialogue became saturated with the rythms of the devil's music, jazz, and the old man in the wheelchair, who had presented himself to me on my first trip to Danceland, became Lily's husband, Lloyd, a brilliant musician, crippled some months before the action of the play begins, by a gunshot from the marauding Dillinger. And the little girl? Eventually, she revealed that her name was Rose. She was Murray's daughter, and the reason for her silence was also the reason for Murray's compulsive, almost psychopathic lying.

4. Between Story and Backstory.

Having discovered the identities of the characters, and the basic interplay of their relationships, I set about placing them back inside the parameters of time and place: the play takes place over the course of one day, dawn to dusk, at Little Manitou, Saskatchewan, in the summer of 1934. The scenes take place at Danceland and in Lloyd and Lily's cabin. Offstage, exist a number of geographic markers: the lake, the hills on the north side, the pier below Danceland, The Hiawatha Hotel. Together they form a unified space, the valley itself, constantly referred to, but never seen.

What emerged next was a series of backstories, the stories of what happened preceding the action of the play; a story about a woman from Little Manitou who, as a teenager, ran away from the Presbyterian constraints of home to pursue a career as a band singer in Chicago. Hanging out in all the darkest clubs, she was taken under the wing of a forty year old lion of a bandleader, named Lloyd, who, no doubt hungering for sexual adventures, proceeded to teach her how to sing. What followed for them was a tumultuous, fourteen year

stretch of road trips, through Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis, Denver, Kansas City and New York.

My feeling is that Lloyd preferred a harder, blacker, style of playing and that this personal jazz style, coupled with his unwillingness to compromise, is what prevented them from breaking through as a popular act on radio. So, when the Depression hit, and those big touring combos of the 1920's could no longer afford to tour, Lloyd and Lily's act would have been put under severe stress; Lloyd would have to adapt his style of arranging, or lose his career. Younger and more adaptable, Lily's professional ambitions are straining the bonds of their marriage. In the years since they first met, Lloyd has evolved into an irritable, musical ideologue, a brilliant, fifty year old white musician who has paid his dues, and who now wants to keep playing black music with black musicians in black clubs, and this is why he is so emotionally attached to the charts which he writes at the top of Scene Three.

Lily, on the other hand, would have been in her late twenties when these seismic shifts in their lives took place; she is frustrated; she is young, her career should be on the rise, but Lloyd's is failing. Lily wants to record, to get on the radio, to lead her own

band, and she wants to do it with or without Lloyd. This has driven Lloyd into a sustained state of sexual and professional jealousy. They both feel they have to prove themselves to each other; their tragic flaw is pride. Domestic tensions between the two are running high when one of Lily's adulterous assignations leads them to the edge of disaster.

Murray is a couple of years younger than Lily. He would have been two or three years behind her at school, and has had a lifelong, sexual obsession with her. As an adolescent, Lily must have seemed unattainable to him; but when she suddenly returns to Little Manitou, in the summer of 1934, his erotic dreams become living, breathing flesh.

A number of other back stories emerged, but these are the ones that did not make it into the final draft of Danceland, and I offer them in the hope that they may shed some light on the psychological pressures at work on the characters over the course of the play's action.

5. A Brief Note on Language and Structure.

The play consists of six scenes which alternate between Lloyd and Lily's cabin at Brown's Sanatorium and the interior of Danceland. The first act contains four scenes and runs approximately fifty five minutes; the second act consists of the final two scenes and runs approximately fifty minutes. Danceland was originally intended to be played without an intermission, but pragmatic considerations such as a bathroom break for the actors and audience as well as the desire by theatre managements to generate revenue through intermission liquor sales dictated otherwise.

Much of the dialogue is written in a "phonetic" style. That is, I have tried to approximate the idiomatic sound of the English language of South Central Saskatchewan. This is particularly true of the characters of Rose and Murray, although Lloyd occasionally slips into a kind of Southside Chicago slang. What I wanted to portray, more than anything else, was the class differences between the two family units.

If the play was to be translated into Quebecois French, for instance, I would want it to be rendered in a mix of joual for Rose and Murray, and a kind of elevated, almost Parisian French for Lloyd and Lily. Of the four of them, it is Lily who, having forsaken her roots, possesses the most "posh" accent. For her, accent has been an important tool in her climb up the professional and social ladder.

The deliberate misspelling of words in the script is not meant, in any way, as a judgement of the characters' intellects; none of them are stupid, although two of them are quite definitely uneducated. The phonetic spelling approximations are, quite simply, an attempt to render, on the page, the natural sound of rural, Western Canadian English. Like everything else in the play, the accents of the characters should spring from a specific sense of place and character.

Readers of the play will also notice that the dialogue is, in a sense, "heightened" or even (that dreaded word), "poetic". Sandwiched as it is between jazz lyrics and the work of three great American poets, Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound and Carl Sandburg, this stylization of language seemed the most organic treatment possible. I do not intend the play to be a

throwback to the lyrically beautiful, but somehow emotionally sterile "poetic theatre" of T.S. Eliot or Christopher Fry, but rather, I intend it to be an extension of the kind of "naive primitivism" which one finds in the work of early Canadian playwrights like Gwen Pharis Ringwood or Herman Voaden. It is intended to be the language of the land; it is also intended to be spoken realistically while, simultaneously, providing a counterpoint to the jazz rhythms which permeate the play.

CHAPTER TWO.

DANCELAND.

Little Manitou Beach, Saskatchewan.

Late August, 1934.

CHARACTERS:

LILY:	Stylish. Thirty three. A singer.
LLOYD:	Her husband. Mid fifties. An American bandleader and clarinetist. Alcoholic. Lloyd has of late been confined to a wheelchair. He has been unable to work as a musician for some time.
MURRAY:	Late twenties. Handsome. He owns and operates the boat taxi service on Little Manitou Lake.
ROSE:	Murray's daughter. Pubescent.

SET: Should be as simple as possible. Evocative, not representative. Light and sound are the most pervasive scenic elements.

SOUND: The actor playing Lloyd need not play clarinet, although a familiarity with the embouchure and fingering patterns is helpful. The play benefits from musical underscoring with solo clarinet. The songs, however, should be sung a capella. They are more like prayers or invocations; a continuation of the action of the scenes rather than musical "numbers".

NOTE: The name of the town, Bienfait, is pronounced "Bean-fay".

SCENE ONE.

Lloyd's cabin. Brown's Sanatorium.

Saturday. Dusk.

Lloyd is sitting in his wheelchair, leafing through a worn volume of American poetry. He is excited. His hands tremble as he searches through the pages.

Lily is changing out of beachwear, getting ready to go down to the dancehall for the night's gig.

LLOYD:
(Finds the poem he's been looking for.)
Here, here, here, here, here. Here it is, I found it. Ezra Pound, The River Merchant's Wife. C'mere; siddown... I want to read this to you.

LILY:
Just hold your horses. Jeez, I'm going to be late. I knew I didn't have time to come down here for a swim; I should just have met you at Danceland after the gig.

LLOYD:
(Gentle.)
Come on. Siddown. Just sit down and close your eyes for a minute. This is beautiful.

Lily slams a chair down and then sits on it.

He reaches over and strokes her hair.

LLOYD:
Listen. Just close your eyes and listen. It's the most beautiful thing in the world. This woman, this Chinese woman is talking...

LILY:
I've heard it before.

LLOYD:
...I think it's supposed to be his girlfriend, Hilda. She was only about sixteen.

LILY:
Oh, the nasty man.

LLOYD:
It's how she felt about Pound.

LILY:
Are you sure it isn't how he felt about himself?

LLOYD:
Don't be a cynic. She'd do anything for him; probably die.

LILY:
(Dry.)
Lucky him. (Beat.) Read me a different one, okay?

LLOYD:
Alright. Here. I love this one, it's another Pound, it's called "Alba"; it's like a photograph. (Reads.) "As cool as the pale wet leaves
of lily-of-the-valley
She lay beside me in the dawn."

Pause.

LLOYD:
Nice, hunh?

LILY:
It's alright. (Beat.) Do they actually do anything, or does she just keep lying there like a plant?

LLOYD:
Of course.

LILY:
Does it say?

LLOYD:
It's implied.

LILY:
What's implied?

LLOYD:
That they... you know.

LILY:
What? Cross pollinate?

She purses her lips together and pretends to blow some dandelion down at him.

LILY:
You're a hopeless romantic, Lloyd. You should get your mind out of books and back down in the gutter where it belongs.

She gets up and resumes dressing.

LILY:
Who else is in there? Anybody a little more, oh, stimulating?

LLOYD:
(Leafing through.)
Sure. Lots of people. Emerson. Thoreau. Some Sandburg. I like Sandburg; met him in a bar in Chicago a couple of years back.

LILY:
What's he like?

LLOYD:
Sandburg? He's great, a great guy. He accompanies himself on guitar when he reads; he's pretty good, too. Musical but muscular; he writes real muscular verse.

LILY:
Oh, I like that.

LLOYD:
(Moving on.)
Here's a couple by Emily Dickenson.

LILY:
That morbid bitch.

LLOYD:
Lily!

LILY:
Well, she is. All those tombstones; death riding past in a horse drawn carriage.

LLOYD:
She was melancholy, that's all.

LILY:
She was crazy. Did you ever meet her?

LLOYD:
No. She died the year I was born.

LILY:
Lucky you.

They laugh.

LLOYD:
Here. Here's some Whitman; Walt Whitman. "Give Me The Splendid Silent Sun". Does that sound good? Whaddaya think?

LILY:
Whatever you want.

LLOYD:
I love you all to pieces.

Lily laughs and resumes dressing.

Lloyd picks up a bottle of bourbon off the floor beside him and takes a pull off it.

Then he begins to read.

LLOYD:
"Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full-dazzling.
Give me autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard,
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape,
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene moving animals teaching content,
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of the Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars.

He looks up at Lily for a moment, then continues reading...

LLOYD:
(Continues.)
"Give me odorous at sunrise a garden full of flowers where I can walk undisturbed,
Give me for marriage a sweet breath'd woman of whom I should never tire,
Give me a perfect child, give me..."

He stops reading. His face is streaked with tears.

LILY:
God, I love you.

He closes the book and puts it down.

LLOYD:
(Gruff.)
Sorry. I forgot how maudlin the old pederast could be. (Beat.) How was your swim?

LILY:
Invigorating. You should try it.

LLOYD:
Are you kidding? It's a goddamned swamp.

LILY:
Little Manitou's a place of healing, Lloyd. People have been coming here for years; the Assiniboines, the Cree...

LLOYD:
It's a smelly, sulphourous, evil goddamned swamp. The water stinks and the sand is full of fleas, the grass is full of ticks and the air is full of mosquitoes the size of goddamned roosters! You couldn't get the clap cured in a place like this. (Beat.) Nope. I'm a city guy. Gimme the streets of Manhattan; give me Detroit, Philadelphia; give me nightclubs and Ellington; Satchmo. Give me Kansas City at dawn. Give me New Orleans, with me and the band and you up front, howling the blues like a wounded she-wolf, standing all alone on the jagged edge of the Atlantic City shore. (Beat.) I should have stayed in Chicago and played with the band.

LILY:
You couldn't have played with the band.

LLOYD:

I could!

Silence.

LLOYD:

I'm a musician, Lily. I need to play. (Beat.) Howzabout it? Tonight. Just one set.

LILY:

Not without a rehearsal, Lloyd. Your style's too strong; you'll throw my band offstride.

LLOYD:

So fire the bums; we'll swing that dancehall singlehanded. Whaddaya say?

LILY:

It's not that simple, I can't just... (Beat.) Let's give it another week, hunh? I don't want you to push yourself too hard.

LLOYD:

You afraid I'll embarass you?

LILY:

We've had a great day, Lloyd. Please don't start.

LLOYD:

I'm not starting anything.

Pause.

Lily moves away to retrieve some clothing.

LLOYD:

I do embarass you, don't I?

LILY:

I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that, okay?

She starts to pull a loose sundress over her head.

LLOYD:

Where'd you get that mark?

Lily stops, mid-motion, to look down at her hip. Lloyd wheels over and puts his hand on her. Lily playfully slaps his hand away.

LILY:
You had all afternoon for that; you missed your chance.

Lloyd grabs at her.

LLOYD:
What is it? A love bite?

LILY:
Around here? It's more like a flea bite, and you know it.

Lloyd grabs hold of her hand and won't let go.

LLOYD:
What's that supposed to mean?

LILY:
Nothing. Just a joke.

LLOYD:
You disappear up the beach for hours at a time. I don't know what you're doing, or who you're with...

LILY:
Lloyd, we discussed this before we left Chicago...

LLOYD:
...and how come you have to stay in some fancy hotel up in town...

LILY:
...Lloyd... quit kidding around...

LLOYD:
...when I'm stuck way the hell and gone out here?

LILY:
...that's not funny... Let go!

She breaks free.

Pause.

LLOYD:
If I so much a smell him on you...

LILY:
What are you...? Dillinger's dead, Lloyd. Some woman saw him coming out of a movie theatre in Chicago last month, the cops set up and ambush and shot him down. (Beat.) I'd better go, I'm going to be late for work.

She scoops up the last of her things and heads for the door.

LLOYD:
Wait a minute! Wait a minute... where are you... don't you walk out on me! I came twelve hundred miles to this goddamned swamp so that I could be with you...

LILY:
Then BE with me! BE WITH ME!

Pause.

LILY:
I love you, Lloyd. Believe me.

She moves in to him and wraps her arms around his chest, her face close to his ear.

LILY:
You're my best one; my only one. (Beat.) Tell you what; I'll move my things out here from the hotel tomorrow. I can always keep the room at The Hiawatha for a getaway between sets. People I knew as a kid keep coming backstage to gawk at me. Presbyterians. God. I mean, what do they think? I moved to Chicago and grew horns?

LLOYD:
Maybe they just wanna look up your ass to see if your hat's on straight.

They laugh. Then Lily moves around and sits, gently, on Lloyd's lap.

LLOYD:
Careful. Careful.

Lily adjusts herself.

LILY:

Better?

LLOYD:

I guess. I don't know...

LILY:

What? Should I get off?

She starts to get off him. He stops her.

LLOYD:

No, no. It's just... I don't know. (Beat.) Sometimes I feel like my bones are trying to crawl out through my skin. (Beat.) You're still so young... (Beat.) Don't leave me, hunh? I couldn't bear it if you ever left me.

She leans in and kisses him, long and deep and hard. When they finish kissing, Lily gets up off Lloyd. She's crying. Lloyd reaches out and takes her hand.

LLOYD:

It didn't hurt, you know. The gunshot. It just startled me more than anything; that first explosion. Then I was falling. I felt heat; waves of cramp in my belly. It all seemed to be happening so slow. (Beat.) I'll never forget the silence; the sight of those white hotelroom curtains hanging straight down; no breeze. Then far away, across the city, I heard the sirens start to wail. Police. Ambulance. (Beat.) Jazz everywhere. (Beat.) You were hovering over me like an angel. (Beat.) And I felt hate, Lily. I remember feeling hate... I'm a gentle man; but, hate... it feels hot; like a shot of Bourbon. (Beat.) I liked it, Lily. I liked the way hate felt.

He lets go of her hand.

Pause.

LLOYD:

You'd better go, you're gonna be late.

LILY:

They'll wait.

LLOYD:
They won't have much choice.

Lloyd picks the bottle off the floor and starts to wheel away.

LILY:
Lloyd?

He stops, but he doesn't look back.

LLOYD:
Yeah?

Pause.

LILY:
Save me a shot for later.

She turns to leave and almost trips over little Rose, who has appeared in the doorway.

LILY:
Jesus! Didn't anybody teach you to knock?

She takes a quick look back at Lloyd and then makes her way out the door.

Rose just stands there, staring at Lloyd.

Pause.

LLOYD:
So, what are you staring at?

ROSE:
Nothin'.

LLOYD:
Well, beat it then. Can't you see I'm busy?

ROSE:
You're not busy; you were just fightin' with your wife.

LLOYD:
I said, get lost.

He wheels away.

ROSE:
Are you really a cripple?

Lloyd stops and turns back to her.

LLOYD:
Look. Why don't you go home and tell your mother she wants you?

ROSE:
Because she's dead.

LLOYD:
Oh. Sorry.

Pause.

ROSE:
If you're a cripple, how come I seen ya walkin' with them stick things up the road to the east beach the other day?

LLOYD:
(Pointed.)
What do you want? Just tell me and then go away.

ROSE:
My Daddy's comin' by in the boat to pick me up from visitin', and he told me special to come an' ask yas if ya wanted a ride up to Danceland for the dancin' later on, seein' as how he's goin' up there anyways an' he says it must be awful hard for youse to get around.

LLOYD:
Oh. (Beat.) No. No, thanks. Maybe later.

ROSE:
He makes another run at nine, but it'll cost you a quarter, seein' as how it's a regular run an' not a special like this time.

LLOYD:
Well, I think I can afford it. I just don't want to go yet.

Rose approaches him and puts her hand on his knee.

ROSE:

Is it arthuritis?

LLOYD:
(Sharp.)

Don't be silly! (Beat.) It's not... It's... No, it's not a disease.

ROSE:

I just thought maybe it was arthuritis. (Beat.) You'll get better, though. Lotsa people do. They come here an' swim in the lake an' then go home all better. That's why Little Manitou's called The Lake Of Healing Waters. All kindsa people come here all sick an' cripply, an' then go home better.

LLOYD:
(Considers.)

Maybe they do. (Beat.) Maybe they do.

Rose looks at him for a moment. Puzzled.

ROSE:

Don't be sad.

She starts to crawl up onto his lap.

LLOYD:

Careful! Careful, careful, you might break my bones.

ROSE:

I'm bein' as light an'careful as an angel.

LLOYD:

Easy. Easy. That's a girl.

Rose settles down on his lap and wraps her arms around him.

ROSE:

I'll be your angel for the summer if you want?

Murray shouts from off, down at the pier.

MURRAY:

Rose! Where are ya? Rose?

ROSE:

I gotta go. My Daddy's callin'.

Rose slips off Lloyd's lap and starts to go. Stops. Turns back to Lloyd.

ROSE:
Can I? Wouldja like that, if I was your angel for the summer?

MURRAY:
(Off.)
Angel?! Rose?!

ROSE:
I could do stuff for ya?

LLOYD:
I don't know, sweetheart. You better go.

ROSE:
Please?

LLOYD:
Well... (Beat.) Whatever you want.

Rose is elated.

ROSE:
Really? I can help you like an angel?

LLOYD:
Sure. But the next time you come over, you knock. Understand?

ROSE:
Oh, yes!

LLOYD:
Now beat it.

She spins on her heels and heads out the door, yelling at the top of her lungs...

ROSE:
Daddy! Daddy! I got somebody to help, just like an angel! I got somebody to help! I got somebody to help!

Lloyd watches her go. Smiles. Then wheels across the room.

There is thunder, low and rumbling in the distance.

Fade out as...

A smokey jazz riff plays.

SCENE TWO.

Fade in. The interior of Danceland. Early Sunday morning.

Dawn is breaking through a single pane window. A dusty white curtain billows on a gentle breeze.

Lily walks through the deserted dancehall, smoking a cigarette. Her silk dressing gown flows out behind her.

LILY:
(Sings to herself.)

Weatherman
Once the skies were blue
Now each day's cold and gray
Won't you chase the clouds away?
I can't endure the temperature.

Weatherman
I depend on you.
In my heart there's a chill
Where there used to be a thrill.
I need my man
Weatherman.

The winds are blowin'
I shake and shiver
My thoughts are goin'
Down to the river...

The doors to Danceland swing open. Sunlight slashes into the space.

Lily is startled. She stops singing abruptly.

A man is standing in the doorway, framed by the light. Lily can't make out who he is.

MURRAY:
(Laconically.)

Knock, knock.

Silence.

LILY:

Murray?

MURRAY:
Yup.

LILY:
You gave me quite a start.

MURRAY:
Sorry, Miss. I never thought.

LILY:
What are you doing here at this hour, shouldn't you be getting ready for church?

MURRAY:
No, Miss. We don't attend.

LILY:
(Dry.)
Smart.

Rose comes bursting in from the shadows behind Murray.

ROSE:
We used to go,
but Daddy lost belief.

LILY:
Jesus!

MURRAY:
No, I never. You hush, Rose. I've got my own ways. (Beat.) Sorry, Miss. We didn't mean to startle ya.

LILY:
It's alright. I just wasn't expecting anyone. The guys in the band clear out pretty quickly after the last set, but sometimes I like to stay and watch the sun come up.

MURRAY:
I know.

ROSE:
That's the best way to say hello to God, isn't it?

LILY:
Yes. Yes, it is. I never thought of it that way.

ROSE:
He lives in the lake, doesn't He, Daddy?

MURRAY:
So they say.

ROSE:
He lives in everything. In every living thing. That's why we don't have to go to church; we can talk to God without a preacher.

Rose holds out a wildflower.

ROSE:
This is for you.

Lily takes the flower.

LILY:
Where did you find this?

ROSE:
Growing along the road by the lake.

LILY:
It's beautiful. Thank you. (Beat.) How did you know I'd be here to give it to?

Rose blushes and looks to Murray.

ROSE:
The god in the lake told me to...

MURRAY:
(Interrupts.)
We were goin' down to the pier to start the boat for the mornin' run up the lake to Brown's when I seen yer husband, Lloyd, sitting down there on his wheelchair.

LILY:
Lloyd? (Beat.) Oh, Jesus, he was supposed to wait at home.

She goes to the window and looks down to the pier.

MURRAY:
Sure. He's been sittin' down there ever since I brung him up the lake, about nine o'clock last night. I wouldn't worry about him, though; I've been keepin' an eye on him; I even went down a couple times last night and asked him why he didn't just come on inside like everybody else?

MURRAY:
(Continues...)
(Beat.) He's been drinkin' a lot, eh? Cursin' and drinkin' an' playin' along with you on his clarinet; he never missed a song, all night. (Beat.) Crazy, eh?

LILY:
Something like that. I'd better scoot.

Lily starts to go.

MURRAY:
Oh, I'd leave him out there to sober up; I'd let him cool down a bit if I was you. We'll take him in the boat with us when we go; tell him how great you were last night; how me an' Rose walked ya home alone to The Hiawatha right after the show. (Beat.) I hate people when they're actin' crazy; the scare the bejesus outta me.

Pause.

ROSE:
I'm named after you.

LILY:
Is that so?

MURRAY:
(Embarassed.)
Well, ya both got the name of flowers.

Lily laughs.

ROSE:
An' we were watchin' you through the crack in the door 'cause I wanted to see the lady I'm named after, an' Daddy said we could, but only this once, but he bumped the door an' made a noise, so we hadta open it.

MURRAY:
We were not spyin'. You quit lyin', Rose.

ROSE:
I'm not lyin'.

MURRAY:
Yes, ya are. Now you go on down to the boat an' start bailin'.

ROSE:
But, Daddy...

MURRAY:
I said, git goin' or I'll send ya home an' never bring ya out for the mornin' run up the lake again.

ROSE:
But I never...

MURRAY:
Rose, I mean it. God says lyin's a sin, an' you lied. Now get.

Rose runs out the door. It creaks and slams shut behind her.

MURRAY:
Kids, eh?

Pause.

LILY:
Thanks.

MURRAY:
For what?

LILY:
The advice. No sense in upsetting him any farther. What's a little white lie?

MURRAY:
A little white lie.

They both laugh.

In the distance, Lloyd, down on the pier, starts to play "It's A Sin To Tell A Lie".

Lily laughs and begins to sing along with the clarinet, teasing Murray.

LILY:

Be sure it's true
When you say I love you.
It's a sin to tell a lie.
Millions of hearts have been broken
Just because these words were spoken
"I love you. Yes, I do. I love you".
If you break my heart I'll die.
So be sure that it's true
When you say I love you
It's a sin to tell a lie.

She sprawls out on the floor in front of him like a big cat, laughing at her own joke.

Pause.

MURRAY:

I remember you from school up at Watrous, before you went away to be a singer. (Beat.) I remember when ya left here. Boy, did people talk. (He laughs.) It's no wonder ya stayed away so long. You couldn'ta come back if ya wanted. At least not until ya got famous enought ta rub it in their noses.

LILY:

Rub their noses in it.

MURRAY:

Whatever.

Pause.

LILY:

I didn't, you know.

MURRAY:

What?

LILY:

Come back to rub their noses in it.

MURRAY:

I know.

LILY:

What do you know?

MURRAY:
Why you come back.

LILY:
You do, do you?

MURRAY:
Yeah. I do. (Beat.) Ya come back because ya couldn't stay away.

LILY:
I came back because my husband is ill.

MURRAY:
An' ya knew that ya could bring him back here an' the lake would help him get better. Little Manitou's a sanctuary; maybe it doesn't look like Eden in The Bible, but it's an Eden just the same. Where else could ya see a blade a grass throw a shadow five feet long?

LILY:
I know.

MURRAY:
I know ya know. That's why ya come back.

LILY:
I know.

MURRAY:
Told ya, didn't I?

LILY:
Yes, you did. I suppose you did, yes.

She gets up and goes to the window overlooking the lake.

LILY:
It's so beautiful. The lake. So blue against the brown of the hills. (Beat.) It's funny how smooth they look.

MURRAY:
They're not, ya know.

LILY:

I know. Lloyd and I took the train out from Chicago. It's a lot slower than coming out by car, but it's easier for him to travel that way now. We used to drive everywhere... St. Louis. New Orleans. New York. Once we even drove all the way to Mexico City, just like a couple of outlaws, then all the way back home to Chicago. But you know what's funny? On all those car trips I never once saw the land as clearly as I saw it from the train. And you know what? It scared me. It scared the living daylights out of me to see how the hills are covered with rose bushes and thistle and little bits of shattered rock, and how everything is dried up, stunted, twisted out of shape because the sky is lying right on top of it.

MURRAY:

(Entranced.)

I like drivin' over the prairie in a car. It makes ya feel real small, like a mouse runnin' over a turtle's back.

Pause.

MURRAY:

I... I... I should be headin' out soon.

LILY:

Don't hurry away on my account.

MURRAY:

I'm not. It's just... what about...?

He nods toward Rose and Lloyd, down at the pier.

LILY:

It's alright. Rose is probably teaching him how to skip rocks.

Pause.

MURRAY:

I better go.

Pause.

MURRAY:

I never been anyplace else like you have. Well, nowhere special like Chicago or New York City. But I can tell ya that this place is special, too, an' that's why ya can feel the sky lyin' right on top of ya. But it's a good lyin' on top of ya, like at night when ya were a kid an' ya'd scare yerself an' then pray ta Jesus an' He'd come an' cover ya all over with a warm blanket of love.

LILY:

I see.

MURRAY:

I know ya do, Miss.

LILY:

Lily.

MURRAY:

Alright. Lily. I like that. Lily. (Beat.) Lily. (Beat.) I never knew anybody famous. (Beat.) But you don't count, do ya, 'cause I already knew ya before. Well, sort of. I seen ya around here anyway, when we were kids. Up at school, or down at the east beach, or smokin' cigarettes with the older guys down under the lattice work below here at Danceland. (Beat.) An' late one night when I was about twelve, I seen ya lyin' all alone on the pier an' I thought to myself that all the soundsa the dancin' an' the music floatin' outta here in Danceland was just a dream an' here we were, the only two souls in the universe an' both of us hearin' the same things, just like Adam an' Eve.

LILY:

Nothing but silence mixing with the music of the spheres.

Silence.

MURRAY:

Was it hearin' the music that made ya want to be a dancehall singer, or didja always want ta be one?

LILY:

Always.

She pulls out a pack of smokes.

LILY:
Want one?

MURRAY:
Oh, no. Thank you, Miss... Lily.

LILY:
Oh, come on. You smoke. I've seen you lots of times. Have a smoke with me, then you can take Lloyd on up to Brown's with you.

Pause.

Murray takes a cigarette.

MURRAY:
Thanks.

Pause.

Lily lights their smokes.

MURRAY:
Did you really see me lots of times?

LILY:
Sure. You're always driving past me in your boat.

MURRAY:
I know. I always see you walkin' along the shore.

LILY:
Then you should wave, silly.

MURRAY:
I wanted to a coupla times, but you always looked like you wanted to be alone, so I never.

LILY:
Well, next time wave.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Where else didja see me?

LILY:
I don't know. Lots of places.

MURRAY:
Like where?

LILY:
All over. At the train station in Watrous.

MURRAY:
Where else?

LILY:
What's this?

MURRAY:
Just tell me where ya seen me like I told where I seen you.

LILY:
Alright. I've seen you driving down the lake in your boat; I've seen you picking up passengers with your car at the train station; and late last night I saw you out in the middle of the lake, diving naked off your boat and playing like a dolphin in the moonlight.

MURRAY:
I know. I seen ya watchin' me. I wanted ta swim over to ya an' talk, but I was too embarassed, so I just stayed in the lake, swimmin' an' playin', until ya left an' went back inta here, in Danceland.

LILY:
I knew you'd seen me. That's why I stayed so long. (Beat.) You surprise me.

MURRAY:
Do I?

LILY:
Oh, yes. Oh, yes, you do.

She moves away from him.

Pause.

MURRAY:
So, we're even, eh?

LILY:
How so?

MURRAY:
You were watchin' me just like I watched you that night when I was twelve.

LILY:
I suppose so. But we're not children anymore, are we?

Pause.

MURRAY:
Do ya like watchin' people?

LILY:
Sometimes.

MURRAY:
Me, too.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Didja ever see yerself? Like turn around an' see yerself comin' up behind ya?

LILY:
I don't think so, no.

MURRAY:
I did. Once when I was twenty four. An' it sure did surprise me 'cause mostly I just keep an eye out for what others are doin', eh?

Lily laughs. Murray catches her by the jaw.

MURRAY:
No. Really. Don't laugh.

He releases her.

MURRAY:
One night I couldn't sleep, an' then just before dawn I got up an' went for a walk. Just ta see the sun comin' up an' to hear the birds start ta singin'. An' I walked along here by the lake, an' nobody else was around, just like this mornin'. An' I walked an' walked, an' said a little prayer ta The Lord ta thank him for all the beauty an' such around me, an' then I sat down on this big

MURRAY:
(Continues...)
rock beside the lake, just lookin' at the sun comin' up an' at the water movin' by, an' then I just kinda fell asleep but my eyes were open an' I could see everything but I was asleep, sittin' there lookin' out at nature, when all of a sudden this snake slithers outta the grass right in fronta me. It was just a garter snake, right. That's the only kind we got here, so it never scared me or nothin', it just got my attention real quick. So I looked up, an' there I was, walkin' down the path toward myself. (Beat.) I guess that snake startled me an' my body woke up before my sould could get back into it. An' it's a lucky thing, too, it was a snake I seen, an' not a person, 'cause if a person crosses yer path while yer soul's outta yer body they can snap the little thread that keeps it connected, an' then yer sould can't find ya, an' it hasta spend all eternity roamin' around, lookin' for ya, so it can get back into ya through yer eyeballs, which is where it come out. (Beat.) So that made me start thinkin' about havin' a soul, an' bein' one a God's children, but still bein' a part of the animal world, too, an' how sometimes things mean things. I mean, they can't happen all by themselves, can they?

LILY:
No. They can't.

Pause.

LILY:
How old's your daughter?

MURRAY:
Twelve.

LILY:
Where's her mother?

MURRAY:
I dunno. Up north, prob'ly, I don't know.

LILY:
Why didn't she take the child?

MURRAY:
She did. Sort of. For a while, anyway. Then she brought it back home an' took back off with some guy from Battleford, who works at The Sask. (Beat.) Crazy, hunh? (Beat.) She was an Indian. (Beat.) So after that, I hadta look after Rose. An' my Mom said she'd help; that yer life is yer life, an' yer child is yer child, an' shouldn't be made ta be brought up in the ways of strangers. (Beat.) That's why we don't go to church anymore. (Beat.) 'Cause of all the gossip goes on. (Beat.) So, I'm not really married anymore. Well, I am, but just sorta.

He moves to Lily.

Pause.

MURRAY:
You're the one who's married.

LILY:
Sort of.

Silence.

MURRAY:
Look. The sky's turnin' inside out.

LILY:
Yes. Dawn.

Murray moves in behind her. They both gaze out the window.

MURRAY:
The whole sky looks like it's turned inside out, an' yer lookin' down at islands in the ocean.

LILY:
How do you know what the ocean looks like?

MURRAY:
I don't. But I can imagine.

LILY:
I'll bet you can.

MURRAY:
I love imaginin'. It's my favourite thing ta do; besides watchin' people. An' every day, winter an' summer, all year long, year after year, ya can look at the sky an' imagine it's... a very beautiful woman.

Pause.

He begins to nibble on her neck and fondle her breasts.

Pause.

Lily moves away from him and stubs out her cigarette.

LILY:
I've been watching you.

MURRAY:
I know. I seen ya doin' it.

LILY:
I know. I've seen you see me.

She moves into his arms and they begin to make love as they dance.

MURRAY:
When I see my arms goin' around your shoulder blades I feel like I'm holdin' bird bones. My arms look bigger than they really are, an' my veins stick out all blue an' muscley the way I always think a man's arms should look an' mine never do.

LILY:
Sssssshhhhhh! Don't talk.

She pushes his shirt up off his chest and nuzzles on his nipples and belly.

MURRAY:
Mmmmmmmmm. So soft. So soft.

He lifts her face to his, and they exchange long, deep kisses.

He undoes her dressing gown and starts to kiss her breasts.

The door swings open and Rose comes running into the dancehall.

ROSE:
Mr. Lloyd says to...

She stops dead in her tracks, turns and heads back to the door.

MURRAY:
(Bellows.)
Rose! You get back here. You sit.

He points to the ground at his feet.

Rose heels like an obedient dog.

MURRAY:
Now you stay put. What did you see?

ROSE:
Nothin'.

MURRAY:
Were you spyin'?

ROSE:
No.

MURRAY:
Don't lie, Rose. Were you spyin'?

LILY:
It's alright, Murray. She wasn't spying, were you Rose?

ROSE:
No, Miss.

MURRAY:
Are ya sure? Are ya sure ya never seen us neckin'?

ROSE:
No.

MURRAY:
Good. Or else I'll take ya out an leave ya at the side a the road fer, fer that that American fella, unh, unh, Dillinger, yeah, Dillinger, ta git.

ROSE:
(Terrified.)
Don't, Daddy. Don't.

MURRAY:
He's... he's hidin' up at Bienfait. I... I seen him myself. A little guy in a hat an' glasses. An American fella. An' he comes up here lookin' fer little girls who spy, an' he picks them up off the side a the road an' takes them away ta feed to his dogs.

ROSE:
I wasn't spyin'. Honest.

LILY:
You're scaring her, Murray, so stop it. It's alright honey, your Daddy didn't mean to scare you, did you Murray?

MURRAY:
No. But if yer lyin', Rose, yer gonna git such a hidin'...

ROSE:
You're the liar, Daddy! You're the liar!

MURRAY:
Ohhh. I am not. I am not.

He starts to move in on Rose.

LILY:
Murray, Dillinger's dead and you know it. Some woman saw him coming out of a movie theatre in Chicago last month and called the cops. They set up an ambush and shot him down.

MURRAY:
An' he had his face changed, so how do you know it was really him that they shot down?

LILY:
Oh, come on...

MURRAY:
An' how come the Mounties been around lookin' for an American fella they say did the killin' up in Bienfait last week? Why'd anybody except Dillinger wanna come all the way up here just ta do a killin' when there's plenty ta do right at home in The States? No. No, it was him I seen. I know it. He's here. He's here hidin' out again, just like he does every summer, an' he'll git ya Rose if ya don't come over here right now an' take a good lickin'.

Rose shrieks and clings to Lily for safety.

ROSE:
Noooooooooooooooo!

LILY:
Don't frighten the child.

MURRAY:
Don't tell me how ta raise my daughter.

LILY:
I'm not telling you how to...

MURRAY:
You don't even have one, so how would you know how to raise it?

LILY:
Because I remember what it felt like to be one!

MURRAY:
Rose! Git over here right now, I'm gonna tan yer hide for disobedience!

Rose clings harder to Lily.

ROSE:
Noooooooooooooooo!

MURRAY:
I said, git over here!

He grabs Rose from Lily, and throws the child across the floor.

Lily and Rose scream together...

LILY/ROSE:
Nooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!

The child hits the floor, and Murray pulls his belt out of his beltloops in a single motion.

Lily lunges at him and grabs his upraised arm.

Murray stops dead. Surprised by her strength.

LILY:
I'll tell you something, Murray. Dillinger's not dead. I lied. He did have his face changed. Then he drove twelve hundred miles up here with the F.B.I. on his tail, because he's a friend of mine and he knew I'd help him out. That's his white Chevy convertible that's been parked out behind The Hiawatha Hotel all week. He hides out in my dressing room. So if you lay so much as one finger on that child, or mention so much as one word about what went on in here this morning, I'm going to whisper in his ear what a dangerous son of a bitch you really are, and he'll hunt you down and put a bullet through your brain just like he did to that poor bastard of a union man up in Bienfait last week.

Silence.

MURRAY:
C'mon, Rose. We gotta go.

He hoists Rose up off the floor and hurries to the door.

As he gets there, he turns back to Lily.

MURRAY:
We'll take yer husband, Lloyd, with us, too. There's no point in his waitin' around all mornin' for an adulteress.

Murray and Rose plunge through the doors and run down to the pier.

Sunlight blasts past them until the double doors slam shut.

Lily is in a state of shock.

LILY:
(Quietly.)
Jesus Christ!

Fade Out.

SCENE THREE.

Fade in. Lloyd's cabin.

Early afternoon. Sunday.

It is extremely hot.

Lloyd is alone, sharing a couple of stiff cocktails with himself and working on some new arrangements.

He hums a few notes, then tries to write them down. He's not being too successful and is getting frustrated.

He snaps his pencil in half and slams back a couple belts of rye.

LLOYD:
Jazz. Christ. What a life.

He tosses his sheet music into the air. It falls down around him like snowflakes.

He hears footsteps approaching.

LILY:
(Off.)
Lloyd?

Lloyd wheels away into a dark corner.

We hear the persistent drone of flies.

Lily enters, carrying a couple of small suitcases.

LILY:
Lloyd?

Silence.

She puts the suitcases down, then starts to pick up the sheafs of sheet music.

LLOYD:
(From the shadows.)
Looking for something?

LILY:
Lloyd!?

LLOYD:
Surprise, surprise.

LILY:
You're here.

LLOYD:
I live in this hovel, you're the one has to stay in a fancy hotel.

LILY:
Nice to see you, too. You're in a good mood.

LLOYD:
I don't have moods.

LILY:
Good. Neither do I. (Beat.) Are these your new arrangements? I told the boys in the band I'd work with them later today.

LLOYD:
Oh, you did, did you? And where do I fit into these plans?

LILY:
Well... you don't. It's my band.

LLOYD:
And they're my arrangements.

LILY:
I know, but it's our night off and we've been playing the same tunes for two weeks now, we need some new material. I just thought I'd take them down to Danceland and run through them a couple of times.

LLOYD:
Well, think again, Missy. Think again.

LILY:
But you wrote them for me.

LLOYD:
I wrote them for me. They're my ticket out of here and I'm not giving them to anybody unless I get to see a substantial part of the action. Those clowns in your band can't even read. You think I want people hearing farmers play my arrangements?

LILY:
They're not farmers. They're from Saskatoon.

LLOYD:
Same difference. They're so white they're almost blue. Who the hell do you think you are, leaving me stranded on a pier...

LILY:
I didn't leave you stranded on a pier... I didn't even know you were there!

LLOYD:
...in the middle of hell's half acre all night and then come waltzing in here to steal my arrangements as if nothing happened?

LILY:
I wasn't stealing your arrangements; I was just going to borrow them!

LLOYD:
Borrow! Is that what you call it? Borrow? Right. And teach them to a bunch of thieving musicians; the next thing I know I'm hearing my tunes on the radio and haven't got a penny to show for it. Six months work spread around as free and easy as a case of crabs.

LILY:
Don't be so vulgar.

LLOYD:
Oh, I forgot. You regained your virginity when we crossed the border.

LILY:
Stop it, Lloyd, I'm sick of it. You throw a jealous conniption fit at least twice a day!

LLOYD:
I do not!

LILY:
Yes, you do. You haven't let up on me since we got here. Two whole weeks.

LLOYD:
And I've got seven more weeks to go; day after day cooped up in this Hades hot cabin listening to the goddamned flies ricochet off the screens while you stay up in town screwing around with the local playboys.

LILY:
I am not screwing around with the local...

LLOYD:
Murray told me he saw some man hiding in your dressing room this morning.

LILY:
That's stupid, Lloyd. How could Murray see somebody who wasn't there?

LLOYD:
Maybe he's clairvoyant.

LILY:
That's a laugh.

LLOYD:
If that sucker had half a brain it'd be lonely, but he doesn't have any reason to lie to me. He came running out of Danceland this morning as if he'd seen the Devil himself. He practically kidnapped me off the pier. I wanted to stay and spend the morning at the hotel with you, but he wouldn't let me. He was stuttering away and his daughter was crying; they drove me up the lake like a bat out of hell and dumped me out on the beach. I had to crawl up for help to push this goddamned wheelchair through the sand and I want to know where the hell you've been!

LILY:
Packing! Getting ready to move out here with you, alright?!

LLOYD:
Murray says Dillinger's here and The Mounties are looking for him. That's why you stayed up at Danceland all night isn't it? The papers say he had his face changed.

LILY:
Dillinger?! For the last time, Lloyd, Dillinger's dead!

LILY:
For God's sake, calm down. You're hysterical.

LLOYD:
I AM NOT HYSTERICAL! I took a bullet in the belly from that son of a bitch, and I am not hysterical!

LILY:
WE WERE SHOOTING COCAINE, WE WERE NOT SCREWING! It's not my fault you came busing into a private hotelroom. He thought you were a cop. Jealousy, Lloyd! One of these days it's going to kill you. (Beat.) I was at the hotel. Packing. Alright? Either accept my word on it or I'll pack your waxy old carcass back onto the train to Chicago.

LLOYD:
You wouldn't dare.

LILY:
Just watch me. (Beat.) I don't know why I didn't dump you years ago.

LLOYD:
Because you needed my talent; you still do!

LILY:
I don't believe this.

LLOYD:
I made you who you are and now that I'm a cripple, you just shuck me off onto the floor like a used rubber. Hell, the maid'll be around in the morning to pick me up. (Beat.) You sucked my talent like a vampire. Sometimes when we'd make love, your hands felt like claws in my back, and I'd hear your tongue so loud in my ear, sucking and sucking, trying to suck the music right out of my brain, and I'd know you needed me and I'd know you hated me for it.

LILY:
You're wrong about when I started to hate you. (Beat.) It didn't start in bed. I might have needed you, and God knows I worshipped your talent, worshipped it to the point where I didn't think I had any myself.

LLOYD:
Oh, come on...

LILY:
I started to hate you... I started to hate you the moment you walked into that hotelroom in Chicago.

LLOYD:
So what was I supposed to do?

LILY:
The look on your face...

LLOYD:
Keep on playing blackjack...

LILY:
You were purple with rage...

LLOYD:
...down in the bar?

LILY:
JEALOUSY, LLOYD! JEALOUSY!

LLOYD:
YOU WERE MY WIFE!

LILY:
You were shouting...

LLOYD:
I LOVED YOU!

LILY:
You were shouting...

LLOYD:
I loved you!

LILY:
You took away my choice!

LLOYD:
I loved you.

LILY:
You destroyed my freedom. (Beat.) You have no idea what you walked in on. The freedom. The possibilities. To be in that room with that man. To be sitting there with John Dillinger, the most dangerous man in the world... I was flying. I was free. Maybe just for a minute. Maybe just for a couple of hours, but Jesus Christ, I could have been free and if a person can't be free in this life, even if it's only for long enough to feel an assassin's bullet in your brain, then it sure as hell isn't worth living. (Beat.) You're not the man I married. You've become unbelievably cruel. I did not suck your talent. You were thirty four when we met; I was only sixteen, what did I know? I'd run away from home. I'd only been in Chicago for ten days!

LLOYD:
Exactly my point.

LILY:
What.

LLOYD:
Who ever heard of a singer being from Saskatchewan? Nobody. That's who. Until I picked you up and made you who you are.

LILY:
I am who I am because of me, not because of you, so don't patronize me, you bastard.

LLOYD:
(Mimmicks.)
Don't patronize me, you bastard. Just fuck me and make me famous.

LILY:
(Beat.) You self pitying parasite. If you'd just stop feeling sorry for yourself you might make something of yourself again. But, oh, no. You'd rather cripple around in your wheelchair, whining and complaining.

LLOYD:
I DO NOT WHINE!

LILY:
Yes, you do. YOU WHINE! You do nothing but whine and bitch and feel sorry for yourself. You're an emotional cripple, Lloyd, and I'm not going to take it. You like being sick. You like being a cripple. You like it because it makes you feel as if you have control over me again, just like when we first met.

LLOYD:
Control?! Control?! Nobody could control you. You screwed every musician and criminal in the midwest!

LILY:
SO?! (Beat.) You know something, Lloyd? You're right. I have needs. Sexual needs. Remember?

LLOYD:
Who cares?

LILY:
I care! And so should you!

LLOYD:
Alright! So why don't you just diddle me and get it over with; just quit all this yip, yip, yip!

LILY:
(To herself.)
Christ.

Silence.

LLOYD:
(Lost.)
I don't know what I'd do without you, alright?

Pause.

LILY:
You'd manage.

LLOYD:
Probably. But I wouldn't like it.

LILY:
Why not? Nobody to boss around?

LLOYD:
Naah. Nobody to dance with. (Beat.) You're a swell dancer.

Pause.

LLOYD:
(Subdued.)
I'm sorry.

LILY:
(Beat.) Just be stronger, alright?

LLOYD:
Alright. I promise. (Beat.) I treasure you.

LILY:
Don't treasure me, Lloyd. Just love me. (Beat.) Just love me the way you used to.

Pause.

LLOYD:
I love you, Lily. I really do.

Silence.

LLOYD:
C'mon. (Beat.) Dance with me.

LILY:
You're kidding.

LLOYD:
I never kid about dancing.

Pause.

Lloyd, very slowly and with considerable pain, draws himself up onto his feet.

He stands for a moment, unsure if he can support himself.

Then he gains his footing and reaches out to her.

LLOYD:
C'mon. Just once. For old time's sake.

She goes to him and takes his hands, supporting his weight.

LLOYD:
(Beat.) We had some times, hunh?

They start to dance; a slow, close waltz.

After awhile, Lloyd begins to sing very softly to her.

LLOYD:
Just when romance got its start
You decided it was time to part
How could ya?

Lily joins him...

LLOYD/LILY:
'Cause it was on a night like this
You left me and didn't leave a kiss
How could ya? Oh, oh, how could ya?

You know that love is just like apple pie
It's either sweet or tart.
You could be the apple of my eye,
But you, you, you upset the apple cart.
I was lookin' forward to
All those little things you didn't do
How could ya, could ya, could ya break my heart?

By the time they finish, they are laughing and kissing.

The laughter subsides.

Silence.

LLOYD:
Oh, baby, I've gotta siddown.

Lily slowly lowers him back down into his wheelchair.

LILY:
You're getting better, Lloyd. Come on, let's spend some time in the lake, take a mudbath down on the shore.

LLOYD:
Don't be ridiculous. No goddamned magic mud is going to get me another band like The Dawn Patrol Boys.

LILY:
(Beat.) The mud isn't magic. It's got minerals in it.

LLOYD:
Who cares, it's still mud.

LILY:
I know, but it's special mud. Like at Karlsbad, in Germany.

LLOYD:
Maybe the idea of a mudbath sounds better in Kraut.

LILY:
Maybe it does. (Beat.) Look. It's simple. You cover yourself in mud and then let the sun bake it onto your skin; it pulls all the poisons out of you. Then you go for a long, salty swim in the lake and wash it off, and then you do it again and again, all day long, all summer long.

LLOYD:
I know. I just feel really stupid sitting around all covered with mud in a wheelchair at the beach.

LILY:
Well, don't take the wheelchair, silly. Use your crutches. (Beat.) C'mon, let's go. I'll limp, so that when we get there you can say the crutches are mine.

She goes to get some towels and their swimwear.

LILY:
When I was walking out here I found some long salt crystals down on the beach. They must have been six or seven inches long. I was going to bring them to you, but I was afraid they'd turn to dust in my pocket.

She hands him his trunks and a towel, then starts to undress him.

LILY:
Little Manitou's a sanctuary; an Eden. It's where I grew up; where I'm from. (Beat.) When we were kids we'd come out here on winter evenings and toboggan down the ravine over by Winnipeg Street, or go skating out on the lake. And afterwards, all the families would gather at the hotel. Not The Hiawatha. The other one. The old one. I forget what it was called. It burnt down. (Beat.) The hotels at the lake are always burning down.

Lloyd is naked now.

LLOYD:
God, you're something.

Pause.

He crawls into his trunks.

LILY:
It's even more beautiful here in the winter than in the summer. Everything takes on the colour of the sky and the sun; everything turns mauve and pink and blue, every shade of blue; except the hills. The wind blows all the snow down into drifts on the lake and the hills stay as bare and brown in the winter as they do in the summer. It sweeps the snow back off their brows like my mother used to sweep the hair back off my forehead. (Pause.) I remember winter nights when the boys would come down from Watrous to play hockey. We'd all tell our Moms we were coming down to practice figure skating, but we weren't. We were coming down to watch the boys get rough with each other. And sometimes, after they'd played for awhile, we'd snuggle down with them in the snowdrifts under the lattice work at Danceland and smoke cigarettes; and maybe one of the older boys, one of the tough ones, would neck with you.

She hands Lloyd his crutches.

He takes them from her, then lowers them down onto the floor.

He reaches out and gently carresses her.

LILY:

It's funny, you know. I remember one night; after chores; after supper, in the dark; after the boys had come down and shovelled the snow off the ice, they brought down this can of gasoline and poured it out, all over their hockey rink. Then they had everybody stand back and one of them, one of the older guys, I forget his name, he was a great kisser, he's a farmer now, lit a match and tossed it out onto the ice. The whole lake seemed to explode. The flames must have been ten feet high, and they burned like hell for about a minute and a half; they actually set the ice on fire and scorched the snowdrifts at the side of the rink. I'll never forget it. They actually burned the snow. And we all just stood and watched, horrified, but fascinated, because we knew the fire couldn't go anywhere; it was so hot and contained that it had to burn itself out. And when it was over, except for a few patches of flame, lingering in the corners, the lake ice was covered with a thin film of water. And we watched as it froze; it only took about another minute; it's so cold here in the winter. And then, when it was frozen, mirror perfect, you could see the stars reflected in it, the boys rushed out onto the ice and started gouging and chipping away at it with the heels of their skateblades. And I jumped out, too. Not to wreck it, but to protect it; to keep it perfect; just one tiney corner of the ice rink. And when the boys would swoop past me on their skates, I'd slam my elbow into their ribs; I learned that from watching them play hockey; and they'd fall down and then get up and glide to their buddies; and it happened again and again, a half dozen times, until they formed a gang and came sweeping down the ice toward me, and I started jumping up and down, doing it myself, gouging and chipping away with the heel of my skateblade, better than any one of them could have done. (Beat.) I never understood why I did that. I guess, I just felt that if something perfect was going to be destroyed, I'd rather do it myself. (Beat.) There's a power here; in this valley. Where else could you see a blade of grass throw a shadow five feet long?

LLOYD:

I don't know.

LILY:
Neither do I.

LLOYD:
(Beat.) C'mon. I'm just about ready for that mudbath.

LILY:
Good. Let's go, then.

She reaches up and gently carresses his face.

LILY:
When it gets dark, I'll show you how the sky turns inside out.

She puts her arms around him and they head for the door.

Fade out.

SCENE FOUR.

Danceland.

Dusk. Sunday.

Deep mauve light spills in through the curtains. Gold light flows in under the doors.

Rose is wearing Lily's dressing gown.

She is entertaining Murray. The two of them are convulsed with laughter.

As their laughter subsides, Murray speaks...

MURRAY:
Do it again, Rose.

ROSE:
Nooooo, Daddy.

MURRAY:
Rose... C'mon, be Lily again.

ROSE:
No, Daddy.

MURRAY:
C'mon, Rose, you do her so good. (Beat.) Ro-ose. (Beat.) Be Lily again.

ROSE:
Don't be monkeynuts, Daddy. It's gettin' dark out an' people'll be comin'.

MURRAY:
Please. I'll watch the door, Rose. Please.

ROSE:
I am too named after her.

MURRAY:
I know that. Jeez. (He sings softly...)
Weatherman, Weatherman...

ROSE:
(Beat.) Alright. But just one more time.

MURRAY:
Okay. Then we'll put her nightie thing back in her dressing room.

ROSE:
(Reluctant.)
Alright.

MURRAY:
Good girl.

He gives her a kiss. Then she starts to sing.

ROSE:
Weatherman
Once the skies were blue
Now each day's cold and gray
Won't you chase the clouds away?

Murray sings along, lost in his own fantasy world.

ROSE/MURRAY:
I need my man
Weatherman.

Murray stops singing. Rose continues.

ROSE:
The winds are blowin'
I shake and shiver
My thoughts are goin'
Down to the river...

Murray looses a hideous growl and chases Rose, both of them screaming with laughter, through the deserted dancehall.

He catches her from behind, hoists her up into the air above him, laughing and growling. He strips the dressing gown off her and then pretends to eat her alive.

They collapse into a jumble of arms, legs, laughter and tears. Eventually they both calm down a bit.

ROSE:
I love you, Daddy.

MURRAY:
I love you, too, Rose.

Pause.

Then Rose tries to pull the dressing gown away from him. Murray grabs at at. It rips.

Silence.

MURRAY:
Oh, no. No. You ripped it. You ripped her nightie thing.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Oh, she's gonna know. She's gonna think I ripped it. You see what you did?

ROSE:
We could take it away with us and then she'll think somebody stole it.

MURRAY:
Oh, that's bad. That's bad. That's stealin'. Really. Don't you ever steal. No. I'm gonna hafta say I ripped it. I'm gonna hafta lie for ya, and there's a worse punishment for lyin' than there is for stealin'. YOU SEE WHAT YOU DID?!

Murray growls and lunges at Rose. She curls up in a little ball.

ROSE:
Mmmmooooommmmmmeeeeeee!

Murray stops dead in his tracks. He picks up the dressing gown and disappears into Lily's dressing room.

Silence.

ROSE:
(Whimpers.)
Mommy? Mommy?

Silence.

Rose looks up. She is alone.

ROSE:
Daddy? (Beat.) Daddy? (Beat.) Daddy, where are you?

Silence.

ROSE:
Daddy, where are you?

Pause.

ROSE:
C'mon, Daddy. I know you're there.

Silence.

ROSE:
I didn't mean to do it, so come on out, Daddy. (Beat.) I'm goin' home, Daddy. (Beat.) Daddy, I'm goin' home now.

Silence.

ROSE:
Daddy?

Silence.

ROSE:
(Shrieks.)
Daaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaddddeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

She runs out of the dancehall. The doors slam shut behind her.

Silence.

Murray enters from the gloom of the dressing room, still holding Lily's silk dressing gown. He calls after Rose...

MURRAY:
Scaredycat!

Silence.

Murray is lost in thought.

He runs his hand over the dressing gown, enjoying the smooth feel of the silk. Then he lifts it to his face and inhales deeply.

MURRAY:
Mmmmmm. So good. Perfume and talcum powder and flower petals.

He inhales its fragrance again.

MURRAY:
So pretty. Aren't you the pretty one? Prettier even than when I used to watch you up at school in Watrous.

He goes to the window and peers out. Nobody's there. Then he crosses to the door and quickly peeks out through the keyhole. Again, nobody's there.

Murray undoes the buttons on his shirt and gently rubs the silk across his chest. Eventually, he takes his shirt right off and stops to inhale Lily's scent.

MURRAY:
Mmmmm. I can smell ya. Yes, I can. I can smell ya. (Beat.) Can you smell me? Can ya smell my sweat? Can ya? I can smell yours. Your not so clean. Not so pretty that you don't sweat, too. Ya sweat just like me, don'tcha? (Pause.) Does yer husband like the smell of yer sweat? I bet he doesn't. I bet he hasn't smelled ya fer a long time. A long, long time. An' I bet ya miss it. Miss bein' sniffed an' licked the way I could sniff an' lick ya. Oh, yes. Oh, yes, you do. (Beat.) I'm gonna get ya from him. Yes, I am. I'm gonna get you for my own. Even if I hafta lie for ya; oh, yeah, I'd lie for ya. Yes, I would. I'd lie ta make you my own.

He kicks off his shoes, then undoes the buttons on his pants and pushes them down around his ankles, all the time rubbing the silk dressing gown on his chest, his stomach, his thighs.

He straddles the dressing gown and then lies down on top of it, slowly making love to an imaginary Lily.

MURRAY:
I love ya, Lily. Yes, I do. I love ya. An' ya want me. Yeah. Ya do. I know it. Oh, yeah, ya needed me so bad this mornin'. I could feel ya pressed up against me, throbbin' an' achin' just like me. An' I needed ta fill ya up, fill ya up all creamy, an' then feel myself runnin' sticky back down outta ya, on your thighs an' on mine, an' know that when we finished we'd got each other's shape stored up in our bodies an' souls, an' we'd always become each other's shape, whenever we made love, even to other people, 'cause our love would hold, as pure an' strong as steel. It was. It was when I was smellin' your hair, an' feelin' your skin an' hearin' your breathin' so close to the surface that I could tell what you were thinkin'. Oh, yeah, I could hear your thinkin' through your breathin'. Yes, I could. I could hear your thinkin' just as loud as my own.

A shadow passes over the window, startling Murray.

MURRAY:
Shit. Oh, shit. Shit.

He frantically attempts to simultaneously disentangle himself from the dressing gown and pull his pants and shirt back on.

Having accomplished most of this, he now doesn't know what to do with the dressing gown, so he just chucks it on the floor.

He thinks better of this, runs to it, picks it up and tosses it off into Lily's dressing room.

Silence.

Somebody rattles the door from the outside.

MURRAY:
Who's there? Is that you, honey? Is that you?

He goes to the door and opens it.

MURRAY:
Rose? Rose? Hon?

Silence.

Murray panicks.

He slams the door and bolts it.

Silence.

MURRAY:
Dillinger. Shit. He's lookin' for a place ta hide.

The door rattles again.

Murray hunches down onto the floor and begins to crawl toward Lily's dressing room.

He stops dead.

MURRAY:
Shit.

He inches back to his shoes, gathers them up and resumes his journey across the floor.

MURRAY:
He's comin' in.... he's comin' in... he's comin' in... Oooooooh, shit, he's comin' in here... he's comin'... he's comin'... he's comin'...

A door opens and bangs shut at the back of the dancehall.

Murray crouches into a tight little ball. His whimpering punctuates the silence.

A light goes on in Lily's dressing room.

Silence.

Murray cowers on the floor.

The light goes out.

The door at the back opens and bangs shut.

Silence.

In the distance, a couple of large dogs bark.

MURRAY:
Jesus mercy, Jesus mercy, Jesus mercy...

Pause.

He gets up and looks out the window.

Nobody there.

He cautiously exits into Lily's dressing room.

Silence.

Moonlight streams in through the window. The curtains billow gently on the breeze.

MURRAY:
(Off.)
It's gone. He took it.

Silence.

Murray re-enters.

MURRAY:
Why'd Dillinger wanna take her nightie thing? (Beat.) Shit. I bet he's gonna kill her for screwin' around with another guy; that's what I'd do. I'll bet he's gonna kill her for screwin' around with... me.

He gathers his courage and moves to the door. Assured that nobody is there, he takes a large breath and then in one movement, unlocks the door and dives headlong into the moonlight.

MURRAY:
Llllliiiiiiiiiiiiiiillllllllllleeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

His voice echoes across the valley.

The door at the back creaks open and then bangs shut.

Rose enters from the shadows, carrying Lily's dressing gown.

ROSE:
Scaredycat.

Fade out.

(INTERMISSION.)

ACT TWO. SCENE ONE.

The cabin.

Late evening. Sunday.

There's a near empty bottle of bourbon sitting on the kitchen table.

Lloyd is in his wheelchair, his book of poetry on his lap.

LLOYD:
(Muttering.)
Sandburg, Sandburg, Sandburg. Where the hell is Sandburg?

He leafs through the book until he finds Sandburg.

LLOYD:
Here it is, here it is. "Limited".

He lifts the bottle off the table and takes a long pull off it.

LLOYD:
(Pleased as hell.)
Poetry. Jesus. Nothin' like a bit of poetry for a lonely old bastard who's had too much to drink.

He takes another pull off the bottle and commences to read aloud to himself. He is having a wonderful, maudlin time.

LLOYD:
I am riding on a limited express, one of the crack trains of the nation.
Hurtling across the prairie into blue haze and dark air go fifteen all-steel coaches holding a thousand people.
(All the coaches shall be scrap and rust and all the men and women laughing in the diners and sleepers shall pass to ashes.)
I ask a man in the smoker where he's going and he answers: "Omaha".

Pause.

Lloyd wipes a tear or two from his cheek, closes the book and takes another pull off the bottle. Then he slams it down onto the table.

He wheels over to the window and looks out into the night.

After a moment, he lifts his face up to the moon and begins to howl like a lonely wolf, over and over until he starts to laugh.

His laughter fills the cabin before it begins to falter and Lloyd starts to sob.

After awhile, his sobbing subsides and he becomes very still. The moonlight flows in through the window.

Pause.

Murray comes bursting into the cabin.

MURRAY:
Lily! Lily! Lloyd?! Hide! Hide! He's comin'! He's comin'!

LLOYD:
Who's coming?

MURRAY:
Dillinger!

LLOYD:
(Angry.)
Says who?!

MURRAY:
Me! Me. I seen him. I seen him myself.

LLOYD:
That's what you told me this morning; don't lie to me. I hate liars!

MURRAY:
Lloyd! Lloyd, ya gotta believe me; I got no reason to lie to you; I don't lie! I seen him. Seen him myself; just now; down at Danceland... I... I... I was down there playin' with Rose... my daughter Rose... an' we were playin' hide an' seek an' games an' stuff an' then she got scared one time when I

MURRAY:
(Continues.)
hid too long an' run home ta my Mom; an' that's when I seen him. (Beat.) Ohohohoh, I seen his shadow on the window, then I heard him rattlin' on the door.

LLOYD:
Alright, Murray, just calm down. Just calm down, now.

Pause.

Murray takes a couple of deep breaths; then he swallows hard as he remembers why he came.

MURRAY:
Where's Lily?

LLOYD:
She's up in town. She said she had a band practice; and she forgot her makeup or some damn thing in her old room at The Hiawatha.

MURRAY:
But I checked The Hiawatha, she's not in her room.

LLOYD:
(Beat.) I could use another drink.

MURRAY:
Me, too, Lloyd. Me, too.

LLOYD:
There's a fresh bottle of Bourbon and a couple of shot glasses in my boot; in the kitchen.

Murray goes out to pick up the shotglasses and the bottle.

LLOYD:
(Mutters.)
Dillinger. In a pig's eye.

Murray hightails it back out of the shadows, bottle and shotglasses in hand.

LLOYD:
You did right to come, Murray. So you just sit yourself down here. We're going to drink some whiskey and you're going to tell me exactly what you saw.

Murray sits.

Lloyd pours him a shot of whiskey and watches while he knocks it back. Then Lloyd pours him another. Murray knocks that one back, too.

Lloyd pours himself a shot, downs it, then pours out two more.

LLOYD:
You're alright now. You did right to come. (Beat.) So tell me what you saw.

MURRAY:
I was down in Danceland an' it was gettin' dark. An' I seen him pass by the window. That American fella. The one The Mounties been lookin' for, did the killin' up in Bienfait last week. The same one I seen this mornin', sneerin' at me from the shadows in... in yer wife, Lily's, dressin' room. I seen him around here a coupla times before, too.

LLOYD:
Dillinger?

MURRAY:
Dillinger.

LLOYD:
(Beat.) John Dillinger.

Pause.

Lloyd is undergoing a strange transition. His voice is filled with a cold, steely anger. He is calm and focussed; he suddenly seems dead sober.

LLOYD:
(Cold.)
So you saw him through the window.

MURRAY:
Then he tried ta get in through the door, only it was locked 'cause I got scared myself after my little girl run away.

LLOYD:
Is your little girl alright? Is she safe?

MURRAY:
Jesus. I don't know. I sure hope so. Jesus. Jesus, I hope so.

LLOYD:
Alright, alright. It's alright, Murray. She's probably safe at home.

MURRAY:
She must be. Yeah. She must be, 'cause she was gone about ten minutes before I seen him lookin' in at me through the window. (Beat.) Oh, God, I hope so.

LLOYD:
So, then what happened? How do you know for sure it was Dillinger?

MURRAY:
'Cause then he come in through the back door, an' went inta her... yer wife, Lily's... dressin' room, an' turned on the light.

LLOYD:
Did you see him then? Did you get a look at his face?

MURRAY:
Yeah. Yeah. He was wearin' a hat.

LLOYD:
Was he tall or short?

MURRAY:
Unh... unh... Tall!

LLOYD:
Liar!

Murray reaches over and grabs Lloyd by the knee.

MURRAY:
No! No! Short!

Lloyd recoils from Murray's grasp.

LLOYD:
Don't! Don't touch my legs!

MURRAY:
Sorry! Sorry!

LLOYD:
Nobody touches my legs!

MURRAY:
Sorry!

LLOYD:
Just be careful, alright?!

MURRAY:
Alright.

LLOYD:
Alright.

MURRAY:
Sorry.

LLOYD:
Stop apologizing!

MURRAY:
I said I was sorry!

LLOYD:
And I said, shut up!

MURRAY:
I am shut up! Jeez, you're not my mom, you know!

Lloyd cracks him across the skull.

Pause.

MURRAY:
I'm real sorry, Lloyd. I won't touch you no more, okay?

LLOYD:
Never mind. (Beat.) So then what did he do?

MURRAY:
He... He... He picked up her nightie thing and, oh, God, Lloyd, he was so ugly. His face is all scars where they stitched it back on, and he... he... he was rubbin' her nightie thing on himself. To get the smell. Like a... like a... like an animal. Sniffin' it an' then rubbin' it on himself.

LLOYD:
(Quiet.)
I'm going to kill the bastard.

Pause.

MURRAY:
I hope ya do kill him, Lloyd. I hope an' pray ya do kill him. He's an animal. Just like an animal. Killin' people an' stealin' their money. An' what he done ta yer wife... ta her... her nightie thing. He's... he's just like an animal.

LLOYD:
(Very cold.)
Shut up and drink your whiskey, Murray.

Murray does.

Pause.

LLOYD:
Then what did he do?

MURRAY:
He... He... He turned out the light an' he... an' he... he left! (Beat.) I seen it all; I seen his gun. I thought fer sure he was comin' out here in his car, that white Chevy they say he drives; the one's been parked out back of The Hiawatha Hotel all week; comin' out here ta kill her for lockin' outta his hidin' place. (Beat.) Oh, God, Lloyd, I hope I'm wrong.

LLOYD:
Did you see his car when you came in? The Chevy? Did you?

MURRAY:
No, Lloyd, I never. An' I sure was lookin'.

LLOYD:
You came out by boat, didn't you?

MURRAY:
Yeah, I...

LLOYD:
If he was coming out by car he'd have got here before you, wouldn't he?

MURRAY:
Unless he's hidin' in the bushes.

LLOYD:
No. He's not hiding in the bushes, Murray. I know Dillinger.

MURRAY:
Ya do?

LLOYD:
I do. (Beat.) Hotel rooms, Murray. He hides in hotel rooms.

MURRAY:
He does?

LLOYD:
He does. Which room did you check?

MURRAY:
Unh... top floor.

LLOYD:
Did you knock?

MURRAY:
Nope. I peeked in through the keyhole.

LLOYD:
Good move. Never knock on Dillinger's door, the bastard's fast as a rattlesnake.

MURRAY:
He is?

LLOYD:
He is.

MURRAY:
So, where is he?

LLOYD:
He's at The Hiawatha Hotel, Murray.

MURRAY:
But I checked The Hiawatha...

LLOYD:
You didn't check hard enough! (Beat.) Nope. He's at The Hiawatha Hotel in the view room on the top floor at the front with my goddamned whore of a wife. (Beat.) She's gonna die, too.

MURRAY:
Oh, no, Lloyd. Don't kill yer wife. Don't. Just don't, eh?

LLOYD:
I'm not gonna, Murray. (Beat.) You are.

He wheels away from Murray.

MURRAY:
Oh, no. No, no. No, no, no, no, no...

Pause.

Lloyd motions for Murray to come to him. Murray does.

Lloyd pours a couple big slugs of the rye into their glasses, then tucks the bottle into the side pocket on his wheelchair.

LLOYD:
Now you listen, and you listen good. I'm only going to tell you this once. You get it wrong, you're a dead man. You understand?

MURRAY:
(Nods.)
Sure, Lloyd. Sure. Whatever you want.

LLOYD:
Good. This what we're gonna do. We're gonna take this bottle and get back in your boat. We're gonna fill it with gasoline and stuff a rag in the top. Then we're gonna get off your boat at the pier below Danceland, just like it's a regular night. Then I'm gonna hide out inside and you're gonna go over to The Hiawatha, light the rag on fire and toss it through the window on the top floor at the front where the sinners are sleeping. (Beat.) Hellfire, Murray. You're gonna flush 'em out with Hellfire. And then you're gonna come back over to Danceland to help me. You're gonna help sad old Job turn his pain to joy. We're gonna wait in the shadows and ambush John Dillinger and his scarlet whore of Babylon.

Pause.

MURRAY:
So ya think they'll come?

LLOYD:
Where else are they gonna go?

MURRAY:
(Beat.) Okay. Okay, Lloyd. I'll do it.

LLOYD:
You're a good man, Murray.

Lloyd reaches down and gives Murray's shoulder a squeeze.

LLOYD:
Prodigals always come home. (Beat.) Cheers.

MURRAY:
Cheers.

They clink glasses and shoot back their drinks.

Lloyd hands Murray the other, empty bottle of Bourbon.

Murray gets to his feet. He's nervous, but willing.

MURRAY:
(Beat.) What if yer wrong, and he's hidin' on the boat?

LLOYD:
Then we'll know where he is, won't we? Here. Wait a minute. I'll need you to wheel me up from the pier once we get there.

Lloyd wheels over to his crutches, hoists himself up onto them and rolls the wheelchair across the floor. The empty wheelchair stops in front of Murray: he just stares at it.

Pause.

LLOYD:
Just push it for Christ's sake.

MURRAY:
I know. I know. Jeez.

Murray sticks his hand in his pocket and makes a mock gun, which he points at Lloyd.

MURRAY:
Bang, bang, yer dead.

LLOYD:
For Christ's sake, Murray, just start the boat, I've got you covered.

MURRAY:
Sure, Lloyd. Sure. I was just scared, that's all.

Murray pushes the wheelchair out through the door and watches its slow progress through the darkness. Then he bolts out after it.

Lloyd watches Murray go. Then he looks around the room. He hobbles over to the darkened kitchen, opens a drawer and pulls a pistol out. He tucks it into his belt and heads for the door. On his way out, he passes his clarinet. Stops. Picks it up.

LLOYD:
Better not forget you. Who knows, I might even want to play a little serenade.

He hobbles out the door, clarinet in hand.

Fade out.

ACT TWO. SCENE TWO.

Danceland.

Midnight. Sunday.

In black...

A lonesome, bluesy clarinet wails. A perfect riff. Smokey jazz. The sound is coming across the water, from Lloyd, who is approaching in Murray's boat.

Fade in. Rose, alone in the dancehall. She is applying liberal amounts of Lily's white makeup to her face.

She stops, and starts to pray.

ROSE:
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He leadeth me beside the still waters
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

She slowly lies down. Then sits back up again.

She puts on some eyeshadow - her face is beginning to look like a Kabuki mask.

ROSE:
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.

She slowly lowers herself to the ground again, then continues the prayer.

ROSE:
And Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil, for The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. No!

She sits back up again, frustrated because she can't remember the right words...

She adds a pair of huge red lips to her face mask.

ROSE:
Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me? Yes.
They rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

She stands up and begins to sing in a lewd, bluesy style... emulating Lily's most provocative stage moves.

ROSE:
Jesus loves me, this I know
For The Bible tells me so.
Little ones to him belong,
He is weak... I am weak, but He is strong.
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes, Jesus loves me.
The Bible told me so.

Rose finishes the song, then resumes her prayers.

ROSE:
God bless me. God love me. Bless the lake and the flowers and all the little animals, too. And God? Bless all the little starving babies. And, God? And, please, God? If I be good as an angel, let my Mom come home from livin' in your bosom forever and ever. Amen.

Her mouth drops open just as Lloyd, off in the approaching boat, lets loose another long, mournful clarinet wail.

Rose is surprised, delighted. As if the sound had come from her.

ROSE:
(Awestruck.)
Gawd.

She lifts her fact to the sky and opens her mouth wide.

The clarinet wails again, high and loud.

ROSE:
(Starting to spin.)
I'm an angel. An animal angel. I'm an angel, I'm an angel, I'm an angel.

The door at the back of the dancehall creaks open and then bangs shut.

Rose stops dead. Then she scoops up the makeup and disappears into the shadows.

Lily enters from the dressing room.

LILY:
(Mutters.)
Makeup... makeup... where the hell did I leave my makeup?

She stops and takes a long, deep breath.

Silence.

LILY:
(Low.)
Christ it's lonely here. (Beat.) Where's old long dong Dillinger when you really need him?

ROSE:
(From the shadows.)
He's dead, Miss. Just like...

LILY:
Jesus! What are you doing here?

ROSE:
Nothin'.

LILY:
(Sees Roses face.)
You little thief. You're the one who took my makeup.

ROSE:
No.

LILY:
Don't lie to me.

ROSE:
I'm not. (Beat.) I'm bein' a lost Assiniboine Princess, crawlin' toward the lake through the fevery night.

Rose gets down on the floor to demonstrate what that might look like. She crawls to Lily and then stops at her feet.

ROSE:
Except for me, there's just white people livin' here now. Presbyterians.

LILY:
Oh. Them.

ROSE:
(Beat.) I want to be like you.

LILY:
Oh. (Beat.) No. No, you don't.

ROSE:
Yes, I do.

LILY:
Whatever for?

ROSE:
Because you're like an angel.

Lily gently lifts Rose up off the floor.

LILY:
So are you, sweetheart. So are you.

ROSE:
I know. That's why I like you. We're both angels. Animal angels, cryin' for the stars at night.

LILY:
Animal angels. Right. Voodoo vixens is more like it. Now let's get you cleaned up and send you home before your Daddy...

ROSE:
NO!

She jumps back from Lily.

LILY:
Rose? What's the matter?

ROSE:
I'm not goin'. I'm stayin' here with you.

LILY:
But, honey, it's late...

ROSE:
I'm an angel; we're both angels, an' I'm stayin' here with you.

LILY:
But people will be worried about you.

ROSE:
People should be worried about you.

LILY:
What are you talking about?

ROSE:
You're all alone, an' you shouldn't be. (Beat.) Things are comin', I can hear 'em.

LILY:
What things?

ROSE:
Old things. From the lake. I can hear 'em howling like a pack of coyotes pullin' down a deer in a snowdrift.

LILY:
Now you're being silly; you're frightening me.

ROSE:
But you're an angel, too. Can't you hear 'em?

LILY:
No, Rose, I can't. There's nothing to hear; now let's wipe off that makeup and get you home before your Daddy...

ROSE:
NO!

Rose crouches low and her mouth drops open. She is having a seizure.

Lily watches as Rose struggles to let her pain out.

Then, from the depths of Rose's belly comes a cry, low, smokey, bluesy, almost like a clarinet wail.

Rose subsides onto the floor.

Lily goes to Rose and takes her in her arms. Rose is sobbing.

Eventually Rose becomes very quiet and very still, slumped in Lily's arms.

Pause.

ROSE:
(Quiet.)

Little Manitou was made from angel tears. That's why the lake's so salty; it's made from angel tears just like mine. It's a magic place, and nobody ever drowned here except for one beautiful Assiniboine Princess who could hear the animal angel cry inside her so loud she had to let it out. And her husband heard it and was so scared he beat her up to make it stop. And it did. But then the Princess was so lonely that she wanted to die. Then one night she heard her animal angel again, far away in the distance, just like a lonely coyote crying for the stars at night. But the angel was afraid to come close on account of it didn't want the Princess to get beat up again. So the Princess decided to run away to be with the angel again. And my Daddy said the god in the lake heard her footsteps running across the lake ice, and he couldn't stand for her to leave the valley and him be left livin' all alone, so he reached up through the ice and pulled her down to live in his bosom forever and ever at the bottom of the lake. (Beat.) Don't leave me. Mama, don't leave me. Mama, mama, mama, mama, mama, don't leave me.

Lily pulls Rose close in to her bosom. Rose begins to calm down.

LILY:

It's alright. I won't leave you. I'll protect you. I won't ever leave you.

ROSE:
(Hard.)

Yes, you will. And I'll find you in the springtime, just like my Mommy. Starin' up at me through the lake ice, with your hands all tangled up in fishing line.

Silence.

The doors to Danceland explode open and Lloyd, in his wheelchair, comes careening into the space.

Rose bolts through the shadows, out the back door of the dancehall. The front and back doors squeak and bang shut simultaneously.

LILY:
Lloyd?!

Lloyd wheels around, startled. He pulls the gun on her.

LLOYD:
Where the hell is he?

LILY:
Who, Lloyd? Who?

LLOYD:
Dillinger. That's who.

LILY:
Lloyd, put the gun down before you hurt yourself. Nobody's here.

LLOYD:
Then who the hell just went scuttling out the back like a shithouse rat?

LILY:
Nobody. Rose. (Beat.) Dillinger's dead, Lloyd. I told you. Some woman saw him coming out of a movie theatre...

LLOYD:
Don't lie to me.

LILY:
...in Chicago last month.

LLOYD:
Don't you lie to me.

LILY:
They set up an ambush and shot him down.

LLOYD:
Don't you ever lie to me!

LILY:
I'm not lying. Why would I lie? (Beat.) Dillinger's dead. Gone. Buried. Kaput. Don't you even read the papers?!

Silence.

LLOYD:
(Low. Brutal.)
Dance with me.

LILY:
You're drunk, Lloyd; imagining things; hallucinating.

LLOYD:
SHUT UP! Shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up, shut up!

Lloyd draws himself up onto his feet, all the time brandishing the gun in her direction.

He stands for a moment, unsure if he can support himself. Then he finds his balance and slowly, with great assurance, points the gun at Lily's head.

LLOYD:
(Cold.)
I said, dance with me.

Lily goes to him. He takes her in his arms, the pistol pointed to the back of her neck.

They dance in silence.

LLOYD:
What happened to us, Lily?

LILY:
I feel old when I sleep with you.

Lloyd crumples to the floor.

Silence.

Rose appears in the doorway of Lily's dressing room.

LILY:
There's your John Dillinger, Lloyd. Are you satisfied, now?

LLOYD:
Oh, Christ.

Silence.

LILY:
C'mon, Rose. We'd better go.

Lily takes Rose by the hand and they head out.

Silence.

LLOYD:
Oh, Christ, Lily, come back. Come back, hey? Come back, Lily, I love you. Come back, hey? I love you. I love you, Lily. Come back, hey? (Beat.) You're the cripple. You're the emotional cripple, Lily.

He sees the bottle of Bourbon sticking out of the side pocket of his wheelchair. He crawls over to it and takes a couple of big slugs.

LLOYD:
I taught you how to backphrase! I taught you how to sell a tune! (Beat.) Bitch. You weren't so innocent when we first met.

He takes a couple more pulls off the bottle.

LLOYD:
You're the cripple, Lily. You're the emotional cripple. (Beat.) Come back, hey? Come back and let's make love. (Beat.) Can't love your man anymore. Can't love the man who loves you because he can't love you because he's afraid his bones might break. (Beat.) But I could kiss you. I could kiss you, and hold you, and stroke your hair. And if you were real gentle we could make love, and in our heads it would be just the same as it was before. Just like before, when you loved me.

Silence.

The door at the back creaks open.

Murray sidles in through the shadows.

MURRAY:
Lloyd?

Silence.

MURRAY:
I done it, Lloyd. I torched the...

LLOYD:
Go to hell.

MURRAY:
But, Lloyd, I just torched the...

LLOYD:
Get out of here!

MURRAY:
What's wrong, Lloyd, should we talk about it?

LLOYD:
I said, get out of here!

MURRAY:
Okay. Alright. Jeez, whatever ya say, Lloyd.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Aren't ya happy now, Lloyd? I thought torchin' The Hiawatha would make old Job happy.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Lloyd?

LLOYD:
(Snarls.)
What?

MURRAY:
Lloyd, I think ya should know...

LLOYD:
What?

MURRAY:
Fer yer own good...

LLOYD:
WHAT?!

MURRAY:
Well... well, people are talkin', Lloyd. People are talkin'.

LLOYD:
About what?

MURRAY:
About you, Lloyd. About you.

LLOYD:
Why would people be talkin' about me, Murray?

MURRAY:
I dunno, Lloyd, but I heard 'em. Heard 'em myself.

LLOYD:
That's bullshit, Murray, and you know it.

MURRAY:
No. No, Lloyd. It's not bull. I'm not lyin'. I was standin' there watchin' the flames lickin' up the inside a the curtains on the top floor at the front, where I tossed the gasoline, when this woman come up, said she heard glass breakin', an' I said, yeah, there's a fire goin' on. An' she says, did anybody tell the people in The Hiawatha or call the fire brigade, an' I says no, so she run off ta do it herself. She run off, an' I just stood there starin' at the flames. I couldn't look away. The Flames A Hell, ya said; that's where sins get purged. An' I just kept starin' at 'em thinkin', The Flames A Hell, that's what they must look like when they're lickin' up ta roast ya. Then the woman comes back an' says, "what're you starin' at?", an' I just said, The Flames A Hell. An' she says, yer fulla hooey, that's just an ordinary hotel fire, we got 'em around here all the time. An' I says, no, no. Look. Just look. Ya can see the Devil in there, laughin' in the flames. He's just laughin' an' laughin'. Laughin' at Lloyd an' his wife, Lily, but especially laughin' at Lloyd's wife, Lily, fer fallin' down from Grace by sleepin' in there with

MURRAY:
(Continues.)
that American fella, Dillinger, did the killin' up at Bienfait last week. (Beat.) So I told her that, an' then I turned around an' hightailed it back here, just like ya said to. (Beat.) Do ya think they're gonna come?

LLOYD:
Just like the prodigal son?

MURRAY:
Yeah. Are we gonna kill 'em when they do?

LLOYD:
Yeah. That's right.

MURRAY:
It's alright ta kill 'em, Lloyd...

LLOYD:
I know.

MURRAY:
It's alright ta kill 'em 'cause their souls are already in Hell.

LLOYD:
That's right, Murray.

Lloyd motions for Murray to lean close. Murray does.

Lloyd grabs Murray by the neck and starts to strangle him.

Murray grabs Lloyd by the arms and pulls back, lifting Lloyd out of his wheelchair. The men appear to be dancing as they fight. Their motion sets the dancehall's mirror ball spinning.

LLOYD:
You lied to me, Murray. You lied about Lily. I hate liars... You lied about Dillinger; I hate liars, I just hate them!

Lloyd is out of control. So is Murray.

LLOYD:
You liar! You liar! You lied to me; you lied to me; don't ever lie to me; I hate liars. I just hate 'em!

MURRAY:
Lloyd! Lloyd! Stop it! Stop it! Yer goin' crazy! Stop it! Yer hurtin' me! Stop it! I'm yer friend! Stop it, Lloyd, I'm yer friend!

Murray has Lloyd by the throat now, strangling him.

Murray takes hold of Lloyd's head with both hands and gives it a sharp twist. He breaks Lloyd's neck. Lloyd collapses onto Murray. Murray slowly lowers Lloyd to the floor.

Silence.

Lloyd lies very still.

Murray prods him with his foot.

MURRAY:
Lloyd?

Pause.

MURRAY:
Lloyd?

Pause.

MURRAY:
Jesus Christ, he's dead. Oh, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Jesus, he's dead, an' I killed him. (Beat.) Oh, shit. Oh, God. I killed him.

Murray bolts over to the double doors and throws them open. He is engulfed in blackness.

MURRAY:
Chriiiiiiiiiiiist! (Beat.) Oh, Christ, I killed him, an' what am I gonna do?

Pause.

Murray takes out his handkerchief and begins to wipe his fingerprints off anything he might have touched.

In the course of wiping his prints off things, he picks up Lloyd's unfinished bottle of Bourbon.

Pause.

MURRAY:

We... we... we drank this bottle already tonight. I took it away an' filled it with gasoline just like ya said, Lloyd. What are ya doin', bringin' it back like that? What are ya doin'? (Beat.) Quit lookin' at me. Quit lookin' at me, Lloyd. I done what ya said, so you got no call lookin' at me. (Beat.) Lloyd? Lloyd?

Murray goes over to Lloyd and, once again, prods him with his foot.

Lloyd rolls over.

Murray screams and jumps away, as if he'd just stepped on a rattlesnake.

MURRAY:

Chriiiiiiiiiissssst!

He stops on contact with the floor on the other side of the dancehall.

Pause.

MURRAY:

God loves me. (Beat.) Jesus loves me. He loves me, an'... an' He fergives me fer what I done, so you quit lookin' at me with them Devil eyes, Lloyd. You quit lookin' at me with them Devil eyes.

Pause.

The first rays of dawn, gold and lavender, begin to creep in through the window.

Murray gets an idea.

He slowly and deliberately goes to the wheelchair and tips it over.

Then he drags Lloyd's body over to the wheelchair, and savagely smashes his head against the floor a couple of times. Then he places Lloyd's gun beside his corpse.

MURRAY:
It was your idea ta torch The Hiawatha, Lloyd. It was your fault. You were the one actin' vengeance, not me. I was just doin' as I was told. It was your idea, Lloyd, not mine. An' now yer reapin' what ya sowed.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Ya tricked me, Lloyd. Ya tricked me, but now yer with the Devil, where ya belong. (Beat.) Lyin's bad, Lloyd, an' you lied. I never. I just did as I was told.

Murray picks up the bottle of Bourbon, uncorks it, takes a big pull off it, then empties the remainder over Lloyd.

MURRAY:
Here, Lloyd, have a drink. Have a drink, you liar.

Murray takes a box of wooden matches from his pocket, strikes one and throws it at Lloyd.

He recoils, expecting an explosion.

The Bourbon fails to ignite.

Murray tries again.

Nothing happens.

MURRAY:
Oh, well. You'll be burnin' soon enough.

He takes his hankie and wipes the bottle, then wraps it up and puts it in his jacket pocket.

MURRAY:
You made me take this bottle away once already tonight, Lloyd. So now I'm gonna take it an' put it back in the Hellfire across ta The Hiawatha, so's it doesn't follow me around like a tail for the Devil ta catch hold on. (Beat.) He sure caught yours, Lloyd. He sure caught yours.

The front doors swing open. Murray turns quickly to see who is there.

LILY:
(Entering.)
Lloyd! Lloyd? The hotel's on fire. Lloyd?

Pause.

She sees "the accident".

LILY:
Oh, God.

She goes to Lloyd and tries to revive him.

MURRAY:
I... I... I was passin' by... unh... unh... passin' by in my boat an' I, an' I, an' I, I heard a shot.

Lily is too concerned with Lloyd to pay Murray much attention.

MURRAY:
The... the... the bullet musta missed an'... an'... an' Lloyd musta fallen an'... (Beat.) I was just drivin' by in my boat, goin' out swimmin', an' I heard a shot so I come in. I thought ya mighta been in trouble, or Lloyd was, was doin' somethin' crazy... yeah... people heard the two of yas hollerin' at each other all day; an' then I seen the fire an' got really scared, an' then I seen him; seen that Dillinger fella take out his gun an' take a shot at Lloyd. I musta startled him or somethin', 'cause he took off outta here like a swallow outta his nest, swoopin' an' divin'; an' then I seen Lloyd fall. (Beat.) I'm sorry, Miss Lily. I'm real sorry.

LILY:
Quit lying, Murray.

MURRAY:
I'm... I'm not lyin', Lily. I don't lie. I... I heard it. Seen it.

Lily can't bear to look at Murray.

LILY:
Which way was he pointing the gun, Murray?

MURRAY:
Unh... unh... towards Lloyd. (Beat.) I never killed him, Lily. I never killed nobody. (Beat.) It was an accident. I never meant to do it. (Beat.) They only hang ya if ya meant ta do it, don't they? (Beat.) I was just comin' by in my boat... comin' by ta tell Lloyd, for his own good, what people were sayin' about him... an' he lost his temper an' started chokin' me, callin' me a liar, an' I... an' I... I pushed him offa me an' he fell an' hit his head, an' musta broke his neck. (Beat.) That's not a murder, is it Lily? (Beat.) Oh, Jesus, I'm scared, Lily. I'm scared. I never meant ta do it.

LILY:
(Moans.)
You're gonna hang, Murray.

MURRAY:
I love ya, Lily. I do. I always loved ya. Even before ya run away from here ta be a singer. (Beat.) Come away with me. We could run away together. You an' me an' Rose.

LILY:
Where we gonna go, Murray? Saskatoon?

MURRAY:
No, no. Mexico City. Just like a buncha outlaws. Or, or New York. Yeah. We could drive ta New York City. An' everything close up'll be whizzin' by so fast it's just a blur, an' the sky an' clouds'll be so big an' so far away they'll look like they're hardly movin' at all, an' we'll feel real small, like three little mice runnin' over a turtle's back.

LILY:
Sure, Murray. Let's get lost.

She picks Lloyd's gun off the floor and points it at Murray.

LILY:
How does it feel, Murray? How does it feel to know you've killed a little piece of Jesus?

Offstage, in the shadows, Rose starts to sing "Jesus Loves Me".

Murray hears her.

MURRAY:
Rose?! I need a witness! Angel!

Lily struggles to pull the trigger.

Murray cowers on the floor.

Lily can't do it; she lets the gun fall, unfired, into her lap.

Pause.

MURRAY:
Tell ya what. Tell ya what... I'm... I'm... I'm gonna go get the R.C.'s. I'm gonna go get the R.C.M.P. up in Watrous. There's been a killin' here, an' I'm gonna go an' get The Mounties. (Beat.) Are ya comin'? I could say Rose an' me was givin' you a ride out here an' you were with us the whole time. (Beat.) Are ya comin'?

LILY:
I'd rather be set on fire.

MURRAY:
Okay. Alright. It's your life. Ya gotta make yer own road.

LILY:
You're goddamned right.

Pause.

MURRAY:
I love you, Lily. (Beat.) We'da made a good couple, just like Adam an' Eve.

LILY:
Goooooooooooo!!!

Murray turns and flees the dancehall.

Lily cradles Lloyd.

After a moment, Rose enters from the shadows.

ROSE:
He's gone. (Beat.) He took the boat.

Pause.

Rose moves to Lily and Lloyd. Then, with her hands, she makes a slow circle over Lloyd's corpse, gathering his soul into the palm of her hand, and then releasing it heavenward like so much dandelion down.

Then she crouches down to Lily.

ROSE:
It's alright. It's alright to cry. (Beat.)
We're angels.

LILY:
That's right. Animal angels, crying for the stars at night.

Lily's jaw drops open is a silent scream of anguish.

A clarinet wails, high and loud, as if it is emanating from the depths of her soul.

Fade out.

CHAPTER THREE:

A PRODUCTION RECORD.

1. The Old Red Lion.

The London production of Danceland came about, as independent productions often do, through a combination of personal relationships and serendipity. I gave a copy of an early draft of the play to my friend, DeNica Fairman, in the summer of 1992. At the time, DeNica had been working as an actor with The RSC for several years, and was feeling frustrated by the artistic constraints of working for a large, institutionalized theatre company. She read the play, fell in love with the character of Lily, and bought a one year option on the British performance rights.

At the end of that year, having exhausted herself pursuing commercial producers, name directors and star actors in various unsuccessful attempts to "package" the play, she telephoned me in Vancouver with the radical proposal that we should just do it ourselves. On the face of it, self-producing is a relatively straightforward concept, but the reality is that it takes an inordinate amount of artistic commitment and a healthy bank account. Commitment was a quality we

shared; finding the money was a problem.

By the summer of 1993, DeNica was able to raise one thousand, seven hundred and fifty pounds from The Canadian High Commission in London, five hundred pounds from Sir Anthony Hopkins, to whom she had offered the part of Lloyd, five hundred pounds from her friend, Brian Hughes, and another thousand pounds from a "friend" of the production, whose name, I discovered later, was Joan Plowright. With this much cash on hand, DeNica then remortgaged her house to finance the rest of the production.

She then contacted our mutual friend, the Glasgow born Canadian director, Tom Kerr, and asked him to direct the play. A Fellow of Trinity College, London, and trained as a director by Tyrone Guthrie, Tom brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to the fledgling Red River Productions. He also demanded, and got, a major rewrite before he agreed to direct Danceland. Over the next few months, DeNica and Tom organized the company and managed to locate and book a suitable venue.

The Old Red Lion Theatre seats sixty people in three L-shaped rows along one side and the end of a twenty by thirty foot black box. Located above a pub,

two blocks east of Angel tube station on the Islington High Road, the stage is approximately fourteen feet wide by twenty four feet long; a thrust of sorts, with two doors going offstage, one up centre and the other down left. The ceiling is twelve feet high, so the lights, all fourteen of them, have to be yoked up above the grid to attain any kind of playable atmosphere. My first reaction upon seeing the space was one of sheer panic: it was so small. Admittedly, I wrote the play with a bare stage in mind, but I had always imagined it as a BIG bare stage.

The set and costume designer, Lisa Robinson, and the lighting designer, Lizz Poulter, are used to working in tiny performance spaces, and at our first meeting to view the theatre, they latched ferociously onto my description of the set as being "evocative, not representative". I know what I meant by that, but what did they mean by it? It was a sobering moment.

2. Notes On The Scenic Treatment.

Lisa, Lizz, the play's director, Tom Kerr, and I had a number of talks about a scenic treatment for the play, and we all agreed that what it needed was a kind

of stripped down minimalism which is not that easily achieved. Every piece had to be absolutely precise, part of a cohesive, stylistic whole. The other uniting principle we agreed on was that the settings needed to act, primarily, as neutral palettes and that colour, when required, should be achieved through light. Tom was anxious to create a dynamic flow of movement through the space, and he, with Lisa, decided that the best way to anchor the design concept was to root it in the harsh realities of the theatre's existing architecture; rather than building walls and doors, they chose to integrate the existing walls and doors of the theatre into the set. In fact, they decided to create an environment rather than a set.

I had made some panoramic, 35mm shots in Saskatchewan that past summer, mostly of endless skies and rolling wheatfields, and when I showed them to Lisa she became excited. She decided to paint three walls of the theatre as a prairie sky, with the doors painted like sky, too. Lisa's image for the play was that people would walk through the sky out onto a wooden dance floor, as if they were dancing in the clouds; and a section of the floor would be hinged, a little above centre, and hoisted up and down by means of a pulley,

to form the back wall of the cabin. Lisa's vision was, to my mind, definitive. She found a van load of old wood at a construction site, and used it to build the floor. Then, offstage, through the doors up centre and down left, she built the interiors of the back entrance to the Danceland, and Lily's dressing room. She left small sections out of the floor to create a floating sensation. Then she painted the exposed floor in a shiny, reflective gray, and then Lizz bounced light off it to create the effect of water. Then she closed the doors and painted her gigantic, three walled sky. The only pieces of furniture were a coat rack which lived alternately in Lily's dressing room during the Danceland scenes, and then was moved into the cabin to facilitate Lily's onstage changes of clothing: a little table for Lloyd to put things on, and a small stool for Murray to use in the second act. All in all, it was simple, elegant and unified, a beautiful rendering of a theatrical idea; three spaces in one.

3. Notes on Sound.

Sound is an important element in the play, and Mark Scholfield, the composer for the London

production, initially thought that the play should be scored like a film, but then he changed his mind. He decided that solo clarinet and silence should be the central motifs in the score, and that the solo clarinet riffs should always emanate, as realistic cues, from Lloyd. The "musical silence" he was looking for was much harder to achieve. In the end, what he decided to do was to fill the scene changes with loud, vintage recordings of noisy Dixieland jazz; the cuts he chose were from a recording of Duke Ellington's sidemen, and this choice of music served as a contrast to the play's many silences, creating sonic shadows. The joyous noise of Ellington's jazz provided a rythmic underpinning to the flow of the play, as well as emotional contrast to the scenes. The only other recorded cues were a stereo pan of Murray's boat, both leaving and approaching the space; and some very faint loon calls. All of the other sound effects, except one, were performed live by the actors; the sole exception being the barking dog in the fourth scene, which was performed from the lighting booth by the Assistant Stage Manager, Rob Payne, who started doing it as a joke during rehearsals and ended up stuck with it.

4. THE REHEARSAL PROCESS.

Danceland is a love story, and I hope that I have constructed it in a way which demands that the actor's words and actions be pulled prominently forward in terms of the directorial mix. With Tom's guidance on the final rewrites, I balanced the through lines of the characters by placing Lily at the centre; we chose to emphasize her as the protagonist. She begins the play and she ends it. It is the story of her relationship with Lloyd, not the story of her affair with Murray.

The part of Murray is infused with theatricality, and it is tempting to let the actor playing him run rampant across the storyline. Yet if he is not reigned in, he threatens to overwhelm the believability of the action. Tom's solution was to treat Murray as realistically as possible; what makes Murray so dangerous is that he actually believes every word he says, and he is such a good liar that he should make everybody else believe him, too.

Lloyd and Rose act as catalysts to the action, but have very independent dramatic lives of their own. They both achieve their ultimate objectives; Lloyd's jealousy consumes him, and Rose's belief in angels

frees her. Murray is destroyed by his compulsive lying, and Lily is changed irrevocably by the end of the play. She gets what she wants, too. Freedom. A painful embrace from life.

The acting company assembled for the production consisted of DeNica Fairman as Lily, Peter Marinker as Lloyd, Kevin Howarth as Murray, and Catherine Holman as Rose. Each of them brought commitment, talent, and a uniquely individual style of acting to the project. Tom's challenge, as a director, was to blend their distinctive energies into a unified performance style.

The rehearsal arrangement between Tom and I was that I was responsible for making any changes to the text which might be necessary to facilitate or clarify the action of the play, and that he would do everything in his power to stage the play as I had written it. He was determined that the rehearsal period should not deteriorate into a workshop of the play; and he was also determined to give the actors as believable a set of dramatic actions as possible. What I discovered through this process is that "place", which had been my key in the writing process, can be an utterly meaningless idea to actors. What actors need, more than anything, is to be able to follow the dramatic

action of the storyline by exploring the relationships between the characters. "Place" in production exists in design, in light, in sound, in expositional dialogue; it cannot, by itself, drive the narrative of a play, but the actors in the London production became so fascinated with the idea that there were times when I wished I had never thought of it. Eventually I brought in several hand drawn maps of the area, outlining the location of every building, every town, every rail line and every city between Denver and Prince Albert. One day, exasperated by their seemingly endless questioning about Saskatchewan, I launched into a long monologue about the type of fish which live in Little Manitou Lake (brine shrimp). This put the "place" issue pretty much to rest, although on several occasions when rehearsals were getting tense, one of the actors would inevitably ask, "Now, what about this pier? Where is it?"

We had five weeks of rehearsal, and while the rehearsal plan often bumped up against the sometimes uncomfortable concept of rehearsal reality, Tom and I managed to spend the first two days with the actors reading and discussing the text. He then wanted to put the play on its feet; to do a rough block so we could

have another look at the play. We tried to establish a pattern of rehearsals in which we would alternate our objectives as writer and director (to complete the final rewrite and to get the play staged). We deliberately created "overlaps" in which I could get caught up on rewrites while he kept the production as a whole moving forward. The pattern that emerged was: two days reading and discussion, three days rough blocking; followed by a day of reading and discussion. The scenes we were not happy with at the outset of rehearsals were the ones I tackled on the first weekend. I brought my new material in on the Monday, and we integrated it into the play. The second week was then spent primarily on exploratory scene work and improvisations; the third was spent polishing scenes and restoring line trims which had been requested by the actors in the first two weeks; the fourth was spent working up to a series of runs. The fifth week was taken up with the actual move into the theatre and technical rehearsals. It was also the week in which I found a key flaw in the play's structure. I had one night to fix it; the crew had four hours to re-cue the show. Tom and the actors had four hours to rehearse it before the first of three previews.

I had been bothered for some time by the opening sequence of the play. As originally written, it was a kind of poetic prologue in which Rose was alone on stage praying. It was a mysterious scene, and I knew I wanted to create a sense of mystery at the top of the play, but in watching the runs of the play in the rehearsal hall I found it confusing: it had no context. It was simply a theatrical gesture, it was an effect, not a scene. The solution was to integrate the prologue into the top of the final scene of the play and, in this way, give it a through line of dramatic action. I called Tom in the middle of the night to explain this to him and was greeted by a long pause, followed by the words, "the crew is going to hate you, but you're right. Do it. Just don't tell anybody before I get a chance to set it up". Early the next morning he got on the phone and worked a small miracle of directorial diplomacy; I got to make my structural change.

I bring this up as way of illustrating the special nature of rehearsing a new play. It is virtually impossible for me to finish writing a play before I get to see it in "runs". For me, the rehearsal process is an integral part of my final writing process; I need to

hear the words out loud, and I need to see the actions played through in sequence. It is only then, when the whole play is living and breathing in front of me, that I can fine tune structural elements.

5. NOTES FOR FUTURE DIRECTORS.

The rehearsal and final rewriting process of Danceland was filled with the joy of discovery. Every day brought a new challenge; on some days there were even some highly entertaining creative brawls. In the end, however, I have come to believe that the final draft of the play as well as the London production itself, were definitive renderings of my personal creative vision. Neither process would have been complete had it not been symbiotically connected to the other.

I offer the following brief notes on the major structural and character discoveries which we made in London, in the hope that critics, directors, actors and designers of future productions might better understand my personal vision of the play.

5a. Locating The Spine Of The Play.

The spine of the action emerges best when Lily's character arc is placed in the centre of the dramatic construct. The other characters' arcs flow off, through and around Lily's, like the framework of a gothic building, and the way for a director to keep this structure flowing is to keep in mind the primary objective of the other three characters - they all want the same thing: Lily. In their own way, each of them wishes to possess her. She is the prize at the end of the game. She is objectified by all three of them, and that is why I have chosen to place her onstage, undressing, at the top of the play. Her beauty is, in a way, the curse of her life. The effect of the opening moment should be intensely erotic. Every eye in the house, male or female, should be glued to her flesh. The eroticism of the moment should be followed by the rapid realization that something terribly wrong is about to happen.

The purpose of her initial objectification by the other three characters is that it sets up the ending, when Lily is finally freed. When, through the tragedy of what has happened to her, she becomes fully human.

If the actress plays the opening scene with an intense belief in her primary objective (to get out of the cabin quickly, easily and without having a quarrel with Lloyd), then the scene will fly. Lloyd, on the other hand, wants to keep her there, and he is being as cooperative as a "rattlesnake in a sleeping bag". The slightest move could set him off, and Lily knows it. She is not afraid of him, and she can give as good as she can take, but foremost in her mind is putting Lloyd in a good mood, and then getting back to the excitement of her increasingly separate life. She wants peaceful independence.

The initial incident occurs within the first six or seven minutes of the play, when Lloyd spots a little bruise on Lily's hip. He grabs her and demands an explanation. She has nothing to hide, and brushes it off as "a flea bite", and in doing so, unwittingly emasculates Lloyd. He fights back, "what's that supposed to mean". This action leads the audience, through a kind of narrative feint, directly into the first key piece of backstory, Lloyd and Lily's personal history with John Dillinger. This piece of exposition must be believed by the audience if the rest of the story is to work; the expositional nature of the scene

needs to be simultaneously rooted in and disguised by, realistic, believable action, and surefire changes of tone, pace, tempo and objective. It is a tricky movement, and its trickiness is compounded by the fact that it has two distinct halves. The first, driven by Lily, should be like a roller coaster ride; the second, driven by Rose, is more laconic in tone. It is a chance for the audience to absorb more exposition about the place itself, and to establish the sense of the valley being an almost supernatural place. It also does something else - it gives the audience a chance to get to know Lloyd, to see his vulnerability, his innocence in the presence of a child. This is Lloyd's first and best chance to get the audience to like him; he is increasingly paranoid after this scene. The actor playing Lloyd needs to be very charismatic, and it does not hurt if, like Peter Marinker in the London production, he is a handsome old dog as well. Lloyd may be a bent and broken man, but it is vital to see his virility trapped inside his enfeebled body; the root of his jealousy is sexual, and the actor playing him should be endowed with the libido of a satyr. Sex is not something you can act; actors either have the sexual charisma or they do not.

Murray makes his first "appearance", as it were, offstage. This was a deliberate choice on my part, as I wanted to establish, as believably as possible, both the reality of the offstage world (the lake, the valley, the boat) and the mythic paradigm for the play. Murray is one of the argonauts, forever ferrying passengers across the River Styx, assisting people on their journey to Hell. What is Murray's objective in the scene? To use Rose as a foil, so that he can get close to Lily. My sense of Murray in this scene revolves around the image of spying; he is most likely hidden away, just outside the cabin, listening intently to the entire scene in exactly the same manner that he and Rose spy on Lily at the top of scene two. When Lily starts to leave the cabin, Murray pushes Rose inside, with instructions to offer her a ride. This is why Rose is so off balance when she enters the scene: she has literally been pushed into the room by Murray.

Another thing that is important for the actress playing Rose to remember is that, no matter how sick her relationship with Murray may be, she is unaware of its inherent sickness. It is absolutely essential that, at the beginning of the play, Rose loves Murray,

and Murray loves Rose; Rose becomes aware of the danger Murray poses to her while she is offstage, spying on him during the final dancehall scene in the first act. The actors must not pass moral judgements on the characters; they must embrace the idea that the two characters love each other, because the existence of their love gives them a tragic height from which to fall.

Lily's songs, especially the first two, can be problematic, and in grappling with them from both a conceptual and a pragmatic, rehearsal perspective, what I have come to understand is that Lily sings for the simple reason that she loves singing. Her mind is brimming with song lyrics; she relates her life to songs. This came up a lot in rehearsal with DeNica, who, after all, was the person who was going to have to stand up in front of an audience and sing them every night, and who wanted, rightly, to know exactly WHY Lily would sing in the first place. It was a difficult acting question, and Tom wanted an answer, too. My initial response to DeNica's question was that, in writing the play I had always assumed that Lily is a beautiful singer, and that when she sings, she keeps still. While this might be an adequate response to

another writer, to an actor it is the kind of response which makes no sense; it is not a reason, it is an effect and, to DeNica, it felt like an arbitrary choice, an example of a writer imposing his will on a character. She resisted playing this particular character trait until I finally convinced her to "at least try it". When she did, she found an emotional stillness at the heart of the character, and from that sense of stillness she was able to find other moments of emotional repose within the play.

Danceland is very dark in tone, and its central action is rooted in the characters' struggles for their very survival. In order to offset this darkness, I have given each of the four characters "something extraordinary" to do. Lloyd recites poetry, Rose believes in angels, Murray is, in his own twisted way, an erotically charged poet of the land, and Lily is an extraordinary singer. It is simply wrong, a misinterpretation of the text, if an actress assumes that because Lily lives her life on the thin edge of violence and addiction, that she moves around like a rock singer and sings with a throat full of gravel. In my view, this destroys the notion of her as a "great jazz singer", it diminishes her stature and, in doing

so, diminishes the tragedy of her fall. Having her sing like Grace Slick or Janis Joplin also destroys the period and style of the piece. I gave her songs to sing because I wanted her to have moments of transcendent beauty which provide a stark contrast to her amoral (but never immoral) love for rough sex, alcohol and drugs. To disregard the pitch and melody and intricate jazz phrasings of the songs on the lame pretense that she is a "hard" woman, turns Lily into a bawling fishwife or a harlot, and that has never been my intent. Lily is a singer, an artist, and that, by definition, implies that she is adept at artifice.

The other mistake an actress can make with the songs is to "turn them out" to the audience, to turn them into little mini musical theatre numbers. This, too, would be a fatal mistake. She sings when she sings because, to her mind, that is the best, and most natural, way for her to communicate - her singing is both a character trait and a continuation of the dramatic action of the scenes.

5b. Some Thoughts On The Play's Style.

Scene two, Lily and Murray's "seduction" scene, is about twenty minutes long, and it is very treacherous territory for the actors. What we discovered in rehearsal was that it helps to think of the scene as four separate movements which blend together in a larger sweep of action. It moves from the stillness and purity of Lily's song (prayer) in which she sings, "I need my man, Weatherman", through the entrance of Rose and Murray, to Rose's subsequent exit from the dancehall. These two sections are primarily expositional and, hopefully, I have achieved my own standards of artifice and buried the exposition deeply enough inside a specific set of actions to carry the story forward. I think the key to making this part of the scene work, metaphorically speaking, is to think of the exposition as a sail, and the actions of the characters as the wind - it is the friction between them that generates the energy which moves the boat of the story forward.

The movement of the "seduction" scene, is fraught with stylistic peril. It needs to be an intensely

erotic scene, but it must never sink to the level of pornography. While it is a scene conceived in celebration of animal lust, it more about erotic possibilities than erotic inevitablities.

This movement of the scene brings up a larger, aesthetic question, and it is one which the director and actors of this play must deal with, because if the treatment of eroticism is mishandled, the production will stray from tragedy to brutality. The play is, frankly, meant to be erotic, and it raises many of the same ethical questions as erotic literature in general. Specifically, how to make something deliberatly erotic without exploiting the characters, the actors or the audience. How does an artist demarcate the line between erotica and pornography? It is a pressing question for modern writers, and while some people maintain that it simply cannot be done, I steadfastly maintain that the dogmatic foes of erotica are wrong.

From a modern actor's point of view, it is difficult to sustain a belief in the prolonged foreplay of the scene. Actors, in the productions I have been associated with, always want to touch too soon. And once the characters touch, nothing, is going to keep those two characters from engaging in ferocious sex

right there on the dance floor and in plain view of anybody who cares to interrupt. Once they touch, the scene is over. The point of the scene is seduction, not conquest. It is difficult for artists of my age to imagine a time when the sexual act was bound up in a proscribed ritual of manners, courtship and seduction, but if this scene is to work, we must engage our imagination.

The final movement of this second scene is a crescendo of action, all of it complicated by the fact that for every action there is a witness; a situation which demands, from the point of view of personal ego, if nothing else, a continuing struggle for the highest character status. The moment a witness is present, domestic situations which would be normal for Medea or even June Cleaver, need to be justified in order that the witness not see us for what we really are. Consider the situation of a policeman who intervenes in a domestic dispute; the victim invariably turns violent upon the intervenor, and this is the essence of the final movement of the scene.

The actors in the London production, unsure of the social graces of South Central Saskatchewan in the mid 1930's, would occasionally ask me "what would I feel

in this situation?" when they would have been better asking, "what would the character do in this situation?". It is impossible to know the answer to that first question. What would any of us feel if we were suddenly transported to another time, another place, in which the customs of the day seemed very foreign? The second question, "what would the character do?" can be readily answered because it can be related back to the concrete evidence which contained in the text; it has a frame of reference.

In my view, acting is doing, and that, paradoxically, includes doing nothing. Acting is about believing in the given circumstances, it is about watching with an unprejudiced eye, about active listening, and about responding truthfully within the stylistic constraints of the play as well as in the psychological realities of the characters.

Style, like accent or gesture, is derived from the specific character demands of living inside certain kinds of clothes, certain kinds of environments and certain social values, but style, for many younger actors, has become a pastiche of cliche and gesture, rather than something which beats at the living heart of a character. Try to imagine Oscar Wilde without

style, try to imagine Sarah Bernhardt or Noel Coward; try to imagine Marlon Brando as Stanley Kowalski without conjuring up a definitive sense of style. Style, in my view, is an organic component of the actor's craft, and to act any of the parts in Danceland requires a sense of style. The actors must root their characters within the parameters of 1930's social values, and then express them truthfully within the style dictated by the script which was described, accurately, I think, by Hugh Cruttwell, a former principal of R.A.D.A. and a champion of the London production, as "poetic melodrama with a primitive feel to it".

Hugh's use of the word melodrama made me cringe, but since he offered his critique on the understanding that the producer wanted a quote to help her raise money for the production, I have to conclude that he wrote that dreaded word, melodrama, after a good deal of consideration. As Ibsen said in An Enemy of The People, the only thing we have in this life is our reputation. Or, as my great friend and sometime collaborator, Cape Breton playwright Bryden Macdonald once put it, "the only thing I own is a bad reputation, and somebody else gave it to me". I suspect that when

an artist of Hugh Cruttwell's ability puts pen to paper at the behest of a friend who is proposing to produce and star in a new Canadian play and hoping to raise money from his professional contacts and acquaintances on the basis of his considered opinion about its potential quality, his instinct would be to cover his risks and write an honest assessment of the text. Maybe I think too highly of people, but my honest reaction to Hugh's quote was that he obviously meant it, and I took it to heart in the final draft.

5c. Finding A Realistic Root For The Characters.

The play is in constant danger of boiling over, especially if a director lets the emotions of the moment get overheated to the detriment of the believability of dramatic action. The play burns hot, emotionally, but no matter how fantastic the character's situations become, it needs to be constantly grounded through the prism of believable action and objective. In short, if it gets overheated, it deteriorates into melodrama. These characters exist inside a claustrophobic, almost mythical world, and the reason they get so crazy is that they keep trying to

make rational sense out of the constantly shifting contruct they form on the basis of their belief in Murray's lies.

Politics may be the art of the possible, but my play, in my opinion, must occur within the realm of the probable, and that is the play's primary challenge to actors, directors and designers - to make it real without trapping it inside the mundanities of day to day reality; to be brave and act out, truthfully, the actions of a myth, the fantasies of an unrepentant liar, an exaggerator, a teller of tall tales.

In his directorial approach, Tom recognized from the outset that the play, through its poetic language, its structural antecedents and its mythical paradigm, represents a kind of heightened reality. He also recognized, from the earliest stages of his dramaturgical work on the text, that the only way an audience can gain access to the mythical world of the play is if the writer, director and actors provide a recognizable, realistic frame of reference.
Like the best surrealist paintings, the play had to be rooted in everyday reality and be driven by a precise sense of logic.

For example, there is a short dialogue section in the third scene, Lily and Lloyd's big fight and reconciliation scene, which makes a glancing reference to their emotional state. When Lloyd accuses Lily of having sex with John Dillinger, she retorts that they were "shooting cocaine. Not screwing". It's a brief moment, but it has consequences which were initially missed by the actors (I guess this was my fault for not painting Lloyd and Lily's addictive personalities more broadly). It just seems to me that if Lily was shooting cocaine, actually using needles, not more than nine months before the start of the play, that she, and in all likelihood, Lloyd, were regular users. If they had crossed the border into Canada, their supply of cocaine would more than likely have been cut off, and even if they managed to scrape together enough time and money to score before they left Chicago, undoubtedly, two weeks into their stay at Little Manitou, they have run out of cocaine. They are in the throes of kicking their addiction - not just in this scene, but from the very beginning of the play. It is not a pretty thought, but it goes a long way toward explaining the manic rise and fall of their emotional states in the scene. When the dope runs out there is

hell to pay; it is always somebody else's fault that the situation has become so desperate, and the last thing an addict will admit is that he or she is terrified of going into withdrawal; "I'm not an addict. What are you talking about? Of course I don't need another fix", is the standard speech when, of course, that is exactly what an addict needs. Denial is a central part of addiction, and that is why the characters in the play never acknowledge that they are junkies, even though, in their dramatic reality, that is what they are. In the stratosphere of junkies, alcoholics live at the bottom; they take an inferior drug, and that is why, in her desperation, Lily accuses Lloyd of relying too heavily on the bottle. She does not actually care that he is an alcoholic, for she is an alcoholic herself; her admonishment to Lloyd about his alcoholism is a cry for help as much as it is a moral judgement.

Lily is dealing with her enforced detox period better than Lloyd for the simple reason that she has something meaningful, the band and the dancehall, with which to occupy her time. But in the end, there is nothing Lily can do to calm the chemical inferno that is raging through Lloyd's body, except to tell a story

about winter, a story about the bitter cold, a story about the extraordinary beauty of the landscape; a story told in defiance of the unbearable heat of the day; a fantastic story, almost all true, which calms the fire in his nerve endings. She subdues Lloyd with a barrage of language, the story of the night the local boys set the ice of the lake on fire. By the end of the scene, Lily and Lloyd have achieved peace together for the first time in the play.

The first act ends with Rose and Murray, playing together in the dancehall. Murray has brought Rose there to make up with her, after their terrible encounter earlier in the act. That is why he has dressed her up in Lily's clothes, and why he is encouraging her to make fun of Lily. Murray is like a child in this regard; he is jealous of Rose's attraction to Lily. It is my belief that the sexual tension which arises between Murray and Rose in the course of the scene is a new experience for both of them. I do not believe that Murray makes a habit of sexually abusing his daughter. It is just that in this one instance, their physical contact, coupled with the smooth feel of Lily's silk dressing gown and his sudden awareness of Rose's budding sexuality, arouses him.

This disgusts him, and that is why he reacts so violently when Rose accidentally tears the dressing gown. He drives her from the dancehall because he finds himself in a state of such arousal that he is afraid he will be unable to control himself. It is also important for the actor playing Murray to remember that Murray has probably not had sex since the night he murdered his wife, five or six years ago; that his sexuality is bound up with a profound sense of guilt; and that his sense of guilt has been greatly influenced by the harsh Protestant morals of the community. His fetishism, then, is a direct result of years of sexual repression.

The directorial and dramaturgical key to the scene, as Tom Kerr so adroitly discovered in the London production, is that Rose, offstage, is watching Murray masturbate - this terrifies her because she sees, for the first time, what he might have done to her. So, even though Rose leaves the stage, it is absolutely essential to "stage", as Tom did, her offstage actions. Every knock at the door, every shadow that crosses a window, is created by Rose and subsequently misinterpreted by Murray. By the time Rose re-enters, at the end of the scene, for her "Scardeycat" line, she

has decided two things: she hates Murray, and she is never going to let him touch her again.

The structural antecedents to the scene, slamming doors, accelerating action and the dissolution of identity are pure farce, although the intent remains tragic, and this farcical sub-structure comes to the fore in the opening scene of the second act, when Murray and Lloyd are plotting revenge out at Lloyd's cabin. As a dramatic gambit, the technique of twisting an essentially tragic story through some judicious thefts from Feydeau, has some built-in dangers, not the least of which is that if the physical comedy gets too far out of hand, it becomes impossible for Lloyd to believe Murray's evil story about John Dillinger masturbating with Lily's dressing gown. Lloyd's being convinced by Murray's "incontrovertible evidence" of Lily's missing dressing gown is as pivotal to the plot of Danceland as Iago's masterful deceit with Desdemona's handkerchief is to Othello.

The final scene of the play is also the longest, clocking in at about thirty minutes and, like the long scene early in act one, is best handled by thinking of it as a series of movements within an orchestral whole. The first two movements (Rose alone and then Rose with

Lily) lead to Rose's release of her long suppressed memories of the night Murray murdered her mother. I believe that Rose witnessed the murder and that Murray, suspecting this, has turned the incident into a kind of mythical event which he often tells her, as a kind of macabre bedtime story. And it is his repeated telling of the story to Rose which has convinced her that some kind of fearsome, primitive god lives at the bottom of the lake. Rose is not possessed of supernatural powers, although, over the years, she has come to believe that she has them. Her long "clarinet wail" is an actual cry from her heart, a vocalized response to the painful unlocking of a terrifying childhood memory. This is the final bit of exposition in the play, and after this, the action should be spurred forward with a mounting rhythm to the play's climax, which is Lloyd's discovery that he has been duped by Murray and his realization that Murray has caused him to destroy the last hopes for his marriage.

The murder of Lloyd is extremely theatrical, and Lizz Poulter, the lighting designer in the London production, used this opportunity for the show's first non-realistic cue: she faded in the light from a spinning mirror ball as the men began their dance of

death, and then faded it back out as Murray realizes what he has just done. This moment, however, for all its innate theatricality is the anti-climax of the play, and Tom's direction stressed this fact. Again, Murray is such a powerful presence in the play that he can unbalance the arc of the story, and pull it off-centre, away from the tragedy of Lily and Lloyd's doomed relationship. The key to keeping the play on track here is to underplay Murray's craziness in this scene. The actor's objective should be "to stay calm" in the face of impossible pressures.

Another key to the successful staging of the scene is to place Lloyd's body just above centre stage; by placing him here, he remains present in the action and, in fact, continues to drive it even after his death. On a more pragmatic note, Lloyd's final position is the same position from which Lily must end the play. Her presence beside Lloyd's inert form is dictated by her relationship to him; she cannot leave him. Once she sees Lloyd, she must go to him. Her objectives are to help him, to revive him, to love him, and to protect him. She must concentrate on Lloyd with every fibre of her being. Murray is not as important to her as Lloyd is. In fact, she would probably be relieved if Murray

killed her, too. This is important, because if the actress focussed too strongly on Murray's predicament, she would diminish her own; if she decided, for instance, to pick up the gun and chase Murray around the room in pursuit of revenge, this final scene would deteriorate into melodrama. I have seen that choice tried in a number of rehearsals, and it does not work.

5d. Some Final Thoughts On The Play.

Every artist who approaches Danceland will bring a unique, individual vision to the play, and I welcome this. It is the fusion of our artistic energy which sits at the heart of this collaborative process we have come to call "Theatre". I do, however, want to request one thing from the directors, designers and actors who will be engaged in future productions of the play. Be mindful of one thing: the audience. They have come to "hear a play"; they have come to witness the believable unfolding of a story, and all of us, myself included, are responsible for that. We must allow the audience to enter the world of the play, and we must allow them to empathize with the characters. We must share the play with them.

Having completed the play, my journey as a playwright has come full circle; I must move on to other plays and other places. For me, the text of Danceland is an artifact, a map of my creative journey to this point in time. If the play is "about" anything, it is about breaking a lifelong embrace of addiction and death. Lily's tragedy is that she, like all of us, must live; her triumph is that she manages to do it at all.

APPENDIX

THE TIMES
November 22, 1994

HOT TIP FROM AN ICY ZONE

Another cracker from Canada. Toronto-based Glen Cairns should be added to the list of hot writers emerging from the icy zones north of the United States. Cairns's poetic, fiercely sexual play **Danceland**, set in smalltown Saskatchewan in the 1930's, in Little Manitou where the healing powers of the lake cannot quench lust and jealousy, is the best work I have seen at the Old Red Lion (EC1). It is an exceptional fringe production.

Arrestingly directed by Tom Kerr, **Danceland** is an allegory of angels and sinners. It is also the story of shattered marriage, frustrated and fetishistic eroticism, and of an intensely disturbed child. DeNica Fairman is outstanding as Lily, the torch singer who has fled Chicago's underworld. Lily, highly sexed but far from a cliched scarlet woman, has returned home in the hope of curing Lloyd, her saxophonist husband, cripplingly wounded in the thigh by one of her gangland intimates.

Fairman performs with acuteness and ease and has a sultry bloom on her singing voice. She is strongly supported by Kevin Howarth's intense Murray, the dangerous local man she becomes involved with, and Peter Marinker's possessive Lloyd, a goat-eyed Clint Eastwood.

Catherine Holman, bare-legged in her flowery frock, looks unsettlingly like a nine-year-old as Rose who, after the drowning of her Native American mother, is in the sporadically threatening care of Murray, her father. Holman is profoundly disturbing, screaming with the grief of an inarticulate animal, or powdering her face a ghostly white as she repeats Psalm 23 like an incantation and lays herself down, like a frozen corpse.

- Kate Bassett (p.34)

WHAT'S ON IN LONDON
November 16 - 23, 1994

DANCELAND.

Just try to imagine the multi-layered drama enacted in this London premiere by Toronto-based writer, director and filmmaker Glen Cairns as being like a cross between a '30's gangster movie, **Twin Peaks** and a film noir thriller, and you might get some idea of its powerful, edgy and mesmeric qualities. But it seems unfair to make such comparisons, because Cairns is clearly a dramatist with a unique theatrical vision, and I for one look forward to seeing more of his work staged here.

Jazz, booze, drugs, sex, mythology, religion and a good-versus-evil theme are all ingeniously woven together in this haunting cautionary tale. At first, the story seems simple. Lily, a torch singer, and Lloyd, her wounded bandleader husband, are on the run from John Dillinger, America's "Public Enemy Number One." They end up in Lily's birthplace - Little Manitou, Saskatchewan. The town was once a sacred place of healing for the indigenous Indians, later becoming a bustling Roaring Twenties spa resort; but post-Wall Street Crash it has begun to die. In their safe haven this fractured couple hope that the local magic mudbath and the mineral-rich lake will cure their sulphourous swamp of a marriage. The action veers mainly between Danceland, one of the local dance halls, and the hotel room where jealous older husband Lloyd fumes from his wheelchair, knocks back the drink and spouts poetry.

But when Lily encounters local boat-man and brooding fetishist Murray and his twelve year old daughter Rose, the scene is set for a complex exploration of human folly and cooped-up lust, allied with the destructive power of myth and legend. All this may appear rather forbidding,

and some of Cairns' ideas do seem to be overstated - not least the second act scenes involving the little girl and her cosmic connections. But the play is bursting with highly-charged moments, and overall is a thoroughly absorbing and haunting piece of theatre.

Credit is due to Tom Kerr's controlled direction, Lisa Robinson's effective plain wood setting, Lizz Poulter's atmospheric lighting and some enthralling acting from a cast of four: DeNica Fairman as the sensual Lily torn between too many men; Peter Marinker as the doomed Lloyd; Catherine Holman as Rose, the "animal-angel" who cries tears for the stars at night; and Kevin Howarth as the monstrous Murray who discovers that it really is a sin to tell a lie.

- Roger Foss (page 56)

TIME OUT
November 16 - 23, 1994.

Danceland.

In Little Manitou, Saskatchewan, John Dillinger, "America's Most Wanted", may or may not be dead. Lily, a dancehall hostess, Lloyd, her crippled jazz-musician husband, Murray, her would-be lover and his small daughter, Rose, wait for the great man to appear. Lily is convinced that he is dead, she's read it in the papers, but like the others she waits for a redemption that never comes.

"Danceland" is billed as "a new Canadian play", but when the author's notes are more interesting than the play itself, we know that the writing is in deep trouble. There are some stunning word pictures through which we can feel and see the wide expanses of Western Canada. But unlike Sam Shepard, for instance, who tackles the same emotional territory, Cairns' writing is essentially prose. It simply lies there with its great leaden beauty and does not budge, reducing director Tom Kerr's very fine work and Lisa Robinson's gracefully evocative set to the illustration of a Book at Bedtime.

The powerhouse cast are left to go right over the top, but they also manage to find moments of quiet strength. They are all extraordinary, but it is the sublime Catherine Holman as Rose, the little child, who burrows deep into the heart of this tale, ripping it open to reveal the cry of a nation trapped in its past and frightened of its future.

- Bonnie Greer (page 134).

DANCELAND received its British premiere at The Old Red Lion Theatre in Islington, North London on November 11, 1994.

Playwright.....Glen Cairns

Director.....Tom Kerr

Set/Costume Design.....Lisa Robinson

Lighting Design.....Lizz Poulter

Composer.....Mark Scholfied/
(The Brother Jonathan)

Cast:

Lily.....DeNica Fairman

Lloyd.....Peter Markinker

Murray.....Kevin Howarth

Rose.....Catherine Holman

For Red River Productions:

Company/Stage Manager....Helen Dolan

Assistant Stage Manager..Rob Payne

Financial Consultant.....Wendy Abel

Publicity.....Sue Hyman Associates