



Dancing on Quicksand
The Collected Plays of Edward Pomerantz

Dancing On Quicksand

and an Original Screenplay

Edward Pomerantz

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(to be performed individually, in pairs, or as a complete evening
titled Dancing On Quicksand)

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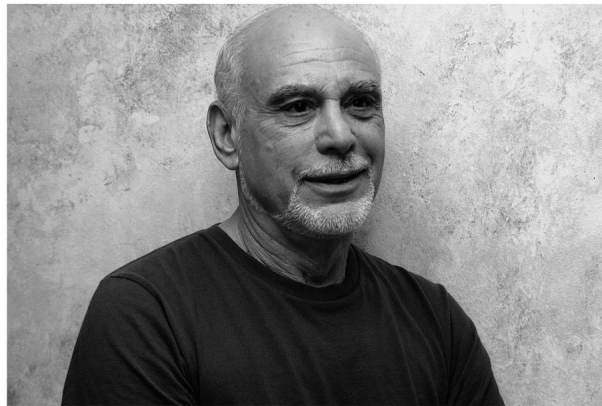
ELECTRA: THE REWRITE

NOT ON THE MAP

An Original Screenplay

MAN RUNNING

Praise for Edward Pomerantz



INTO IT

“Reading this book is like eating electricity.”

Albert Bermel

“Brilliant...the most exciting evening I’ve had in some time.”

Ross MacDonald

“Vivid...different...easy to read and very, very hard to stop thinking about.”

Joseph Heller

“James M. Cain on acid...Great narrating voice...A terrific read.”

Erik Tarloff

“Original and impressive...”

The New York Times

CAUGHT

Dancing On Quicksand

“A gritty masterpiece.”

Godfrey Cheshire, New York Press

“A masterly film...Keeps generating tension and psychological force, placing the seamy sexual desperation of film noir right alongside the rigorous proprieties of classical tragedy.”

Margo Jefferson, The New York Times

“Riveting, suspenseful, and hypnotic...”

Rex Reed, New York Observer

“Beyond most other movies. It takes chances and covers a depth of human experience other movies avoid...It left me stunned.”

Howie Movshovitz, Denver Post

“Extremely powerful...”

Jeffrey Lyons

“Elegant and concise...has the intimate fateful feel of all the best noir of the 1940’s.”

Richard Rayner, Harper’s Bazaar

“Toward the end you realize how effectively and completely you’ve been caught by CAUGHT...”

Bob Mondello, All Things Considered, National Public Radio

BRISBURIAL

“A feast indeed...A fine gusty vaudeville...The language is the most brilliant use of the Jewish idiom on stage since Saul Bellow’s The Last Analysis...In structure, it reminds me a lot of the Nighttown section from Ulyssses...A remarkable achievement in many ways.”

Robert Brustein

“Wild, outrageously funny, and deep...I loved it.”

Arnold Weinstein

THE GODDESS OF FILTHY THINGS

“The whole thing has a terrific heart and depth...interweaving all the characters and their stories to reveal, step by step, through different layers and stories within other stories, one central and powerful story.”

Martin Salinas

A TUNE BEYOND US

“A play not within a play, but a play on top, on bottom, on both sides of a play... Turns us inside out and upside down...”

Howard Shevrin

NOT ON THE MAP

“A truly insane comedy. A little Gilbert and Sullivan, a little Wilde, a little Oedipus, and a lot of Eddie Pomerantz storytelling and zany humor.”

Zachary Sklar

“A brilliant play...consistently sharp, funny, and moving.”

Alan Ziegler

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For my parents

Gert and Al Pomerantz

who live and dance in these pages

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dancing On Quicksand

I owe this book to Sandy Kazan, who, for better and for more and less better, has lived with the writing of these plays. And I thank David H. Cohen and Robert Sims for their time, patience, hard work, and wizardry pulling it all together.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In addition to the plays and screenplay in this collection, EDWARD POMERANTZ has written

INTO IT, a novel, originally published by Dial Press, reprinted by iUniverse.com

CAUGHT, the movie based on INTO IT, directed by Robert M. Young, starring Edward James Olmos and Maria Conchita Alonso, released by Sony Pictures Classics, and nominated for three Independent Spirit Awards

BRISBURIAL, a play/feast, produced by Woodie King, Jr.'s New Federal Theatre, published by Magic Circle Press

SWEETHEART, VIRGIN, AND GOD and DO ME A FAVOR, two novellas, published by Contact, the San Francisco Collection of New Writing, Art, and Ideas

THE GARDEN and ONLY A GAME, two one-act plays published by Samuel French

THE GARDEN (expanded into a full-length play), First Prize, Samuel French National Playwriting Contest

Over 35 commissioned screenplays and teleplays, including two LAW AND ORDER episodes, THE PRINCESS AND THE CABBIE, a CBS movie starring Valerie Bertinelli, and THE GOLD BUG and NEW YORK CITY TOO FAR FROM TAMPA BLUES, two award winning television adaptations

He was a Playwright In Residence at the Yale Drama School, and has received two Writers Guild Awards

He is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Columbia University, where he teaches Filmwriting, and at SUNY-Purchase, where he teaches Writing for Television

He is the Director and Co-Founder (with Voza Rivers) of the Harlem Arts Alliance Dramatic Writing Academy, a program of free workshops and mentoring, created to find and nurture gifted playwrights, screenwriters, and writers for television, in the Harlem community

He has been a Creative Advisor, Mentor, and Visiting Writer at various international screenwriting labs in Mexico, Spain, South America, England, Germany, and Cuba

He is at work on his new play EL GALLO BRAVO TO GO

For reviews and personal tributes, visit www.edwardpomerantz.com

PRODUCTION AND PUBLICATION HISTORY

NOTHING PERSONAL and A CHANGE OF PACE, originally published by Ms Magazine. Presented at the Aspen Institute in Aspen, Colorado and by Food For Thought at the Players Club and the National Arts Club in New York City. Actors in these performances include Sandra Kazan, Judith Light, Marlo Thomas, Barbara Feldon, Lorraine Bracco, Betty Buckley, and Daniel McDonald.

A CHANGE OF PACE, published in 35 in 10, 35 Ten-Minute Plays, by the Dramatic Publishing Company.

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU with Rhonda Ross and Tobias Truvillion, and I HATE WHEN IT GETS DARK SO EARLY with Edward Pomerantz and Sandra Kazan, performed at Food For Thought.

I HATE WHEN IT GETS DARK SO EARLY and THE PEACEKEEPER, Finalists for the Actors Theatre of Louisville Heideman Award.

THE PEACEKEEPER and A MAN DANCING performed by Joyce Griffen and Valery Oisteanu at the Maxine Greene Salon Series, New York City

DANCING ON QUICKSAND, an evening of all six short plays, produced at the Hayworth Theatre in Los Angeles, as part of the Bruno Kirby Celebrity Reading Series, directed by Lisa James, and starring Paul Mazursky, Jenny O'Hara, Gregg Henry, Anita Barrone, Deidre Henry, and Ntare Guma Mbabo Mwine.

THE PEACEKEEPER, produced by the Samuel French 2010 Short Play Festival, starring Karen Murphy, with Tobias Truvillion, Maisha Azadi, and Michael Citriniti.

THE GODDESS OF FILTHY THINGS, staged at the Actors Studio in New York City, and at the Edgemar Theatre in Santa Monica, California

A TUNE BEYOND US or WHAT A REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT THIS IS!, presented by Woodie King, Jr.'s New Federal Theatre at the Theatre of St. Clements, New York City.

ELECTRA: THE REWRITE, directed by Edward Pomerantz, and produced by Kinitiras, at the 2010 Athens Fringe Festival, Athens, Greece.

NOT ON THE MAP, staged at Ardea Arts, New York City.

INTRODUCTION

Coming Home

When I was sixteen, my playwriting teacher at the High School of Performing Arts submitted the play I wrote to Samuel French. It was a one-act called *The Garden*, and I got fifty bucks for it. The next one, *Only A Game*, published a year later, made it official. The first was no fluke. I was the real thing—a Playwright, and got seventy-five bucks.

This was in the early 50's, when the American Theater was an exciting place to find a home in. Until then, I was a movie kid, going to double features at my Washington Heights Loews and RKO every Saturday from the day I was born. But now, a drama student at a pioneering new public high school at Broadway's epicenter on West 46th Street, I was a Saturday matinee kid, getting up at dawn to stand on line for standing room or the last row in the second balcony, where I had my heart broken by Julie Harris in *A Member Of The Wedding* and Bert Lahr in *Waiting For Godot*, my view of reality expanded by Jo Mielziner, his set for the bedroom in *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* an open space, no pretending to look like a real bedroom, just Maggie the Cat in a white slip down left on a thrust stage, her husband Brick, drinking, on a bed up right, nothing but isolation and distance between them.

I was lucky. It was Jacob Weiser, the playwriting teacher, who saw a gift in me I didn't know I had, and mentored me (every day after school in his parked convertible on Riverside Drive) through a long process of endless rewriting, scene by scene, line by line. It's all Jack Weiser's fault. Instead of the next Gene Kelly, I would have to settle for being the next Eugene O'Neill.

Then Time happened. After the one-acts, I expanded *The Garden* into a three-acter, and won First Prize in the Samuel French National Playwriting contest, which led to interest in the play by Kraft Television Theater and an offer to go to Hollywood to be a contract writer for one of the Studios, neither of which happened. Instead, I ended up with an MFA from the Yale Drama School, where I returned six years later, when Robert Brustein took over, to be a playwright-in-residence and write my play/feast *Brisburial*. By now, it was the late 60's, and except for two one-acts in this collection and a production of *Brisburial* at Woodie King, Jr's New Federal Theatre in the early 70's, I didn't write or have another play produced for over twenty-five years.

I did, however, remain a storyteller—writing two novellas and my novel *Into It* (Dial Press), and over thirty commissioned screenplays and television scripts, some of which have been produced (most not), some winning awards. Which jump-cuts me to the mid-90's, when *Caught*, the movie I wrote based on *Into It*, premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was released by Sony Pictures Classics. It was around then, after 20 years (and drafts) fighting to get the movie made, I returned to *The Goddess Of Filthy Things*, a play in my head and on scattered pieces of paper that demanded my attention and

jeopardized my sanity until I finally “saw the forest for the trees” and figured out what all the voices and unconnected monologues, notes, stories-inside-stories were telling me. Most important, and we’re coming around full circle now, I figured out how to travel through the play--through open space, the space Mielziner opened for me when I was a kid in the second balcony watching *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* forty-five years earlier.

With the writing of *The Goddess of Filthy Things*, I had come home. And “home” is where I’ve stayed since then, writing all the plays in this collection (except for the two one-acts written in the early 70’s). I’ve also included *Man Running*, an original screenplay, which began many years ago when Bob Young, my treasured friend and director of *Caught*, brought me the gift of his idea for it. Decades later, it remains unfilmed. But that could be a “blessing in disguise.” What you have here is the latest draft written in the last year (There’s always a scene, an inspiration, a truer and funnier way to do it that makes me and Bob laugh, keep working on it).

Play. Novel. Screenplay. I’ve written them all with the deepest pleasure and satisfaction. Why then, in these last years, has the stage become the only arena for my ideas? Stories? Imagination? Why now, when I close my eyes, it’s always that open space I see, giving me the same freedom movie writing gives me—to move fluidly through time and place—meeting and merging with what prose gives me—the music and density of language, the rhythmic force and driving flow of narrative. And even though the neighborhood movie palace was my cathedral, and the Josephs, Conrad and Heller, changed my life, it’s the Theater—the public event, the human voice—out there, filling the space, the happening now, right now of it--that keeps me coming back to it. It’s the space where all my writing—screenplays, novel, and plays-- intersect. The space where I can create what Matthew Ritchie, the painter, calls “a landscape...designed to produce adventures inside itself, adventures of information,” where, like Ritchie, I can “dream the whole thing up as a way to express just how much fun you can have thinking.”

Adventure. That’s the key word here. Every play in this collection began with a question, a strong scene, image, or situation that haunted me, whose mystery could only be solved by writing it, moving step by step into unknown territory, emboldening me with clues and discoveries, as I moved forward, loving the danger of it, dancing on quicksand. “We’re lucky,” William Carlos Williams tells us, “when we catch the evasive life of the thing.” With these plays, and the one I’m writing now, I feel lucky to still be spending my days in pursuit of it.

Edward Pomerantz
New York City
February 19, 2011

SYNOPSIS OF EACH PLAY

NOTHING PERSONAL, two characters. After lovemaking, a wife asks her husband if he’s ever cheated on her.

Dancing On Quicksand

A CHANGE OF PACE, two characters. After lovemaking, a husband asks his wife if she's ever cheated on him.

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, two characters. In a car, on the way to their wedding rehearsal, a young woman asks the young man she's going to marry tomorrow to tell her something she doesn't know about him.

I HATE WHEN IT GETS DARK SO EARLY, two characters. In a car, traveling as day turns to evening, a wife tells her husband something she's never told him, a thought she's never put into words, spoken aloud. The marriage is shaken. It will never be the same.

A MAN DANCING, two characters. A Nobel Prize Winner, bored to death at a banquet in his honor, reveals the dark truths he's been hiding behind his "humanitarianism."

THE PEACEKEEPER, four characters. A translator, haunted by the testimony of a United Nations Peacekeeper charged with the murder of an escaped war criminal who ordered a massacre in Rwanda, keeps breaking into songs as she sits at her breakfast table with her newspaper-reading husband, talking to us.

THE GODDESS OF FILTHY THINGS, 12 characters. A story inside a story inside a story inside a story. A dramatic labyrinth that attempts to bring the density of the novel and the fluidity of the movies to the stage. At its core—a mystery. What happened to Jerry Green, a writer? His daughter Jessica thinks if she can tell her father's story she'll find him and get him back. The only one who can help her is Jack, who, haunted by Jessica since she was a child, is writing a play about her—the play you're watching—about the obsessive nature and power of storytelling itself—what happens when a story seizes your imagination and becomes more real to you than your own life.

A TUNE BEYOND US or WHAT A REVOLTIN' DEVELOPMENT THIS IS!, 8 characters. A ghost and gangster picture show. Spanning generations, the epic saga of a Jewish Crime Family, with deadly rivalries, multiple scenarios and narratives. Tonight's the night. Jerome Greenspan, aka Cody Jarrett, will take revenge for the murder of his childhood bodyguard Fat Jack The Nail. The same night his sister Midnight Flower and his aunt Shonda The Mother Killer will play out their dream of revenge—against the same enemy, Mose The Nose Weinstein, returning to take his revenge after fifteen years in prison. But before the night is over, there are stories to tell, unwritten screenplays, all merging into a theatrical picture show, the characters fed and fueled by movies, the power of movies to ignite our imaginations, shape our identities.

ELECTRA: THE REWRITE, 8 characters. A wild mix of Greek Tragedy, Vaudeville, and Bob Hope Road movies. Electra, sick of waiting for the return of Orestes to kill Clytemnestra and Aegisthus for the murder of Agamemnon, decides to rewrite what the gods have written and take vengeance with her own hands. Enter Bobhopecles, Apollo's Top Banana, and his sidekick Jerrycolonnus, two entertainers for the Trojan troops, who wander into Agamemnon's courtyard on their way home to Troy. (Bob, a battle-shocked amnesiac, can only speak in one-liners). Perfect timing! Two "actors" to help Electra carry out her fatal plan, but the script doesn't quite work out as she expected when Bob and Jerry turn her Greek Tragedy into Musical Comedy.

NOT ON THE MAP, 10 characters. An insane ensemble comedy. Peta Thessaloniki Von Wildergeist Flynn (called Pet), a world-renowned psychoanalyst in her eighties, has retired with her young lover to a not-on-the-map Sicilian farmhouse where no-one with “emotional emergencies” can find her. But then the doorbell rings, and Bobby Vitale, a stranded New York movie director, arrives, his rented car dead on the way to the airport. And then the doorbell rings again...and keeps ringing...with the invasions of Pet’s family and former lovers and patients, all bringing their “emotional emergencies” with them, turning Pet’s life and dreamhouse into an exploding minefield.

MAN RUNNING, an original screenplay, based on a story by Robert M. Young and Edward Pomerantz. Today’s the day! The day Lou Robinson has to make up his mind, make a life-changing decision. A day he has to juggle all the jumbled relationships in his life, when he’s running late, and there are all these women coming on to him, and a cab driver who quotes Martin Buber, and a traffic tie-up because the Pope is in town, and a chase by the cops who think Lou is a terrorist, led by an Israeli bomb-sniffing dog called Chutzpah. Can the day get any crazier? Wilder? How fast can Lou run? Keep running? Poor Lou! All he wants is to do the right thing—and be everything to everyone everywhere at the same time.

NOTHING PERSONAL, two characters. After lovemaking, a wife asks her husband if he's ever cheated on her.

NOTHING PERSONAL
a one-act play by
EDWARD POMERANTZ

Scene: A bedroom

ANN and BILL, a married couple in their early thirties, are lying in bed in each other's arms.
A long silence, then:

ANN
Bill?...Bill?

BILL
Mmmmm?

ANN
I'm sorry. I woke you.

BILL
That's okay. What is it?

ANN
Forget it. Go back to sleep.

She smiles at him. He smiles back, kisses her, turns over.

ANN
(into space)
I was just wondering...Have you ever cheated on me?

Bill opens his eyes, doesn't move.

ANN
Bill? You up?

Bill looks at her.

ANN
I'm sorry. Go back to sleep.

Bill holds his gaze, turns over, closes his eyes.

ANN
I was just lying here...thinking... how smug I feel. Past thirty. Eleven years with the same man.
Two kids. Everybody else falling apart. And we're still here. Still making it. Together.

Dancing On Quicksand

She looks at him.

ANN

I don't care if you've ever been unfaithful. At this moment, that's how safe...how loved you've made me feel.

Bill looks at her. She smiles, turns out the light. Silence.

ANN

Have you?

Bill turns on the light.

BILL

Okay. What's going on?

ANN

What do you mean what's going on?

BILL

Something is going on. What is it?

ANN

I asked you a question.

BILL

Some question.

ANN

You don't have to answer it if you don't want to. I told you. It wouldn't make any difference.

BILL

Then why ask?

ANN

(shrugs, laughs)

To see if it would.

They look at each other.

ANN

Let's go to bed.

She turns over. A long silence.

BILL

Have you?

ANN

Have I what?

BILL

Given to the Heart Fund this month.

She looks at him.

BILL

Been unfaithful. That is what we were talking about, wasn't it?

ANN

Don't be ridiculous.

BILL

Wait a minute. Don't be ridiculous what? Don't be ridiculous. I haven't been unfaithful. Or don't be ridiculous. I wouldn't dream of answering such a stupid and/or insulting question.

ANN

I asked you first.

They look at each other.

BILL

Who?

ANN

Who who?

BILL

Who have you been screwing?

ANN

I don't believe you.

BILL

Come on. You can tell me. You wouldn't have asked if you weren't thinking of it.

ANN

You're crazy.

BILL

You want to find out I have so you won't feel so bad. Who? Ben? Robbie? The kid next door?

ANN

I don't think this is funny, Bill. Cut it out.

BILL

The week I went to California. The summer I stayed in the city and worked while you and the kids were on Fire Island.

ANN

What makes you think I wait? You don't have to go to California. Soon as you leave for the office, I call up Whole Foods and have them send over a delivery boy.

BILL

I knew you sounded funny.

Dancing On Quicksand

ANN

I'm supposed to know what you're talking about.

BILL

Dropping something off on his way to work. I wondered what Ben was doing here in the middle of the afternoon. Dropping something off! Indeed!

ANN

I knew you didn't believe me. I knew you sounded funny.

BILL

Go on. Tell me. He didn't make a pass at you.

Ann doesn't answer.

BILL

Go on. Tell me. You haven't wondered what it might be like jumping in the sack with him.

ANN

You're disgusting.

BILL

Go on. Tell me.

ANN

All right. All right. I'll play I Love Lucy with you. As a matter of fact, I have wondered. I do find Ben attractive...and yes, Ricky... that afternoon you called from L. A., he did make a pass at me. If you must know, he did more than make a pass. He took his clothes off.

BILL

He took his clothes off.

ANN

I was in the kitchen. On the phone with you. And when I came back to the living room with coffee, he was sitting in the rocker with just his socks on.

BILL

With just his socks on.

ANN

Milk and sugar? I asked him. Just milk, he said. And then we sat there awhile. Drinking coffee.

BILL

No danish or anything. Just coffee.

ANN

Just coffee. And then he said: My penis wants you. It would give us both great pleasure if you would let us come inside you.

BILL

Us.

ANN

Ben. And his penis.

BILL

I get it. And what did you say?

ANN

I said I'm terribly sorry. But as much as I'd like to, I don't think I can handle it.

BILL

How big was it?

ANN

Not his penis! The whole thing! The mess. The guilt. The getting involved. Besides, it was 2:30 and I had to pick the kids up at school.

BILL

Ah-ha!

ANN

Ah-ha what?! Nothing happened. He finished his coffee, put his clothes on, and left.

BILL

But you wanted to. You would have.

ANN

I'm warning you, Bill. If you don't stop this, you're going to make me very sorry I didn't.

BILL

It's not too late. You still can.

ANN

Are you giving me permission?

BILL

I wouldn't mind.

ANN

Why wouldn't you?

BILL

What happens between two people is their business.

ANN

You mean you wouldn't mind as long as you didn't know about it.

BILL

If I knew about it, I would try to understand. It might drive me crazy if I thought about it...or visualized it. I might want to divorce you...or murder you...

ANN

But you wouldn't mind.

Dancing On Quicksand

BILL

I would deal with it. I wouldn't hold it against you.

ANN

That's consoling. You can tell the kids that when they find my body.

BILL

It's unreasonable to expect anybody to stay faithful.

Ann stares at him.

BILL

Everybody's on the make. If they're not, they're available.

ANN

And which category do you fall into?

They look at each other.

BILL

Something tells me we're back to your original question.

ANN

You bet we are.

BILL

You really want to know.

ANN

More than ever.

BILL

Uh-uh.

ANN

Uh-uh what? Uh-uh, you've never been unfaithful. Or uh-uh, you won't answer the question.

BILL

Uh-uh, I won't answer the question.

ANN

Why not?

BILL

It's irrelevant.

ANN

Oh, come on.

BILL

Look at you. You weren't, and you might as well have been.

ANN

What does that mean?

BILL

Having to pick up the kids and organize an extra sex life. Logistics! That's what stopped you! Fidelity had nothing to do with it.

ANN

You're stalling.

BILL

Mess. Guilt. Getting involved. Having to look me in the eye when I come home at night. Keeping your life intact! That's what you're committed to. You don't have the guts...the stomach to have an affair.

ANN

You have been. Haven't you?

BILL

Unfaithful to you. Never.
(a long silence, then looking away)
Cooperative with others...

ANN

I don't believe it.

BILL

Good. Then we can go back to sleep.

He turns over.

ANN

All I had to do was ask.

BILL

(mumbling)
You should learn to quit when you're ahead.

ANN

What?

BILL

You should learn to quit when you're ahead.

Silence.

ANN

How many?

BILL

(turning, looking at her)
Oh, for Christ's sake.

Dancing On Quicksand

ANN

You said others. I want to know. How many?

BILL

Look, I can't lie to you, okay?

ANN

What is that? A threat?

BILL

I don't want to hurt you.

ANN

You just want to arouse my curiosity and watch me salivate to death.

BILL

I love you. Understand? I don't want anything to happen to that.

ANN

You bastard. You screw around and I can't ask questions cause it might jeopardize this beautiful thing we have. Well, fuck you. My father pulled that "Ask me no questions and I'll tell you no lies" shit... and my mother ended up swallowing her tongue as well as her pride. How many, goddamit?! Two? Three? A couple of hundred?!

BILL

Somewhere in between.

ANN

From the beginning? Or only when you started losing your hair.

BILL

Getting older has nothing to do with it.

ANN

From the beginning then.

BILL

Not right away.

ANN

You waited a day or two.

BILL

A couple of years.

ANN

Regularly?

BILL

On and off.

ANN

On and off who? Anybody I know? Or just pick-ups and office temps?

BILL

I'd rather not be specific.

ANN

Of course. What happens between two people is their business, etcetera, etcetera. Would you like a divorce?

BILL

Not particularly.

ANN

I'm flattered.

BILL

I love you.

ANN

I know. You told me. You also love screwing around...Well, didn't I start something? What do we do now?

BILL

I'll sleep in the living room.

ANN

That's original...When? That's what I want to know. When do you find the time?

BILL

You have to want to. You have to make yourself available.

ANN

Okay. Tomorrow, you pick the kids up.

BILL

If you wish.

ANN

Oh, for Christ's sake! You can afford to be generous now, can't you?...Well, if you really want to know, Ben does have a large penis. The largest penis I've ever seen!

BILL

That's hitting below the belt.

ANN

(exasperated)

Oh!...Give me a for instance. No names or anything. Just give me an idea of how you go about it. How it happens.

BILL

It just happens.

Dancing On Quicksand

ANN

You do nothing to make it happen.

BILL

Sometimes. A smile. A look. The other day...at lunch.

He stops.

ANN

I'm listening.

BILL

What difference does it make?!

ANN

I want to know. I want to test our love...The waitress? The hat-check girl? Some woman at a bar?

Bill looks at her. A long wait. Then:

BILL

The busboy.

ANN

(quiet)

Oh my god.

BILL

Last week it was some woman at a bar. A month ago...someone on the subway. The gender didn't matter. I just liked the mouth. Wanted the ass.

He looks at her.

BILL

The actual person seldom matters.

She remains speechless. He goes on.

BILL

This summer. In the country. When you went to sleep and Tom and I stayed up in the kitchen talking for hours...When we realized it was dawn, it suddenly seemed illogical ... unnatural ... wrong ... for me to go to your bed, not his. Nothing personal. The next day up at the pond I was taking a sunbath, naked ... and this dog I had never seen before ... with the wettest tongue ...

Ann remains still, silent.

BILL

I don't know what it is. A deficiency of character. Or hyper-horniness. Infantilism. Or a mature acceptance of my nature. Whatever it is, I don't suffer for it. Whatever it is, I don't seem to be able to say no to any sexual opportunity.

Ann holds her gaze.

BILL

Is that so terrible? So difficult to understand? I'm sure, once the initial shock is over, you'll realize it's not what I do, or who I do it with that hurts so much. It's thinking you knew me, and finding out there's more.

He waits for her to speak. She doesn't.

BILL

Maybe we can do some of these things together now.

No response.

BILL

Say something. Please.

Ann starts to speak, but can't. Instead, she starts to laugh, at first quietly, slowly, then gradually to hysterically. Bill watches her, speechless, not sure what to say, do. Then turning to him, still laughing:

ANN

Get out. Get out. Before I kill you.

Bill, afraid, gets out of bed, backs away.

BILL

You'll get over it. I promise. It's impossible to know anyone completely. We'll work it out. I love you!

ANN

(the funniest joke she ever heard)

He loves me...He loves me...

Suddenly, she grabs a lamp, stands on the bed, and throws it at him. Bill ducks. The lamp crashes against the wall.

BILL

Are you crazy?! You'll wake the kids!

That does it! With a howl, Ann leaps from the bed and knocks Bill to the ground, sitting on him, punching him. A silence as she stops, then exhausted, out of breath, she gets up, slowly, gets back into bed. Bill sits up, dazed, bloodied. Ann looks at him, smiles.

ANN

Nothing personal.

THE END

A CHANGE OF PACE, two characters. After lovemaking, a husband asks his wife if she's ever cheated on him.

A CHANGE OF PACE

a one-act play by

Edward Pomerantz

Scene: A bedroom.

JERRY and MARGO, an attractive couple in their forties are lying in bed in each other's arms.
After awhile:

JERRY
Margo?

MARGO
(sleepily)
Mmmmmm?

JERRY
You still up?

MARGO
(muttering)
What is it?

JERRY
Nothing...I was just lying here thinking
(pause)
...Have you ever cheated on me?

MARGO doesn't answer. We listen to her breathing.

JERRY (cont'd)
I mean...what right have I to assume you haven't? What right have I to be so sure of you?
Especially now...Back to school after all these years...your whole life centered around the kids ...
around the house...around me. You must be coming into contact with all kinds of new people...all
kinds of opportunities.
(pause)
...Are you?

MARGO
(in her sleep)
Am I what?

JERRY
Meeting new people...Having an affair.

MARGO
(turning over, making herself comfortable)
I'll tell you in the morning.

She goes to sleep. Jerry looks at her, then to himself:

JERRY

Some English professor who's told you you have a talent for writing...a profound understanding of the human heart. Some kid...with a tattoo and an earring in his nipple--who punctuates your every word, your every breath with wow...and cool...and like that's really deep, man.

(a sigh)

Well, it was inevitable, I guess.

(he leans over, kisses her ear)

Just try to keep things in perspective. Okay? I'd hate to see you get hurt.

He turns over, goes to sleep. Long pause. Then lifting her head, Margo turns and looks at him. She sits up.

MARGO

You've got it all figured.

JERRY

(waking with a start)

What?

MARGO

I said you've got it all figured.

JERRY

What are you talking about?

MARGO

My education. My extracurricular activities.

JERRY

I was only kidding.

MARGO

Kidding. First you tell me you have no right to make assumptions...no right to be so sure of me. Then you not only assume I'm having an affair but who I'm having it with.

JERRY

I was indulging myself--in fantasy.

MARGO

Some kid. Some English teacher. Some nice safe stereotype you can generalize, feel superior to.

JERRY

I wish I was dead. What do you want me to say?

She stares at him.

MARGO

You don't think I have talent...a profound understanding of the human heart.

JERRY

Dancing On Quicksand

I didn't say that. I was suggesting some English teacher might take advantage of that to get into bed with you.

MARGO

And that's all it would take.

JERRY

English teachers want to get laid like everybody else.

MARGO

That's your fantasy...your image of me. Instant pushover. For horny intellectuals. Tattooed boys with earrings.

JERRY

Oh for Christ's sake...

MARGO

What contempt you must have for me. What contempt you must have for yourself...being married to such a pushover.

JERRY

I'm sorry. Okay?...Let's go to sleep.

He turns over. Margo sits there for a moment. Then:

MARGO

He's not an English professor.

JERRY

What?

MARGO

I said he's not an English professor.

Jerry turns, looks at her.

MARGO

Or a kid.

JERRY

What does that mean?

MARGO

I'm answering your question.

They stare at each other.

JERRY

Look. Forget I asked. Okay? If you're having an affair, terrific! We've been married forever. It's about time.

He turns over and punches his pillow. Margo waits for him to settle down.

MARGO

Then you won't mind hearing the details.

JERRY

I don't want to hear the details.

MARGO

You just want me to hear your fantasies.

JERRY

(turning, angry)

Look, what is this? Revenge?

MARGO

Revenge for what?

JERRY

You know.

She looks at him bewildered.

JERRY

All the times you think I've screwed around.

She stares at him dumbfounded for a moment, then she laughs.

JERRY

What's so funny?

She laughs again.

JERRY

What's so funny?!

MARGO

Think you've screwed around. Oh Jerry...

JERRY

What does that mean?

MARGO

Everytime you've been with a woman I know it. That night...when you come home...all that week...you're a better lover. We fuck more often. Why do you think I've never said anything to you? If it didn't pay off for me I'd have left you long ago.

He looks at her stunned.

MARGO

What a fool you take me for...I've lived with your infidelities for years. If it hasn't been other women, it's been your fantasies...your projects...your constant preoccupation and love affair with yourself. Most of the time I'm not here at all for you. Even when you're with me you're not with me. I just exist--as your mirror, your tape-recorder.

JERRY

I don't believe this. I don't believe this is happening.

Dancing On Quicksand

MARGO

His name is David.

JERRY

Who?

MARGO

My new person. The one you inquired about.

JERRY

Oh my god. I think I'm going to be sick.

MARGO

He's an ex-Marine. In my philosophy class. Works nights as a bartender while he gets his PhD. He's killed people. Enemy soldiers his own age. He's thirty-two.

JERRY

You're just dying to tell me all this, aren't you? You've been lying there...waiting.

MARGO

If you weren't prepared for the answer you shouldn't have asked the question.

They stare at each other.

MARGO (cont'd)

For years I thought going to bed with another man would mean the end of us...that it would have to be him or you. I know otherwise now...For years I thought all men brought your appetite...your violence to bed with them...I'm not complaining. It's always excited me...

(she shrugs)

Now I know there's something else...Something different.

JERRY

And something tells me I'm going to hear all about it.

MARGO

Your fantasies underestimate me. I want you to know who I am...what my capacities are.

JERRY

If there's one thing I'll never do again it's underestimate you.

They stare at each other.

MARGO

(slowly, quietly)

I've learned things. I've learned that you can make a man happy and not feel like a slave...a nymphomaniac. I've learned to locate and honor my appetite...my violence.

Jerry stares at her.

MARGO (cont'd)

I've learned to do things...sexy things...things only whores and Orientals are supposed to know how to do.

JERRY

What kind of things?

MARGO

(a shrug)

Things. With thumbs. And knotted silk handkerchiefs.

He stares at her dumbstruck. She smiles.

MARGO

If you like I'll teach them to you.

He turns away.

MARGO

I've learned to be generous...with all of my body. With you I've always held back, resented giving until I got, only gave when I got first. I'm sorry about that. Until I met him, I had no idea there was another way. Until I met him, I had no idea you could make love to someone and still belong to yourself...That's why I agreed to try the others.

Jerry looks at her.

JERRY

Others?

MARGO

His brother. And his friends.

Jerry stares at her.

MARGO (cont'd)

When he first suggested it, I was insulted. I felt like a prostitute. An object. But then I saw it his way. How could he be so selfish. So possessive. To keep me all to himself. (she laughs)As it turned out, his brother and his friends are as sexy as he is. Sensitive. Intelligent. I'm sure you'd like them.

JERRY

(quietly)

How many of them are there--all together?

MARGO

Just four.

JERRY

I don't believe you.

MARGO

My only regret is there isn't more of me to go around.

She smiles. A long pause as they stare at each other, then:

JERRY

Oh no...Oh no...You had me going there for a minute...but that did it...That last one about the brother and the friends...You blew it, baby.

Dancing On Quicksand

MARGO

Would you like to meet them?

JERRY

I'm warning you, Margo. A joke is a joke.

MARGO

You overestimate my sense of humor.

JERRY

(visibly shaken, trying to control himself)

Okay...

(holding his hand up in truce)

Okay. One fantasy deserves another. We're even now. Let's go to sleep.

He turns over and lies there taut. Margo sits there. A long moment, then:

JERRY (cont'd)

(laughing)

Thumbs...Knotted silk handkerchiefs...

(turning to her)

Where did you get that shit?

A long moment before she answers.

MARGO

I read a book.

She turns over and goes to sleep. Jerry remains still, looking at her, as the lights dim and the curtain falls.

THE END

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU, two characters. In a car, on the way to their wedding rehearsal, a young woman asks the young man she's going to marry tomorrow to tell her something she doesn't know about him.

TELL ME SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU

a one-act play by

EDWARD POMERANTZ

A YOUNG MAN and WOMAN in their late twenties are in a car on the highway. The YOUNG MAN is driving. A silence. Then:

YOUNG WOMAN

Idea for a play. Short. About ten minutes. Just two characters. In a car on the highway. Tomorrow's their wedding and they're on the way to the rehearsal and a family dinner.

YOUNG MAN

They got names?

YOUNG WOMAN

Lois. And Bruce.

YOUNG MAN

Bruce? No way. Jack. Or Ike. Something with a k.

YOUNG WOMAN

(a beat, she wants to get this right)

Mac. With a c.

YOUNG MAN

(trying it on for size)

Mac. Yeah. That's good. I like that.

(driving on, like a Mac)

Mac.

The YOUNG WOMAN laughs, stares ahead.

YOUNG WOMAN

They're almost there. The last twenty minutes they haven't said anything. They've just looked at each other and smiled.

(stroking the Young Man's thigh)

Stroked the other's thigh.

The YOUNG MAN smiles, clasps her hand. A comfortable silence.

YOUNG WOMAN

Then out of nowhere, Lois says "Tell me something."

The YOUNG MAN waits for her to go on. She doesn't. He looks at her. She smiles.

YOUNG WOMAN

Last chance. Before the rehearsal. And the wedding. Before all the fuss and the noise and the music and the tears...Tell me something I don't know about you.

He holds his gaze. Is she serious? Is this a game?

YOUNG WOMAN

It's why people get married. Right? They've found the one person they can really talk to. Trust. Not be ashamed or feel afraid with.

The YOUNG MAN, realizing he's veering off the highway, straightens the wheel, keeps his eyes on the road.

YOUNG MAN

This Lois. She's got great timing.