

Tom Visits Rose One Last Time

a play with songs, vaudeville and last visits

by Kenneth Prestininzi

Tom Visits Rose One Last Time

Book and lyrics by Ken Prestininzi; music by Christopher Winslow

The play is a series of scenes, songs, and vaudeville between Tom Williams and his sister Rose at an institution where Rose stays after she underwent the botched “miracle cure” of a lobotomy. The play spans almost twenty years. During this span of time, Rose is moved from a St. Louis, Missouri institution to upstate New York and Tom opens many plays in New York City.

Note: Despite our wishes for her to be shy and demure, Rose is not the double of Laura from The Glass Menagerie.

WELCOME/WAITING

ROSE

Do you mind terribly waiting? He'll be here soon. Time and Tom. They're both so fickle. Cruel. But also capable of great kindness when you least expect...

She waits.

O, you know him, my brother.
Candle blower, paper lantern, iguana creeper
Angel, poet, trembling soul
You know him by another name: Iowa.
No, Florida Keys. I can never remember.
which State he inhabits? And twang.
My brother Tom.
Tennessee
I didn't forget. I was having you on.
I suspect he's not coming today.
Let's not give up hope just yet.
Let's wait.
I'll do my best to entertain...I always thought I could be a star on a vaudeville stage.
But I just don't have the...I'll give you a little background, so you might better understand: tell you a story.

Tom and I always believed we were orphans. The ogres who pretended to be our parents were always trying to pull us apart because we had become, they said, too old to be innocents. The change in us had begun. Tom was banned from my bed. The Mama Ogre said my body was no longer pure. I had been called to be a woman. Tom must be spared...my moods. My swings. My smells.

Tom snuck into my bed anyway. There were questions we had. And no one else to imagine the answers with.

Late at night Mama and Papa would start to make snout noises in their bedroom, and we knew that would always lead to Mama screaming how the Papa Ogre filled her with the pain of Saint Beatrice. "Let me tell you", the Mommy Ogre would scream-whisper on the phone to her sister. "Having marital relations with that man is like having my breasts and private parts cut off and burned inside of me. I have done my duty. I have ruined my precious body bearing two children. This is not what the nuns promised me!"

O, the Time. Look at the time. If he's not here by now, that means he's not coming today...

Tom hates traveling but loves to visit. Once he's here. We always have a nice visit. Just like when we shared a bed. We bump our knees together and discuss important things, the moonlight teasing us through the cracks of the curtains, as if the moon was peeking at us through butterfly wings.

When they first put me in a brightly lit room after my operation, Tom came to visit and crawled into my skinny hospital bed, just like he did when we were children. When we were innocent. Is there any pain more exquisite and ridiculous than the sounds of lust to the uninformed and innocent?

I was to go home after the operation...but that proved impossible.

Shall we start the show without him?

I don't think he's coming, the little bitch. Pardon me.

Tom, didn't visit this week. Month.
He's in rehearsal for a play.

So. We wait. Even when we know...

We wait, and are silently envious of the others who do get visitors every day. No visitors for me, besides you lovely few, of course. You see, Mother is incapable - of loving me. Tom's called away. And Father's a Beast. I save up my lusts - MY STORIES! Sorry. My stories. I save up my stories for no one and start bursting at the seams.

I've taken my life and turned it into a little bit of vaudeville. A girl can only make baskets for so long before she loses her mind. So. May I try my song out on you? The vaudeville must go on, we don't hold the curtain for stragglers. No sirree. We will begin. I put together a little show, a little vaudeville for Tom, for his birthday, but the little monkey's not showing. May I try my act on you? Will you be my first? Yes? Thank you.

Remember to be kind...

VAUDEVILLE SONG: PREFRONTAL

ROSE
PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY.
PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY.
CAN YOU IMAGINE?
THEY BOTCHED IT TOO.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?
WHAT CAN YOU DO?
I'M A POET TOO.

PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY.
PREFRONTAL LOBOTOMY.
BOTCHED, THROUGH AND THROUGH.
THERE'S NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO.

EXCEPT YOU.
YOU.
TOM.
YOU.

"I DIDN'T KNOW," YOU SAID.
"NO ONE TOLD ME WHAT THEY WERE TO DO..."

CAN YOU IMAGINE?
IF THEY HAD DONE IT TO YOU.
TOM?
SHE'D BE DEAD. MOTHER WOULD.

"ROSE, ROSE, WHAT CAN I DO?
HOW CAN I
MAKE IT UP TO YOU?"

IF I DIE FIRST,
"I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU IN MY WILL."

DIE FIRST?
YOU'RE THE WORST
WHO WILL I HAVE TO LOVE?
THERE'S ONLY YOU.
YOU.
TOM.
YOU.
NO ONE LOVES YOU AS I DO.
THAT'S WHY I WAS MEAN TO YOU.

MY LOVE WAS TOO BIG.
I MUST PUT YOU IN YOUR PLACE.
PINCH YOUR CHERUBIC FACE.
I JUST HAD TO CALL YOU NAMES. SISTER NANCY.
NANCY PANTS.
I WANTED TO BE CRUEL.
MAKE YOU CRY.

YOU LAUGHED INSTEAD.
“THAT’S MISS NANCY TO YOU,” YOU SAID.

MY TOM-TOM.
I HAVE ONLY YOU.
NO ONE LOVES YOU AS I DO.

Tom?

A VISIT

Tom enters.

Yes, Rose? TOM

You’re late. We’ve been waiting. ROSE

Never wait for me. Never wait. It’ll turn you into Mother. All she did was wait for him. And he hated coming home to her. I’d smell him when he came in. He smelled of bourbon and...a Jezebel’s stink. TOM

Who is Jezebel? ROSE

*They revert to being their young selves.
It’s quite simple to do when you are with your sibling.*

A woman who let’s the devil in. Or out. A woman who wears red and enjoys the lust of men. TOM

Have you met her? ROSE

I am her. TOM

Tom! ROSE

Aunt Millie told Mama that we all have a bit of the Jezebel in us. Even Mama. That's when Mama told me to leave the room. TOM

I know how to get her out of you. ROSE

She tickle tortures Tom. He squeals and laughs at first, but then he kicks her away.

Come out. Come out. Jezebel!

Stop it. Stop it. Go to Hell! TOM

They are quiet.

I'm sorry. I was trying to call out Miss Jezebel, not Mr. Morris Overly Sensitive. ROSE

Virgin. TOM

I'm rubber. You're glue. ROSE

Embarrassment. TOM

I'm not. ROSE

You are. TOM

So are you. ROSE

I'm not. TOM

You're a virgin too. ROSE

I... TOM

Embarrassment. You're twenty-six. ROSE

You're twenty-eight. TOM

I'm a girl. ROSE

I'm a... TOM

What? ROSE

Not. TOM.

Not what. ROSE

I'm a not. TOM

You are. ROSE

Not. TOM

You are. ROSE

What? TOM

A degenerate. ROSE

I am. TOM

You are? ROSE

I am. TOM

You should be ashamed. ROSE

I'm not. I'm glad. TOM

Have you? ROSE

I have not. Not yet. O god, not yet. TOM

You're a virgin and a degenerate? ROSE

I am. TOM

I'll tell Mother. ROSE

I have. TOM

You have! You have not. Her heart would've stopped. ROSE

It has, but her tongue wags on. TOM

You aren't. ROSE

I am. TOM

ROSE

You don't know. You have to be in love. Only then will you know love's plan.
O, Tom! Are you in love?

TOM

I am.

ROSE

Tom! In love! Lucky man.

TOM

It's awful. Keeping it secret.

ROSE

You haven't told him?

TOM

I can't.

ROSE

Tell him.

TOM

I can't.

ROSE

I don't understand.

TOM

It doesn't work like that for men.

ROSE

When you kiss doesn't he know...

TOM

Rose.

ROSE

Have you kissed?

TOM

No!

ROSE

Held hands?

TOM
No!

ROSE
Looked into each other's eyes? Winked? Have you met?

TOM
All in due time.

ROSE
You said.

TOM
I am.

ROSE
You haven't met!

TOM
He's seen me. I've seen him.

ROSE
That's it? Now, who's the embarrassment?

TOM
I want to die. He has no idea I'm alive!

Tom cries. He cries and cries.

ROSE
Tom. Tom. Please. They'll lock you away. Who will bring me my movie magazines?

TOM
I'm not alive! I'm a virgin at twenty-six.

ROSE
Tom.

TOM
All I want to say to him.

ROSE
The doctors will blame me. No show of emotions, please!

TOM
I'm in misery. Someone fuck me please.

ROSE
Tom!
TOM
What? You know exactly how I feel.

They agree. And compete:

VAUDEVILLE DITTY: MISERY

TOM & ROSE
I'M IN MISERY.
FUCK ME PLEASE.
I'M IN MISERY.
FUCK ME PLEASE.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
I'M IN MISERY.
FUCK ME PLEASE.

TOM
Virgin.

ROSE
Old maid.

TOM & ROSE
Whore.

TOM
I love you, Sister.

ROSE
I'm yours, mi amour. Tom?

TOM
Yes, Rose?

ROSE

Please, please, please, stop worrying about Father, Mother and me.
Do it for me. Please. Lose your virginity.

Tom exits.

WAITING

ROSE

Well, that was a short visit.

Tom is a good little brother. Good little brother: a younger sibling who does what his older sister tells him to. And then comes back and tells her everything. Tom stopped telling me things. He thought keeping secrets gave him magical powers and made him better than you and me. Made him an...Artist. I think secrets make you a bitch.

Tom enters with a big smile on his face.

What's so funny?

A VISIT

TOM

Nothing's funny. Everything's grand.

ROSE

Something's...different.

TOM

Nothing.

ROSE

Something's...did you eat a canary? You did!

Rose screams.

TOM

Shh. I won't tell you anything, if you go wild.

ROSE

I never thought. How did. Don't tell me. Tell me. No, don't.

TOM

I won't.

ROSE

You're blushing.

TOM

Yes, so was he, thank God. Thank Father, actually. Dear Daddy, the unknowing matchmaker, saved me from my misery.

ROSE

Tell me! No!

TOM

Daddy pulled me out of school and made me sell shoes to teach me a lesson. That's when we met.

ROSE

You met selling shoes! Wait. I don't know if that's romantic or not

TOM

I stock. He drives the truck. I watched him everyday get in and out of his truck and finally, because I could no longer just stare and walk away, I asked him for a cigarette.

ROSE

That's it. That's all it takes?

TOM

Asking for a smoke is how it began, yes.

ROSE

But people ask each other for cigarettes everyday. It doesn't mean what you say.

TOM

It's all in how you ask.

ROSE

Who taught you that?

TOM

My dear Sister, I believe I learned how to flirt from you.

ROSE

Don't you dare blame me for your carnal ways, sir. A woman flirts to entice without giving anything away.

TOM

I prefer the opposite. Give it away. Be generous!

ROSE

I don't want to know this side of you.

TOM

Who else can I tell? You have to permit me or else I'll go insane.

ROSE

You won't. You're too vain. You believe the world needs you.

TOM

I need you, Rose.

ROSE

Did you proposition him? How? How does one even try to?

TOM

When you don't know how, you just do. I learned it's all in the eyes. I could teach you. First you let them catch you looking at them. Then you stop as if that one time wasn't true. Then you almost let them catch you. But you look away, look away, again and again, until BAM, you lock eyes with him and don't blink. And since by then he's too angry to look away, you tilt your head ever so slightly and reveal neck. Smile. Show off your feathers first, of course, peacock it up, then expose your vulnerabilities. Expose the way to your soul like animals do.

ROSE

Like animals. Do you grunt and growl at each other? Or is talking allowed?

TOM

I talked, he didn't, boy did I talk. I get that from Mother, I guess. I talked to distract us both from what my hands were up to. I keep talking and talking until he puts his big Polish hand over my mouth. And then bam, he pushes me against a wall and I let him take charge. The whole time, he pretends nothing is happening, while everything is.

ROSE

Where are you?

TOM

In the parlor.

ROSE

No!

TOM

Imagine it! Mother in the next room! No, no, no – not at home, never at home. That's why I had to go away to school.

ROSE

In the stock room?

TOM

There are bars. And cheap rooms you can rent.

ROSE

You met selling shoes. Was it love at first sight?

TOM

No one sells shoes, Rose. I stock. He drives the truck. And we didn't do anything when at first sight. We had to torture each other first, by catching each other's eyes, then looking away, brushing against each other and pretending not to notice everyday – the rituals for hiding one's appetite for another are brutal. Be glad you're spared. Until at last, one of you punches your fist through the wall and admits what must be said. I belong to you. I'll give you everything.

ROSE

I've never seen you like this.

TOM

it didn't happen right then, when we first met. Much much later. When we both were drunk and offered to drive the other one home.

ROSE

Was it beautiful?

TOM

I was a mess. He was aggressive. We both were determined to go all the way.

ROSE

Don't tell me. How do men kiss? I can't imagine...

TOM

Rough and smelly and god how awkward, but I didn't care. Don't worry, you don't have to cover your ears, I won't say anything more. I know how you don't like to hear anything...sordid. Ha.

ROSE

Did you scream like a cat? Like Mother! Mother in heat!

TOM

Like Mother? No! Not like Mother at all. Shut up. I don't like you.

ROSE

You should have waited.

TOM

For what?

ROSE

Love. Tom, does your Polish truck driver love you? Tell me he does. I want to believe you still believe in...

TOM

I believe in everything he is, let that satisfy you. I believe in everything he made me feel, even the things that made me cry and hide.

ROSE

It can be enjoyed? Wipe that grin off your face.

TOM

Yes. Don't you dare tell you know who.

He tries to wipe the grin off his face. He can't.

ROSE

You're bad.

TOM

I am. Okay, I have to go. It's time.

Tom exits.

WAITING

*Rose waits and waits. Embarrassed.
Annoyed. Hungry. Bored. Until finally:*

ROSE

He's not coming today. You're my real audience, we needn't wait for him. I prepared a ballad about my first love. My one great romance. Richard Miles. Mother asked him over to play for my piano recital. He played the violin...

VAUDEVILLE SONG: STICKY FINGERS

Rose does a sweet little soft shoe and sings:

ROSE

HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN
I SIT AT THE PIANO
MY FINGERS ON THE GLISTENING KEYS
HIS EYE UPON MY NAPE
WHY WON'T HE KISS ME
WHAT WILL IT TAKE?
WILL THIS SANTINA MAKE MY HEART BREAK?
(MOTHER KNOWS – WHAT LIVES WITHIN...
-- -- --)

HE PLAYS THE VIOLIN
I SIT AT THE PIANO
MY STICKY FINGERS ON THE STICKING KEYS
I HEAR HIS BOW SCRAPE
WHY WON'T HE KISS ME
WHAT WILL IT TAKE?
I WET MY PANTIES, CRY OVER EV'RY MISTAKE
LUST CRIES OUT FROM UNDER HIS CHIN
MOTHER KNOWS.
WHAT OUR DESIRE IS:
SIN SIN SIN.

Mother never asked him back again.

A VISIT

Tom enters, self-collected again.

TOM

Mother met my friend. She called him a gentleman. I said Mother, he is not only a gentleman, he is my gentleman. And with that he pulled out her dining room chair and we sat down for dinner. So, she has to know. Frank is moving in and we have only one bed. So. And guess, you won't believe it, Mother seemed happy for me. She said she never saw me look – so healthy.

ROSE

He loves you.

TOM

He does. Maybe. Who knows? He reminds me I should be happy I'm alive. He's also the one who crushes me inside.

ROSE

Someone loves you!

TOM

He does. For now.

ROSE

Now is good.

TOM

It's killing me. Knowing he loves me now but will leave me soon.

ROSE

Tom-tom. I would be so happy if I were you. Now is good. Now is all we have.

TOM

Rose.

ROSE

O. Is it time?

TOM

Almost.

ROSE

May I meet him? Bring him to me. So I can tell him not to let you push him away. Tell him he must love you more. I wished he loved you so much he hated every minute you spent with me because it was like an eternity away from him.

TOM

It's time. I have to go.

ROSE

No. One more round.

TOM

One.

CHILDHOOD SONG: THE WHAT GAME

ROSE
WHAT QUACKS BUT IS NOT A DUCK?

TOM
WHAT THROWS BUT IS NOT A BUCK?
WHAT DRIVES BUT IS NOT A TRUCK?
WHAT PRICKS BUT CAN NOT PLUCK?
WHAT PECKS BUT CANNOT CLUCK?
WHAT SHOUTS BUT CANNOT SHUCK?
WHAT MOVES BUT STILL IS STUCK?
WHAT WINS BUT NOT FROM LUCK?
WHAT ROOTS BUT WILL NOT RUCK?
WHAT SQUEALS BUT WILL NOT FUCK?
WHAT!

WHAT?
TOM, THAT'S WHAT!
ROSE, THAT'S WHAT!
WHAT!
DUCK TRUCK CLUCK STUCK RUCK!
BUCK PLUCK SHUCK LUCK FUCK!
TOM, THAT'S WHAT!
ROSE, THAT'S WHAT!
BUCK FUCK YOU!
DUCK TRUCK YOU TOO!
YOU SUCK!
NO, YOU!
NO, YOU!
BOO HOO.
LOVE YOU.
YUCK.
YUCK, YOU TOO!
NO, YOU
NO YOU
YOU.
YOU.
SUCK.
SUCK.

TOM
Look at the time.

ROSE
Bye 'til next time. Bring your gentleman. Bring Frank.

TOM

Next time. Rose, it may be a while. I have deadlines.

ROSE

No, excuses. See you next time.

TOM

Rose, try to understand. It's not easy for me. Coming here. When I have so much pressure on me.

ROSE

You.

TOM

It's not just the time here, or the time on the train I lose.

ROSE

Lose?

TOM

It's the three days before, and the five days after. I can't concentrate. I get no writing done. And then there's Frank. He needs my attention too. Once I'm finished with these two deadlines, three, then I will have so much more free time, but right now, you have to understand. And remember, it's my writing that got you moved to this nicer place, closer to me.

ROSE

What's closer, if you don't visit. You can be in Morocco, for all I know.

TOM

The writing is not going well. I'm constipated.

ROSE

If you need an enema, I'm sure the attendants here could be asked.

TOM

Rose. Not funny.

ROSE

A little funny.

Tom exits.

WAITING

ROSE

My brother writes best on the toilet. He can stay in the bathroom for hours.
Constipation. So he says.

VAUDEVILLE SONG: TOM TAKES A SHIT

TOM

SOMETIMES WHEN I SIT ON MY PORCELAIN THRONE
ALL ALONE
I TAKE A MINUTE
BRACKET THE MOMENT
REVIEW
EVERY LIFE CHOICE I'VE EVER MADE

WHY AM I CONSTIPATED?

TEARS COME TO MY EYES
I REALIZE
THIS ONE -
THIS EFFORT WE MAKE -
THIS SHIT WE MUST TAKE -
I WANT TO WEEP
EVERY WRONG CHOICE I'VE EVER MADE

O GOD
IF ONLY -
PLEASE - RELEASE -
PUSH HARDER -
O HOLY GOD
LET ME SHIT MY WAY OUT OF MY RUT!

SORRY TO BE CRUDE
BUT LIFE IS NOTHING IF NOT -
LIFE IS NOT ALL GOSSAMER ETUDES!
IT'S RUDE!
THE EFFORT IT TAKES!

YOU'RE ON THE THRONE.
YOU ROCK AND KEEN.
DO YOUR BEST, COME CLEAN.
MAKE A SHIT
HUGE, MIGHTY AND MEAN
INTIMATE

OBSCENE
THE ONE
THE PURGE
THE EXPULSION OF POISON AND SIN
THE ONE THAT CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE
CHANGE EVERYTHING

(- grunt -)
(- grunt -)
(- grunt -)

IF YOU DO THIS
YOU CAN CONQUER THE WORLD
LOVE IS WITHIN YOUR REACH
SHAKESPEARE WILL BOW AT YOUR FEET

(- grunt -)
(- grunt -)
(- grunt -)

SHIT
OH, PLEASE, PLEASE, SHIT
PLEASE SHIT. PLEASE SHIT.
SHIT AND SEE STARS.
SHIT SO YOU WEEP.

WEEP.
WEEP.
WEEP.

Drunk? O, I may be.

I TELL YOU I HAVE SEEN GOD

He has spoken to me.

SON, YOU ARE A NEW MAN. GO. BE THE POET YOU WERE MEANT TO
BE. SHHHHHHHHHIT.

GOD TELLS ME I'M GOOD.

He trusts me with the gift he's given me. I'm a little boy hiding in the choir loft once
again. Memories.

TOM
I WEEP AND WEEP.
THANK YOU GOD FOR YOUR MYSTERIES.

I SHIT AND WEEP.
I SHIT AND WEE – EEEE HEE HEE EEP.

Rose applauds.

Tom exits.

Rose sighs.

WAITING

ROSE
Did you know the inventor of lobotomy won a Nobel Prize? He did.

VAUDEVILLE SONG: A CURE, A NOBEL PRIZE

ARE YOU A LITTLE SAD
TOO QUICK TO GET MAD
TOO OFTEN GIDDY AND GLAD

O DESPAIR
O DESIRE
THE TWO COMPANIONS MAKE THE STRONGEST AMONG US
BUCKLE OVER IN GRIEF

YOU NO LONGER NEED TO FEAR
THESE LITTLE AGITATIONS
WILL RISE UP AND RUIN
RUIN YOUR DAY
TO YOU I SAY
I OFFER RELIEF

I, DR. CARL MUNOZ
ANGEL OF EQUILIBRIUM
THANK THE ACADEMY
AND THE HUMAN MIND
TWO THAT CANNOT REST
UNTIL WE FIND PEACE
STOP THE MADNESS!

STOP THE MADNESS!
WORLD PEACE, YES!

NO YOUNG WOMAN
NEED EVER FEAR
BEING SWALLOWED UP AND DEVoured
BY HER DESIRE
HER DESPAIR
EVER AGAIN.
NO TO HYSTERIA.
NO TO HYSTERIA.
WORLD PEACE: YES!

WE WILL MOUNT OUR NIGHT MARES AND HOLD THE REIGNS
WORLD PEACE, YES!
NIGHT MARES: NEIGH! NEIGH! NEIGH!
BINDING AND BLINDING IS FOR YESTERYEAR
BREAK THE FILLY!
REIGN HER IN!
WE ARE MEN OF SCIENCE HERE!

NEIGH! NEIGH! NEIGH!
NEIGH! NEIGH! NEIGH!

ROSE as DR. MUNOZ
I, DR. MUNOZ, AM BUT A PIECE
OF HUMBLE PIE
SURE, THERE BE SOMEONE WHO DESERVES THIS MORE THAN I

NEIGH! NEIGH! NEIGH!
YES! YES, YES!

WE ALL KNOW HER NAME
MISS EQUILIBRIUM'
MISS MIRACLE CURE
DEAR MISS ROSE ISABEL SAVED FROM HER PERSONAL HELL
OUR SUNSHINE

We...givethisTonyOscarNobelDoodooprizeto...you!

Rose giggles and flutters.

ROSE
Speech! Speech! Speech!

I...I...I...

*Rose holds a toilet plunger as if it were an Oscar AND a Nobel prize.
She speaks to an invisible "academy."*

ROSE

I'D LIKE TO THANK...

THE ACADEMY OF MEDICINE, ART AND NEUROLOGY
SCIENCE TATA
AND PHILOSOPHY
THIS GREAT HOUSE OF BALDERDASHERY!

I NEVER DREAMED YOU WOULD NOTICE ME
LET ALONE DEEM ME WORTHY OF THIS:
THE WORLD'S MOST GOLDEN TROPHY
SUCH A COVETED ROD
SO SMOOTHLY MOLDED INTO THE SHAPE OF...

A BALDING MAN. A DYNAMITE STICK. MY BROTHER'S...

PEANUTS!

I FORGOT WHAT I WANTED TO SAY
ALL THE PEOPLE I WANTED TO THANK
ALL OF YOU WHO HELPED ME GET TO WHERE I AM TODAY

Dynamite stick!

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
THANK YOU
I AM PROUD TO ACCEPT THE NOBEL PRIZE

(Dynamite stick!)

TODAY!
FOR PEACE!

YES, ME!
HEE HEE
HEE HEE, HEE HEE!
HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE HEE!

I'D LIKE TO THANK...

I forgot what I was going to say.

WAITING

*Rose stops. She sits. Waits.
Tom never arrives.*

*Time passes.
Tom makes a visit.*

*Tom and Rose sit in the visiting room.
They have run out of things to say to each other and sit.
Tom looks at the clock on the wall.*

TOM
How fast it flies. It's time.

ROSE
No, you just arrived.

TOM
Time flies.

ROSE
That clock never tells the truth. Five more minutes.

TOM
Don't make it harder than it is.

ROSE
What time do you come back tomorrow?

TOM
You know I can't. We're in rehearsal. I shouldn't have come as it is. But I needed to get away from...all their helping me. They want me to cut the projections. If I don't, they'll drop me. I don't want to, so for one more day I won't. I ran away. But when I go back, I know I'll agree.

ROSE
You have no integrity.

TOM
None.

ROSE
Do you only visit when they're being mean?

TOM

Don't you be mean to me too.

ROSE

If they were always nice to you, sucked your tommy-joe every day -

TOM

Rose!

ROSE

- you'd never visit me again.

TOM

Not if you talk to me like that. My virgin ears!

ROSE

Were you ever a virgin? I don't think so.

TOM

Don't start.

ROSE

How many since last week? How many had names?

TOM

If you are going to use the stories I tell you against me, perhaps I should never tell you any of my stories at all.

ROSE

I don't approve of you modeling your self after Father -

TOM

Father!

ROSE

I don't. You'll get that genital disease he did. Don't look dumbfounded.

TOM

I don't know what you are talking about.

ROSE

GONORRHEA. It's a venereal disease.

TOM

I am nothing like our Father.

ROSE

Have you ever had a venereal disease?

TOM

I'm not answering that.

ROSE

Father and his office buddy brought prostitutes to the office and got gonorrhea. The only reason he didn't get fired is he admitted it and snitched. Why do you think Mother almost left him that time?

TOM

Nothing but wild imaginings.

ROSE

It's true. Ask Mother. Believe her if you don't believe me.

TOM

Is this free talk a sign of you getting better or worse?

ROSE

Better. Worse. Which would make you stop seeing me? If I got better or worse?

TOM

You can't say I'm like Father. You can't. He doesn't visit you. I do.

ROSE

You're a stronger man than he is, okay, that's true. When are you never coming to see me again?

TOM

Maybe next week. Maybe. This month is difficult.

ROSE

This was the last time. As long as I know. As long as I'm not waiting for you to call, I'm fine. I'll be nicer next time. I promise. No vulgarities.

TOM

Next week. If I can. We'll write between.

ROSE

You want me to say you don't have to visit because you're so busy and important with your Broadway play. If you can't stay, you can't.

TOM

Yes.

ROSE

This one was it? This was your last visit?

TOM

I'll see you next week.

ROSE

If you can't, you can't. I understand. Don't worry about me. I'm not going anywhere.

TOM

Love you. Got your nose. I'll bring it back next week.

He leaves.

ROSE

Don't forget you have it. Don't leave it in some hotel room. Or in Time Square. With your TRICKS. You know they go through your pockets while you sleep. You're too trusting, Tom, and I'll be out my nose! Keep their fingers out of your pockets. You need me to watch out for you. You do, Tom. You're too trusting and innocent. I could keep my eye on them. YOUR POCKETS. THE TRICKS.

Good. He's gone.

WAITING

Rose sits alone.

She hears something far away. Is Tom at the entrance hallway?

His play opens today. He'll send a car. He promised...

She sees the present box on the table.

It has a card. She opens it.

From Tom. "Wish you were here."

If wishes were faggots we'd smoke our lives away. Be gay.

O, Tom. For me? Music, please.

Dance music begins. She opens the box. O my! Viola.

Show it off to everyone. A new dress.

A shiny new polyester dress picked out for Rose on Tom's Broadway opening day. Such a dress.

Who can resist dancing with such a dress?

Not Rose. She dances with her new dress.

She's happy and gay. She suddenly strips in a frenzy.

She dons her new dress.

From somewhere faraway, we hear Tom say:

TOM
They love me. They love me.
Success. Success.
Rose!
How do you like your new dress?

Rose gets out her stationery. And writes her brother a letter.

ROSE
Dearest Brother: Your distressed relative thanks you for the gift. I tore open the gift box. Made quite the mess. It was difficult ripping the paper and tape. They clip my nails to the nub. Let's not think about nails and nubs. MY DRESS! How sweet of you to think of me on your big day. You think of me. Mother is a mess, a happy proud mess. The world shines its light on you. A happy proud mess. A blinding light. Me too. I'm bright in my beautiful new green polyester dress. Thank you, Tom. P.S. I can't stop smiling because everyone stops to tell me how beautiful I am in my new dress. I wear it and I sit by the window and read your press. The light...catches me...and I feel I should be in a magazine. If only...if only you could come for a short visit and see...

VAUDEVILLE SONG: A NEW DRESS

THE WAR IS OVER;
WELCOME TO WOMAN'S WEAR,
HOUSE OF DIOR.
EASY CARE SYNTHETICS
ARE THE ANSWER TO EVERY CARE.

OH,
I HAVE A NEW LOOK,
I READ LIFE MAGAZINE.
I CAN BE BOLD,
I PUT BRIGHT LIPSTICK ON.
DRIP DRY,
DACRON,
NYLON.

TOM
No need to fuss.

DON'T NEED AN IRON
READY TO WASH N' WEAR,
NO NEED FOR TEARS:
HAIR UP IN A BEEHIVE
HEAT-SET PLEATS AND A FITTED WAIST.

OH,
I HAVE A NEW LOOK,
I READ LIFE MAGAZINE.
I CAN BE BOLD,
I PUT BRIGHT LIPSTICK ON.
SPANDEX,
ACRYLIC,
TRIACETATE.
HOUSE BOY PANTS,
PEDAL PUSHERS,
SAUCER HAT-
TOM, WHAT CAN I GIVE YOU IN EXCHANGE FOR THAT?

OH, I HAVE A NEW LOOK,
I READ LIFE MAGAZINE.
LIFE HAS A NEW HOOK
YOU'VE READ MY DIARY!

FOR EVERY PAGE WHERE I CONFESS
MY MESS
I GET A BRAND NEW POLYESTER DRESS.
FOR EVERY EXTRA LITTLE PHRASE YOU SNATCH
I GET ACCESSORIES TO MATCH.

Music starts totally unraveling here.

OH, I HAVE A NEW LOOK
I READ LIFE MAGAZINE
WIPE OFF THAT BLUE LOOK
YOU LIVE LIFE HOW I MEAN
TO LIVE MY LIFE
BUT I'M NOT A CROOK
YOU THROW A NYLON DRESS IN A BOX AND DO THE FOXTROT WITH ALL
YOUR FEATHERED QUEENS. YOUR SYCOPHANTS SCREAM 'BOUT HOW
YOU BROUGHT THE WHOLE TOWN TO ITS KNEES, TO ITS ROUGED
KNEES. I'M TUCKED IN A BOX I'M WEARING TOM'S DRESS, TUCKED IN A
BOX WEARING A BRIGHT GREEN DRESS, I WEAR A DRESS, THAT ISN'T A
LIFE, TO WEAR A DRESS, THAT ISN'T A LIFE!

TOM
I imagine you in a box seat
in your new green frock...

O, I HAVE A NEW FROCK
BROADWAY CALLS OUT TO ME...

ROSE

...you. I told everyone of your success. Usually they think I'm a mess. But not tonight. Not in my new dress! Come and see me soon. Your proud sister, Rose.

A VISIT

Tom enters. Tom is aging. He also has a black eye.

ROSE

What's that?

TOM

Nothing. A black eye. It's nothing. You wore that dress the last time I came.

ROSE

You don't talk to me. You say things. But you don't say anything. Lift the lid. Kick the can. Pop the cork. Tell the truth. O, God. Tell me how you've been! How did you get your black eye?

TOM

My black eye? I fell down the stair. I met the door square. Don't believe me? Okay. I took a man home. And he thanked me in his own way.

VAUDEVILLE SONG: BLACK EYE

DEATH IS A YOUNG MAN
A SAILOR
A MAN IN A DRESS
IN A BAR.
IN MY BED.
NAKED IN FRONT OF MY FACE
I ACT THE SAINT
DEATH SEES ME FEINT
I FORGO MY DESIRE, AND SIMPLY ADMIRE THAT YOUNG MAN'S GRACE
MY GOD, THAT'S A LIE
I'M NEEDY AND GREEDY
WHEN HE WANTS TO LEAVE, MY HEART STARTS TO RACE

LET ME LOVE YOU – I CRY! LET ME LOVE YOU
“LOVE ME? PAY ME. NOTHING BELOW THE GOING RATE”
PAY YOU? FUCK YOU! I'M NOT A JOHN FOR YOU TO MANIPULATE!
“FUCK ME? FUCK YOU. GIVE ME MY MONEY, I'M STRAIGHT!”
MY, MY, O MY, SAY I. DOES THAT MEAN I TURNED YOU FAIRY IN ONE DATE?

AND THAT'S HOW I GOT MY BLACK EYE.

Tom exits.

VAUDEVILLE SONG: MARLON BRANDO

ROSE

TELL NO ONE
I HAVE A NEW BOYFRIEND
HIS NAME IS...MARLON BRANDO

HE SITS OUTSIDE MY WINDOW
WHEN HE HAS NO WHERE ELSE TO GO. OH.

MARLON
MARLON
MARLON
BRANDO
LATE AT NIGHT
HE STANDS OUTSIDE MY WINDOW
HE'S A BRUTE, YET SENSITIVE
WHEN HE'S IN MY BED, I WANT TO LIVE

I'M A HOOT, MISUNDERSTOOD
WHEN I'M IN HIS ARMS, I KNOW I'M GOOD

MARLON
MARLON
MARLON
BRANDO
WHAT A SIGHT
BRUISED BENEATH THE MOON'S GLOW

MARLON
MARLON
MARLON
BRANDO
LATE AT NIGHT
WE MAKE LOVE, NO ONE CAN KNOW

WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH
MARLON MARLON MARLON BRANDO
THEY SAID YOU WOULDN'T BE TRUE
I BELIEVED THEM
I WAS A FOOL
I'M SORRY I HURT YOU

COME BACK, ASK ME AGAIN, I'LL SAY YES
I'LL MARRY YOU

A VISIT

TOM

So, Rose...
Have you been busy? Do anything grand?

ROSE

I have a life.

TOM

Yes.

ROSE

I met someone.

TOM

Someone...?

ROSE

Yes! He asked for my hand.

TOM

Why did he want your hand? A proposal...?

ROSE

I haven't said yes. I want you to meet him first. Shall I introduce you to my Man?

TOM

I...don't know if...that's a good idea...Wait. You're pulling my leg.

ROSE

I almost got you.

TOM

Almost.

ROSE

Almost. Almost. Meet my beau. Bob the Bedpan!

TOM

Rose.

ROSE

I almost made you laugh!

TOM

So you almost got engaged. What else have you almost done ?

ROSE

I almost wrote a screenplay! About a girl who lives for the movies.
She leaves her beloved brother and drives to LA. But then feels bad.

TOM

Why bad? She should follow her dreams.

VAUDEVILLE SONG: NO CIGAR

ROSE

HER BROTHER HAS MURDERED HER MOM AND DAD
SHE MISSES THE TRIAL.
HE GETS THE CHAIR.

THEY'LL FRY HIM SO AWFUL, YOU'LL SMELL BURNT HAIR!
AND SHE WON'T BE THERE.

SHE TRIES TO GET BACK IN TIME.
BE BY HER BROTHER'S SIDE.
WE WATCH HER TRY.
WHY MUST HE FRY?
WILL SHE MAKE IT?
SEE HIM ONE LAST TIME?
WILL SHE MAKE IT?
SHE HAS TO TRY.
TRAIN, BUGGY, CAR.
HOLLYWOOD'S SO FAR!
HURRY, SISTER.
BEFORE HE'S CHAR.

SHE CRIES OUT HER LAST LINE:
"HAVE I MADE IT IN TIME?"
THE WARDEN ANSWERS:

SORRY, SISTER.
NO CIGAR.

What do you think?

TOM

I can't wait to read it.

ROSE
I ONLY STARTED IT YESTERDAY
THE DRAMATIC ARC
SEEMS SILLY AND TRITE
THE CHARACTERS
FORCED, NOT RIGHT
IT'S ALIVE IN MY HEAD
ON THE PAGE IT FEELS DEAD
IT'S ALMOST GOOD
NOT QUITE

YOU KNOW, I'M JOKING, RIGHT?
I WANT TO MAKE YOU LAUGH
ALMOST
ALMOST

Almost won't win you an Academy Award. Almost won't take you to the moon.
Or cool you down in June.

ALMOST WON'T MAKE MOTHER RELAX
WHEN POPPA GETS BIG IN HIS PANTS!
OH!
OH!
I MADE YOU GASP.

Almost. TOM

No almost about it. I did. ROSE

You did. TOM

You cackled. I win. You know what that means. ROSE

Yes. I have to come back and visit you again. TOM

Tom exits.

WAITING

*Rose waits.
And waits.*

ROSE

I hate him. I'm sorry, that's not true. But it is. I do.

A VISIT:TRICKSTER

Tom enters with a report on Rose's behavior from her doctors.

ROSE

He tricked me

TOM

Rose. Rose? Rose. You're not a little girl. You can't pretend you don't know... you know...

ROSE

I don't. He said he had a treat. A ring. Something sweet. Hard candy. In his pocket. So I, yes, I, why shouldn't I, I deserve a sweet, so, I, stuck my hand in, I wanted -

It was a trick. A trick in his pocket! I screamed. It was so silly really. I had to laugh. What would Mother say? I Laughed. And. Yes.

I wrapped my fingers round. Him. It. I did.

TOM

You. Wanted to play his little game. Rose? Rose. Admit.

ROSE

You admit it. I admit I trusted him. I admit I wanted him to like me. I admit I knew it was a little naughty to stick my hands into his pockets. But I was tricked. I won't admit I wasn't tricked.

TOM

Rose. Rose, no one believes you. No one falls for it. This act of innocence. It's a con. A pretty little pretense.

ROSE

Just like you.

TOM

What?

ROSE

You heard me. You're sad. Did Frank leave you?

TOM

No. We had a fight. He says I have to stop going out at night. Without him. He's the best thing that will ever happen to me, but still. I go out. I'm no longer young or pretty. But I'm not. A pretense. What. What do I pretend?

ROSE

You love me.

TOM

Rose.

ROSE

I'm glad you do.

TOM

I don't pretend. I'm here visiting you.

ROSE

Right. It's you. Hello, Tom.

TOM

O my God, you will drive me out of mind.

ROSE

Good. Then maybe you'll get to stay like I do. Ha. Don't make that face, I was teasing. I still can see how funny the world is.

TOM

You know I have only two loves in the world.

ROSE

Booze.

TOM

No. Okay, three.

ROSE

Sex.

TOM
Okay four. The first two are:

ROSE
Writing every day.

TOM
And you.

ROSE
And stealing from my diary.

TOM
You're the worst.

ROSE
I know I am, but what are you? Rubber, glue. Look at the time. Where does it go? Are you staying? It's Talent Hour here at Briar Rose Way. Excuse me, you have to excuse me, I have a number I have to rehearse. You can stay. But I don't want any notes. It's not your kind of show.

TOM
As you wish.

Tom exits.

WAITING

ROSE

As I wish? Shish. Please.

One summer night, the night I first bled, the night Tom fled, a great big firebird flew into my room, sat on my tummy, and said:

VAUDEVILLE DITTY – VEGAS STYLE: TOO MUCH

“TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH
TOOMUCHTOOMUCH
TOOMUCHTOOMUCH

Appetite.

TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH
TOOMUCHTOOMUCH
TOOMUCHTOOMUCH

Sensual delight.

TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH, TOO MUCH
TOOMUCHTOO MUCH
TOOMUCHTOOMUCH

Imagination.
At night.

TOO MUCH.”

A VISIT: THE CARSON ADDITION

Tom enters, cleaned up and bright.

ROSE

Would you look at you.

TOM

Hello, Rose.

ROSE

What’s happened to you?

Life is good!

TOM

A miracle or a mirage? Who are you?

ROSE

I've met someone.

TOM

You always do.

ROSE

Not a trick. A friend. A soulmate. A sister. She wants to meet you.

TOM

Who?

ROSE

Her name is Carson. Who I adore. You will too. She's like the sister you always wanted me to be.

TOM

Carson. Who is this Carson?

ROSE

I told you. She's the writer who went to the cottage with me.

TOM

You love her.

ROSE

Yes. You will too.

TOM

Very good.

ROSE

She wants to meet you.

TOM

I'm happy for you.

ROSE

Rose.

TOM

ROSE

The sister you always wanted me to be.

Silence

Marry her.

TOM

Rose.

ROSE

If you love her so much. You should.

TOM

She is married.

Silence

ROSE

Then what is she doing cavorting with you?

TOM

We don't cavort.

ROSE

What do you call it? What is she doing going to Nantucket with you?

TOM

Riding bikes, spotting seals, writing plays.

ROSE

O, writing plays. Do you share the same table?

TOM

We do. She makes me like myself. Can you imagine? Me liking who I am? My heart might burst.

Pause

Rose?

ROSE

I'm happy you're happy. I am. That's all I ever wanted. Tom, happy.

TOM

I am.

ROSE

Marry her. Tell her to dump her first husband. You must marry her. Let her make you an honest man.

TOM

I am honest.

ROSE

You love her.

TOM

She loves me too. The only thing is, she's a little jealous.

ROSE

Of me?

TOM

No, me. My success. We compete. You? You? No, she already loves you because you're related to me. That's what soul-mates and best friends do.

ROSE

I love her too.

TOM

Not yet. But you will. She wants to meet you.

ROSE

Does she know where I am?

TOM

Yes. I tell her everything.

ROSE

More than you tell me. You have secrets, Tom.

TOM

Not with her. That's why I'm happy. That's why you see me beaming before you: a healthy man!

ROSE

You do look good. You got fat. Good fat! Happy!

TOM

Carson McCullers is the first person I've ever met who just by listening, by looking at me makes me feel present and complete. Whole. A feeling I haven't had since we lived with Grand. Since our childhood! I want you to meet her and her to meet you. I have a hope, Rose, that I want to make come true. My hope my dream is that we three move in together. Live in one big house. An artist menagerie. We three. A home that's healthy and happy.

VAUDEVILLE DITTY: HEAVENLY

IT WILL BE HEAVENLY
IT WILL BE HEAVENLY
IT WILL BE HEAVENLY
WE THREE
MAKING A HOME THAT'S HEALTHY AND HAPPY.

IT WILL BE HEAVENLY
IT WILL BE HEAVENLY
IT WILL BE HEAVENLY
WE THREE
MAKING A HOME THAT'S HEALTHY AND HAPPY.

Tom dances a happy little dance.

WE THREE
MAKING A HOME THAT'S HEALTHY AND HAPPY.

Waits for applause.

ROSE

I'm happy where I am. I don't want to move.

TOM

Rose? Are you crying?

ROSE

I'm so happy. You found someone. At last. I've been so worn down worrying about you. Now, I can rest, knit in peace. You have someone, who will inspire and watch out for you, as I used to. I want you to give your Carson a gift. This ring. My favorite. Yes. Take it. Grand's marriage band. Tell her it's from me. For all she's done for you.

TOM

Rose, that means so much to me that you would...

ROSE

Shhh. Now go.

He does not go.

ROSE

What a relief! I no longer have to feel sorry for you. Happy again! Guilt is a wicked thief! Goodbye, Tom.

TOM

I don't understand.

ROSE

You do. I love you. It's time. For me to go. I'm so happy. I am. I believe she'll take good care of you. But you must watch out for her too. As you seek your Truth! The Truth. That's why we all admire and sacrifice for you. You seek the Truth.

TOM

You sacrifice for me?

ROSE

The Truth is your pity was killing me.

TOM

Killing you?

ROSE

My hope, my dream, has always been one day I would be replaced, that you'd find your other half. At last. I can breathe again. Relax. It was killing me that you never had.

TOM

Killing you!

ROSE

Yes, killing me. The anxiety you cause me.

TOM

Killing you! The anxiety I cause you!

ROSE

Shhh, be sweet.

TOM

Goddam you. I see through you. You know I do.

ROSE

What's there to see? I've always been terribly transparent and thin.

TOM

You're being deliberately cruel! You hate that I can be happy without you. Admit it. After all I've done for you. You selfish bitch. I never want to see your ugly face again.

He knocks over the table.

She leaves the room.

He waits for her to return.

WAITING

Rose?

Rose?

Rose?

Tom exits.

WAITING: THE GAP

Rose alone in the brightly lit room.

No visits.

ROSE

Tom doesn't visit now.

All year. Two. Ten. Ten years no Tom.

Pom Pom Pom Pom Pom...

Tom's the toast of Broadway. What about me? What about me? I'm Sister. Sex crazed. Out of control. Didn't you hear? They had to fix her. Now wait. What does that mean? Needle through the eyeball. That's lobotomy. No, stop. No snakepit dramatics. Tell us straight, ma'am. What does that mean? Make her shut up. Her and her... Wild imaginings! Mother said I was hurting you, Tom, that I would infect you too. Mother is a cunt who chose our rapist father over me. Wild imaginings. Shoo. Shoo shoo shoo.

VAUDEVILLE SONG: WILD IMAGININGS

ROSE

MY FATHER HE SMEARS ME
MY MOTHER SHE FEARS ME
MY BROTHER REVERES ME

Rose, Rose, your mind's not right.
We must free you of your wild imaginings.
Who's talking? Who let you in?

DADDY, YOU'RE NOT WELCOME HERE
MOTHER, CLEAN UP YOUR HYSTERIA
TOM...
TOM...
WHERE O WHERE ARE YOU, MY TOM-MAGINARY?

WHO ELSE CAN HEAR
WHAT'S QUEER
WHO ELSE WILL BEAR
WHAT'S WILD AND FREE
DEEP DOWN INSIDE OF ME

WILD IMAGININGS
WILD IMAGININGS

THE BEST WILL SET US FREE

LOCKED INSIDE YOU. ME.

WILD IMAGININGS
WILD IMAGININGS

COME BACK
SET US FREE

Tom doesn't visit.
All year. Two. Ten. Ten years no Tom.
Pom Pom Pom Pom...

If Tom won't come, we can bring his twin.

And here he is. Our Tom-maginary.

An attendant enters. He looks exactly like Tom, but dressed as an attendant in the asylum. He is Tom-maginary.

A VISIT: BATHTIME, HUMOR ME

ATTENDANT (TOM-MAGINARY)

Get in the bath.

Rose, fully dressed, steps into the bath.

Take off your dress. Your gown, ma'am. That frock.
There's dirt between your skin and clothes.
Get out of your clothes. You have to scrub
Undress.

I'll let you sit there and soak until the water gets cold.
I won't even wash your hair.
I won't rinse you off.
You'll be soapy and soaked and that's how I'll
leave you. Undress.
You mess.
You filth.
Take off the dress.

ROSE

Someone will see.

TOM-MAGINARY

Who?

ROSE

You.

TOM-MAGINARY

Yes, of course, I'll see. You want me to wash you off eyes closed?

ROSE

Don't. Make. Fun of me.

TOM-MAGINARY

Fun? Where? I wish I was. Up with arms. You can keep on your underthings.

ROSE

I'll die.

TOM-MAGINARY

Rose.
Rose!
You pissed yourself. So now we have to get you clean.

ROSE

We? Since when do you speak in the we?

TOM- MAGINARY

When you went wee wee.

ROSE

We is how she would speak to me.

TOM-MAGINARY

Wee wee.

ROSE

WE must, WE mustn't, WE must stay clean!

TOM-MAGINARY

Arms up.

ROSE

There will be no speaking in WE, Mother.

TOM-MAGINARY

Dress off.

ROSE

This is the best I can do.

She takes off her shoes.

TOM-MAGINARY

If they could see me now...

ROSE

They? No longer we, you're talking they now? Who can keep up with you, Mr. Cosmopolitan? Who are they? The doctors?

TOM-MAGINARY

Take off the dress.

ROSE

You bought this for me.

TOM-MAGINARY

I did?

ROSE
It's Dior you said.

TOM-MAGINARY
It is?

ROSE
It is!

TOM-MAGINARY
How sophisticated of me.

ROSE
It's ugly on me. That's why you don't see it for what it is.

TOM-MAGINARY
It doesn't suit you, I agree. Take it off. I'll close my eyes.
Get in the water. Get in. If I don't give you a bath they said they will.
By force or needle.

She takes off her dress.

ROSE
I love this dress. I haven't taken it off since you sent it to me.
It made me feel I was still alive. A part. A part of something bigger than me.

TOM-MAGINARY
Let's throw it away. I'll buy you something prettier. Bloomingdale's. Dior is already passé.

ROSE
I know. But I didn't want to say.

TOM-MAGINARY
You slut.

ROSE
You Nancy.

TOM-MAGINARY
You Nutcase.

ROSE
You perve. Stop looking at me.

TOM-MAGINARY

Sit in the tub. I'd pay to have someone sponge bathe me.

ROSE

Lucky me. I get it for free.

She sits in the tub.

He begins to wash her. She suddenly thrusts her hand down his pants.

He splashes her away.

Jeez, Louise, don't be such a baby.

TOM-MAGINARY

You're in trouble.

She sinks in the tub. For too long.

Tom-Imaginary runs over and pulls her head out of the water.

ROSE

Let me.

TOM-MAGINARY

Let you? What? Drown?

ROSE

Play.

TOM-MAGINARY

Play? What?

ROSE

Mermaid.

TOM-MAGINARY

Scrub.

She goes back under. He fishes her out.

ROSE

Remember?

TOM-MAGINARY

WHAT.

ROSE

When we were told to take a bath together we played merman and mermaid.

TOM-MAGINARY

No.

ROSE

Yes. I was five and you were three. I can't breathe. I can't breathe.

TOM-MAGINARY

They'll put a needle in you, knock you out, and then bathe you. Is that what you want?

ROSE

Don't worry about me, I'm going to feel much better. Let's put you in. You're so sweet when you're wet and clean. Such a beautiful little boy. Mine. My little baby. Sometimes I pretend...

TOM-MAGINARY

Don't.

ROSE

Don't what?

She pulls him into the tub.

My bathing beauty.

*He doesn't move. She pulls him out of the water.
He isn't breathing. She tries to resuscitate him. She fails badly.
She tries to roll his body up to a sitting position. It refuses.
His body is lifeless. He's dead.*

Oh.

She sits in the puddles and stares at him.

Oh.

*She looks around.
She gets a mop and spreads the water around,
now and then hitting the body in her rush.*

Oh.

*She exits. She comes back with a fluffy towel.
She wraps him in it.
She tries to wring out his wet clothes and put them on the body.*

No. Don't be dead.

She gathers the body into her arms and lap.

ROSE

But you're beautiful. You're so beautiful. Don't be like this. Be a man.

She lets go of the body down.

Be a man.

THE FANTASY BATH has begun:

Rose imagines herself as a proud naked man, oiled and dirty.

One could confuse her for a young Marlon Brando as Staney Kowalksi, if one had her imagination. She looks around the room.

She steps over Tom-maginary's body and eases himself into the tub.

ROSE as MAN

Ahhhh.

She splashes.

Hey. Where is she? Get the washerwoman.

She closes her eyes.

Ahhh. All week I wait for her. Ahhhhhhhhhhh. Hey, start the washing. Didn't you hear me?

She opens her eyes. She is Rose again.

She plays a scene between Rose and the Man.

ROSE

Hold your horses, would you!

ROSE as MAN

I brought you some pictures. They're in my breast pocket. My jacket's right outside the door. Go. Get them.

She uncovers hidden photographs.

Something, huh?

She lets the photographs drop in the water.

Hey.

ROSE

I don't want to look at a bunch of dumb pictures of naked women.

ROSE as MAN

Get back here. My bath isn't finished. Stupid woman. Get over here. I pay good money. Not for this.

She/Man splashes water in a tantrum.

I want my bath.
I want my bath.

ROSE

Yeah, well, too bad.

ROSE as MAN

I'm still dirty!

She/Man grabs herself by the hair.

You think this is fun? How about we bob for apples?

She/Man pushes her head into the tub, pulls her head out, pushes herself under, pulls herself out, pushes herself under, pulls herself out and then throws herself backwards.

ROSE as MAN

Now wash.

ROSE

You won't be the first man I finish off today.

*The big Man starts to cry like a baby.
During this time, Tom has disappeared.*

No, not this. Don't be a baby. Hey, where did Tom go?

She transform again and becomes a father looking for his son in a brothel.

ROSE as MAN

Tom? My boy. I've lost my boy. I sent him in here, this place, because I thought, I was told, it would, it could help. He's so easily upset. But I was told it would do him good. I'm afraid. I lost my boy. What are these? Naked women. They're beautiful. Tom? Look, mermaids, make love to them...I paid for them...I paid for your mermaids.

*Rose shivers.
Wraps herself in bedsheets and sits in a chair.
She's done playing Fantasy Bath.
Rose is Rose.*

WAITING

ROSE

Is it time? Are visiting hours over? When will you be back? Promise me...

I told stories so you could sleep.
Little Bo Beep who kissed all her sheep.
The girl who wore red and married a wolf.
And how Hansel was a degenerate but Gretel saved him from the witch.

When you cried and wished you'd never been born, I told us stories. Rose and Tom went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. There's a hole in your bucket. Then fix it, dear sister, then fix it. If a man honors his true heart, he will be rewarded with a true love. True love exists. Why else go up the hill? What is it, Tom, you went to collect? You forget to come back and show me what you went up the hill to collect.

*She closes her eyes.
And waits.
She may never move.*

*Tom, yes, the real Tom, enters.
She does not move or register his entrance.*

A VISIT: IT'S TOM

TOM

Rose
Tell me
Remind me
Why I'm happy to be me
Rose

I decided not to be Tom Williams
Now look at me
Can you forgive me being Tennessee

Happy Birthday my Sister
Can you forgive me?
Put me under your thumb. Where I belong.
I wasn't busy. I was afraid. I'd see myself in the mirror.

TOM

Cracked and lobotomized.

Will you. Open your eyes. Come back to me, Rose.

Let me see their light. Let me see the look that holds me to the truth, the truth of who I am. Let me see. The love in your eyes. The love in your eyes. Rose. Are you going to open your eyes today? It's Tom.

She opens her eyes.

Hello, Rose.

ROSE

Who is it?

TOM

It's Tom.
You're Tom.
Hello.

SONG: ALMOST TENNESSEE

ALMOST GREAT
NEVER OVER THE FINISH LINE
ALMOST
ALMOST
NEVER THE GOLDEN STAR
NEVER AS GREAT AS
ONE INCH SHORT OF
ONE INCH TOO FAR
ALMOST

I ALMOST HAD EVERYTHING
I ALMOST KILLED MYSELF

ALMOST

FORGIVE ME HART CRANE
WHEREVER YOU ARE

ALMOST
I ALMOST GAVE UP EVERYTHING
ALMOST

ALMOST

TOM
I ALMOST FORGAVE MYSELF

I almost got away from the damnation that follows me everywhere every where just for being Tom, Tom who has no discipline, Tom who has no bottom, Tom who has no end, Tom who is always almost happy –

ALMOST
ALMOST

I ALMOST LOST MY MIND
BUT I'M TOO VAIN
AND TOO MUCH A SERVANT TO THE GODS

I ALMOST ALWAYS GO TOO FAR
BUT IN THE END
I PUNISH THE SAD LONELY ONES
WHERE'S THE FUN? I RUIN THE FUN IN EVERYTHING
I ALMOST ESCAPE FEELING
EVERYTHING

I ALMOST DIDN'T COME BACK HERE
I ALMOST ALWAYS NEVER COME BACK HERE TO SEE YOU, ROSE

BUT I'M WEAK
A COWARD
NEVER STRONG ENOUGH
TO SAY GOODBYE

ALMOST ALWAYS OVER ALL THE HURTS
ALL THE SLIGHTS AND INJURIES
ALL THE WEAK AND TENDER FEELINGS
THAT KEEP ME BRIMMING
WITH MY LOVE
FOR YOU
YOU
WHO
ALWAYS ALWAYS
CHOOSE
WHAT'S TRUE

I ALMOST
GOT OVER YOU

ROSE
Almost is only good in horseshoes

TOM

I ALMOST
KILLED MYSELF

EXCEPT I KNEW
ON SUNDAY, TOO EARLY TOO
I WOULD CURSE THE TRAINS, THE TIMETABLES, THE BAD COFFEE, MY
MIGRAINE...
AND I WOULD BE HERE
BECAUSE ON SUNDAY I VISIT YOU

I ALMOST ALWAYS NEVER DO
BUT THEN ALMOST
WINS AGAIN
AND I'M WHERE I BELONG
RIGHT NEXT TO YOU

I'M ALMOST ALWAYS TENNESSEE
BUT NEVER REALLY MORE THAN ME:
TOM
WHO ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS NEEDS
YOU

ROSE

Promise. When you die it will be with me. Promise.

TOM

I promise. But no one's dying any time soon.

Tom looks at his watch.

ROSE

Is it time?

TOM

Did you take your medicine?

ROSE

Is New York City calling you back again?

TOM

We have time. There's lots of time. Time.

ROSE

I'm sorry Frank died, Tom. I really am.

SONG: KOO KOO BIRD

ROSE

O, TOM.
LET ME IN. LET ME IN.
I WANT TO LIVE IN YOUR MIND.
I GO THERE. ALL THE TIME.
DRESSED UP PEOPLE AND HOT PLACES.
COSMOPOLITAN HAPPY FACES.
I TELL THEM JOKES.
THEY LOVE ME TO PIECES.

I RUN ON THE BEACH.
PROVINCETOWN. NO BOYS FOR ME.
THAT'S OKAY.
I'M AT PEACE.
ON THE BEACH.
NOT OUT OF MY MIND.
YOU'RE NEVER CRUEL.
YOU'RE KIND.

I HAD A JOKE TO MAKE YOU LAUGH.
SOMETHING ABOUT SAWING A WOMAN IN HALF.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME.
MY MEMORY.
YOU CAN'T TELL A JOKE IF YOU ONLY TELL HALF...

A WOMAN AND A MAGICIAN MET A MAGICAL BIRD
IT KNOWS THE SECRET OF LIFE BUT WON'T SAY A WORD
KOO KOO KOO ROO
KOO KOO KOO REE
KOO KOO BIRD
KOO KOO ME

She laughs. Guffaws.

O, TOM.
LAUGH A LITTLE. FOR ME.

WHO HURT YOU THIS TIME
WHO CLIPPED YOUR SMILE

KOO KOO BIRD, IT'S ME, YOUR SIS

I DIDN'T KNOW THEN BUT I KNOW NOW
THIS VISIT IS THE LAST TIME

ROSE & TOM
THE DARK WILL FLEE MY/YOUR MIND
CRUEL THOUGHTS WILL BECOME KIND
AND YOU WILL FLY
YOU WILL FLY
FLY BEYOND MY MIND
NO LONGER CONFINED
KOO KOO KOO REE
KOO KOO BIRD ME
BYE BYE – 'TIL NEXT TIME

I LOVE TO WATCH YOU FLY. HIGH.
I LOVE TO WATCH YOU FLY.

ROSE
You can leave. I'm not mad at you any more.

TOM
It's not time. We have another hour before the next train. I'd like to sit and maybe ask that we not say anything. Just sit. Hold my hand?

She does.

End of play.