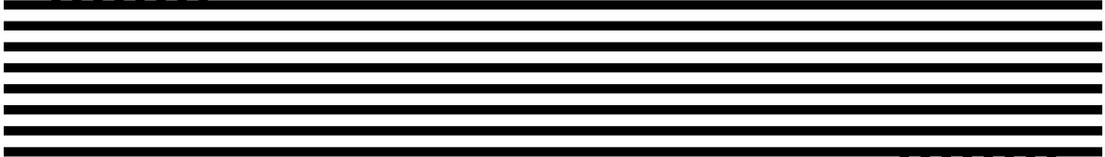
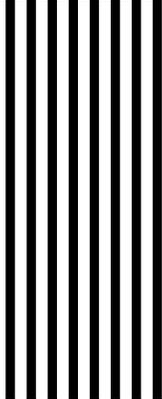


# **BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS**

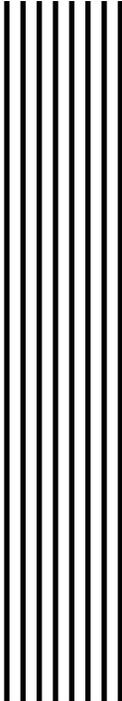
**BY PETER SINN NACHTRIEB**



★  
DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



**BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS — NACHTRIEB**



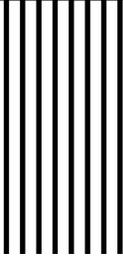
# **BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS**

**BY PETER SINN NACHTRIEB**

★



★  
DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS  
Copyright © 2012, Peter Sinn Nachtrieb

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Bret Adams Ltd., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. Attn: Mark Orsini.

#### **SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The following acknowledgments must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play:

Originally commissioned and developed by South Coast Repertory.

BOB was developed with the support of Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco,  
(Amy L. Mueller, Artistic Director).

World premiere in the 2011 Humana Festival of New American Plays  
at ACTORS THEATRE LOUISVILLE.

*For Bob*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

BOB was commissioned and developed by South Coast Repertory.

BOB was developed with support of the Playwrights Foundation, San Francisco; Amy Mueller, Artistic Director.

THANKS TO: Sean Daniels for his creative brilliance and evangelism; Ken Prestininzi for once again being able to see into my brain; John Glore, Kelly Miller, Megan Monaghan, Sherri Butler-Hyner and everybody at SCR for birthing this play; Marc Masterson, Sarah Lunnie and everybody at ATL; Madeleine Oldham; Emily Schooltz and Ars Nova; Jonathan Spector, Amy Mueller, Lisa Steindler and the Z Space Studio, The National Theatre Conference, the Resident Playwrights of the Playwrights Foundation, Buck Busfield, Jerry Montoya and everyone at B Street Theatre, New Dramatists, Mark Orsini and Bruce Ostler and Bret Adams Ltd.

Kasey Mahaffy, Rob Nagle, Larry Bates, Angela Goethals, Blake Lindsley, Danny Wolohan, Arwen Anderson, Delia MacDougall, Nick Pelczar, Liam Vincent, Lance Gardner, Sally Dana, Matt Dellapina, Brett Robinson, David Turner, Jackie Viscusi, Joey DeChello, Ryan Barrentine, Brigitte Davidovici, Lauren T. Mack, Dhyana Dahl, Kevin Tomlinson, Tyler Hastings, the Theatre Departments at FSU and UNLV, Jason Aaron Goldberg.

A special shout out to the fearless and wonderful souls that are Jeff Binder, Aysan Celik, Polly Lee, Danny Scheie, and Lou Sumrall. And to the Nachtrieb Family and Mark Marino for their love and awesomeness.

BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS received its world premiere at the Humana Festival at Actors Theatre of Louisville (Marc Masterson, Artistic Director) in Louisville, Kentucky, in March 2011. It was directed by Sean Daniels; the set design was by Michael B. Raiford; the costume design was by Lorraine Venberg; the lighting design was by Brian J. Lillenthal; the props design was by Joe Cunningham; the sound design was by Matt Callahan; and the production stage manager was Paul Mills Holmes. The cast was as follows:

BOB . . . . . Jeffrey Binder  
CHORUS ONE . . . . . Aysan Celik  
CHORUS TWO . . . . . Lou Sumrall  
CHORUS THREE . . . . . Polly Lee  
CHORUS FOUR . . . . . Danny Scheie

## **CHARACTERS**

BOB — from infant to old man. If handsome, unconventionally so. If not handsome, his personality adds something charismatic. Energy, optimism, open, active. American, of any or many cultural backgrounds.

THE CHORUS — Two women (Chorus One and Chorus Three) and two men (Chorus Two and Chorus Four). The chorus is, ideally, of unspecified but diverse cultural backgrounds. American. The Chorus will play themselves as well as every character in the play, aside from Bob. (See end of play for a possible breakdown of roles for each chorus member.) The Chorus is dispassionate but eloquent. The characters they assume are vivid, bright, sharp, and distinct. Even if they only have one line, there is pathos, history, and pain.

## **PLACE**

All over the United States of America, interiors and exteriors. Plus one scene in Mexico. The play often changes rapidly from location to location and the shifts are quick. The speed of the changes is important and part of the ride of the play. My hunch is that the stagecraft in the play is exposed for being what it is.

## **TIME**

From the birth to the death of Bob.

## **THE ACTS**

ACT ONE — How Bob was born, abandoned, raised by a fast-food employee, discovers his dream, and almost dies.

ACT TWO — How Bob does not die, comes of age at a rest stop, pursues his dream, falls in love and has his heart broken.

ACT THREE — How Bob pursues his dream across America, gets chased out of many towns, meets an important man, and turns his back on everything he believed.

ACT FOUR — How Bob has a turn of luck, becomes a new man, achieves a false dream, meets an important woman and is redeemed.

ACT FIVE — The rest.

## **INTERLUDES**

There are short interludes in between each act, each performed by a chorus member. I call them “dances” in the play but they could be any sort of brief performance with no words.

An intermission is perhaps best placed between Acts Three and Four.

## **MUSIC**

Yes. Underscoring. Maybe a live musician. Maybe the Chorus plays music.

## **MOOD**

Epic, cinematic, a whirlwind, a ride.



# BOB: A LIFE IN FIVE ACTS

## ACT ONE

*The Chorus enters.*

ALL CHORUS. Bob. A life in five acts.

CHORUS ONE. Act One.

CHORUS TWO. How Bob is born, abandoned, raised by a fast-food employee, discovers his dream, and almost dies. (*A sterile fast-food restaurant bathroom. Chorus Three assumes the character of Helen. She is sweating, crying, breathing heavy, legs wide.*)

CHORUS ONE. It is said that Bob was born on Valentine's Day in the bathroom of a White Castle Restaurant in Louisville, Kentucky. It is said that Bob's birth mother, whose name was Helen, was feeling particularly lonely and depressed on this holiday and felt that only a certain cuisine would soothe her ache.

CHORUS TWO. It is said that Helen was unaware of the Valentine's Day tradition of the usually more subdued restaurant to adorn their tables with candles and cloths and other romantic miscellany and that the restaurant would be packed with couples flaunting their couplehood.

CHORUS FOUR. Nor was Helen aware of how severe her physiological reaction would be to witnessing this vast scene of public love until, after eating much faster than she intended, she rushed into the bathroom, pushed to urinate and her wombic fluids erupted onto the bathroom floor. (*Wombic fluids erupt out of Helen.*)

CHORUS ONE. Nor was she aware how quickly labor could be sometimes until five minutes after her water broke, Bob would

emerge quickly and fiercely from her magic chamber. (*A pop. Baby Bob flies out of Helen, umbilical cord attached.*)

CHORUS TWO. Nor did she expect the emotional response she would have to this birth ... a progression from joy to relief to memories to regret to fear to terror to anger to hatred to wanting absolutely nothing to do with what had just emerged. (*Helen pulls out a knife.*)

CHORUS FOUR. She did remember the small sign posted outside the restaurant below the "Meal Deal" poster: the blue outline of a house, silhouette of an infant sitting in large comforting hands, "Safe Place" written in multiple languages below. At that moment, Helen made a decision that would ultimately affect thousands of lives. (*Helen takes the umbilical cord, cuts it with the knife.*)

CHORUS TWO. It is said that this was the only advice Helen could think to give her newborn son.

HELEN. Good luck. (*Helen runs off.*)

CHORUS FOUR. This is what Bob did when he was alone. (*Bob assesses the situation.*)

BOB. BWAHHH! (*Jeanine, a White Castle employee, enters the bathroom.*)

JEANINE. Oh my.

CHORUS THREE. Her name was Jeanine. This is how Jeanine saved Bob. (*Lights Shift. By the counter. Jeanine, holding Bob, reads corporate instructions on a piece of paper.*)

JEANINE. (*Reading.*) Step one: Retrieve baby/child and take him/her/it to a neutral yet safe space behind the service counter. (*Jeanine moves.*) Do not stand near fryers. (*Jeanine moves again.*) Step two: Determine if parent or guardian is still on the property. (*Jeanine takes counter microphone.*) Attention Valentine's Day guests. We hope you are all enjoying your romantic meals. If there is anyone in the restaurant who may have left a personal item in the bathroom, would you please come to the counter at this time? (*Jeanine waits.*) Step three: Should no one claim baby/child, immediately phone the police, Child Protective Services, and the corporate legal crisis line. Under no circumstances should you look into the baby's eyes and fall in love with it. Do not fall in love with the baby. (*Jeanine lowers the paper. Jeanine tries to not look at Bob. Jeanine looks at Bob. Jeanine falls in love with Bob.*)

CHORUS FOUR. This is why Jeanine decided to raise Bob as her own. (*Jeanine driving, Bob in a bundle next to her.*)

JEANINE. I was finishing up my Sunday night dinner at the Bamboo Wok. I don't know how authentic or healthy it is but I like the flavors. I'd been working my way through the menu for about a year. Each week, I would have a new entrée in order of appearance. I'd finally made it to the "Noodles slash Rice" section after several months of Lamb and I felt like I was entering a new era in my life. When the waiter delivered the check and cookie, the fortune inside seemed different. The paper looked shiny, almost golden, the ink darker, more insistent.

FORTUNE COOKIE VOICE (CHORUS TWO). "You will be the mother to a great great man."

JEANINE. The fortunes I usually get are a little more vague than that. But this felt intentional. Like someone was watching me. From inside the cookie.

FORTUNE COOKIE VOICE (CHORUS TWO). "You will be the mother to a great great man."

JEANINE. It made me smile. I thought, "Well, cool, Jeanine, maybe the future isn't only selling tiny burgers and having Asian food once a week." And then my stomach started to twitch, felt like I was gonna be sick. I started sweating, breathing heavy. And I thought, Oh my god, it's happening already. I stood up from my table and shouted "I'm gonna be the mother to a great great man!" Next thing I knew I woke up in a hospital bed. At first I thought I'd conceived my great man immaculate till the nurse told me that I'd almost died at the restaurant. That I had a severe reaction to the gluten in Asian noodles slash rice that messed up my insides so much that I would never be able to make a "great great man" the regular way. I don't really care for fortunes very much anymore. But, funny, you know, there you are. There you are. I must be just a weird noise in your ear. You little moving thing. I will give you food and shelter. I will educate you. I will make sure that becoming President of the United States remains a possibility. Even if it kills me, I will make you a great great man. (*Shift.*)

CHORUS FOUR. This is how Bob got his name. (*Jeanine's house. Bonnie, Jeanine's friend, is there. Jeanine is playing with Bob. Bonnie stares at Jeanine. Bob is examining.*)

BONNIE. You don't look exhausted.

JEANINE. I'm not exhausted, Bonnie.

BONNIE. Trust me. In a few days you will be exhausted for the rest of your life.

JEANINE. He sleeps through the night.  
BONNIE. Since when?  
JEANINE. Since I got him five days ago.  
BONNIE. I read that babies who sleep through the night often have learning disabilities. It was in *Newsweek*.  
BOB. Ghshablah.  
JEANINE. What should I name him?  
BONNIE. You don't have a name for him yet?  
JEANINE. It's not like I got to plan ahead for this. *(Bonnie starts to cry.)* Bonnie?  
BONNIE. Are you sure you can do this?  
JEANINE. I think so.  
BONNIE. The choices you make right now will determine a life of joy or a life of pain.  
BOB. Ooo.  
JEANINE. It's just a name, Bonnie.  
BONNIE. THE NAME IS EVERYTHING, JEANINE! First impressions, schoolyard happiness, entire futures depend on the name. I read that in *Newsweek* too. This is a child's future. THINK OF THE FUTURE.  
JEANINE. You're getting a little angry, Bonnie.  
BONNIE. I was given the wrong name! Someone asks, "What's your name?" and I say "Bonnie" and people think something's wrong with me 'cause I don't seem very "Bonnie-like." I'm suspect from the get-go and that ripples and ripples, a chain reaction against my favor and look at me now. If I wasn't "Bonnie," I'd be a different person. I'd have a better life. I wouldn't want to die. Chester. *(Bonnie does a flourish with her hands. Exits.)*  
JEANINE. What do you think? If you could be called anything in the world, what would it be?  
BOB. Bwahhhhhhhhhhhb. *(Beat.)*  
JEANINE. What was that?  
BABY BOB. Argh baplbttss urggllmmmmmm ... bwaahhb.  
JEANINE. Did you just say —  
BABY BOB. Bwaahb.  
JEANINE. Bob? Bob. Bob. Bob.  
BABY BOB. Bwahb. *(Jeanine looks out — a thought to the future. The Chorus each take alternating lines.)*  
CHORUS TWO. Welcome our newest student, Bob.  
CHORUS THREE. What a beautiful painting, Bob.

CHORUS FOUR. You were just incredible at recess, Bob.  
CHORUS TWO. Bob the way you play hockey, I don't know what to feel.  
CHORUS THREE. Kiss me Bob.  
CHORUS FOUR. Here, take this special chair, Bob.  
CHORUS TWO. Bob you can be anything you want.  
CHORUS THREE. Be a historian, Bob.  
CHORUS FOUR. Be an artist, Bob.  
CHORUS TWO. Cure, Bob. Cure the sick.  
CHORUS THREE. Kiss me again Bob.  
CHORUS FOUR. Bob, kiss us both at the same time.  
CHORUS TWO. I love you Bob.  
CHORUS THREE. I love You Bob.  
CHORUS FOUR. Bob must be stopped.  
JEANINE. Bob. Your name is Bob.  
BABY BOB. Bwahb. (*A banging on the door.*)  
CONNOR. Open up, Jeanine!  
CHORUS FOUR. This is why Jeanine decided to leave town with Bob.  
JEANINE. That's the police, Bob. (*A bang.*)  
CONNOR. Jeanine!  
JEANINE. It's open! Stay quiet, Bob.  
BABY BOB. Bwahb.  
JEANINE. Stay quiet. (*Jeanine hides Bob in a grocery bag. Connor, a police officer, enters.*)  
CONNOR. Jeanine.  
JEANINE. Connor.  
BABY BOB. Bwahb.  
CONNOR. Been a long time.  
JEANINE. Seen you around.  
CONNOR. It's been a long time. (*The pain of their history is felt.*)  
JEANINE. How can I help you, Connor?  
CONNOR. You still working at the White Castle?  
JEANINE. You know I still work there.  
CONNOR. Anything weird happen the last few days?  
JEANINE. Something weird happens every day. Our lighting has a way of pushing people over the edge.  
CONNOR. We got a call at the station today.  
JEANINE. Well, good for you.  
CONNOR. Some woman.

JEANINE. Of course it was a woman.  
CONNOR. Crying. Didn't say her name. Just asked if "he was OK."  
JEANINE. Who?  
CONNOR. She wouldn't say. Said she "had to do it," that "if I knew the whole story," blah de blah and I had to interrupt: "Ma'am, what you are talking about?" She said, "White Castle" and hung up.  
JEANINE. How odd.  
CONNOR. Anyone leave an infant at the White Castle on Valentine's Day?  
BOB. Bwahb.  
JEANINE. Not to my recollection.  
CONNOR. You've always had a great memory.  
JEANINE. Don't butter me, Connor.  
CONNOR. I'm just saying you have a tendency of not forgetting any and all things that happen.  
JEANINE. I like to learn from my mistakes. *(Beat.)*  
CONNOR. I've seen you at the Bamboo Wok.  
JEANINE. Don't.  
CONNOR. Eating alone every week.  
JEANINE. I enjoy self-dining.  
CONNOR. Maybe I can join you sometime.  
JEANINE. Connor, thank you for your diligent police work but alas, I do not recollect anyone leaving a Bob at my place of employment.  
CONNOR. A what?  
BOB. Bob.  
JEANINE. A baby.  
CONNOR. You said Bob.  
JEANINE. I meant a baby.  
BOB. Bobby.  
CONNOR. Who's Bob? *(Bob pokes his head out.)*  
JEANINE. It's someone I'm seeing. His name is Bob. *(Beat.)*  
CONNOR. I don't believe it.  
JEANINE. I fell in love with him the moment I saw him.  
CONNOR. What does Bob do?  
BOB. Bob do. Do Bob Bob.  
JEANINE. He is a great great man.  
BOB. Gray. Man.  
CONNOR. I guess it was a mistake to come here. *(Connor almost exits, turns.)* I want you back, Jeanine. I want another chance.  
JEANINE. You had your chance, Connor. *(Beat.)*

CONNOR. If you see anything at work —

JEANINE. Nothing would overjoy me more. *(Connor almost exits, turns.)*

CONNOR. One day, Jeanine Bordeaux, I will prove myself to you. *(Connor exits.)*

BOB. Bwahb. Proo Mah Salf.

JEANINE. We can't stay here, Bob.

CHORUS FOUR. It is said that Jeanine collected the few belongings she felt to be essential, including a pillowcase filled with her life savings, and left her home forever to raise Bob in her beige Chevy Malibu. This is the road trip of Bob and Jeanine. *(A "road trip" that spans twelve years. The Chorus assists.)*

JEANINE. That is the sky. That's a tree. Black walnut. That's a dead goat. That's a fire. You'll want to be careful with that. *(White Castle.)* That's where I worked. *(Las Vegas.)* That's where they play roulette. *(A religious sign asking "Where you will spend eternity?")* That's a good question. *(Bamboo Wok.)* Don't eat there. That's a farmer. That's someone who delivers things to people. That one's crazy. And that one's evil. *(The Grand Canyon.)* This is the Grand Canyon, Bob.

BOB. Whoa.

JEANINE. It was carved by the Colorado River over millions of years. And it's still changing. *(Pointing.)* As are those Rocky Mountains, those mesas, this coastline. The ground beneath us is undergoing constant change, Bob.

BOB. Erosion. *(A house in South Carolina.)*

JEANINE. And it was here that they would rest, but only for a few hours. Danger was always close. Nineteen times Ms. Tubman made this journey. That's what you do when things aren't right, Bob.

BOB. Railroad. *(New Mexico.)*

JEANINE. And it was here that Mr. Oppenheimer dropped his experiment from a wooden tower and fission ensued. One event can change the world, Bob.

BOB. Chain reaction. *(The first Wal-Mart.)*

JEANINE. And it was here that Mr. Walton opened the first stores that ushered in a new type of shopping experience. But he still always drove the same old truck, Bob.

BOB. Entrepreneur. *(Mt. Rushmore.)*

JEANINE. And even though Lincoln was killed at a play, the decisions he made would change the course of our nation. One man can change everything.

BOB. So if I do something amazing, someone else will carve my face onto a mountain?

JEANINE. There are lots of factors involved when getting put on a mountain. Politics. Popularity. Your face. A lot of achievements go completely unrecognized, not even on a plaque.

BOB. What's a plaque? *(They look at a plaque.)*

JEANINE. It's a marker, Bob. To pay tribute to some great act or person.

BOB. *(Rubbing fingers over letters.)* "In Memory of Great Sculptor Gutzon Borglum." It's beautiful.

JEANINE. And they last forever.

BOB. I want to be on a plaque someday.

JEANINE. Well, you can be, Bob.

BOB. In memory of Bob, the man who rescued a town from destruction! Bob, the great entertainer and tamer of beasts. Bob, the man who invented a blanket you can wear!

JEANINE. You better keep a piece of paper handy to write all your ideas down.

BOB. I've got some paper in my pocket!

JEANINE. You can do anything you want with your life, Bob.

BOB. You should be on a plaque, Mom.

JEANINE. Oh, Bob, that's, well, that's the nicest thing anyone has ever —

BOB. Let's go.

JEANINE. We don't always have to be in such a rush.

BOB. But Mom, if I am to become great, there is so much I have to learn and see! *(The montage goes into overdrive. Bob's energy remains high. The trip is killing Jeanine.)*

BOB. Birthplaces!

JEANINE. Battlegrounds.

BOB. Big cities!

JEANINE. Empty stretches.

BOB. Public parks

JEANINE. Private islands.

BOB. Man-made lakes.

JEANINE. Hoover Dams.

BOB. Holy sites.

JEANINE. Corn Palaces.

BOB. Dinosaur bones.

JEANINE. Swinger camps.

BOB. Monuments.  
JEANINE. Junkyards.  
BOB. Luxury homes.  
JEANINE. Trailer parks.  
BOB. Ham and Cheese omelets.  
JEANINE. Coffee.  
BOB. More Ham and Cheese omelets.  
JEANINE. Indigestion.  
BOB. Fudge.  
JEANINE. Ibuprofen.  
BOB. Art and science  
JEANINE. Wow that is hurting —  
BOB. History and Civics  
JEANINE. Can't quite —  
BOB. Beauty and Truth —  
JEANINE. catch my breath —  
BOB. Knowledge and Experience!  
JEANINE. (*In pain.*) Too much to experience. (*Chicago. Bob is 12. Jeanine is ill.*)  
BOB. C'mon, the museum closes at four so we need to —  
JEANINE. I can't seem to catch my breath, Bob.  
BOB. They're not gonna let us in!  
JEANINE. Maybe we can go tomorrow.  
BOB. No, I want to see the canvasses now. The brushstrokes with which Grant Wood captured the gothic soul of an elderly couple, the splatters of Pollock that drip anguish and liquor, the flowers of O'Keefe that evoke the beauty of nature and vaginas at the same time.  
JEANINE. My, Bob, you soak everything up like a roll of Bounty.  
BOB. Moving from place to place, collecting visitor guides and souvenir spoons, learning trigonometry as we eat ham and cheese omelets ... I love everything we do together, Mom.  
JEANINE. I'm not your real mother, Bob.  
BOB. What?  
JEANINE. You were left at the White Castle. I wasn't supposed to take you. But then I looked into your eyes.  
BOB. You did?  
JEANINE. Most people don't grow up in Malibus. They don't drive around the country with all their money in a pillowcase.  
BOB. That's because we're special.

JEANINE. You, Bob, are a special special boy.  
BOB. You're making me blush. (*Jeanine collapses.*) Are you OK?  
JEANINE. There's a bit of money left in the bag, Bob. You're going to have to use it wisely.  
BOB. You're soaking wet.  
JEANINE. Keep an eye out for danger and advantage-takers. Don't skimp on oil changes for the Malibu. And always wear your undies.  
BOB. What is happening right now?  
JEANINE. I'm dying, Bob.  
BOB. No, you're not.  
JEANINE. My liver is pressing out, cracking my ribs. It's getting harder to breathe. I want to blame those Bamboo Wok noodles that combo cursed and blessed me years ago but I think it just happened. You know how things just happen.  
BOB. I'll call an ambulance.  
JEANINE. Don't.  
BOB. Ambulance!  
JEANINE. It's too late, Bob.  
BOB. Phineas Gage survived a metal rod through his head. Lance Armstrong survived cancer to win the Tour de France. Dean Martin lived till he was seventy-eight.  
JEANINE. Look at you trying to do something. You're twelve years old and you're already a man.  
BOB. I don't want to be.  
JEANINE. Well in a second, Bob, I'm going to breathe my last breath and then I'm going to slump over and my body may twitch but I'll be gone. My heat will drain, but if you hug me it'll drain into you. After that happens, I want you to light me on fire. Gather some flammables, lay me on top, and set me on fire.  
BOB. I'm going to get on the plaque for the both of us, Mom.  
JEANINE. It's Jeanine. I love you, Bob.  
BOB. I love you too, Jeanine.  
JEANINE. Good luck. (*Bob hugs Jeanine. Jeanine dies. Bob puts Jeanine down. He gathers a few sticks, newspaper and other burning supplies, puts them under Jeanine. Bob lights a match, drops it on the ground. A police siren. Bob and Connor, who is now a Chicago Policeman, at an interrogation table.*)  
CHORUS FOUR. This is how Bob avoided prison.  
CONNOR. You do realize it's illegal to cremate someone on the steps of the Art Institute of Chicago.

BOB. It's what she wanted.  
CONNOR. There are concerns. About pollution. Asthma.  
BOB. I don't care so long as she's everywhere.  
CONNOR. And now we can't do an autopsy. We'll never get to know what caused her death.  
BOB. She said some things just happen.  
CONNOR. That's not good enough for the paperwork. Was she dead before you lit her on fire?  
BOB. YES!  
CONNOR. OK, OK. It's required we ask that.  
BOB. I don't know what it's going to be like without her.  
CONNOR. It's going to suck, probably. There's going to be a lot of people you lose in your life. Some die. Some move away. Some you just say the wrong thing to. You'll have those days. When you'll be so sad, praying you could just see her even for an instant before she vanishes into a puff of smoke.  
BOB. Do you have any more Kleenex? *(Connor gives a Kleenex to Bob.)*  
CONNOR. Well, since there's no one to claim you, we may have to put you in prison till this all gets straightened out.  
BOB. No. I have to learn about airports tomorrow!  
CONNOR. It's a prison for kids, so it's not so gloomy.  
BOB. I have a lot of great things to do with my life!  
CONNOR. Well, you're not allowed to do that. Not till you're eighteen, uh, what is your name?  
BOB. Bob. My name is Bob.  
OTHER CHORUS. *(Whisper.)* Bob!  
CONNOR. Why does that name haunt me?  
BOB. It was my first word.  
CONNOR. Where were you born?  
BOB. In a White Castle.  
OTHER CHORUS. *(Whisper, unsuccessfully in unison.)* White Castle.  
CONNOR. What was the name of the woman you just burnt?  
BOB. Jeanine. Her name was Jeanine. *(Connor drops his pen.)*  
CONNOR. Oh my. Oh my oh my oh my.  
BOB. You dropped your pen. *(Connor gets on one knee, pulls out a ring.)*  
CONNOR. I was going to give this to her the next time I saw her. I've had this in my pocket for eleven years. I said, "Connor, even if you're in a bathroom stall mid-tinkle and you see her, get on your

knees ASAP and beg her to come back.” (*Connor grabs Bob’s hand, perhaps kissing the soot of Jeanine in Bob’s hand.*) Oh my sweet Slider Highness ... I’m sorry for being selfish and stupid. I’m sorry for making you so sad on the day you looked the prettiest. (*Connor gives Bob the ring.*)

BOB. This would have looked beautiful on her finger.

CONNOR. Keep it somewhere safe. It’s a dangerous world out there. Keep it in your undies. I think I’m going to go back to the museum and, just breathe awhile. Good luck, Bob. (*Connor exits. Bob is alone.*)

BOB. Hello? (*Bob looks at the ring. He puts it in his undies and steps outdoors into the cold Chicago air.*) You’re on your own, Bob. On West Monroe Street, Chicago. (*A gust of wind.*) The “Windy City.” Home of the White Sox, late-night sketch comedy, and the “fresheezie”: a hot dog wrapped in bacon and filled with American cheese ... a meal that is delightful and cruel at the same time. At the Alamo, the Texans were outnumbered, but they were able to fight off the Mexican Army twice before they all got killed. In the Sierra Nevada, trapped by snow and bad teamwork, the Donner Party withstood bitter cold and the sour taste of human flesh for seven of them to survive and reach the state of California. “You can do anything you want with your life.” So said Jeanine Bordeaux, the safest driver and best breakfast companion ever. And today I’m going to get in our Malibu that should be parked right here and ... (*A citizen walks by.*) Excuse me, businessperson, have you seen a Malibu that was parked here? (*The citizen ignores Bob. Another citizen runs by, avoiding eye contact.*) Hello there, forlorn woman, did you happen to see what happened to a Malibu that was here? (*A citizen walks by, the pillowcase slung over his/her back and scurries off.*) There was a pillowcase with wet kittens on tugboats under the passenger seat ... (*Bob takes a step. His shoe breaks.*) My shoe. (*Helen, Bob’s birth mother and now a thief, runs in with her knife.*)

HELEN. Give me your shirt!

BOB. What?

HELEN. Give me your shirt before I cut your face! NOW! (*Bob removes his shirt, gives it to Helen.*)

BOB. What are you doing with my shirt?

HELEN. Are you wearing underwear?

BOB. That’s private.

HELEN. ARE YOU WEARING UNDERWEAR?

FOR LICENSING INFORMATION AND  
TO PURCHASE ACTING EDITIONS, PLEASE VISIT

[WWW.DRAMATISTS.COM](http://WWW.DRAMATISTS.COM)

