

FIVE FAKE DREAMS
in SIX SHORT SCENES

A PLAY *by* EDDIE KOHLER
22 October 1996 R2

NOTES

Five Fake Dreams in Six Short Scenes was first presented in MIT Kresge Little Theater as part of MIT Dramashop's student-written, student-directed One Acts, November 14 through 16, 1996. The cast was as follows:

ETHAN Z.	Kevin Simmons
ANGEL 3, WORKER 3, PIPPY LONGSTOCKING, DOCTOR	Aomawa Baker
ANGEL 1, WORKER 2, HELENA	Rachael Butcher
ANGELIC BUREAUCRAT, WORKER 1, TONY, VLADIMIR	Jeremy Butler
TIN MAN, BRUCE B., CHRISTIAN	Sean Levin
ANGEL 2, SUPERVISOR, JULIE, REBECCA	Andrea Zengion

The production was directed by Avi Weiss.

Many people have told me by now that Pippi Longstocking was actually translated from the Swedish!

“Rebecca” is Rebecca Leonardson, a very good friend to whom the play is dedicated. The character is not a God figure – she is a real person with an odd sense of humor. She should be simply and directly played.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

	Male	Female
First Dream	ETHAN Z. ANGELIC BUREAUCRAT TIN MAN	ANGEL 1 ANGEL 2 ANGEL 3
Second Dream	ETHAN Z. WORKER 1	WORKER 2 WORKER 3 SUPERVISOR
Third Dream	ETHAN Z. BRUCE B.	
Interlude	ETHAN Z.	PIPPY LONGSTOCKING
Fourth Dream	ETHAN Z. TONY CHRISTIAN	JULIE HELENA DOCTOR
Fifth Dream	ETHAN Z. VLADIMIR	REBECCA

For six actors, 3 male and 3 female. All except ETHAN Z. play multiple roles.

FIRST DREAM

(Blackout. Pause.

Someone (ETHAN Z.) is heard approaching in the darkness. He seems very clumsy. Huge clattering noise as he comes on the stage, which is still dark.)

ETHAN: *Ow, fuck! Shit Christ! (He is hopping on one foot, grabbing the other. Then he falls completely over.) Ow ow ow ow ow! –*

Shit. Same toe as always. (He gently reaches down and touches the toe.) Ahh! – Damn, it's probably turning purple.

(Pause)

Well, this is pretty boring so far. It's probably my fault. Maybe it's a metaphor for something.

(Pause)

I bet it's a stupid metaphor.

(Longer pause)

(ETHAN hums something noncommittal in a small voice.)

(Short pause.

Suddenly, a bright ray of pure white light shines over the stage, preferably from upstage and out over the audience. A harmonious organ tone rings through the auditorium, and the three ANGELS sing a simple chord, distant and wordless.

The light grows brighter and warmer as the scene goes on. The stage is totally empty; ETHAN is sitting downstage. In a perfect world, the stage would be covered with smoke.)

ANGELS: *(offstage) Ahhh!*

ETHAN: *What the...? (He stands and bobbles towards the light.)*

BUREAUCRAT: *(offstage) (In deep, ringing tones, but with a nasal edge) Waaaalk iiiiiinto the liiiiiight!*

ANGELS: *(offstage) (A swelling crescendo!) Aaaaahhhh!!... (they continue singing)*

BUREAUCRAT: *(offstage) Iiiiiiiinto the liiiiiiiiiight!*

ETHAN: *(dumbstruck) Wow. I must be dead.*

(The three ANGELS and an ANGELIC BUREAUCRAT “materialize”. Either that, or they walk out from the wings. The BUREAUCRAT has a yellow legal pad; the three ANGELS should be as indistinguishable as possible, and are smiling beatifically.)

ANGELS: *(Joyful and exuberant. This could last a while and be quite complex)* Aaaaaahhhhhhhh!!!

BUREAUCRAT: Welcome to Heaven.

ANGELS: Aaaahhh!!

ETHAN: Um...Thanks.

BUREAUCRAT: So you died peacefully in your sleep, there was no pain.

ETHAN: Really?

ANGEL 1: *(resonant and meant to awe)* Yes.

ANGEL 2: We hovered over you.

ANGEL 3: Watching you die.

ANGEL 2: Waiting to guide your immortal soul to Heaven.

ANGEL 3: The final journey.

ANGEL 1: And the most rewarding.

ANGEL 2: You breathed erratically.

ANGEL 3: And then...

ANGEL 1: You stopped.

ANGEL 2: Have no fear. It is over.

(Pause)

ETHAN: Wow.

(Pause. The ANGELS smile beatifically)

ETHAN: *(A thought occurs.)* There was no pain?

ANGEL 2: No pain.

ANGEL 3: None.

ANGEL 1: *(Nods)*

ETHAN: Then what was that stubbed toe? Hmm? Look at this *(holds up the toe)*, it's turning purple.

(Pause. The ANGELS look for help to the BUREAUCRAT)

BUREAUCRAT: Umm, probably just a kink in the tunnel to the sky, nothing to worry about. I'll call it in and Physical Plant'll fix it up pronto, wouldn't want anyone else getting hurt. Now before we show you around and all, let's give this bio a once-over – wouldn't want it to go into the records with your name spelled wrong, now would we? Heh heh! *(holds out the legal pad)*

ETHAN: (*hesitantly taking the legal pad*) Okay.

(*He reads, moving his lips.*)

“Obnoxious” ends in oh you ess, not oh ess.

BUREAUCRAT: Oh-kay. (*He looks over ETHAN’s shoulder and makes a mark on the pad with a pen.*)

ETHAN: Looks fine. (*hands over the pad*)

BUREAUCRAT: Oh-*kay*! We’re moving along fine now. I’ll just leave you in the capable hands of Tigris, Euphrates, and Orthodontia here (*the ANGELS bow in turn*) and they’ll show you around a bit. Just call me up if anything’s wrong, they all know my number, and leave a message on the old voice mail. Taa-taa! (*He exits purposefully, whistling.*)

(*Pause. The ANGELS smile beatifically*)

ETHAN: (*awkwardly*) So...!

ANGEL 1: So!

ETHAN: So I’m in Heaven, huh?

(*The ANGELS nod beatifically.*)

ETHAN: I wonder how I ended up *here*. Especially with it being – well, no offense, but so *cheesy*. I mean, you’re just these (*gestures at the ANGELS, searching for the word*), these *angels* – you’d look right at home on a cute postage stamp or something. And you sing this common major chord stuff from Harmony and Counterpoint One! It’s very TV Christmas special. Only I’m not the baby Jesus.

(*The ANGELS shake their heads “no”. Pause*)

ETHAN: The other thing is that I don’t really believe in God.

ANGEL 1: Oh, that’s no problem.

ANGEL 2: You’ll learn now that you’re here!

ANGEL 3: God is very forgiving.

ANGEL 1: A very, very nice deity.

ANGEL 3: Infinitely nice! (*a particularly beatific smile*)

(*Pause*)

ETHAN: So...!

ANGEL 2: So!

(*Pause*)

ETHAN: So is there always this much going on?

ANGEL 3: You know, most people are *happy* when they arrive.

ETHAN: Oh, I didn’t mean to – I mean....

(Pause)

ANGEL 2: (*hesitantly, to the other ANGELS*) Maybe we could show him the Lord's Path?

ANGELS 1 and 3: (*brightening up, insufferably perky*) Yes! Yes! Yes!

(ETHAN *sighs under his breath.*)

ANGEL 1: Did you say something?

ETHAN: Me? No.

(*Uncomfortable pause*)

ANGEL 2: So...The Lord's Path?

ETHAN: Sure.

(*They walk downstage left and look out over the audience.*)

ANGEL 3: (*an expansive gesture*) Behold! The Lord's Path! (*The ANGELS recover their beatific smiles.*)

ETHAN: Wow! It is beautiful! All that brick.... (Pause) It's yellow.

ANGEL 1: (*disapproving*) Golden. Yes.

(ETHAN *stifles a laugh.*)

ANGEL 2: Is something wrong?

ETHAN: Oh, no. It's just...oh, never mind.

ANGEL 3: And if you look just over there, you can see the Great Palace at the end of the Path.

(ETHAN *looks, begins giggling, stifles it almost immediately.*)

ETHAN: Sorry.

ANGEL 1: No, what is it?

ETHAN: Well, it's just – *green*.

ANGEL 3: We don't understand.

ETHAN: A yellow brick road? A green castle? That doesn't sound familiar? (Pause) Dorothy? – Toto? (Pause) The Wicked Witch of the West? (Pause) Oh, never mind.

ANGEL 2: There's no wickedness in Heaven.

ETHAN: (*under his breath*) And I can't tell you how happy that makes me.

ANGEL 1: What was that?

ETHAN: Oh nothing.

(Pause)

ANGEL 2: So...!

ETHAN: So!

ANGEL 1: You're probably curious about what we actually do here.

ETHAN: I was wondering that.

ANGEL 2: It's beautiful.

ANGEL 3: In its simplicity.

ANGEL 1: It might take a little getting used to.

ANGEL 3: Yes, an adjustment period is common.

ANGEL 2: But once you have gone through that...

(The ANGELS sigh with joy.)

ETHAN: What is it?

ANGEL 1: Well, it's a little hard to describe.

ANGEL 2: Even though there's not much to it.

ANGEL 1: You just...

ANGEL 3: ...float around...

ANGEL 2: ...and are *happy*.

ANGEL 3: That's it!

ANGEL 1: In a nutshell!

(ETHAN stares dumbstruck at the ANGELS. Silence. He begins clicking his heels together.)

ETHAN: There's *no* place like *home*, there's *no* place like *home*, there's *no* place like *(he manages to bump the bad toe, and crumples to the ground in pain) yaaaaabb*, holy *shit*, what a fucking *nightmare*, ow, ow, *ow!*

(The ANGELS exchange a glance; ANGEL 1 produces a cellular phone and touches a button. The ANGELIC BUREAUCRAT enters immediately.)

BUREAUCRAT: *(to ETHAN)* So I hear there's some kind of problem.

ETHAN: Problem?

BUREAUCRAT: Yeah, problem. They tell me you aren't happy here.

ETHAN: *(shoots the ANGELS a grateful glance)* Well, not really, no.

BUREAUCRAT: Oh well, too bad. We were worried about that from the file – “sarcastic and immature,” it said, but what the hell, you gotta take a chance every now and then. It's water under the bridge anyway. Just close your eyes and we'll send you back home, okay?

ETHAN: Really? Great! – But wait. Is that kink thing fixed? In the tunnel?

BUREAUCRAT: Oh, yeah, no problems, everything's fine. Now let's get a move on.

ETHAN: Okay.

(ETHAN closes his eyes. Blackout.)

ETHAN: Hmm. I wonder how long it takes. (*opens his eyes*) Well, everything seems dark. Maybe if –

(*He takes a step. There is a huge clattering noise as he falls over a pile of junk.*)

Ow!! Ahh, fuck!!

(*Lights up. The ANGELS and the BUREAUCRAT are gone. ETHAN has fallen down on a junkheap and is clutching the same foot as before. The TIN MAN is nearby.*)

ETHAN: Oh my God, fabulous, just fucking fabulous – I bet I lose the nail – oh, aaaaah....

TIN MAN: (*squeaking with his mouth closed*) Oil can!

ETHAN: (*surprised*) What?

TIN MAN: Oil can!

ETHAN: Oh! Oil can! (*rummages around, limping and muttering*) Jesus, my subconscious is so predictable – fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck – (*Straightens up.*) I'm sorry, sir, I can't find your oil can.

TIN MAN: Use your dick!

ETHAN: (*uncomprehending*) What?

TIN MAN: Use your dick! Peenis!

(ETHAN stands shocked. Pause.)

TIN MAN: Semen! (*Pause*) Seeemen!

(Blackout.)

SECOND DREAM

(An office with four desks. Sitting at the desks from left to right are WORKER 1, a man in his twenties; WORKER 2, a timid woman in her twenties; ETHAN; and WORKER 3, a woman in her thirties. Each has a large pile of papers on her desk, a keyboard, a phone, and a different unidentifiable contraption. Each worker follows this procedure: First, choose a paper from the middle of the stack. Write all over the paper, then quickly type something at the keyboard while looking straight ahead at an imaginary monitor. Finally, place the paper on the desk, whack it very hard with the contraption, and throw it over a shoulder. The workers are never in phase with one another.)

The lights come up on everyone hard at work; the action continues without interruption through one or two contraption-whackings. Then WORKER 1's phone rings, and he answers it.)

WORKER 1: Hello hello. Yes yes. But I was supposed to get that today. *Today*, I said, *not* next week, *not* tomorrow, *today by five o'clock*. It's already seven months overdue! – No, no, no, I don't care about hurricanes, tornadoes or Satan himself, you got it? *Today*, I said, or I will speak with my superiors and you'll never see another purchase order from this place as long as you live, unless you steal it from a responsible company or frame one of the ones you've already got! Good-bye! *(Slams down phone, whacks paper with contraption, tosses it.)*

(ETHAN rubs his temples.)

WORKER 2: Wow! You think they'll finally listen to you now?

WORKER 1: They better.

(Pause)

WORKER 3: How many times have you said that to them already?

WORKER 1: Five.

WORKER 3: *(skeptical)* Mm-hmm.

WORKER 1: But the purchase order stuff was new.

WORKER 2: I hear they get really nervous when you threaten them like that. You think so? I think they just hate it. *I* thought you did a great job.

WORKER 1: Yeah.

(WORKER 3 *grumbles under her breath. Pause. ETHAN has stopped working and is staring off into space, daydreaming.*)

WORKER 3: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, what a day. I can't wait to get home.

WORKER 1: I can work so much faster from home, I wonder why I come in at all. (*holds up his contraption*) Look at this thing. It's beyond antiquated. It's probably from the fucking *seventies*.

WORKER 3: Hey! Don't even *start* with the seventies, okay?

(*Pause*)

I hope my husband doesn't mind take-out Chinese, cause he's crazy if he thinks I'm gonna cook tonight.

(*Pause*)

WORKER 2: (*to WORKER 1*) Have you ever thought of getting married?

WORKER 1: *What the fuck!!* (*Bangs his contraption over and over again. ETHAN covers his ears and puts his head on his desk.*) *Out of parsley?! How the hell can this thing be out of parsley?! I just put five pounds in last week!! Fucking thing eats parsley! The people in office supplies think I'm gorging myself on parsley with the amount I get every month!! This keeps up and I'm quitting before I get fired for parsley larceny! Christ!*

WORKER 3: (*overlapped with WORKER 1*) Hey! Hey! *Hey!!* – I can't take it any more. You're always screaming, yelling, swearing, like some kind of goddamn siren in the room! Well, just shut up, okay? Some of us are trying to work! And your noise disturbs those hard-working people! So listen! Just keep it down, *way* down, or I'm talking to the supervisor!

WORKER 1: Fuck you.

(*Long pause. The WORKERS work quickly and angrily.*)

WORKER 2: (*very quietly, to ETHAN*) Hey, what are you doing?

ETHAN: (*lifts his head*) Thinking.

WORKER 1: What a shock.

WORKER 3: (*to ETHAN*) You know, you'd get more done if you didn't think all the damn time.

ETHAN: I can't help it.

WORKER 2: What are you thinking about?

ETHAN: I'm looking for something.

WORKER 2: Yeah? What?

ETHAN: Anything good.

(*Pause*)

There must be one tiny beautiful thing about this place, but I don't know what

it is. I'm looking and looking, but I can't find it. There are people, you know, who can find some good in absolutely anything. *(Pause)* And I usually hate those people.

(Pause)

WORKER 2: You're depressing.

WORKER 1: No shit.

WORKER 3: You know, if you had a life, you might be a lot less moody. You should listen to me here, you might learn something.

ETHAN: Thanks.

WORKER 3: Just go out, you know. Go to a bar. Go dancing. Meet some people. I don't know. Just stop being so goddamned depressing around us. I've got problems, we've all got problems, but this is a job, man. We've got to work, so we keep them to ourselves.

ETHAN: I've never been able to do that.

WORKER 3: Well, honey, it's time you learned.

(The WORKERS work. ETHAN stares into nowhere)

ETHAN: *(dreamily)* One day last year, I was talking to someone on the street. I asked her what was going on and she said "I'm a little depressed." Why? "I'm thinking about where I want my life to go, what I'm doing, who my friends are. You know. And I don't know if I'm at the place I want to be, blah blah blah, I'm feeling a little shut out of life, blah blah blah, my goals and aspirations, blah blah," on and on, nothing I hadn't heard before. So she asked how I was and I said "I'm great. Look! It's a sunny day!" And her lip just curled up. She was like "Do you ever think about *important* things?" And I said "I try not to. It depresses me." And she was like "whatever," and went away.

I thought she was being Typical Tina Teenager, worrying about the same boring issues as everyone else but convinced her problems were a fascinating addition to history. Give her two years, I thought, and she'll realize how stupid she was. Now I wonder who was being more immature.

(Pause. Slowly, a beautiful flower rises out of the mouth of ETHAN's contraption. It tickles his chin before he notices, but when he notices, his breath is taken away.)

My god. It's beautiful. *(He takes it out of the contraption and smells it. Enthralled)* This is it. The one tiny rapturously beautiful thing.

(Pause. A door slams. Enter the SUPERVISOR, who walks directly to ETHAN's desk.)

SUPERVISOR: What exactly are you doing?

ETHAN: *(Holds out the flower)* Look. Isn't it beautiful? Small and fragile, unimportant, but beautiful? *(Pause. Simply)* This is what makes life worthwhile.

(Pause. The SUPERVISOR makes no move to take the flower.)

ETHAN: Sir?...

SUPERVISOR: I'm sorry, but the Board has authorized me to take disciplinary action for terminal lack of focus and inability to differentiate the important from the trivial. I came here to give you a second chance, but your actions leave me no choice. Your punishment is indefinite imprisonment in the Garbage Scow of Useless Shit.
(The WORKERS rise from their desks and approach ETHAN.)

ETHAN: *(flabbergasted, holding up the flower)* But...but *look!* It's *pretty!*

(At a signal from the SUPERVISOR, they engulf ETHAN and start beating the crap out of him. Blackout)

THIRD DREAM

(BRUCE B. *in his apartment alone. There is a knocking at the door. BRUCE opens it and ETHAN is there. Pause*)

ETHAN: I forgot what I wanted to tell you.

BRUCE: Can I help you?

ETHAN: It was very, very important, and I forgot.

(*Pause*)

ETHAN: Do you have any idea what it was?

BRUCE: No.

ETHAN: Do I know you?

BRUCE: No.

ETHAN: Well, then, here we are.

BRUCE: Here we are!

ETHAN: There's something I have to tell you, and until I tell you what it is I have to tell you, we are just going to stand here and wait, because...

BRUCE: Because?

ETHAN: *Because* because.

BRUCE: Hm.

ETHAN: Maybe that's what I have to tell you. Maybe I have to tell you why I have to tell you something.

BRUCE: Something?

ETHAN: Yeah. This thing. Whatever it is that...I have to tell you. (*Pause*) That's so stupid.

BRUCE: No it's not.

ETHAN: Yes it is. It's the kind of pseudo-intellectual pop philosophy crap I churn out all the time.

BRUCE: Don't be so hard on yourself.

ETHAN: Hm.

BRUCE: You might be right! Maybe there is no second thing. Maybe you have to tell me...not why you had to tell me *one specific thing*, but...why you wanted to talk to me *at all*. You see?

ETHAN: It's plausible.

BRUCE: Plausible?

ETHAN: Plausible.

BRUCE: So why did you want to talk to me at all?

ETHAN: Because...I have something to tell you.

(Pause)

ETHAN: This is so frustrating. It's not at the tip of my tongue, but it's there, peeking around corners in my brain and flipping me off. What was it? What was it?

BRUCE: Don't obsess about it.

ETHAN: I can't help it. It's like a toenail that's a quarter-inch too long. I can't stop picking at it.

BRUCE: You'll only remember once you stop thinking about it.

ETHAN: That is extraordinarily unhelpful.

BRUCE: Would you like to come in?

ETHAN: I'd love to.

(He comes in. Pause)

BRUCE: So, welcome to my place.

ETHAN: Thanks.

BRUCE: Anything jog your memory?

ETHAN: (*frowning in thought*) Not a thing. Not a clue.

BRUCE: Do I remind you of anyone?

ETHAN: (*frowning in thought*) No.

(Pause)

BRUCE: Your mother maybe?

ETHAN: No.

(Pause)

BRUCE: (*points toward the kitchen*) Would you like a drink or anything?

ETHAN: (*brightening*) Aaaaaaa —!

BRUCE: (*steps forward, excited*) Yes?!

ETHAN: (*crestfallen*) No.

BRUCE: Oh no, did I ruin it? Should I go back where I was? Here, I'm back just the way I was (*"freezing" in a grotesquely fake pose*), does that help?

ETHAN: (*smiles*) No. But thanks.

(*Pause*)

This is completely maddening. It's beyond maddening, it's...really maddening. I will probably never stop thinking about this for as long as I live. Each minute I need to remember more and more, and each minute I can remember less and less of it.

BRUCE: You really should stop thinking about it. I wish I could think of something to help...you know...

ETHAN: Get my mind off it.

BRUCE: Yes. (*Pause*) Do you have a girlfriend?

ETHAN: What?

BRUCE: Do you have a girlfriend?

ETHAN: Oh! Very clever.

BRUCE: No, I really want to know.

ETHAN: Really?

BRUCE: Yes.

ETHAN: No.

BRUCE: Oh. (*Pause*) How long has it been?

ETHAN: Without a girlfriend? Oh, years.

BRUCE: Hm.

(*Pause*)

ETHAN: This is incredible. Now I'm forgetting what I'm supposed to be trying to remember. Just now, I'm sitting there desperate, worrying my ass off, and all of a sudden there's this moment of calm: What, exactly, am I worried about? And I couldn't remember. For at least two seconds. (*Pause*) Which is a long time.

(*Pause*)

BRUCE: Are you gay?

(*Pause*)

ETHAN: (*reflective, almost an aside*) You know, people have asked me that question every now and then for quite a while. And generally, I just give them the answer, and life goes on pretty much the same as before. I worry about my father asking, or my Republican aunt, or some asswipe musclebound football player on the street with a ballpeen hammer in his hand, but up till now I've never really been afraid.

Now, my stomach is queasy, my face is burning, and the answer frightens me a lot. I'm not even sure what I should say – Yes? No? Maybe? It's not like I'm sure of anything at all these days. *(Pause)*

BRUCE: So are you gay?

ETHAN: Yes.

(Pause)

BRUCE: Was that what you needed to tell me?

ETHAN: I guess that would be symbolic if it were true. The most important thing in my life right now, my most urgent obsession, is to come out to a complete stranger. No: maybe it's to come out to myself, since you *are* a stranger, a blank slate. I don't see you, not your personality or your uniqueness – I don't know you well enough. I just see bits of my reflection in your eyes.

The problem with this theory is that I still feel like I have something to tell you.

BRUCE: Hm.

ETHAN: Are you gay?

BRUCE: As your reflection, I guess I must be.

ETHAN: *(embarrassed)* Oh, well, I didn't really...

BRUCE: I know. *(Pause)* Yes.

ETHAN: Well.

BRUCE: Yep.

(Pause. They are almost touching)

BRUCE: So what are you doing tonight?

ETHAN: What do you mean? I mean, nothing.

BRUCE: Good.

(Pause)

ETHAN: You know, for a fantasy, this is silly in a lot of ways.

BRUCE: Shut up.

ETHAN: Okay.

(Pause. Passionate kiss! then blackout. In the darkness:)

ETHAN: *(joyful recognition)* Obbbbbb!!

INTERLUDE

(Close lighting. ETHAN is sitting on a chair or stool.)

ETHAN: Okay. So this is an interlude because this was a real dream.

I wasn't in the dream, or at least my body wasn't. It was one of those camera dreams, where there's a viewpoint that moves around, but not really a body behind it.

Anyway, the viewpoint is very, very high, five thousand feet above this island in the middle of a deep blue sea. The island is the only land in view, and it's covered with jungle: dark, rich and impenetrable, an intense and shaded green that seems alive itself.

Down swoops the viewpoint, first slowly, then faster and faster, right down to the island at a hundred miles an hour or more – over the white-sand beaches, the tiny border of grassland, and then into the jungle itself. Trees whoosh by on either side, and it becomes very dark, a warm green light that's as old as the world.

But it starts to get brighter and brighter and there's a patch of yellow up ahead. The jungle has thinned down to a forest, and the patch of yellow is a clearing. We're slowing down, slowing and slowing, and finally we're in the clearing.

The ground is covered with tall, matted grass, fallen branches, dead leaves. Grasshoppers jump all around, and cabbage butterflies are everywhere, looking drunk. I don't remember any sound, though.

In the middle of the clearing is a huge fallen log, so round and straight and perfect it looks man-made. It's at least two feet in diameter, and sitting on it is Pippi Longstocking.

(Lights in back have come up on the scene described. The only important parts are the log and PIPPI LONGSTOCKING in full costume.)

(chatty) I don't know if you remember Pippi Longstocking. She was some girls' adventure book character from around fifth and sixth grade. I forget what-all she did, but it was fascinating! Pirates, buried treasure, going to school, making friends, menstruating, getting pregnant, going on welfare. She had fire-red hair

like Danny Dunn, but unlike Danny Dunn, her hair was in two long pigtails that stuck straight out from either side of her head just above the ears. It was amazing hair. And I remember her plaid shirt, and these gorgeous overalls. I think she was translated from the German.

All right, she never actually menstruated, and maybe she didn't even wear overalls. I never actually read her; the only girls' adventure books I read were the Nancy Drews. But this is how she was in the dream. Except for one thing: *her braids hung straight down*. I'm not sure I can describe how strange this was.

(voice hushed) A moment of tense silence. Pippi is staring right at me, or *through* me, and I get nervous even though my body isn't there. *What does she want?... (faster)* Then, suddenly,

PIPPY: *(very loud)* *Borscht!* (*pronounced* Boarshh-'k-'t)

ETHAN: *(very fast)* she says, and the pigtails stand straight out from her head like handles, and she falls backwards off the log. (*This all happens as he describes it.*) Her pasty legs are straight up in the air, completely rigid, like trees. (*Blackout on the scene in back.*) There's a slight pause. Then suddenly she's sitting upright on the log again without having moved there, and she's staring right at me, and she says

PIPPY: *Borscht!*

ETHAN: and her pigtails stand out, and she falls backwards off the log. Then there she is again, sitting on the log, and it happens again. And again. And again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again, until I wake up.

(Pause)

I'm not sure, but I think it was a nightmare.

(Blackout)

FOURTH DREAM

(An empty stage with five people in a queue. From front to back, they are JULIE, 17 years old; her brother TONY, who is 13; HELENA, a funky dressed woman in her late forties; CHRISTIAN, an intense man in his early thirties; and ETHAN.)

A moment of silence. They are all very tense)

TONY: Julie?

JULIE: Yeah?

TONY: You're next, Julie.

JULIE: I know.

TONY: How do you feel?

JULIE: Pretty excited. But I'm worried, too.

TONY: Me, too. *(Pause)* Do you think we'll see each other again?

JULIE: I don't know. I don't know what to think. It's all so weird and new.

Maybe we'll turn into really different things, you know? And not be able to see each other any more.

Or maybe you don't want to see anyone else after you change.

TONY: I'll want to see *you* after *my* change.

JULIE: *(smiles)* You don't know that, Tony.

TONY: *Yes* I do.

JULIE: Oh, honey. *(Hugs him. She is almost crying)* I'll want to see you too. Oh, I will.

(The DOCTOR enters towards the head of the queue. She has done this many times before, but her routine is not mechanical.)

DOCTOR: Who's next? *(to JULIE)* Are you next?

(JULIE and TONY separate, and speak together.)

TONY: She's next! She's next!

JULIE: *(spoken together)* I'm next.

DOCTOR: *(small smile)* You have the paperwork ready, and proof of identification?

JULIE: Oh yeah, yeah – (*finds papers, gives them to the DOCTOR*) Here they are!

DOCTOR: (*examines papers*) Please come in.

JULIE: (*Hugs TONY quickly, and kisses him*) Goodbye! I love you! I'll see you soon! (*The DOCTOR and JULIE exit*)

TONY: Good luck!! Good luck!

(*Pause*)

HELENA: (*softly, to CHRISTIAN*) So young and so nervous!

CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

HELENA: (*Pause*) I guess you don't have to be young to be nervous.

CHRISTIAN: I know what you mean.

(*Tense pause. There is a small flash of light offstage and a gasp from JULIE. Long pause.*
Offstage, JULIE makes an inarticulate, echoing noise, almost a scream of joy, which starts in one voice and ends in another, as if she has metamorphosed during the vocalization, into an animal or something even stranger – it is a scream of transformation, and it lasts for a long time.

Pause. TONY, HELENA, and CHRISTIAN move nervously about.)

TONY: Oh my god.

CHRISTIAN: That was incredible!

HELENA: It was.

TONY: Oh my god. Oh my god, I'm next. Oh my god.

HELENA: (*to TONY*) A little worried?

TONY: No – yeah. Yeah, a lot.

HELENA: I hear the shot doesn't even hurt.

TONY: I'm not afraid of the *shot*. I've had a lot of shots. That's nothing. (*Pause*) Wait. Oh my god, where are my papers? Oh my god! (*pats his front pockets, looks around desperately*)

CHRISTIAN: Is that them, in your back pocket?

TONY: My...? (*checks his back pocket. Relieved*) There they are. Oh wow, phew. Yeah. (*to CHRISTIAN*) Hey, thanks. I was really starting to freak out.

CHRISTIAN: No problem.

HELENA: (*to TONY*) So, your parents know you're doing this today?

TONY: Oh, yeah. Well, one of them, anyway. My dad left us when I was real little, so just my mom took care of us. So my dad doesn't count. I don't think he knows. But my mom knows. Sort of.

HELENA: Sort of.

TONY: Yeah, sort of. She was feeling pretty run down, you know, because of the house and all that, and having to work so hard for the family. And nothing ever gets better by itself, you know? So when she heard about the shots, she got pretty excited. Because it was a change, a big change. And it was free too! She was excited. But she didn't want to do it because what if she changed into something that couldn't be our mother, you know? Something weird that we couldn't handle. Or what if she needed to live in the water, or couldn't cook or something? So she talked to us. We were pretty weirded out at first, but then we realized it was really what she wanted to do. Not because she didn't love us or anything. It was just one of those things. So we said sure, she should go do it. And then she got all worried because there'd be no one to take care of us, so we told her that if we needed to, we'd get the shots too, and then we could take care of ourselves.

Well, we're doing fine so far, but Mom doing it and all really got the idea stuck in our heads. So, here we are! I don't know if Mom knows about it. We haven't seen her since she went. But maybe she's like floating around in the air, watching us right now! I kind of hope so.

(The DOCTOR enters.)

DOCTOR: Who's next? *(to TONY)* Are you next?

TONY: What? *(whirls around)* Me!! Me, I'm next, sir.

DOCTOR: You have the paperwork ready, and proof of identification?

TONY: *(Pause)* Oh my god. Oh my god, my papers, oh my god where did –

HELENA and

CHRISTIAN: Your back pocket?

TONY: Oh yeah!! *(takes papers, hands them to the DOCTOR)* Here they are.

DOCTOR: *(reads, frowns)* Hm. *(Pause)*

TONY: Is there some problem, sir?

DOCTOR: It'll just take a minute. Please come in.

(TONY and the DOCTOR begin to leave)

HELENA: *(whispered)* Good luck!

(TONY turns and smiles, then is gone. Tense pause)

HELENA: *(to CHRISTIAN)* What a strange story.

CHRISTIAN: The kid?

HELENA: Yes. I don't know. It seems like I should feel indignant about it, at least. There's something wrong with a mother leaving her children. If I had children, I would not be here.

CHRISTIAN: But you don't feel indignant.

HELENA: No. No, I don't. I don't know why not. I guess I've heard other stories like hers, and they all seemed to have happy endings – or most of them did. You know, someone's in a dead-end situation, but after a fundamental change, they recover. They're jolted enough to really improve their lives.

CHRISTIAN: I'm not sure I'd care if they recovered.

HELENA: What do you mean?

CHRISTIAN: I'm not sure I'd care if it didn't improve things, if people got worse instead of better. I still think she did the right thing. It's the one right people have left, to change themselves.

(Flash offstage as before. Conversation is cut off. Transformation scream as before.)

CHRISTIAN: *(very fast and excited)* Listen to that! That was it. That was the human moment – the moment of change! Fundamental, deep, human change!

HELENA: *(fast and excited)* Yes. Yes! – But still. The process seems so random. An injection, a metamorphosis. Why do people assume the forms they do? What will I turn into? I don't know. Is the drug reacting to some genetic structure? Will I have a luckier change because I've got Native American blood? It's just not as simple as you think! And that kid – you saw him. So young! He has no idea what the world is really like. How can he make a decision like this at his age? A permanent, irrevocable one?

CHRISTIAN: That's exactly what makes it so fundamental, so important. That it's irrevocable. And random. What else is life about but adaptation? Change? Change in the face of the random? So he's young; so what? Can you honestly say you're any more ready than he was?

(The DOCTOR enters.)

DOCTOR: Who's next? *(to HELENA)* Are you next?

HELENA: *(smiles at CHRISTIAN, then turns)* I am.

DOCTOR: You have the paperwork ready, and proof of identification?

HELENA: Yes, here it is.

DOCTOR: *(examines papers)* Please come in.

(HELENA and the DOCTOR leave. HELENA does not look back, but the DOCTOR returns immediately.)

DOCTOR: Whoever's next, please go down the corridor to the right and into the next door. Another line has just emptied and you'll get faster service there. *(Exits.)*

CHRISTIAN: *(turns and smiles at ETHAN)* Well, good luck. *(He exits quickly.)*

(Long pause.)

Flash offstage and transformation scream, as before.

Long pause. ETHAN has not moved up to the front of the queue. The DOCTOR enters.)

DOCTOR: Who's next? (to ETHAN) Are you next?

ETHAN: (Pause) Yes.

DOCTOR: You have the paperwork ready, and proof of identification?

(ETHAN takes out papers, walks forward, hands them to the DOCTOR.)

DOCTOR: (examines papers) Please come in.

(Long pause. Flash offstage as before; ETHAN gasps.

Very long pause, during which the lights on stage dim to almost black, with a painfully bright spotlight.

ETHAN walks onstage and into the spotlight. He looks straight ahead for a moment, then lightly touches his sides. More and more violently, he touches every part of his body, patting himself down, craning his neck to see, searching for something. He stands up straight, then suddenly pulls the front of his pants open, looks in, and lets them snap back. He looks straight ahead, utterly desolate and alone.)

ETHAN: It's all the same. I'm all the same.

(Quick fadeout.)

FIFTH DREAM

(A country road. A tree.

Evening.

ETHAN, *in a sour mood and sitting on a low mound, is trying to pick a piece of glass out of his foot. He digs at it with both hands, panting. He gives up, exhausted, rests, tries again.*

As before.

Enter VLADIMIR. He is dressed shabbily and wears a bowler hat.)

ETHAN: *(giving up again)* Fuck. I can't get it out. Nothing to be done.

VLADIMIR: *(advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart)* I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle. *(He broods, musing on the struggle. Turning to ETHAN.)* So there you are again.

ETHAN: *(Pause)* This seems familiar.

VLADIMIR: I'm glad to see you back. I thought you were gone for ever.

ETHAN: I don't know who you are.

VLADIMIR: Together again at last! We'll have to celebrate this. But how? *(He reflects.)* Get up till I embrace you.

ETHAN: What? Leave me alone! *(He turns away and continues to work on his foot.)*

VLADIMIR: *(hurt, coldly)* May one inquire where His Highness spent the night?

ETHAN: Why do you care? Just leave me the fuck alone!

VLADIMIR: *(almost weeping)* When I think of it...all these years...but for me...where would you be... *(Decisively.)* You'd be nothing more than a little heap of bones at the present minute, no doubt about it.

ETHAN: All right, you're such a big help, you want to help me get this glass out of my foot?

VLADIMIR: *(examines it)* It hurts?

ETHAN: Yes, it hurts!

VLADIMIR: (*angrily*) No one ever suffers but you. I don't count. I'd like to hear what you'd say if you had what I have.

ETHAN: Oh Christ.

VLADIMIR: One daren't even laugh any more.

ETHAN: That's it. I'm going.

(*He does not move.*)

VLADIMIR: (*an attempt at a new start*) Things have changed here since yesterday.

ETHAN: Shut up!

(*Silence. VLADIMIR sighs deeply.*)

VLADIMIR: You're a hard man to get on with, Gogo.

ETHAN: Don't call me that.

VLADIMIR: AH, STOP IT!

(*Exit VLADIMIR hurriedly. During ETHAN's monologue, he reenters, crosses the stage with bowed head, and stands forlorn in a back corner. With time, he recovers, goes to the extreme right, and gazes into the distance off, shading his eyes with his hand.*)

ETHAN: (*aside*) What does it mean?

Dreams are always supposed to mean something. Why can't I ever figure mine out? Why does this seem so familiar? Why is that tree there? Jesus, I don't even think it's real. What is a prop tree doing in my dream? Why do I ask so many questions?

I guess all you can do is ask questions.

I heard that dreams ask the questions you don't want to ask when you're awake. But if I don't want to ask a question, I don't want some fucking dream coming along and asking it without my permission. That's just rude.

Maybe the questions have to be asked.

But then why don't I remember my dreams? Am I missing something? Something important?

Do I dream at all?

Maybe I'm empty. Of dreams.

Maybe that means I'm empty of everything.

Once when I was on acid, I considered suicide. I visualized my funeral and it made me very happy. Spitefully happy. That'd show them all! The fucks.

That's a pretty empty reaction to your own death.

(*Pause*)

I guess that's what being suicidal is. Emptiness.

(Pause. With sudden resolve) Oh fuck it. (He turns to VLADIMIR.) Let's go.

VLADIMIR: We can't.

ETHAN: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We're waiting for Godot.

ETHAN: (*despairingly*) Ah! (Pause. ETHAN has given up. He sits on the mound.) And if he doesn't come?

VLADIMIR: We'll come back tomorrow.

ETHAN: And then the day after tomorrow.

VLADIMIR: Possibly.

ETHAN: And so on.

VLADIMIR: The point is –

ETHAN: Until he comes.

VLADIMIR: You're merciless.

(Pause)

ETHAN: Let's stop talking for a minute, do you mind?

VLADIMIR: (*feebly*) All right. (VLADIMIR paces agitatedly to and fro, halting from time to time to gaze into distance off. ETHAN falls asleep. VLADIMIR halts finally before ETHAN.) Gogo!...Gogo!...GOGO!

(ETHAN wakes with a start.)

ETHAN: (*restored to the horror of his situation*) I was asleep! (*Despairingly.*) Why will you never let me sleep?

VLADIMIR: I felt lonely.

ETHAN: I was dreaming I was happy.

VLADIMIR: That passed the time.

ETHAN: (*aside*) And I remember it!

VLADIMIR: (*warning*) Don't tell me.

ETHAN: I dreamt that –

VLADIMIR: DON'T TELL ME!

ETHAN: (*Silence.*) It's not nice of you. Who am I to tell my private nightmares to if I can't tell them to you?

VLADIMIR: Let them remain private. You know I can't bear that.

ETHAN: (*coldly*) Sometimes I wonder if –

VLADIMIR: Hsst! Listen!

(They listen, grotesquely rigid. REBECCA is heard approaching. She seems very clumsy.)

ETHAN: What is it?

VLADIMIR: Hsst! (*They listen. ETHAN loses his balance, almost falls. He clutches the arm of VLADIMIR who totters. They listen, huddled together.*)

(*After a huge clattering noise, REBECCA falls onstage and stands almost off balance with a tight mischevious smile on her face. She is bursting with energy, but does not move overmuch.*)

REBECCA: Hel-lo.

ETHAN: (*undertone*) Is that him?

VLADIMIR: Who?

ETHAN: (*trying to remember the name*) Er...

VLADIMIR: Godot?

ETHAN: Yes.

VLADIMIR: Not at all!

ETHAN: Why not?

VLADIMIR: She lacks equipment!

ETHAN: I want to ask. Shall I ask?

VLADIMIR: What do we risk?

ETHAN: Um,...Are you Godot?

REBECCA: Mmmmmmmmmmm*maybe.*

ETHAN: What have we learned?

VLADIMIR: More than nothing.

ETHAN: But less than we might have hoped.

VLADIMIR: Ask again, louder.

ETHAN: (*emphatic*) Are you Godot!

REBECCA: (*giving up*) Oh, if you *want*. From time to time. But it's only because I like you so very, very much.

VLADIMIR: I knew it.

ETHAN: No you didn't.

VLADIMIR: What now?

ETHAN: You wanted to see her.

VLADIMIR: I forgot what I wanted to say.

ETHAN: (*steps forward*) Actually, I was wondering – would you mind explaining something for me?

REBECCA: Where I got this extremely attractive flannel shirt?! Or maybe why I'm so much *better* than you in *every, possible, WAY?!*

ETHAN: (*a little taken aback*) No.

REBECCA: (*mock petulance*) Oh. Well, *fine*. Ask. But don't expect any Christmas presents from me this year!

ETHAN: Okay. So... (*looks for guidance to VLADIMIR, who gestures to go on. Forging ahead*) So why am I dreaming *this dream*? What does it mean? (*Pause*) It's just that... (*Pause*) It's something I need to... (*Pause. Plaintive*) I just want to know what it means.
(*Pause. REBECCA looks mischevious and may chuckle once or twice. Pause*)

ETHAN: What? What is it?

REBECCA: (*bashfully holds out an index finger*) Pull my finger.
(*Long, shocked pause.*)

ETHAN *pulls* REBECCA's *finger*.
(*Instantly, blackout*)