



FIRST ACT – SAMPLE

By Robert J. Wheeler, 15 Windsor Cres., London, ON N6C 1V6 Canada – Revised May 1/25

Settings – A bus stop, Heaven, Hell. Run time – approximately 90 minutes.

Actors -- 13 M -- 8 F – 5 With doubling Actors – 4 M – 2 F – 2

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<https://www.canadianplayoutlet.com/pages/search-results-page?q=robert%20wheeler>

Email robwheeler999@gmail.com if you would like to read the play
for a possible production and I will send it to you.

CHARACTER NAME	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	AGE	GENDER
ROB	Dead Playwright	30-50	Male
STELLA	God's Special Angel	30-70	Female
GUS	Hen-pecked husband	30-70	Male
HILDA	Gus's wife	30-70	Female
BASIL	An actor, Julia's husband	30-50	Male
JULIA	Librarian and Basil's wife, has an average bust	30-50	Female
TRUCK DRIVER	Truck driver	30-60	Male
SHEREEN	Max's assistant	30-50	Female
MAX MAGIC	Failed magician	30-50	Male
HAZEL	God's assistant	30-60	Female
GOD	Voice	30-80	Male
INVESTMENT MANAGER	Sinner	30-50	Male
POPE	Sinner	30-70	Male
ROCK STAR	Sinner	30-50	Male

WITH DOUBLING ONLY FOUR ACTORS ARE REQUIRED.

ONE FEMALE ACTOR FOR – STELLA

ONE MALE ACTOR FOR – ROB, INVESTMENT FUND MANAGER, ROCK STAR

ONE MALE ACTOR FOR – GUS, BASIL, TRUCK DRIVER, MAX MAGIC, POPE,
GOD (*DISTORTED VOICE*)

ONE FEMALE ACTOR FOR – JULIA, ROB IN JULIA'S BODY, HILDA, HAZEL.

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Morning

Place: Bus stop

A “Bus Stop” sign is on top of a three-panel screen to represent a bus shelter. A bench is in front of the screen.

ROB (35-40), ruffled, casually dressed, possibly with a worn sport coat or blazer, red scarf, strolls from UR to the bus stop.

ROB This can’t be right.

Rob walks around disoriented.

No. This is all wrong. I can’t remember where I’ve been or where I’m going. *(looks around, pauses)* I should leave.

Rob starts to leave, stops, sits on the bench.

I’m lost and alone at a bus stop with nowhere to go.

Rob jumps up.

I wish I had taken better care of my heart. Being dead is so, so, so limiting. *(new idea)* Hey! I could write a play about a man at a bus stop, so I can’t be fully dead. *(another idea)* Forgot! There’s a manual!

Rob pulls a manual from a pocket. The word “MANUAL” is printed on the cover. He sits on bench, looks through it.

Bla-bla-bla-bla. Now the interesting part. Step one. Move to the bus stop. Step two. Sit on the bench. Step three. Wait for the bus. Step . . .

STELLA *(O.S.)* BOO!

Frightened, Rob jumps up, looks around.

(O.S.) I swear, all playwrights are directionally challenged! Where does it say to wander around complaining about being lost, alone and dead?

(MORE)

STELLA (30-60) is covered with a shimmering silver wrap. She seems to glow with the robe and long blonde hair.

Stella snatches the manual from Rob.

Does step four say that? No, it says wait for passengers to exit the bus! Here, read it.

Stella hands the manual to Rob.

ROB So, who are you?

STELLA Stella.

ROB Stella who?

STELLA Stella The Star. You're Rob The Playwright. I know about you, all about you!

ROB All?

STELLA All!!!! Not good!!!! You neglected your body. No exercise! Writing at all hours! Eating pizza, pop and chips? Does any of that sound healthy to you?

ROB *(nervous)* I'm, I'm not an exercise nut or a culinary nut. I'm a playwright . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)*. . . nut! Making you one dead nut!!! You were unable to perform the simple task of maintaining a healthy body!! You gave yourself a heart attack!!

ROB *(moves forward)* So, are you an angel, or, or *(steps back)* maybe you're the Other?

STELLA Other what?

ROB The not nice Other.

Stella starts to move behind the screen.

STELLA Oh, that Other!

Stella moves behind the screen as Rob looks fearfully DS.

ROB I've made a mistake or two . . . mainly with the ladies . . . but . . .

STELLA *(interrupting O.S.)* The Other has it easy, real easy!

Stella returns not wearing her shimmering silver wrap. Her wrap is black. Her hair is dark and messy.

Rob turns, sees her.

ROB Ahhhhhhha!.

Stella moves threateningly toward Rob. Rob steps onto the bench.

STELLA The Others are mean, real mean, takin' care of business, grab you, throw you into the red-eye express, straight on the long, winding, shrieking, torture express, straight, and I mean straight down, into excruciating burning Hell!!!!

Terrified, Rob moves down the bench away from Stella.

The Other has it easy! Everything dark! No grey, pathetic loose ends to deal with.

Stella turns, moves behind the screen.

(O.S.) But no, I'm required to be nice, oh so nice. You have no idea of the challenges I face from eon to eon.

*Stella returns with golden hair and shimmering wrap.
Relieved, Rob sits on the bench.*

Constant niceness is a huge burden. Stella, the Star is back, ready for whatever you've got.

ROB *(sits on bench)* I'm a grey loose end?

STELLA You left out pathetic.

ROB But . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Pathetic, grey and loose! Dark grey, verging on black, and loose! I've never had looser.

ROB But you're not the Other.

STELLA I'm a facilitator, a problem solver, here to solve your nasty problem.

ROB In a good way?

(MORE)

Stella shrugs. Rob jumps up.

My prayers have been answered!

Stella takes the manual.

STELLA *(big smile)* Prayers? No. Prayers are backed up, way back. I'm not from prayers!

ROB *(fearful)* N-n-n-o. Where?!!!

STELLA I'm from . . . *(loud)* COMPLAINTS!

ROB *(guiltily)* Oh-oh.

STELLA Multiple complaints have been lodged against you.

ROB Me?

STELLA Multiple! Complaints get priority over everything. Squeaky wheel?!! There's nothing worse than a whiney, squeaky complainer.

Rob's terrified, jumps onto the bench.

You've been whining on and on in Playwrights' Heaven about not finishing your sordid play after it happened, remember?

Rob sits on the bench.

ROB Yes, yes, that's right. I am soooooo soooooorry.

STELLA *(writes on manual)* He says he's sorry.

ROB I was just wondering, sometimes out loud, possibly insisting a little, off and on, from time to time, that I be permitted to finish my play. Sorry again.

STELLA *(writes on pad)* Oh so sorry. *(looks to Rob)* Is that right?

ROB Yes! Yes! Yes!

STELLA You're sorry for turning Playwrights' Heaven into PLAYWRIGHTS' HELL?!!

ROB *(guilty)* Yes! I was about to write the last scene of my play "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone" when I felt a pain in my chest, and I found myself without my body.

STELLA *(sarcastic)* Are you missing yourself?

ROB Very much. *(sales pitch)* It's an important play. A fantastic comedy that promotes organ donation! It has a husband and wife who . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Hold on.

ROB: He has a roofing company, and she works as a . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Hold it!

ROB So, you don't care about my play?

STELLA I'm REQUIRED to find you a temporary body so you can finish your supposed precious play.

ROB A miracle! Hallelujah!!

STELLA Not a miracle.

ROB No?

STELLA In this instance I'm required to facilitate you acquiring a body. In another instance I'll be about saving a child from a preventable mishap, but now I've got you, just you, understand? We need to move along.

ROB That's fine. *(eager)* I'm listening.

STELLA The transfer procedure doesn't happen often.

ROB No?

STELLA Permission has been given for the passionate playwright clause. The PPC needs to be enacted.

Stella throws arms up, indicating herself.

All this just for you.

ROB Tremendous! "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone" has a poignant ending, one I've been dying to write.

STELLA You got the dying part right.

ROB So, do I get to choose the body? How about sex?

STELLA We've just met. I'm not that kind of facilitator.

ROB *(shocked)* No, no!

STELLA When I was a young star, maybe. Lately, I've elevated myself.

ROB No, I don't mean . . . Look, I didn't mean . . .

STELLA *(interrupting, points at him)* Got ya! You're so serious. Lighten up. The manual explained everything.

ROB *(guiltily)* Manual?

STELLA *(perturbed)* Are you telling me you didn't read your manual?!

ROB I skipped the boring stuff, went right to the steps. First, second, you know.

STELLA *(glances up)* He didn't read his manual!

ROB Booooooring.

STELLA Playwrights are directionally challenged and non-manual readers. *(looks skyward)* Why me?

ROB Sorry. I see myself in . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Hold on!

Stella looks heavenward then back to Rob.

Checking my transfer resources. You were saying?

Rob puts a foot on end SL end of bench, enthusiastic, eyes aglow, clears throat.

ROB I see myself in a young, strong, male body. Football player. Yes, football player.

Rob throws out his chest, motions with left hand.

I'll take a handsome, rich quarterback.

STELLA You're more interested in scoring with the ladies than your dreary play.

ROB It's funny yet poignant, not dreary.

STELLA It has to be dreary.

ROB Why?

STELLA You're dreary. Dreariest facilitation I've ever had. Now you, YOU want me to make you look good for the ladies.

ROB It's been quite a while since, you know.

STELLA You died in the arms of a hot blonde!

ROB They say if you've gotta go, then . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Saturday night?!!

ROB How time flies.

STELLA I'll see what's available.

Stella gives Rob a stern look, he takes foot off bench.

ROB Okay, okay, male or female. Young, attractive.

STELLA Can you convince any male or female to lay down and die for you?

Rob sits on the SR end of the bench.

ROB *(deflated)* No. That's why I'm a playwright. If I could have convinced people to buy houses, cars, appliances, I'd be rich.

STELLA Multiple failures! You're one big failure!

ROB Okay, okay, so you're right. Can we move on to finding me a body, any body to occupy whatever I am.

STELLA You are your essence, minus the physical stuff.

Stella sits on the SL end of the bench.

ROB A sad situation.

STELLA Why couldn't you have been an assembly line worker, a person turned into a machine? They're blissful, no need to write anything.

ROB *(frustrated)* To finish my play I'll need a nimble body and fingers for typing.

STELLA *(not hearing him)* No stories bouncing around in their heads. Nothing to obsess about! Pleasant souls, easy to please with nothing going on. So, so, so easy. *(sigh)* The good eons. Wonderful.

Rob jumps off the bench.

ROB *(aggressive)* Can I send you back?! Get someone who cares about what's happening to me, not their own past!!?

Stella jumps off the bench.

STELLA *(indignant)* Send me back?! Me?! You're looking at the cream of the crop. You got lucky when I got unlucky. I'm your ticket, our only ticket to finishing your boring play.

ROB *(earnest)* It's a life changing masterpiece. Very significant. A monumental contribution to humanity.

STELLA *(indignant)* If you had drawn any of the others, you'd be regretting it, really regretting it.

ROB *(sarcastic)* Yeah, right.

STELLA They could scoot you into an old lady with arthritic fingers and failing eyesight. How about that? Or a prisoner who's getting unwanted, intimate attention. Try writing with that going on!

ROB I had no idea.

STELLA Oscar Wilde got a less skilled facilitator. He's crafting his sequel to his "The Importance Of Being Earnest" in the body of a diminutive insurance salesman married to Prudence, a champion kick boxer. They call her Prudence The Punisher. He could finish it.

ROB Could finish it?

STELLA She likes to spar with him.

ROB Oscar's better half is abusing him?

STELLA She's his better three-quarters.

ROB *(reluctantly)* Oscar's suffering for his craft?

Rob staggers to, and sits on the bench.

STELLA Somewhat.

ROB How much what?

STELLA He's missing some teeth.

ROB Missing teeth?

STELLA *(shrugs)* Just six, maybe seven.

ROB *(stunned)* Oscar is performing the role of a living punching bag for his craft?!

Rob fathoms.

STELLA All transferees experience side effects.

ROB So, what's the title of Oscar's sequel?

STELLA "The Importance of Loving Prudence".

ROB *(fearful)* On second thought, a transfer might not be a good idea.

STELLA *(annoyed)* There's no turning back. It's in the manual you didn't read!

Rob shrugs. Stella swats at Rob's head. Rob ducks. She misses him.

STELLA You didn't have to duck.

ROB I did!

STELLA My hand would have gone right through you.

ROB *(sarcastic)* Yeah, right.

STELLA You don't have a body, remember?

ROB That's right.

STELLA *(wicked smile)* Watch, I'll prove it.

Stella winds up and punches Rob in the stomach. Rob keels over.

ROB Ahhhhhhh!

STELLA *(perplexed)* That's not supposed to happen.

ROB Ow! That hurt!

STELLA *(insincere)* Soooooorry.

ROB *(still suffering)* It happened! It hurt!

STELLA Oh, that's it. I know. It's your body memory.

ROB *(still suffering)* You huuuuurt meee!

STELLA You're whining again!

ROB Sorry.

STELLA You remembered your old body so well you made it hurt. It was your fault.

ROB You punched me, and it's my fault?!

STELLA Absolutely! You've got too much body memory! You expected it to hurt, so it hurt. All your fault!

ROB Okay, okay, that's fine, can we move on?

STELLA *(resigned)* I'll fill you in. People in bodies who can't handle the situation they're in request a transfer out of the situation which necessitates leaving their body.

ROB *(stands)* I could end up married to a kick boxer?

STELLA *(enjoying it)* Or worse!

ROB Oh my Go . . .

Stella brings her finger up to Rob's lips, looks around.

STELLA *(interrupting)* We don't want to attract any undue attention. *(takes her finger away)* It's a significant sacrifice to step into a body again. But you need to finish your play, right?

ROB I've written a dozen plays, all of the highest quality, full of humor, with poignant or profound characters, dealing with the hurdles life has put in their path. "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone," is my passion to complete right now.

STELLA Wait a micro-millisecond! Are you saying I, or one of my associates, might be required to go through the transfer all over again? You could skip from body to body, writing plays your passionate about willy-nilly, until the end of time.

ROB *(feeling his power)* If I were given a sound body, I'm very, uh, moderately sure, I'll be content with it.

Dejected, Stella sits on the SL end of the bench.

STELLA *(resigned)* The tail is wagging the dog.

Rob sends a big smile to Stella.

Woof.

ROB *(upbeat)* Got yu! You're so serious. Lighten up.

STELLA *(dejected)* The prospect of failure has raised its ugly head.

ROB Okay, okay. Stella, listen.

STELLA What?!!

ROB I have a small request.

STELLA More from the ugly head.

ROB I can write and fight off a kick boxing spouse. Whoever imagined a diminutive insurance salesman married to a champion kick boxer has to have a screw loose.

STELLA I know, but keep it down! You're talking on thin ice. They just got off the bus. Here they come.

LIGHTS OUT

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

ACT ONE SCENE TWO

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Morning

Place: Bus stop.

Rob and Stella are as before.

GUS and HILDA (60s), ENTER from DR. They wear worn out coats. Hilda has a head scarf, Gus a wool hat. They behave like they're in a snowstorm.

Hilda has a grating voice. Gus is forlorn. Both speak with foreign accents. (not French)

ROB They look odd.

STELLA They stepped off a cold bus into a snow blizzard.

ROB I don't see a blizzard or a bus.

STELLA In your present state you're allowed to see just what you need to see. We see and hear them, but they don't see or hear us.

ROB So, that's a bus shelter?

STELLA The best I could do on short notice. Shusssh.

Gus and Hilda sit on the bench, Hilda SL and Gus SR ends of the bench, both oblivious to Rob and Stella.

Rob and Stella are near Gus. Hilda and Gus never look at each other.

HILDA It'll take the six bus a good ten minutes to get here. Thanks to you we'll probably freeze to death before it arrives.

GUS The shelter will keep the wind off.

HILDA If you weren't so slow we would have caught the five bus and been home by now. This shelter is full of holes.

Hilda points to the bus shelter.

There's a hole the size of a watermelon blowing right on me.

Gus moves to the base of the shelter where she was pointing, facing DS.

GUS Better?

Hilda shrugs,

HILDA If you had run faster, we'd be warm at home, free of all this. Why?!!!

Whenever Rob and Stella speak Hilda continues to yammer on berating Gus, but we don't hear her.

ROB It feels odd to see people huddled from the cold with no cold to speak of.

STELLA Weather is part of the physical environment.

Hilda lifts her bum a little, long FARTS.

ROB *(wincing from the fart)* That's wicked.

Gus reels from the odor, hangs his head dejected.

Hilda's nagging mouth keeps moving but we don't hear her.

ROB *(wincing from the fart)* Can't you smell it?

STELLA I don't smell. It's your body memory again. Gus placed his request for transfer two years ago. Tonight is his night to fly.

ROB Gus? I'm to be Gus? Old and living with a human methane plant?

STELLA After his momentary heart attack. You'll look like Gus, but you'll still be you. Ready?

ROB Have you noticed Hilda has an attitude problem?

STELLA No body is perfect.

ROB She's so negative!

STELLA She doesn't kick box. Your teeth will be safe.

ROB It'll take me a month to finish the play. I doubt I'll last a week with her nagging on and on. I need peace to write.

STELLA Get ear plugs!

ROB I don't know.

Stella touches Gus with her robe. Gus grabs his chest, staggers to DC, collapses on floor, head down, bum up.

Hilda doesn't see Gus go down, mouths words without us hearing her. Stella and Rob are around Gus.

STELLA Touch him and you'll go on the next bus with Hilda so you can finish your precious play.

Rob goes to Gus, hesitates.

Finishing your play means everything to you, right?!!

ROB Touch that?

Rob reaches out but doesn't touch him.

I can't. *(pulls back)* If I can choose between living with Hilda or a kick boxer, I'll take the kick boxer.

STELLA What are you thinking?

ROB I can get false teeth, but once sanity is lost, it's gone forever!

STELLA What am I supposed to do now?

ROB Bring him around. He can go with the next dead playwright.

Stella mouths a profound, silent "fuck," looks up and mouths a silent "sorry" then she touches Gus with her robe. Gus awakens, sits on the bench.

HILDA There's our bus. Come on.

Hilda and Gus move to exit, towards DR.

Rob takes two steps toward Gus, close to his ear, says the following like a howl of wind toward Gus.

ROB Diiiiivooooorrce.

GUS *(to Hilda)* Did you hear anything?

Hilda and Gus stop.

HILDA It's the wind!

GUS Odd. I swear I heard a word.

HILDA Now you're hearing things! Dementia! Schizophrenia! Is there no end to my torment?

STELLA You're not supposed to communicate with a subject.

Rob pulls back.

ROB Sorry.

Hilda and Gus move toward the exit. Rob moves to Gus, whispers in his ear.

Muuuuurrrdeeeeer.

Gus stops, straightens up, looks DS, smiles, EXITS with Hilda.

STELLA (*looks up*) See what I'm dealing with. Playwrights are the worst.

ROB It was just a couple words.

STELLA If Gus divorces or murders her, he'll live a happy life. He'll withdraw his transfer request.

ROB So what?

STELLA Deceased passionate playwrights rely on distressed people wanting transfers.

Rob sits on the SL end of the bench.

ROB Sorry again.

STELLA (*looks up*) This one is permanently sorry!

Stella looks up for three seconds.

ROB What?

STELLA (*interrupting, calmer, looks heavenward*) Checking on my transfer resources.

END OF ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

LIGHTS OUT

ACT ONE SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP ON:

Time: Nighttime

Place: Bus stop

Rob and Stella sit on the bench. Stella looks up, Rob's depressed.

STELLA Okay. *(looks to Rob)* Another option is being arranged. Their car will break down. They'll need to take the bus that stops here.

ROB What have you got?

STELLA Female librarian and male actor. Julia and Basil are in their 30s.

ROB The actor is perfect. Playwrights love actors.

STELLA It's the female librarian who wants the transfer.

ROB Oh. I had wanted . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Take it or leave it!

ROB Okay, okay. I'll take it.

BASIL (35) and JULIA (35), dressed in theatre opening night wear, her with a black wrap and slightly tastefully low-cut gown, rush into the bus shelter from DR.

Basil looks into a bound play, oblivious to the weather or Julia.

Both speak with British accents. They sit on the bench, Basil SL side, Julia toward the SR side.

Stella and Rob are beside Julia.

Basil and Julia talk without sound when Stella and Rob talk.

Okay, okay, I'm ready. Have her heart stop. I'll touch her.

STELLA Patience. I need to know why she wants the transfer.

BASIL You're sure the seven bus is our bus?

JULIA Our driver said it should arrive in five minutes.

Julia holds up two bus transfers.

BASIL Good. We will get to the theatre in sufficient time. I want a perfect opening night.

JULIA: You're still learning your lines?

BASIL Every word must be perfect. Paraphrasing is unthinkable.

JULIA You're a perfectionist about your acting, but not about everything.

Basil looks away from his book to Julia.

BASIL What do you mean?

JULIA: Our marriage.

BASIL Have I missed an anniversary, a birthday? I've been busy with the play.

Julia jumps up, moves to SR end of bench.

JULIA As if you don't know!

BASIL I don't know?

JULIA I forgot my lunch last week and came back for it.

BASIL So, you got your lunch and went on your way.

JULIA *(intense)* I saw you with another woman in our living room, on our sofa! I almost screamed out, then I ran back to the library as fast as I could run. You called her Gwendolyn, the love of your life. You broke my heart.

BASIL No! You've got it all wrong.

STELLA Another broken heart.

Stella, Julia and Rob jump up.

Julia is in tears.

Stella touches Julia with her scarf. Julia grabs her chest, gasps, starts to fall.

BASIL *(stands)* I was acting!

Julia collapses, her upper body on the SR end of the bench.

Stella moves behind the bench to Basil, touches him on the shoulder. Basil becomes calm, smiles out to the audience, sits on SL side of bench.

Stella turns to Rob.

STELLA Don't stand there! Touch her! I'm behind schedule.

ROB Okay, okay.

Rob rushes to Julia, kneels beside her, brings his left hand up, his fingers splayed and gently lowers his hand on her back, his head down for three seconds, then simultaneously (because Rob's finger presses into her back unseen) they jerk their heads up and take deep breaths.

Julia is now in Rob's body and Rob is in Julia's body.

Julia In Rob's body has a blissful smile, stands, circle moves behind the screen.

Rob In Julia's Body is on her knees. The voice is Julia's but deep with no accent.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY (deep voice) So, what's . . . uhm . . . (clears throat) what's this!

STELLA It's your new voice. You'll adjust to it.

Rob In Julia's Body clears throat, normal voice, throws arms up, looks around.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY So?

STELLA Your new you.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY No, no, this is weird. I'm a child!

STELLA It's normal to feel different at first.

Rob In Julia's Body takes a step forward on knees, toward DS. Stella moves with her on SR side of her.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY You've turned me into a 10-year-old girl!

STELLA It's not what you think.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I wish I had a facilitator who knew what she was doing. I hated my childhood. Now I need to go through another one?! This time as a girl?

STELLA Gabriel told me there'd be times like this.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay, okay, listen! You've got to do something!

STELLA You're on your knees! Stand up!

Rob In Julia's Body, tries to stand, is in high heels, slips half a dozen times holding onto the bench before falling onto the bench.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I've been hobbled!

Rob In Julia's Body frantically struggles to stand holding onto the bench.

Help me!

STELLA Stop! You're wearing heels. Stand straight.

Rob in Julia's Body stands still, feet firm. One ankle goes over, then it straightens, then the other goes over and it straightens.

As a playwright you're barely tolerable. As a woman, you're impossible.

Rob in Julia's Body is out of breath, struggles to breath,

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY *(desperate)* My chest! Tight, so tight! Can't breath! Heart attack!

STELLA *(sarcastic)* Heart attack?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I've got experience!

Rob in Julia's Body COLLAPSES, is on one knee.

STELLA It's a self-imposed torture device.

Rob in Julia's body is on her knees, struggles to breath.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY You can't make the transfer, so you're burying your mistake. You're evil.
Evvviiiiil!

STELLA *(looks up toward God)* Why can't a man act like a woman?
(to Rob In Julia's Body) You're wearing a bra!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I'm dying! I'm sure of it! *(pause)* Bra?

STELLA Relax. Take a few breaths. You'll get used to it.

Rob in Julia's body takes a few deep breaths, breathes easier, tenderly, stands, clomps two steps toward DS falls forward, heels struggle to find traction, is saved by the bench. Stella moves with her.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY I keep falling forward. I can't walk.

STELLA A common side effect.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY My balance has gone! So, you've wrecked my inner ear!

STELLA It's not your inner ear.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Ears are very sensitive!

STELLA You've got boobs.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY My hearing will be the next to . . . Boobs?

STELLA Have a look.

Rob In Julia's Body stands, looks down at chest, is SHOCKED, jumps back suddenly.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY *(as loud as possible)* AHAAAAAA!

Rob In Julia's Body looks to the audience, confused, smiles to the audience, then looks down to the boobs again, looks up toward the audience, smiles to the audience.

I've got . . . boobbs. *(to Stella)* Can I touch them?

STELLA Of course.

Rob In Julia's Body tenderly cups them from below.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY My very own boobbs. So, can I name them?

STELLA Sure. They're yours.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay, okay. I'll call them . . . uhuh. I'll call them . . . Yes! I'll call them the Boobsie Twins. What if they're not real?

STELLA They're real.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY You're sure? I wouldn't want this body if they're silicone. Everything about me is natural. How about a warranty?

STELLA Comes with a lifetime body back warranty. Don't like this one, you get a walrus! You can finish your play with flippers!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Okay! Okay! I was just wondering out loud.

STELLA Look. I've got to get going. You're happy with the transfer, right?

Rob in Julia's Body shoulder shimmies, tries to twirl the boobs, does a Gypsy Rose Lee imitation with the wrap behind the shoulders, like a boa. The Stripper song plays.

What are you doing?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY The twins want to break out, want to fly.

STELLA You know they're in bra-cataz?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Yet they yearn to fly free.

STELLA It's not as easy as it looks.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY It took me forever to learn to drive. There's movement! I detect movement! Nearing lift off! With a little practice I'll . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* You're transferred, and you've got a new hobby. So, I'll be on my way.

Stella moves toward the bus shelter. Stripper music stops.

Rob In Julia's Body stops shoulder shimmying, turns serious.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY Wait a minute! Wait just aaa minute! Something's wrong! Very wrong!

Stella moves back to Rob in Julia's Body.

STELLA What now?

Rob in Julia's Body does a hip swivel.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Nothing's swinging below deck!!

STELLA

(happily) C'est la vie. You've got swinging above deck. You can't have both.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) They're not dancing like . . . No! Worse! They're missing!

STELLA

(happily) Enjoy your new body. Finish your play.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) No! You can't leave me like this!

STELLA

(happily) I get a huge feeling of satisfaction when everything goes my way. Any more complaints and it's flippers for you!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(pleading) You can't.

STELLA

(happily) Got yu! You're so serious. Lighten up.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) I'm too light!

STELLA

(happily) You can twirl, twiddle, fiddle and fart all you want. I've got important interventions to facilitate. Bye, bye.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

No! There's the five-minute clause!

Stella stops a step away from being behind the SL edge of shelter.

STELLA

You said you didn't read your manual!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

I skimmed it, so I know there's a five-minute clause! Fill me in.

STELLA

Why should I?

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

(desperate) Okay, okay. You said you'd fill me in, remember? Are you a liar?

Resigned, Stella returns to Rob in Julia's Body.

STELLA

If, within five minutes, both parties change their minds, then the transfer is revoked. Both parties! It takes two to tango!

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Right, two! I'll need both of them! Did you ask Julia? Check with Julia! *(begging on knees)* I beg you, pleeeeeeassse! *(whining)*

STELLA

A champion *(mocking)* whiiiiinnnnner.

ROB IN
JULIA'S
BODY

Sorry. Please check.

Stella moves behind the SR end of the bench.

STELLA

Both parties never agree to . . . My Gu . . . She heard something before the transfer. She's changed her mind! Oh no! This is a disaster.

Stella claps hands twice.

Julia in Rob's Body, with a frozen heavenly smile, spin drifts from behind the SR end of the shelter.

Stella is between Julia in Rob's Body and Rob In Julia's Body.

Stella touches them simultaneously.

They take sudden deep breaths, snap into their previous forms.

Disoriented, Rob backs off to the side. Julia sees Basil.

JULIA Basil, you said . . .

BASIL *(interrupting)* I was acting! We were rehearsing for tonight's performance. Shirley Smith is the female lead in "The Choice."

Basil points to a page in the play he's reading.

See. It says Gwendolyn, you are the love of my life. *(looks at her)* I don't love her. I love only you.

ROB He could be acting now. How's she to know?

STELLA I've seen him act. He's not that good.

Basil and Julia embrace.

BASIL Here's our bus.

Basil and Julia, arm in arm, EXIT DR.

Rob steps forward toward Stella.

ROB I wrote "The Choice". It's a terrific play about a passionate dentist. Rob the dentist has to choose either his wife, Gwendolyn, or his dog, Rex.

STELLA His wife or his dog? Why?

ROB Gwendolyn became allergic to Rex's fur. He loved them both, but Rex was just a dog so . . .

STELLA You made Rob the dentist put his faithful dog, Rex down?

ROB He sent Gwendolyn packing. It was a poignant scene.

STELLA Poignant, huh! Your protagonist said "Gwendolyn, you are the love of my life . . . but . . . you're no match for my dog Rex?"

Rob shrugs. Stella and Rob sit on the bench.

(wails) I've failed you. Game over. End of story. Fini. Julia was your last hope. I don't know what will happen to me now.

ROB You? I'm missing a body!

STELLA I've got a history, an unsavory history.

ROB *(sarcastic)* No. Stella The Star? Your star not shining tonight?

STELLA I've had three nasty, miserable, failed facilitations. You're my last strike.

ROB Don't . . .

STELLA *(interrupting)* Facilitators get an extra strike. Heaven?

They sit feeling dejected on the bench.

ROB So, you're telling me the good old eons weren't so wonderful?

STELLA It's hard to talk about.

ROB Go ahead, clear your conscience. Tell me about Stella the Star's dark history. Don't leave anything out.

STELLA My last five-millennia performance review didn't go as well as it could have.

ROB No?

STELLA No. God's got this nasty secretary, Hazel. She's efficient, but nasty, hates me because I'm God's Special Angel, so needles me whenever she can. Now she's got four reasons to put me down.

ROB Down?

STELLA Way down.

ROB You don't mean into that Other place?

STELLA Yes. The ultra hot place or ultra cold place. Depending on your preference.

Rob looks questioning to Stella.

STELLA You prefer one, you get the other.

ROB Ouch.

Rob jumps up.

What about me?

STELLA Not you, I don't think, just the other three, I'm pretty sure . . .

ROB *(interrupting)* I could be going to Hell because of your multiple mistakes!

Stella shrugs.

STELLA I'm responsible for a Pope, an Investment Fund Manager and Rock Star taking the direct red eye flight into Hell. Now you.

ROB Me?!

STELLA Yes. You're my fourth failure. The first three are in Hell. You're still here . . . for now.

ROB So, Stella, you're not making me feel like a winner.

STELLA My five-millennia review is coming up. Hazel could assign another angel to your problem while I could be playing for . . . the Other.

ROB No!

STELLA Yes. The Other have requested that God transfer me to their team.

ROB Wow. That's bad.

STELLA Yes. It's a sort of an angel joke. Even the Devil's best tempters haven't bagged a pope. It's more than embarrassing. I'm worried.

ROB You're worried? I don't have a body!!

STELLA The Pope was one of God's favorites, too.

ROB So, because of your mistake a Pope is burning in Hell?

Rob hedges away from Stella.

STELLA It happened in the eleventh century, ten ninety-six. Pope Urban the Second was getting into the sauce more than normal, so I was sent to facilitate his problem with his imbibing. It's the wine. Everything was going very well until, well . . . (*hesitates*)

ROB Go on.

STELLA His flock was constantly bickering and fighting with each other. In those days they used lances and swords, not like words or nuclear threats of today, so they were making a huge mess. He thought they didn't have enough to do.

ROB I've heard farming was taking off around then. Did he turn them into farmers?

STELLA He launched the Crusades.

ROB Crusades?

STELLA Three years of war and slaughter! Thousands of lives lost!

ROB That's history.

STELLA Negative history. I got him off alcohol, then for no apparent reason he turned to mass murder. (*jumps up*) How was I to know? I'm not a mind reader! He said he was going to wage war on sinners. I thought he meant on sin. I didn't take him literally.

ROB What about the Investment Fund Manager?

STELLA A pleasant man, very personable, but he liked the ladies. He was squandering his personal development, hopping from woman to woman. I was sent to encourage him into monogamy, which I did. He was happily married for a year, then one day, he got the idea that he could use a few extra dollars, more than his commission. This crazy idea took hold, so he took all his investors' money to Vegas and squandered it. He died broke in a brothel. His only defense was he thought what happened in Vegas stayed in Vegas.

ROB I've heard that.

STELLA Let me tell you, what happens in Vegas definitely gets around!

ROB What about the Rock Star?

STELLA Felix Wonderful! He was a talented rock star. He could play all the instruments, sing, dance. You name it, he could do it. Had audiences begging for him. I was sent to show him some humility. I was doing okay too, then well . . .

ROB (*interrupting*) So, what happened?

STELLA Sex drugs and rock and roll. More sex drugs and rock and roll. On and on until . . . well . . .

ROB (*interrupting*) Until?

STELLA His lifestyle! At twenty-eight he wore out, looked like a man of seventy-five. Next thing I knew he was dead and booked on the red eye flight to Hell. He wasted his life. I didn't stand a chance of turning him around.

ROB You're sure I'm not going to Hell, right?

STELLA (*shrugs*) Who knows?

ROB So, now you're saying because I'm your fourth mistake I'll burn in Hell?

LIGHTS FADE to THIRTY PERCENT.

STELLA You'll never write an ending to, to . . . what was it called?

ROB *(defeated)* "I'll Miss Me When I'm Gone".

STELLA Although . . .

ROB *(interrupting)* What?

STELLA I won't miss you when you're gone.

Stella shrugs.

LIGHTS DIM ON THEM TO 20 PER CENT

Stella slumps, her head on Rob's shoulder. Rob bends his head so it rests on the top of Stella's head. They are sad for THREE SECONDS.

The SOUND of a LOUD CRASH.

LIGHTS COME UP

Rob and Stella fly off the bench to DR.

A wind blows on them, then a disheveled TRUCK DRIVER, (30-40), wearing a cowboy hat, ripped beige T-shirt, dark pants with cowboy accent, staggers through the storm into the shelter from DL to DC.

TRUCK
DRIVER *(Texas accent)* God no! My truck is wrecked! Insurance expired! My life is over.

The Truck Driver faces the audience, looks up.

Oh God, I wish I was dead!

The Trucker continues to stagger.

ROB *(perks up)* Wasn't that a transfer request?

STELLA *(very perked up)* It was!

ROB Tremendous!

STELLA You're sure this time?

ROB Never been surer!

STELLA His financial life is in a tailspin.

ROB I'm a playwright! Any trucker is rich compared to what I'm used to.

The Trucker limps and staggers toward the bench.

Stella touches The Trucker with her robe.

The Trucker COLLAPSES partially on the SR end of bench.

STELLA You know the drill.

Stella returns to SR. Rob kneels beside the Trucker, touches him as he touched Julia.

They transfer as they did with Julia.

The trucker is in Rob's body.

Rob's body takes on a blissful smile, drifts behind the shelter.

Rob is in the Trucker's body.

Hallelujah. Transfer complete.

Rob In The Truckers body stands, flexes his arms, air types with his fingers, talks without the cowboy accent.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY

Yes! Fingers work perfect.

Rob in Trucker's Body exaggerates swinging his hips, is pleased.

(overjoyed) It's tango time! (swings his hips) They're swinging fine. Yes!

STELLA Finally.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY Okay, okay, wait a minute. Wait just a minute!

STELLA I'm not waiting a millisecond!

Stella backs toward the bus shelter.

Transfer complete!

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY So, what's that smell?

STELLA I don't smell. Odor is a physical thing.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY It smells like a deer has been killed and been decaying for a couple weeks at
the side of the highway.

Stella shrugs, he makes face.

Horrid!

*Rob In The Trucker's body moves DC to audience, sniffs DR
and DL, returns DC, lifts right arm high overhead, smells
under his under right arm, lowers right arm, raises left arm
high overhead, smells under the left are, faces audience,
distracted, shouts.*

It's me!!!

Stella moves toward the bus shelter.

STELLA *(sarcastic)* Too bad. Use deodorant. Take a shower. It might come off, and
then again it might not. Oh well, I'll be on my way.

ROB IN
TRUCKER'S
BODY No! Wait! *(whining)* Pleeeeeaaaaase wait!

*Stella exits behind the shelter. Rob looks toward the
audience.*

(MORE)

Stella.

Rob In Trucker's Body turns to UC, sees Stella's gone, is desperate.

Stella!

Rob In Trucker's Body turns to audience, is crazed with fear, throws hat, drops to knees, smells both under arms, is disgusted by the smell, throws arms to the Heavens.

(screams to Heaven) STEEEELLLLLLA!

Stella rushes from behind the screen, stands behind the kneeling Rob In Trucker's Body.

STELLA *(enthusiastic, smiles with a fist pump) YES!*

Stella and Rob In Trucker's Body freeze.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE – FIRST ACT SAMPLE