

WISHFUL THINKING

Amy Berlin & Ann Bucci
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CHARACTERS

ANNETTE: 25-35, new-agey

BILL: 25-35, Annette's boyfriend, conservative

TEENAGER/LUCKY/MAX: "Evil" characters, all played by one actor

BUGWOMAN/POLICE OFFICER/ANGEL: "Good" characters, all played by one actor

MEDICS/DISPATCHER: Voiceover; can be pre-recorded

SYNOPSIS

WISHFUL THINKING examines what happens when the universe gives signs that you just cannot decipher. The play follows Bill and Annette, a young couple in love, as they experience one weird coincidence after another. Annette is certain the universe is trying to tell them something. Bill is not so sure. While Bill and Annette continue their journey, they talk about their hopes and dreams and argue about the nature of the universe, as the "signs" start coming fast and furious. However, because neither Bill nor Annette can read the "signs," they meet a tragic end, and we discover how the hereafter gives you exactly what you wish for, whether you really wanted it or not.

WISHFUL THINKING is a comic mystery, encouraging the audience to try, along with Bill and Annette, to figure out what everything means. But *WISHFUL THINKING* also has something to say about fate, religion, and the universe. Be careful what you wish for!!

PRODUCTION HISTORY

While unproduced, *WISHFUL THINKING* has received a developmental reading at the Women's Festival in Phoenix, Arizona. The script has also been honored by the Sands Theatre Company One-Act Play Festival (semi-finalist), Wonderland One-Act Festival (selection), Geneva Theatre Guild Playwrights Playreading (finalist), and Dubuque Fine Arts National One-Act Playwriting Festival (finalist).

PLAYWRIGHT BIO

Amy & Ann's first full-length play, *All's Well That Ends With Monique*, had its world premiere at Richmond Triangle Players in Richmond, VA. It also won numerous awards, had staged readings in Valdez, Alaska; Phoenix, Arizona; and Richmond, and was published by Brooklyn Publishers. Amy & Ann also authored *The Joshua Plant*, a full-length about a teen with autism. *Joshua* received a world premiere at CAT Theatre, after winning CAT's Original Play Contest, and was nominated by the Richmond Theatre Critic's Circle for Best Play.

WISHFUL THINKING

(Lights up on BILL and ANNETTE sitting in beach chairs. We hear ocean surf sounds and people on the beach. They each have a pad of paper and a pen).

BILL:

I don't want to.

ANNETTE:

C'mon Bill, I read mine. Just read it!

BILL:

It's stupid – I'm no good at this!

ANNETTE:

You're doing fine. Look, I was reading in Couples Meditation that playing silly games is good for a relationship. If you can laugh together, your energy resonates at a much higher, clearer level.

BILL:

Well, who wouldn't want that?

ANNETTE:

Exactly. OK, next category . . . new McDonald's items. What did you put for W?

BILL:

McWater?

ANNETTE:

(laughing) That's great!

BILL:

You?

ANNETTE:

McWatermelon Happy Meal.

BILL:

Not bad! Ok, the next letter is R.

ANNETTE:

McRoe.

BILL:

Gross.

ANNETTE:

I know. But sadly I would probably order it! I'm a sucker for seafood.

BILL:

Yuck. Ok, I had McRavioli. *(They laugh. Frisbee is thrown onstage and hits BILL)*

Ow! Watch where you throw that thing--

(A punk teenager comes running onstage after the Frisbee.)

TEEN:

Yo' dog. Sorry man.

BILL:

That's okay.

ANNETTE:

Hey, I really like your nose ring!

TEEN:

Thanks a lot. Listen, I want you to have this. *(Gives her Frisbee).*

ANNETTE:

How sweet. I don't....that is we don't...really play Frisbee though.

TEEN:

Well, just keep it as a momento.

BILL:

No, thanks.

TEEN:

It'd mean a lot to me, dude.

BILL:

No really.

TEEN:

For your troubles.

BILL:

No, honestly, we don't want—

TEEN:
You don't like it?

ANNETTE:
Oh, no we love frisbees, it's just—

TEEN:
It's just me you don't like.

BILL:
Look, if we keep it, will you please go away?

TEEN:
Sure. I'll go. *(Laughs)*.

BILL:
Okay great. We'll keep it. Thanks for the Frisbee. See you later.

TEEN:
Oh, you will, you will. *(Laughs and runs off.)*

BILL:
Man, kids these days! Hey, are you ready to go?

ANNETTE:
Oh, it's too early. *(Puts Frisbee on blanket)*. I don't want to go back. And we haven't finished yet. The next category is "Bad Pick-up Lines". For Y, I've got "Your Father is a good kisser."

(BUGWOMAN enters. She is dressed in some strange costume with antennae and is passing out coupons to a seafood buffet.)

BUGWOMAN:
Hey kids. Here you go. 2-for-1 tickets to the Heavenly Sent Seafood Buffet. It's quite spectacular.

BILL:
No thanks. We have to get going soon. We'll be on the road before dinner.

ANNETTE:
No, wait, Bill. We have to eat. And I LOVE seafood. I'll take one.

BUGWOMAN:
Here you go. Enjoy!! *(BUGWOMAN exits)*

BILL:

What was she dressed up as?

ANNETTE:

I don't know. Looked like a bug. But it's a seafood buffet . . . maybe a crab?

BILL:

Maybe they should save money on the coupons and buy a better outfit.

ANNETTE:

So, should we get something to eat before we leave? It's clearly a sign that we were given this coupon. We are meant to eat seafood. Lots and lots of seafood.

BILL:

Shall I take this to mean that you are hungry, honey?

ANNETTE:

Oh, Bill! You can read me like a book! It's a sign! We're meant to be together forever!!

BILL:

Enough, Annette, no more talk about signs and the universe, please. I love you, but this new age crap is getting silly.

ANNETTE:

(She can't stop the game) What? How can you deny that the fact that there's a sign for a seafood buffet means that we are destined to belly up to the trough! What else could it mean?

BILL:

(playing along) Well, let's see, the sheer volume of seafood buffet signs could mean that we're at the beach. Or maybe the buffet signs mean that we need to make choices in the smorgasboard of life. Or maybe they mean that you should stop being a glutton at the expense of marine life or maybe . . .

ANNETTE:

You know, you're totally right.

BILL:

What?

ANNETTE:

No, I don't mean that your interpretation is right . . . I only mean that signs can be read differently. It's so wrong!! Here I am, fully open to the universe and all the messages it may send and I can't be sure I'm even reading the signs right.

BILL:

Maybe it's because there are no signs from the universe.

ANNETTE:

Bill . . .

BILL:

No, seriously. The world just is, Annette. There are no powers or energy or higher being helping us out.

ANNETTE:

How can you say that? Remember Las Vegas?

BILL:

Vegas. What do you mean?

ANNETTE:

The "roulette wheel"? Remember, you were going to play roulette and I said the fact that we were in room 210 on July 12 was a sign from the universe that you should play number 12. Remember?

BILL:

Yeah, but I'm not sure this proves your point. I wanted to play a black number but you told me to play red because--

ANNETTE:

Because I was wearing a red blouse and I had worn a red blouse on our first date—it was so romantic.

BILL:

So, I put \$200 down on red 12 because I love you.

ANNETTE:

I love you too.

BILL:

And it came up red 21. And I lost \$200.

ANNETTE:

I was close.

BILL:

I don't really think "close" is the point.

ANNETTE:

Fine, mock me. But it was a sign from the universe, don't you see? Unfortunately, I'm dyslexic and 12 and 21 look the same to me!

BILL:

Annette, face it. There are no signs from the universe. Roulette is a game of chance. You can't beat a roulette wheel. We guessed and we lost, it's that simple. All these signs, angels and mystical beings are just things that people have made up to explain things they can't understand. There are no supernatural forces or entities. There can't be any. Nature simply exists.

ANNETTE:

I can't believe I'm dating someone so unspiritual. You don't care if the moon is full the night you have to make a big decision; you don't care if a meaningful song comes on the radio . . . you just do what you want to. What kind of way is that to live?? Something, or someone, may be trying to communicate with you. And you're going to miss it!

BILL:

Huh, did you say something?

ANNETTE:

(deadpan) Hilarious. You're so funny, you know that? But don't come crying to me when you get reincarnated as a shoe, or an ATM machine, or a dog or something. I'll be on my cloud partaking of the seafood buffet. And YOU will be sorry.

BILL:

Dog! Crap! We've got to get home, Annette, or there's going to be a sign on my carpet. Drake has no trouble communicating.

(SFX (Sound effect): Airplane passing)

ANNETTE:

Hey, look at that! I knew it!!

BILL:

What?

ANNETTE:

That banner behind the plane. It's for the 15th Street Heavenly Sent Seafood Buffet. Special tonight, only \$7.95 for all-you-can-eat. And we've got a coupon!! See it's not only a sign, but it's also a "sign." We ARE supposed to eat now. And we're supposed to eat crab legs. *It's perfect!*

BILL:

(Starting to pack up) You're just saying that because you love crab legs, Annette. Besides there's no time for a huge buffet. Let's just get on the road. We can stop on the way back if we get hungry. I don't want to hit traffic.

ANNETTE:

Alright. Alright. Ignore the signs. Make the fates angry, see if I care! But, I warn you, the restaurants on the highway will not be as good. Besides you know how crabby I get when I am hungry.

BILL:

Honey, right now, getting home to Drake is more important.

ANNETTE:

Well, I can see where I rate. First there's Drake, then Annette. No, first Drake, then making money, then Annette. No, no, it's Drake, then money, then your big screen TV, then your iPhone, then Annette.

BILL:

You are so not resonating with my energy, Annette. I'd put you before my iPhone any day. Look, we'd better go. I'm sure Drake's already whining.

ANNETTE:

Oh right. Poor Drake. Poor, poor Drake. Forget that the universe is telling you that your beloved "I love you forever" Annette must satisfy her craving for crab legs. It's always Drake.

(ANNETTE puts the Frisbee in the cooler and she and BILL finish folding chairs, etc. during the following dialogue:)

BILL:

Just get the cooler, would you?

ANNETTE:

Got it. Hey, do I look like I got any sun?

BILL:

No.

ANNETTE:

Drat, what's the point of the beach, if I'm not going to get any color!

BILL:

Wait a second. What's that on your arm?

ANNETTE:

Oooh, where? Am I tan? Oh, there. Hmm. I don't know. Looks like bug bites. Ick. Well, that'd be just my luck. I avoid skin cancer, but come down with malaria.

BILL:

Oh, honey, even with malaria, you're beautiful.

ANNETTE:

Yes, but if I actually have malaria, I'm going to die.

BILL:

Well, I'll come to your funeral, does that count for anything?

ANNETTE:

Very little.

BILL:

(leaning over to fold up the blanket) Come on! I'm funny! Admit it!

ANNETTE:

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!

BILL:

What? What is it? Funny, Annette! Not scary!!

ANNETTE:

It's disgusting. Look. On my shoulder!!

BILL:

What?

ANNETTE:

It's a green bug. Really gross. Oooooo. Bright green. Look at it.

BILL:

Kill it.

ANNETTE:

I can't. Ick. I can't touch it.

BILL:

Annette, dump it on the ground and step on it.

ANNETTE:

Then what? It'll be all smushed. No way.

BILL:

What do you care?

ANNETTE:

Too gross. Huge, icky wings and about a million legs. No way I could look at this thing all smushed. Plus it might get mad. Bad karma.

BILL:

(BILL swats the bug) Jesus. Run away, bug!! Go on!! Freedom!!

ANNETTE:

It's sort of cute. In a gross way. Why doesn't it go away? Go away, bug! Go away!

BILL:

Alright, look -- I'll just throw it. *(BILL picks up the bug)* Wow, I've never seen such a bright green bug. *(BILL throws it)* OK? Happy now? It's gone.

ANNETTE:

My hero!

BILL:

Of course. Just put all that stuff in the car.

(They rearrange the boxes into a "car," get in, and start driving during the following:)

ANNETTE:

OK.

BILL:

What do you think of us getting a beach house?

ANNETTE:

We can't afford that!

BILL:

Yea, but what do you think?

ANNETTE:

It'd be incredible. Why? What do you think?

BILL:

Heaven.

ANNETTE:

Yea, and we could set up our own buffet in the living room.

BILL:

Right, but Drake gets her own booth.

ANNETTE:

Fine. She can be the maitre de.

BILL:

And we can get George to be the main course.

ANNETTE:

Keep your paws off my goldfish!!

BILL:

Why? You're making Drake work? She's only 4!! That's got to be illegal!

ANNETTE:

Uh, Bill.

BILL:

Yea, what is it?

ANNETTE:

The bug's not gone. Look, he's on the hood. Just sort of staring at us.

BILL:

Well, after we drive for a while he'll be gone. Trust me.

ANNETTE:

Didn't we leave him back at the beach?

BILL:

Yea, so he flew onto the car, so what?

ANNETTE:

I feel bad. He seems sort of sad.

BILL:

Sad? Annette, he's a bug. He doesn't feel anything.

ANNETTE:

He's wringing his hands. I mean, paws. No, more like antennae. I don't know. It's giving me a very strange energy. I can't explain it.

BILL:

Could it be . . . that you're insane?

ANNETTE:

Har-dee-har-har. Don't you feel it? Come on. It feels like . . . the air is just crackling. Something's going to happen. I know it! Hey, maybe it means we're supposed to invest in utility stocks . . . or maybe I'm supposed to repaint my bedroom furniture with a crackle finish . . . or maybe . . . oooo, look at these bug bites. I think they're spreading. Should we stop at the hospital? Maybe the hospital has a buffet?

BILL:

ANNETTE!!

(SFX: Thunder & sudden rainstorm)

BILL:

Man! Where did this storm come from? I can barely see where I'm going.

ANNETTE:

Should we pull over?

BILL:

Nah. I'm not going to let a little rain stand between me and Drake. We are making great time!!!

(SFX: Rain stops.)

ANNETTE:

Wow, that was quick. *(Smoke wafts in from offstage)* Ohmigod, look at that. On the right!

BILL:

Man, that car is a fireball.

ANNETTE:

Pull over. Let's see if we can help.

(BILL stops car. LUCKY enters from the direction of the smoke)

BILL:

Hey, buddy, you alright?

LUCKY:

Oh, yeah, I guess. The car appears to have overheated. Of all the rotten luck.

BILL:

Overheated? That's a bit of an understatement. Can we do anything?

LUCKY:

Well, I could use a lift. If it wouldn't be too much of an imposition.

BILL:

Where're you headed?

LUCKY:

South.

BILL:

How far?

LUCKY:

I think we're traveling to the same spot.

ANNETTE:

What?

LUCKY:

Nothing. I meant that I am going about as far south as you can get.

ANNETTE:

You mean Florida.

LUCKY:

If that's what you want to call it. If you'd be kind enough to give me a ride partway, I'll just make do for the rest of the trip.

BILL:

Sure, I guess that'd be okay. What're you going to do about your car?

LUCKY:

Looks like a lost cause. Let's just get out of here. And quickly.

(Everyone gets in the car. BILL begins driving)

LUCKY:

I don't want you to get on the bad side of the authorities or anything, but I really am in a hurry. As fast as you can go would be just smashing. By the way, the name's Lucky.

BILL:

I'm Bill. This is Annette.

ANNETTE:

God, it's hot in here. Are you guys warm?

BILL: Yes. **LUCKY:** No.

ANNETTE:

Bill, slow down. You're going to kill us.

BILL:

My foot's barely on the pedal, and we're going over 85. What is wrong with this car?

(LUCKY laughs maniacally)

ANNETTE:

What's so funny?

LUCKY:

Oh, nothing. I was just thinking about something my boss said.

ANNETTE:

If you don't mind me asking, did anything weird happen to you today? You know, something that, looking back, would have told you that you were going to break down?

LUCKY:

Weird? Nah. More like a direct order, to tell you the truth.

(SFX and lights: Sirens)

ANNETTE:

Great. I told you you were speeding. Pull over.

(BILL pulls over. POLICE OFFICER enters)

POLICE OFFICER:

May I see some ID please?

BILL:

Sure, what's the problem, officer?

PO:

We've been looking for an escaped convict. Got a tip he was in your car. And lo and behold, look who we have here.

LUCKY:

Damn you. Damn you to hell, you miserable gnat.

PO:

I think you mean pig. Step out of the car, please.

LUCKY:

Very well, but you're too late, you know. They'll be there just in time.

BILL:

Be where?

(LUCKY gets out of the car)

PO:

We'll see about that. *(Hand cuffs Lucky)* I'm going to need to inspect your car, son.

BILL:

I didn't do anything.

PO:

I have reason to believe your pal here planted evidence.

LUCKY:

Isn't that your job?

BILL:

Well, I guess it's okay.

PO:

(looking under hood and fiddling around)..mmhhmmm, aha...

BILL:

I don't think anybody planted evidence in the engine.

LUCKY:

I'd ask to speak to his supervisor if I were you!

PO:

(moving around to trunk, he opens cooler and takes out Frisbee) Bingo!

ANNETTE:

It's a Frisbee.

PO:

(To LUCKY). You underestimate me. I'm going to have to keep this.

BILL:

Look, officer it isn't ours. Some kid insisted we take it and—

PO:

It's okay. I know just what to do with it. Now, drive safely, kids, and by that I mean slowly. Which should not be a problem anymore. You two look a little tired. Maybe you should stop and get something to eat.

LUCKY:

Oh good. The old buffet ruse. How original.

PO:

Shut up, you. Let's go.

(PO and Lucky leave)

ANNETTE:

What was that all about? Was he really a convict? I mean, they really seemed to know each other.

BILL:

I guess.

(SFX: Wind chimes).

BILL:

Hey! Where'd they go?

ANNETTE:

The police car was . . . wow, I didn't see them drive away. They just disappeared.

BILL:

The car, too.

ANNETTE:

Let's get home. And fast. I've got to sort out what all this means. Somebody's trying to tell us something.

BILL:

Maybe we shouldn't sit out in the sun so much?

ANNETTE:

No, it's bigger. More cosmic.

BILL:

So, the universe is going to put our lives at risk to send us a sign? What if that guy killed us?

ANNETTE:

He didn't though. And WHY?

BILL:

OK, so, tell me, exactly WHO is sending these so-called signs?

ANNETTE:

I don't know. The energy. The universe. I think the bug and the Frisbee and the convict were all signs. And there's probably other stuff we're missing.

(During Bill's line, Annette takes out a small bundle of sage, lights it, blows it out and starts waving it around the car.)

BILL:

The bug is just a bug, sweetie. There's nothing more to know. *(Coughing)*. What are you doing?

ANNETTE:

Shhh...I'm cleansing the car.

BILL:

It's pointless. Drake's fur is EVERYWHERE.

ANNETTE:

Not THAT kind of cleaning. We'd need a blowtorch, just to start. No, I'm cleansing the car of bad energy. Don't worry. Just drive.

BILL:

Geez, I need to open a window.

ANNETTE:

Sorry. You just don't know where that convict has been. Never mind the bug!

BILL:

Annette, maybe you should put that out. It's making my eyes water.

(Smoke begins wafting from somewhere near the "car")

ANNETTE:

Just a little longer, honey. This stuff is expensive. Hey, wanna play a game? It'll take your mind off the fact that thanks to me, the gray is moving out of our auras.

BILL:

Wow, it's a hard choice. A game that I will lose, cause I always lose. Or a dirty aura. Hey, is there smoke coming from the car?

ANNETTE:

It's the sage, honey. Just a few more minutes.

BILL:

I don't know. It looks like the smoke is coming from the back of the car.

ANNETTE:

Are any of the indicator lights on?

BILL:

No.

ANNETTE:

It's probably OK then. That's what they're for.

BILL:

Oh right. I forgot. The "your car is on fire" light.

ANNETTE:

A game will take your mind off the smoke.

BILL:

How about "I Spy" a bug?

ANNETTE:

What? Is he still here?

BILL:

Well, one like him, anyway. Look at the antenna.

ANNETTE:

Wow. How does he hang on? He seems really fond of us, don't you think? He must be a good spirit because he is still here even with the cleansing sage.

BILL:

I guess.

ANNETTE:

Anyway, please play a game with me!! It'll be fun!

BILL:

Alright, honey, for you. I will play and I will lose. What do you want to play?

ANNETTE:

How about Rank?

BILL:

Fine. Rank. Whatever. How does it work?

ANNETTE:

OK this is what you do: one of us lists four scenarios for the other person's future life. Then, the other person ranks them in order of preference. That's it. Nobody wins and nobody loses. BUT you find out loads about the other person.

BILL:

Seriously, how do you think of these things? And why do you always think of them when you're with me? (*Starts coughing.*) Annette, I really think you should put out that sage now. Don't you think we're clean enough?

ANNETTE:

It's almost done, sweetie. Not to worry. You don't want us to have the convict's evil energy do you? Just relax, and play, OK? OK, life #1: You're stranded on a desert island with no one but your dog.

BILL:

Drake?

ANNETTE:

Yeah, Drake. Now before you pick this one right away, listen okay? Drake learns to cook and makes you all sorts of tropical meals and cleans the house, er hut, and generally tries to make life really nice for you. But, in the end, she's just a dog, OK? So you get sort of lonesome, and Drake feels bad when she realizes she is not enough.

BILL:

I pick that one.

ANNETTE:

BILL!!! That is not how it works.

BILL:

But it's perfect! Me, Drake . . . what else do I need?

ANNETTE:

Thanks a bunch.

BILL:

Just kidding. Is Drake wearing a bikini?

ANNETTE:

BILL!!!!

BILL:

Kidding!! I'm just kidding!

ANNETTE:

Anyway, I said no comments til you hear all the lives. OK, life #2: umm, Ok, here's one: You are promoted at the Power Company and making tons of money. The problem is that you only got the job by having an affair with your boss, and everyone knows it, so people laugh a lot behind your back. Also, your boss always wants to have quickies in her office on a minute's notice. Alright, that's 2.

BILL:

You know, we're making terrible time. Ever since we got pulled over, we've just been crawling. But the odometer says 65.

ANNETTE:

You know the bug is still there, too.

BILL:

I'm starting to get a headache.

(During Annette's next lines, Bob takes out a cigarette from his glove compartment, lights it and starts smoking.)

ANNETTE:

Anyway, now life #3: You live in your two bedroom house with me and our 14 kids.

BILL:

WHAT?

ANNETTE:

Relax. They were your idea. Ok, so you discover that our house is on top of a lot of gold, and we create a mine beginning in the guest bathroom. However, when we bought the house, we knew that the underground mining rights belonged to someone else, so if we ever let on or sell the house, then we'll probably lose all the money. So, we are really rich, but we still have to live in a tiny house with tons of children running around screaming. Hey, I thought you gave up smoking.

BILL:

Well, I just have this terrible urge to smoke, what with the sage burning ritual and all. I'll quit when we get home.

ANNETTE:

This is not a good sign—you promised me you quit!

BILL:

I said I'd try. Tell you what. If you toss that burning bush out the window, I'll snuff the cigarette. Deal?

ANNETTE:

Fine.

BILL:

Just one more puff. Okay, I'll snuff it out and you throw on 3. 1, 2, 3

(ANNETTE tosses the sage out the window and BILL snuffs out the cigarette.)

BILL:

Why is it still so smoky in here?

ANNETTE:

I don't know.

BILL:

Doesn't it look like smoke is still coming from the car?

ANNETTE:

You might be right. Should we stop?

BILL:

What would we do if we stopped? I don't know anything about cars. I couldn't fix it.

ANNETTE:

What if we break down?

BILL:

Well, I guess breaking down closer to home would be better than breaking down right here, right? Keep your eye out for a service station!!

ANNETTE:

What's going to be open this late on a Friday night? Oh, I know!! The service station we are SUPPOSED to go to!! Right! I will keep my eyes open!!

BILL:

Great.

ANNETTE:

Ok, you've got one more life.

BILL:

I forgot the other ones!!

ANNETTE:

Bill!!! Come on! There was Drake on an island, Power Company quickies, and lots of kids on a mine. Remember?

BILL:

I choose Drake on an island.

ANNETTE:

Bill!!! No choosing yet. There's still one more life! Alright, here's the last one . . . Now, we have a happy marriage and you have a good job. The problem is . . . our child. Let's call him Stefan. Now, Stefan is slowly killing himself from malnutrition because all he ever eats are meatball subs. No vegetables. No fruits. We've tried punishment, withholding allowance. Nothing works. Stefan sells stuff, sweeps floors, whatever he has to do. He only eats meatball subs. Alright, that's it. Now, choose.

BILL:

Let's see. First: Drake serving me food on an island. *(Starts coughing again.)*

ANNETTE:

Well, obviously, you were going to pick that one. It was almost too easy, but I thought maybe the fact that I wasn't there would dissuade you a little.

BILL:

Well, I'd miss you terribly of course , but at least I wouldn't have to cook. Plus, Drake would never force me to play stupid games or pick up convicts.

ANNETTE:

Touché, but be careful what you wish for. Next choice, please.

BILL:

Ummm, Annette, can we stop? I'm really kind of worried about the car.

ANNETTE:

Well, what can you do about it? I've cleansed it, so there's nothing else I can do. We might as well try to relax. Next life, please.

BILL:

Alright, second: Stefan eating meatball subs. At least with all that tomato sauce, he wouldn't get cancer. And if he did, I could blame you for not seeing the signs!

ANNETTE:

(deadpan) Hilarious.

BILL:

Third: quickies with my boss. And living on a gold mine is last.

ANNETTE:

Admit it. This is a good game. OK, now your turn, give me some lives.

BILL:

I'm not going to be good at this.

ANNETTE:

Come on. You have to. *(She starts coughing)*.

BILL:

Alright, life #1. Uh, you live in a lighthouse, and you have a good job and a good marriage. The only problem is that the light from the lighthouse is always blinking, blinking, blinking. It's hard to sleep, and no one ever wants to visit you. All night long, there's blinking, blinking, blinking. Oh and there's a strange bowl of fruit on your dining room table. Even though you eat fruit every day, it is constantly replenished. You can never see the bottom of the bowl. Ever. Alright, is that enough?

ANNETTE:

How can you say you are not creative? That's great. Ok, next one.

BILL:

Um, Ok . . . Life #2 . . . uh . . . Annette, I really think the smoke is getting worse. Maybe this look for a service station thing is a bad idea. What if the car blows up?

ANNETTE:

No. It looks the same to me. Go on!

BILL:

Fine. You are living in a castle outside of London. You have 3 servants, one of whom is always reading your mail, but you don't know which one. This is ridiculous; the smoke looks like it's pouring out the back of our car. I think it's coming out the exhaust pipe. Can you see?

ANNETTE:

Oh, and wait! The bug is still here. Okay, this has to mean something. Bugs and smoke. Bugs and smoke.

BILL:

(Pulling out cell phone) It means we are screwed. I can't get a signal.

ANNETTE:

The bug could represent our spirits in their most basic incarnation. And the smoke refers to the fact that we often can't see what is right in front of us.

BILL:

Holy crap.

ANNETTE:

Do you see what I see?

BILL:

Thank God you see it too. I can't believe I didn't see it before now! I guess we weren't looking in the right direction.

ANNETTE:

No, it makes sense now. The smoke, the bug...we couldn't see what we needed, what was right in front of us because of some spiritual blockage?

BILL:

How could we miss that gas station sign? It's as big as the state of New Hampshire. Busy Bee's Service Station. I'm getting off.

ANNETTE:

Cute sign.

(Bill pulls "the car" off the highway, and Annette and Bill get out of the car at the service station)

BILL:

Never heard of this company. I suddenly have a bad feeling about this.

ANNETTE:

I knew you had it in you. Maybe you're a Shaman.

BILL:

It's just a gut feeling, Annette. You better stay here. I'll check it out.

ANNETTE:

You're not leaving me here with the bug.

BILL:

I thought he was your cosmic messenger.

ANNETTE:

Well, here, nobody needs to go. Here's the mechanic.

(A mysterious man walks towards them. BILL stands in front of ANNETTE).

BILL:

We're having car trouble. Lots of smoke. It seems to have dissipated now. Do you work here?

MAX:

Yep. (*opens car hood*) Looks like it's leaking transmission fluid. That's what's causing all the smoke. I can't tell now where it's leaking from exactly, but I have a pretty good idea.

BILL:

Can we drive it back home? We've got about an hour left to go.

MAX:

I wouldn't. You're practically out of fluid now. Even if we fill it up again, it could all leak out, your transmission would blow completely, and you'd never get there in time. Plus, you wouldn't want to pay for that repair, trust me. Especially on a Malibu.

BILL:

Well, now what?

ANNETTE:

When can you get to it?

MAX:

I'll start now. It shouldn't take too long.

ANNETTE:

You can do it tonight?

MAX:

Well, you're lucky. My house is being fumigated. I was going to sleep here anyway. I could have it done in about half an hour.

BILL:

I don't know. That's very nice, but . . .

ANNETTE:

What are you talking about? That's fantastic!! I knew we saw your sign for a reason.

BILL:

Don't mind her, sir. She thinks we were brought here by the universe. Don't ask.

MAX:

Smart girl.

ANNETTE:

Thank you. You see, Bill, some people are aware that there are other forces at work!

BILL:

Right. Anyway, I guess, thank you, sir. It's really very nice of you to do this at such a crazy hour. We really appreciate it. And Drake appreciates it.

MAX:

Drake?

ANNETTE:

His numero uno best buddy, Drake, who is patiently asleep in a designer dogbed dreaming of chasing squirrels, while his numero two girlfriend knows that a seafood buffet would have avoided all this trouble.

MAX:

Uh-huh. Well, glad to help.

(Max walks away)

BILL:

Man, how lucky are we? If we hadn't found this place, we really would have been up a creek.

ANNETTE:

Luck? Can't you see that the universe pointed us towards this service station. Oh my God. Look!

BILL:

Where?

ANNETTE:

On the ground. It's that green bug again.

BILL:

I'm sure it's not the same one.

ANNETTE:

How many bugs have you ever seen that look like this?

BILL:

That's the only one, actually.

ANNETTE:

Maybe this bug was looking over us. It was the bug that led us to this service station! I mean, a bug follows us from the beach. It means something.

BILL:

It's just a bug on the hood. It didn't follow us. And it sure didn't lead us to a gas station.

ANNETTE:

Then how do you explain it?

BILL:

There's nothing to explain. These bugs must be indigenous to this area. We've just never seen them before.

ANNETTE:

No. I feel it's the same bug. This bug helped us find this service station. And we need to give thanks for the good karma.

BILL:

Give thanks. To a bug.

ANNETTE:

Yes.

BILL:

Well, go ahead.

ANNETTE:

Don't you want to help?

BILL:

No, I believe it's just a bug, remember.

ANNETTE:

Okay. Then I'll get all the good karma. Maybe we can train it, and it can be our pet. Here little bug . . . c'mere . . . Oh my God, look. It's crawled into my purse. It's crawling right onto my hand. That proves it. When have you ever seen a bug do that?

BILL:

Actually never.

ANNETTE:

(To the Universe:) Thank you for sending us this bug. Mr. Bug, we thank you for leading us to this service station, whoever you are. We are aware and we . . . OUCH!

BILL:

What happened?

ANNETTE:

The bug bit me. OW! That really hurt. Get it off me. Get it off!

(ANNETTE and BILL slap at the bug)

BILL:

Alright, Annette. Relax. It's gone now.

ANNETTE:

It just left us alone? Oh my God, I hope I didn't hurt it. I'm sorry, bug!! Wherever you are. Where did it go?

BILL:

I don't know. I didn't ask. Are you okay?

ANNETTE:

Yeah, but that was so spooky. What do you think it meant?

BILL:

That you shouldn't play with strange bugs.

ANNETTE:

You know, this is the problem with the whole synchronicity theory. If you can't read the signs right, what does it matter that you're getting them. And we've been getting them all day.

BILL:

Annette, forget about the bug.

ANNETTE:

I'd like to but my hand really hurts. Wow! Would you look at how swollen my hand is getting? I must be allergic to the bug. Holy cow!

(MAX enters)

MAX:

Alrighty, friends. The car's all yours!

BILL:

That was amazingly fast! Look, we need to go. Thanks a million!

(BILL and ANNETTE get in the car and "drive away")

ANNETTE:

Maybe the bug bit me to tell me something.

BILL:

Tell you what? That your hand is almost the size of a canned ham?

ANNETTE:

Bill, I think the bug bit me to tell us something. I just happened to be allergic to it.

BILL:

You know, that desert island is looking better and better. Tropical drinks. A golden retriever. That's heaven.

ANNETTE:

Mock me, if you must, but I think the bug was trying to protect us from getting back in the car for some reason.

BILL:

Protect us from what? It bit your hand. That's what bugs do. They bite.

ANNETTE:

I am really getting a very negative vibe here in the car. I shouldn't have thrown out the sage. I think we should go back to figure this out.

BILL:

That negative vibe is just me losing my patience with all your new age---

ANNETTE:

I know how you feel Bill, but call it women's intuition then. I think the bug was trying to save us from something.

BILL:

It's kind of hard to take you seriously when you're waving your giant swollen red hand around. Now, not that I agree with any of your theories but, if anything, at least this whole bug debacle has enabled us to spend the entire evening together. Without all these crazy signs, we'd be home by now!

ANNETTE:

I'm not sure. The bug didn't look terribly romantic.

BILL:

Sweetie

ANNETTE:

Bill!!! Watch out!!!

BILL:

Oh my God!! Hold on!!!

(Siren sound/lights. The sound of a car crash. The following can be a prerecorded voice over done in the dark:)

DISPATCHER (over radio):

Car 12. Three car accident at mile marker 45, Route 75. Two fatalities. Please update.

MEDIC 1:

This is Car 12. We're pulling up to the scene now. Will take the bodies to Hope Street General.

DISPATCHER:

Roger, 12.

MEDIC 1:

Over here. The bodies are in the Malibu.

MEDIC 2:

I'm right behind you. It looks bad.

MEDIC 1:

Well, there's nothing we can do here. Let's just get them to the hospital, so they can call it there.

MEDIC 2:

One male, one female, both appear to be in their late 20's. No vital signs. The girl's hand is the size of her head though. Weird. Hey check that out!

MEDIC 1:

What?

MEDIC 2:

On the hood. That bug. What a weird-looking bug.

MEDIC 1:

Yea, it is! Bright green! He looks sort of pissed off, don't you think?

MEDIC 2:

Y'know, I think you're right. I've never seen a bug with facial expressions before.

(SFX: Wind chimes)

MEDIC 1:

Holy Crap!!! Did you see that? It's gone. It just disappeared.

MEDIC 2:

Are you sure? It probably just flew away.

MEDIC 1:

I was staring right at it. It was just like . . . “poof” but without the smoke.

MEDIC 2:

Creepy. Let’s get out of here. And, if I were you, I wouldn’t mention any “poofing” in your report.

(SFX: Continued chatter as the siren fades into the distance. SFX: Harp music is heard. Lights up.)

ANGEL:

Welcome to the Heavenly Sent Seafood Buffet, Annette!

ANNETTE:

Wait. Where am I?

ANGEL:

Didn’t the hostess tell you?

ANNETTE:

Tell me what? Wait. What hostess?

ANGEL:

Honestly, what is going on up here today? Oh, I forgot, it’s the day they pick the Mid-Atlantic Lottery winner. The prize is up to 400 million, I hear.

ANNETTE:

Excuse me?

ANGEL:

It’s almost as bad as the day of the Super Bowl. So many people are praying that we just can’t keep up. It’s a nightmare!!

ANNETTE:

I’m sorry. I just don’t know what you’re talking about.

ANGEL:

I’m sorry, dear. This must be a bit of a shock. After dinner, why don’t you join us for drinks and line dancing on the Lido Cloud? It’ll make you feel better, I assure you. Although truthfully, harp music is very difficult to dance to.

ANNETTE:

Cloud? Oh no. Is this . . . ?

ANGEL:

Yes, of course, welcome!

ANNETTE:

Am I . . . ?

ANGEL:

I'm afraid so. You went fast though, and see, you can't remember anything. It wasn't too bad, was it?

ANNETTE:

So, I'm dead? Wow. It seems so soon.

ANGEL:

Well, unfortunately, we'll have to take the responsibility for that. Down there, you'd have to sue us -- but it's heaven! No lawyers and no judges. We'll just admit fault and give you a lifetime pass to the buffet. But for what it's worth, we're really sorry.

ANNETTE:

What for? What happened?

ANGEL:

That car accident was meant to be only a two car pile up. You weren't supposed to be involved.

ANNETTE:

What?

ANGEL:

Well, we sent you a couple of signs. There's only so much we can do. It's like Six Flags, you know. Everyone wants to ride the rides, but nobody wants to run them. I mean, you're in heaven, right? What incentives can we offer the employees? Better health care? Sort of not an issue. Vacation time? Again, not too appealing. Profit sharing? Unfortunately, that's not an option.

ANNETTE:

What were you saying about the accident?

ANGEL:

Oh sorry. Anyway, your car broke down, right? Since it happened on a Friday night, you weren't supposed to have it fixed so soon. There was a rainstorm, some other miscellaneous delay tactics. If you think about it, you'll remember. Also, we sent a messenger.

ANNETTE:

A messenger? We didn't talk to anyone, except a mechanic named Max.

ANGEL:

No, Max is no angel. You should have known that, because he overcharged you for that transmission work.

ANNETTE:

Was it that guy, Lucky? The one whose car was on fire?

ANGEL:

Hardly. Lucky works for the competition.

ANNETTE:

Oh, the kid with the Frisbee?

ANGEL:

Do you really have to ask that?

ANNETTE:

I guess not. But there wasn't anybody else . . . oh no. The bug, right?

ANGEL:

Well, yes. Clive was trying some new transubstantiation things. He can't shut up about that stuff. I don't think it worked all that well. I mean, what kind of messenger is a bug?

ANNETTE:

So that's what the whole thing was about. Wow, I knew there were signs!! I mean, I admit I read them all wrong. But, in my defense, that was really tough. How were we supposed to figure it out?

ANGEL:

The bug bite was supposed to make you sleepy so you would spend the night and not get back in the car. For what it's worth, Clive is being reprimanded as we speak. In fact, his punishment just reeks of poetic justice. I'm sure it won't happen again. Not that that's much of a comfort at this point. Are you ready to go? The crab legs go quick up here. The only saving grace is that they're not Kosher, so the Jews won't touch them. More for the rest of us, I say!

ANNETTE:

Oh, so there's Jews up here? This is amazing. I always wondered who was right!

ANGEL:

(calling offstage) Hey, Abdul!! One plate at a time, mister!!

ANNETTE:

Abdul? Is he Muslim?

ANGEL:

I believe so. Why?

ANNETTE:

Well, I mean . . . Jews, Muslims . . . such different ideas of God and heaven and the afterlife . . . and they both end up at the buffet? It's fascinating. Wow.

ANGEL:

Just don't tell the Jehovah's Witnesses okay? They think they're the only ones up here.

ANNETTE:

But which religion was the way to go? What is the truth?

ANGEL:

Well, it's really not that simple, Annette. We like to think of it as different roads -- each with their own traffic signs and laws . . .

ANNETTE:

Signs, right. I'm with you . . .

ANGEL:

Obey the laws on your road, and you end up here!

ANNETTE:

Wow. Oh. Poor Bill.

ANGEL:

Why?

ANNETTE:

Well, I mean, I think he was an atheist. I'm not sure I want to know, but where is he?

ANGEL:

Don't worry about Bill, dear, he got in through our exchange programs. He took care of an angel for a while, and now we'll take care of him.

ANNETTE:

Oh, that's sweet. But I'm no angel.

ANGEL:

No, dear, I wasn't talking about you . . . it was Drake!

ANNETTE:

Drake!! Hmmm, I wouldn't have thought an angel would chew through dry wall. The universe remains a mystery. So is Bill here?

ANGEL:

No. I'm sorry, Annette. The buffet is your heaven. Actually, it's quite a popular one, but Bill had a different idea in mind.

ANNETTE:

There's so much I don't understand. But, I am hungry so lead the way, I guess.

ANGEL:

Just follow the signs, dear.

ANNETTE:

OK. (*Looks around at the "signs"*). But, the signs don't make any sense. That arrow looks like a circle. And that one like an inkblot.

ANGEL:

It just takes patience, Annette. And the reward is great. I assure you. A raw bar like no other!

(ANGEL leaves)

ANNETTE:

Wait, come back!! I can't . . . Alright, don't worry. I can do this . . . But poor Bill. I wonder we he is?

(ANNETTE continues walking in circles as lights dim. We hear calypso music, and lights change to another place on the stage and we see BILL with a tropical drink in his hand sitting on a rock. DRAKE is also there, but can't be seen)

BILL:

(tired and bored) Well, thanks, Drake. This pina colada is actually pretty good. *(SFX: barking throughout in response to BILL's monologue)* I really like the way you've garnished it with fruit and plastic swords. Where did you get the swords anyway? *(SFX: Bark)* Uh-huh. That's pretty ingenious. Dinner last night was delicious, too. *(SFX: Bark)* Yes, I suppose I can do the dishes tonight. It's only fair. *(SFX: Bark)* Alright, alright. Yes, I'll bring you a present from the other side of the island. I said I would, alright? *(SFX: Loud Barking)* What is it, girl? What are you looking at? Huh, a little green bug. What do you know? It looks like it's got a little halo. What do you know. How's this for a sign, buddy! How's this?!

(Bill squashes bug and laughs maniacally. We hear wind chimes and calypso music)

THE END

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

The play should be performed on a very simple set (perhaps a few boxes?) that can be moved around quickly by the actors.

The play calls for a smoke effect and various sound cues. If need be, the actors can simply reference the “smoke” without it actually being physically there.