

IN THE BOOM BOOM ROOM

by David Rabe

ACT II

The play tells the story of Chrissy, a go-go dancer in the late sixties. It is the story of her search for love, of her failure to find anything but abuse and rejection, and, ultimately, of the destruction of her spirit.

Chrissy is a big-hearted, pretty, and very naïve girl who loves to dance and yearns for the romance depicted in pop and rock music. Rejection was there right from the beginning of her life when her mother tried to have her aborted. The abuse started with her father's drunken sexual assaults when she was a young child. In the following scene Chrissy confronts her mother, Helen, about the abortion. She has just been talking to her father.

HELEN: How was he? *And she is dumping the Kool-Aid into the pitcher.*

CHRISSEY: Fine.

HELEN, *as the water in the pitcher is turning red:* Don't they play so many nice songs on the radio nowadays? I peeked in the window of your apartment, you know, bringing you oranges. You looked so worried, Chrissy. Are you in the right line of work, every person must ask herself. Every person must. Is it your new line of work you're so worried about? I bet you diet and diet.

CHRISSEY: I'm overweight. Don't like it.

HELEN: To look pretty for your father. He always liked a pretty figure. *Handing Chrissy a glass of Kool-Aid, Helen sits down with a glass of her own to sip.* Except it's a silly business how you gotta wanna have a nice little figure so a man'll wanna get you pregnant and ruin your nice little figure. How tall are you?

CHRISSY: Why?

HELEN: Oh, forgive me honey, I don't mean to pry. It's just I been so nervous and short-tempered lately and so worried about your father. There are moments, I tell you, when I see him sittin' off somewhere lookin' at a wall, or out scratchin' in that dirt, I wish he would want to steal again. The way he used to. He loved to steal things. Made big elaborate plans for big jobs he was goin' to pull someday. Start his own gang.

CHRISSY, *advancing on her*: Don't you know he's thinkin' about leavin' you is what he's thinkin' about?

HELEN, *sitting quietly, calmly, a little dreamily*: Chrissy, no, no; he's so tired. Home to stay this time. And that's a fact. We gotta be gettin' ready for our little old age. Savin' our money. Doin' our little jobs. Wanna come inside? I'm gonna make him chocolate pudding.

CHRISSY: But he hates you. I mean, that's what we were talkin' about—how you was a hateful liar. I mean, you never even had any a those abortions I been so worried about.

HELEN: Did he tell you that? He never did like to think about it. Still don't. He's a squeamish man, in a lotta ways. But my God, he had women sittin' down with coat hangers all across this state. Toilets flushin'; stomach's goin' empty. He just don't bear to think about it—always lovin' little children so. Just never understood the connection. Wanna come in the kitchen? *She is walking away.* It's nice inside. Gonna make some chocolate pudding.

CHRISSY: I mean, I am here to tell you how I am never gonna forgive you—not ever, for how you didn't wanna have me.

HELEN: Then how come I did? I loved him. How are you to know I loved him? He would lift a can of beer or I would see him standing deep in thought, I would feel such a hurt of love. But I could never make him do what I wanted—be careful—use a thing. “Man don't wear galoshes to take a shower,” he would say. So, “I'm pregnant,” I would tell him and he would nod and say, “That's good,” and pretty soon I would feel him lookin' at my lumpy body, and in his lookin' at me his leavin' of me was clear. I couldn't bear it. So I would get rid of whatever was inside me. I would get rid of it. Except for you. I wanted you.

CHRISSY: I don't feel good—like my head is shaking; all vibrating. *She is going sideways a step or two, her knees weak; she looks for a place to rest.*

HELEN: I mean, sometimes I forget all 'bout that other stuff. I swear I do, honey.

CHRISSY: I feel like maybe I can hear what you're thinkin' and I been able maybe all my life. How you hate me. You are in the room with me, I hear you. Outside my door, you stand hatin' me—

HELEN: No, no.

CHRISSY: Sendin' rays a hate in at me—I hear your thinkin' how I am hateful, all these rays a hate sent in at me into my head! *And she falls to her knees*: SHUT UP, SHUT UP! You ain't tellin' me anymore. You are done tellin' me. You tried to get rid of me, and you ain't changin' it now. You used to sit on the floor and bounce up and down tryin' to get me out like a hunk a ole blood in that belly and so that's how you always looked at me and me at myself, like I was a little bit dead or that oughta be dead, which is how I regard and look at myself a lot. But I don't oughta be dead. I mean, Christ almighty, sometimes I think about what it musta been to be me inside you bouncin' up and down and I wasn't ready to come out. I would only die if I did. How did I feel? How did I feel? *She has bounced on the floor; she has fallen forward.*

HELEN: It wasn't you, Chrissy; that wasn't you. No, no.

CHRISSY, *begging*: Who, then?

HELEN: I didn't want you dead.

CHRISSY: Who?

HELEN: That thing inside me and all the way it was gonna hurt my life.

CHRISSY: That was me! *And she collapses; Helen runs to console her.*

HELEN: No! No, I was hesitant in my bouncing. I was hesitant. Something tugged at my heart. I know it did. *She is embracing Chrissy, the two of them on the floor.* I coulda bounced harder. I coulda bounced much harder. I coulda jumped off the table. Some tugging at my heart for you held me back or you wouldn't be here. But you are. That's proof of my innermost wishes of hope and love and how they prevailed.

CHRISSY: Noooo. *Pulling away.* I don't oughta be dead.

HELEN: No.

CHRISSY: Tell me.

HELEN: You don't oughta be dead, honey.

CHRISSY: I gotta stop. I'm gonna stop.

HELEN: You wanna stay the night? You look so tired.
 CRISSY: No. I don't wanna be here, even. I don't wanna see you anymore. You go away.
 HELEN: All right. *And Chrissy is kneeling, Helen moving backward.*
 CRISSY: You go away.
 HELEN: I'm going. *Still backing away: See you later.*
 CRISSY: No. Noooo. *Helen is gone.* Don't wanna see you ever again. Not either one a you. No more. I gotta stop. *And she sits, shaking her head as the lights are fading.* No more.

HELLO FROM BERTHA

by Tennessee Williams

This one-act play takes place in a bedroom of an East St. Louis brothel. Bertha, a prostitute, is very sick and has been lying in bed for two weeks. Goldie, the madam, needs the room for business. She wants Bertha to leave, and tells her to go back home or to a hospital. Many terms are applicable to Bertha: she is *in pain*, she is *delirious*, she is *drunk*, she is *frightened*, she is *belligerent*—but most of all, Bertha is very much *alone*. The following excerpt is from the beginning of the play. Bertha is in bed. Goldie enters.

GOLDIE: Well, Bertha, what are you going to do? *For a moment there is no answer.*
 BERTHA, *with faint groan*: I dunno.
 GOLDIE: You've got to decide, Bertha.
 BERTHA: I can't decide nothing.
 GOLDIE: Why can't you?
 BERTHA: I'm too tired.
 GOLDIE: That's no answer.
 BERTHA, *tossing fretfully*: Well, it's the only answer I know. I just want to lay here and think things over.

GOLDIE: You been layin' here thinkin' or somethin' for the past two weeks. *Bertha makes an indistinguishable reply.* You got to come to some decision. The girls need this room.
 BERTHA, *with hoarse laugh*: Let 'em have it!
 GOLDIE: They can't with you layin' here.
 BERTHA, *slapping her hand on bed*: Oh, God!
 GOLDIE: Pull yourself together, now, Bertha. *Bertha tosses again and groans.*
 BERTHA: What's the matter with me?
 GOLDIE: You're sick.
 BERTHA: I got a sick headache. Who slipped me that Mickey Finn last night?
 GOLDIE: Nobody give you no Mickey Finn. You been layin' here two solid weeks talkin' out of your head. Now, the sensible thing for you to do, Bertha, is to go back home or—
 BERTHA: Go back nowhere!—I'm stayin' right here till I get on my feet. *She stubbornly averts her face.*
 GOLDIE: The valley's no place for a girl in your condition. Besides we need this room.
 BERTHA: Leave me be, Goldie. I wanna get in some rest before I start workin'.
 GOLDIE: Bertha, you've got to decide! *The command hangs heavily upon the room's florid atmosphere for several long moments. Bertha slowly turns her head to Goldie.*
 BERTHA, *faintly*: What is it I got to decide?
 GOLDIE: Where you're going from here? *Bertha looks at her silently for a few seconds.*
 BERTHA: Nowhere. Now leave me be, Goldie. I've got to get in my rest.
 GOLDIE: If I let you be, you'd just lay here doin' nothin' from now till the crack of doom! *Bertha's reply is indistinguishable.* Lissen here! If you don't make up your mind right away, I'm gonna call the ambulance squad to come get you! So you better decide right this minute.
 BERTHA, *her body has stiffened slightly at this threat*: I can't decide nothing. I'm too tired—worn out.
 GOLDIE: All right! *She snaps her purse open.* I'll take this nickel and I'll make the call right now. I'll tell 'em we got a sick girl over here who can't talk sense.
 BERTHA, *thickly*: Go ahead. I don't care what happens to me now.