

W o m e n & G u n s {bang!}

By

Steve Gold

WHY I LIKE IT: *From the onset there's no escaping the riptide momentum – driven by dialogue and action – that propels the characters in Women & Guns. The piece opens with a boot-camp staple: a Drill Instructor rather brutally operating the levers of the Marine Corps method that disassembles the psyche of new “boots,” then reconfigures them, physically and emotionally, into exemplars of devotion to duty, mission and their brothers and (now) sisters in arms. At least, that's the plan. And trust me, this is a very real depiction of that process; I haven't seen it done this forcefully since Kenneth Brown's ultra-realist classic, The Brig. And the play's window into working class reality is similarly stark and unvarnished – though all of this strong medicine is laced with real humor. The plot converges on a singular, excruciating Full Metal Jacket moment in Baghdad and the emotional debris of guilt, recriminations, broken dreams, lost love, memories (self-incriminating but also bittersweet), left in its wake.*

The simple statistical facts of who defends a nation from outright or perceived threats seem to be relatively universal: a soldier's fate usually falls on the shoulders of the working class. For those with more advantages, it's hardly viewed as a sound career move. But for others with a dead-end job, or those trapped in a difficult family situation or an oppressive (maybe even) adversarial social dynamic “the service” has always been an option – viable (until it's not) but also fraught with physical pain and potentially damaging moral / ethical traps. In that respect, Women & Guns shares a lineage with Naomi Wallace's In the Heart of America. In its portrayal of working class realities, this play resonates closely with Sweat by Lynn Nottage. (Spacing is playwright's own.) JS

Women and Guns

Steve Gold

Lgbg@aol.com

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Tiffany Hansen.....Marine

Bobby Keneally.....Her boyfriend

Jerry Jenkins.....Her cousin

Valerie Swenson.....Her fellow Marine

George W. Bush.....President

Senior Drill Instructor.....Offstage male voice

Act I is set in South Carolina and southern California. Act II alternates between southern California and Baghdad.

The play begins in January 2001 and ends in July 2004.

There is to be a ten-minute intermission between Act I and Act II.

Author's Note: No particular ethnic or racial type is designated for any of the characters with the exception, of course, of George W. Bush.

An onstage actor can assume the role of the voice of the Drill Instructor.

The character of George W. Bush can be eliminated from the script; or, budget permitting, video can be used as a substitute.

(A DOWN CENTER SPOTLIGHT; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. A SOLITARY WOMAN—TWENTY-TWO, SMALL, THIN, HER BROWN HAIR CUT SHORT, HER SKIN GLISTENING—STANDS AT ATTENTION, TERRIFIED AND

DRESSED IN MARINE CORPS FATIGUES. THE NAME TAG ON HER UNIFORM READS “HANSEN.”

IT IS PARRIS ISLAND, SOUTH CAROLINA, JANUARY, 2001. THE WOMAN HAS JUST BEGUN RECRUIT TRAINING, BETTER KNOWN AS “BOOT CAMP.” COMPLETION OF THIS THIRTEEN-WEEK COURSE WILL OFFICIALLY MAKE HER A UNITED STATES MARINE.

AT THIS MOMENT SHE IS BEING GRILLED BY AN OFFSTAGE DRILL INSTRUCTOR, HIS VOICE BOTH BOOMING AND BARKING)

DRILL INSTRUCTOR

Straighten up! ...I said straighten up!

WOMAN

Yes sir.

D.I.

What you say?

WOMAN

Yes sir.

D.I.

Not “sir!”

WOMAN

Yes sir—I mean—

D.I.

I’m a senior Drill Instructor. You call me “Senior.”

WOMAN

Yes, Sir—oh, I’m sorry—

D.I.

You fuckin’ stupid? I just told you to call me “Senior.”

WOMAN

Yes, Senior.

D.I.

What?

Yes, Senior. WOMAN

Louder! D.I.

Yes, Senior! WOMAN

Don't you *ever* call me "Sir!" D.I.

Yes, Senior. WOMAN

You call me "Sir" and I'll make you curse your mama for giving birth to you. D.I.

Yes, Senior. WOMAN

I am a Senior Drill Instructor. You got a problem with that? D.I.

No, Senior. WOMAN

Now I can sleep well. D.I.

Yes, Senior. WOMAN

What you say? D.I.

Yes, Senior! WOMAN

Do you know what you are? D.I.

No, Senior. WOMAN

D.I.
You're a Marine recruit—the lowest form of life on this Earth.

WOMAN
Yes, Senior.

D.I.
You got a problem with that?

WOMAN
No, Senior.

D.I.
You better not, 'cause I'm sensitive.

WOMAN
Yes, Senior.

D.I.
I'm a delicate rosebud.

WOMAN
Yes, Senior.

D.I.
I cry when I do laundry.

WOMAN
Yes, Senior—

D.I.
You got a problem with that?

WOMAN
No, Senior.

D.I.
What's your first name, Boot?

WOMAN
Tiffany, Senior.

D.I.

What you say?

TIFFANY

Tiffany, Senior.

D.I.

Are you shitin' me?

TIFFANY

No, Senior.

D.I.

You got to be shitin' me.

TIFFANY

I'm not shitting you, Senior.

D.I

That's a asshole name: *Tiffany!*

TIFFANY

Yes, Senior.

D.I.

You an asshole?

TIFFANY

No, Senior.

D.I.

You look like a asshole.

TIFFANY

Yes, Senior.

D.I

You walk like a asshole.

TIFFANY

Yes, Senior.

D.I.

You *smell* like a asshole.

Yes, Senior—
TIFFANY

You a asshole?
D.I.

Yes, Senior—I mean no, Senior.
TIFFANY

What's your last name, Boot?
D.I.

It's on my uniform, Senior.
TIFFANY

What you say?!
D.I.

Hansen.
TIFFANY

Hansen what?
D.I.

Hansen, Senior.
TIFFANY

Louder.
D.I.

Hansen, Senior!
TIFFANY

Louder.
D.I.

Hansen, Senior!!!—
TIFFANY

That's *too* loud.
D.I.

Yes, Senior.
TIFFANY

You think I'm fuckin' deaf? D.I.

No, Senior. TIFFANY

Do you know the Marine Corps' core of values? D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

It is honor, courage, commitment. D.I.

I know, Senior. TIFFANY

You know? D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

How do you know? D.I.

I read it. TIFFANY

You can read? D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

Since when? D.I.

Since I was a kid, Senior. TIFFANY

Damn right you can read. The Marines don't take just any slob off the street. D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

We ain't like the army. D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

They're so desperate, they take criminals. D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

They take drug addicts. D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

They take wackos. D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

You a wacko? D.I.

No, Senior. TIFFANY

You look like a wacko— D.I.

Yes, Senior. TIFFANY

You walk like a wacko— D.I.

Yes, Senior— TIFFANY

D.I.

You smell like a wacko—

TIFFANY

Yes, Senior—

D.I.

You a wacko?

TIFFANY

No, Senior.

D.I.

We gonna teach you the Marine way. Thirteen weeks from now, you will be a Marine. You will be the roughest, toughest sonofabitch on God's green Earth. You will be able to chew rusty nails for breakfast. You will be a model of physical perfection. You will exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. You will be as pure as the driven snow. You will be a Marine.

TIFFANY

Yes, Senior.

D.I.

Dismissed.

(SPOTLIGHT DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN LEFT PORTION OF THE STAGE; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. A NARROW, LOW-SLUNG WORKBENCH—ABOUT SIX FEET IN LENGTH—IS PLACED STAGE CENTER. TIME: JULY, 2001. PLACE: AN AUTOMOBILE REPAIR SHOP IN ESCONDIDO, CALIFORNIA, NOT FAR FROM THE CAMP PENDLETON MARINE BASE.

TWO OFFSTAGE MALE VOICES ARE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE; THEY BECOME INCREASINGLY LOUDER AS THEY APPROACH THE PLAYING AREA)

OFFSTAGE VOICE ONE

Gonna rain today.

OFFSTAGE MALE VOICE TWO

So what?

I just thought you should know. ONE

I don't give a shit. TWO

Neither do I. ONE

That's settled. TWO

(TWO MEN EMERGE STAGE LEFT FROM THE DARKNESS, BOTH IN THEIR MID TWENTIES. ENTERING FIRST IS JERRY JENKINS—"VOICE ONE": SHORT, STOCKY, SLOPPY-LOOKING, WITH GLISTENING PINK SKIN AND UNRULY SANDY HAIR. HE WEARS THE DARK BLUE WORK PANTS AND LIGHT BLUE SHIRT OF AN AUTO MECHANIC. HIS CLOTHES ARE GRIMY WITH GREASE.

DIRECTLY FOLLOWING HIM IS BOBBY KENEALLY, TALL AND WIRY, HIS HAIR SHORT AND DARK; DRESSED IN A GREASE-LADEN DARK BLUE JUMP SUIT, FULLY ZIPPED UP. HE CARRIES A DIRTY WASH CLOTH WITH WHICH HE IS CURRENTLY RUBBING HIS HANDS.

THE TWO MEN STOP IN FRONT OF THE BENCH, AT ITS CENTER. JERRY SITS, BOBBY REMAINS STANDING, CONTINUING TO RUB HIS HANDS WITH THE WASH CLOTH)

You smell like a horse. BOBBY

Woke up late—no time to shower. JERRY

So *I* pay for it. BOBBY

We're grease monkeys. We're supposed to smell. JERRY

Yea, right. BOBBY

They called again about the transmission. JERRY

The Chevy? BOBBY

Yea. JERRY

Still working on it. BOBBY

I told them tomorrow. JERRY

Why did you do that? BOBBY

They want to go to Vegas. They need the car by tomorrow—what are you waiting for? JERRY

Don't worry. BOBBY

And the alternator? JERRY

For the Chevy? BOBBY

Yea. JERRY

I finished that. BOBBY

So it'll all be ready by tomorrow? JERRY

I think the fuel pump is also on the way out. BOBBY

Should I tell 'em that? JERRY

BOBBY

No. Let it conk out and they'll come back to us.

JERRY

Okay, so we're all caught up for today—except for the transmission?

BOBBY

That's about it...I'm gonna lock up—

JERRY

I...want to ask you something.

BOBBY

What is it?

JERRY

You doing anything Friday?

BOBBY

Why?

JERRY

Just asking.

BOBBY

You're never "just asking." You always have a reason.

JERRY

What do you mean?

BOBBY

What do you mean, "What do you mean"?

JERRY

I just want to know if you're busy Friday.

BOBBY

Night?

JERRY

Of course Friday night—what did you think, Friday morning?

BOBBY

With you, I take nothing for granted.

Friday night—that's what I mean. JERRY

Today's Wednesday. BOBBY

So? JERRY

I don't make plans that far ahead. BOBBY

That far ahead? It's only two days away. JERRY

I gotta keep my schedule open. BOBBY

What are you, the Pope—you're so busy? JERRY

You still haven't told me. BOBBY

Told you what? JERRY

Why you want to know if I'm busy Friday night. BOBBY

You really want to know? JERRY

No. BOBBY

I'm gonna tell you anyway. JERRY

You're busting my ass— BOBBY

I need a favor. JERRY

From me? BOBBY

Who else is here? JERRY

You want a favor from me? BOBBY

Yea— JERRY

Forget it. BOBBY

You don't know what the favor is— JERRY

Doesn't matter—I don't do favors anymore. BOBBY

Why? JERRY

I'm a funny guy that way. BOBBY

Hilarious. JERRY

So what's the favor? BOBBY

If you're not gonna do it anyway. JERRY

Maybe I'll change my mind. BOBBY

You really want to know? JERRY

Yea. BOBBY

Double sure? JERRY

So tell me already. BOBBY

I got a cousin— JERRY

No. BOBBY

How do you know what's coming— JERRY

I know what's coming: You want to set me up with your cousin—whichever she is. BOBBY

Let me explain first. JERRY

I haven't forgotten the last time you set me up. BOBBY

I didn't know she was a transsexual— JERRY

I'll bet you didn't. BOBBY

But this is my cousin: I guarantee she's female—she's been female her whole life. JERRY

So she's female—wonderful. BOBBY

So you'll go out with her? JERRY

There's gotta be something wrong with her. BOBBY

Why? JERRY

BOBBY
'Cause she's your cousin.

JERRY
There's wrong with her—

BOBBY
I'll bet she's a bow-wow.

JERRY
Matter of fact, she's not bad-looking.

BOBBY
If it's not that, it's something else.

JERRY
There's nothing wrong with her—

BOBBY
Then why do you have to dig up dates for her? Can't she find somebody herself?

JERRY
The only guys she knows around here are Marines, and all they do is talk shop.

BOBBY
How come she only knows Marines?

JERRY
Because she's *in* the Marines.

BOBBY
She *what*?

JERRY
She's a Marine.

BOBBY
U.S. Marines?

JERRY
No, the freakin' Polish Marines.

BOBBY
You're trying to set me up with a dyke?

JERRY

Dyke? What the hell are you talking about?

BOBBY

Those female Marines—they're all dykes.

JERRY

She's no dyke—she's normal.

BOBBY

Like you really know—

JERRY

I oughtta know: She lived with us, off and on, for years. And she's the one who asked me to set her up with a guy—it wasn't my idea.

BOBBY

Why did she live with you? What about her own family?

JERRY

Her father ran out when she was a baby. Her mother's a lowlife.

BOBBY

What sort of lowlife?

JERRY

How many kinds are there? Her mother's a drug addict. From time to time she would dump Tiffany off on us so she could go and turn tricks to get drug money.

BOBBY

Nice person.

JERRY

When we found out Tiffany joined the Marines—with her background—we couldn't believe it. But she made it through Basic Training; and then they sent her to school to be an MP—

BOBBY

A cop?

JERRY

A Marine cop.

BOBBY

This is getting worse by the second.

Intimidated? JERRY

Me? BOBBY

You look intimidated. JERRY

I'm not intimidated—and you're retarded. BOBBY

If you're not intimidated, then you'll go out with her. ... Whaddya say? JERRY

...Okay...I'll go out with her. BOBBY

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN CENTER PORTION OF THE PLAYING AREA, WHICH IS BARE; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. TIFFANY AND BOBBY STAND AT OPPOSITE ENDS: SHE IS STAGE RIGHT, HE STAGE LEFT. SHE WEARS MARINE DRESS BLUES AND DARK BROWN PENNY LOAFERS. HE IS DRESSED AS BEFORE.

SHE IS SHY, VAGUELY MELANCHOLY; HE'S OUTGOING AND COCKY. THIS BEING A FIRST DATE, AN INITIAL AWKWARDNESS PREVAILS.

IT IS THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY, EARLY EVENING)

Tiffany? BOBBY

That's right. TIFFANY

Hi! BOBBY

You're Bobby? TIFFANY

You got it. BOBBY

Hi, Bobby. TIFFANY

BOBBY

Hi, Tiffany.

BOBBY

I had to stay late at work...didn't have time to change.

TIFFANY

You don't have to apologize.

BOBBY

I wasn't apologizing...I was just explaining why I look the way I do.

TIFFANY

No need to explain. ...I thought you weren't going to come anyway.

BOBBY

What made you think that?

TIFFANY

I don't know....

BOBBY

I was at the shop...Jerry had left early and I lost track of the time.

TIFFANY

I was about to leave.

BOBBY

Should've called you.

TIFFANY

That's okay.

BOBBY

I was doing battle with a stubborn transmission and, well.... Any place special you want to go to eat?

TIFFANY

No...I never eat out.

BOBBY

Oh, you'd rather cook at home?

TIFFANY

I never cook.

BOBBY

You don't go out to eat and you don't cook. You must be hungry all the time.

TIFFANY

I eat on the base...it's more convenient.

BOBBY

Well, there's a Mexican joint down the street. Wanna go there?

TIFFANY

Okay.

BOBBY

You like Mexican food?

TIFFANY

Never ate it.

BOBBY

Never?

TIFFANY

No.

BOBBY

You live in California and you never...that's...that's amazing.

TIFFANY

I think Jerry likes Mexican food.

BOBBY

Jerry likes Mexican...he likes Italian...Chinese—anything not bolted to the ground, he'll eat.

TIFFANY

He was always like that.

(LONG, UNCOMFORTABLE PAUSE)

So, you're in the Marines.

BOBBY

You figured that out, huh?

TIFFANY

Huh? Oh, yea, that's right. Dumb question.

BOBBY

I guess so.

TIFFANY

That's a spiffy-lookin' outfit you're wearing..

BOBBY

Yea...real nice.

TIFFANY

And you look terrific in it.

BOBBY

Thank you.

TIFFANY

(GOES TO HER; GENTLY, RUBS HIS HAND ACROSS HER SHOULDER)
Nice fabric....comfortable?

BOBBY

Very.

TIFFANY

I'll bet some people join up just so they can wear the uniform.

BOBBY

I never met anyone who did.

TIFFANY

Do you have to pay it?

BOBBY

For what?

TIFFANY

The uniform. BOBBY

It's free, but I bought the shoes. TIFFANY

Nice shoes. BOBBY

Thank you. TIFFANY

What happens if you stain the uniform? BOBBY

It becomes dirty. TIFFANY

No, I mean: Do you have to pay to have it cleaned? BOBBY

I would never stain my uniform. TIFFANY

But what if you did? BOBBY

I don't plan on staining it. TIFFANY

But what if you did? BOBBY

Then I would pay to have the stain removed. TIFFANY

Boy, that was like pulling teeth. BOBBY

I don't wish to annoy you. TIFFANY

You're not annoying me...I know how sensitive women can be about their clothes.... BOBBY
...Especially straight women....

I see. TIFFANY

...You *are* straight? BOBBY

Yes...I am. TIFFANY

I figured. BOBBY

Would I be here if I wasn't? TIFFANY

BOBBY
That's right...I should've realized that. Not that I have anything against gays. They can do whatever they want; marry anybody they want—barnyard animals—I'm not prejudiced. ...I guess I shouldn't have asked that about you.

TIFFANY
That's alright.

BOBBY
It's just that I have this idea that if you're a female and in the Marines, then you're probably....

TIFFANY
Gay.

BOBBY
Gay. But I see now that's kind of stupid to think that.

TIFFANY
I don't care if somebody's gay or straight...none of my business anyway.

BOBBY
That's how I feel, too.

TIFFANY
They should give everybody a fair shake.....the world would be a better place, don't you think?

BOBBY

Yea...yea, it would. ...When Jerry first told me you were in the Marines, I couldn't believe it.

TIFFANY

Why?

BOBBY

It seemed kind of...off the wall.

TIFFANY

Not to me.

BOBBY

Now that I've met you, I see that it's not off-the-wall—there's nothing off-the-wall about you.

TIFFANY

I appreciate it.

BOBBY

It's the *idea* of joining up—that's what I find off-the-wall. Again, I'm not talking about didn't mean *you*. I mean, I know some guys from my high school class who joined the army—but they weren't too smart to begin with.

TIFFANY

Like me?—

BOBBY

No—the Marines are different. You've got to be really sharp to be in the Marines. That uniform you're wearing—it's like a diploma from some high-class college.

TIFFANY

Never thought of it that way.

BOBBY

You should. ...Fact is, I'm very impressed with you.

TIFFANY

Really?

BOBBY

Absolutely.

TIFFANY

Nice of you to say so.

BOBBY

What made you want to join up?

TIFFANY

When I got out of high school. I tried to get a decent job. There was nothing out there, just minimum wage stuff.

BOBBY

It's tough without a college degree.

TIFFANY

And you can't live on a minimum wage.

BOBBY

At least I've got a skill I can sell: I can fix cars. It's a dirty, grimy business, but it's a living.

TIFFANY

Where did you meet Jerry?

BOBBY

We were grease monkeys at a Meineke shop in San Diego. We heard about someone who was retiring and wanted to sell his shop. So we went to see him. Jerry was able to chisel him down to, like, thirty percent less than the original price. Jerry's very good at that sort of thing.

TIFFANY

I know.

BOBBY

Yea, Jerry could talk a dog off a meat wagon. So, the next thing was to find a bank that was dumb enough to lend us the money for the down payment.

TIFFANY

You found one?

BOBBY

Before we did that, we put the squeeze on various friends to provide seed money; and we showed this to the bank, and they gave us the rest. So we owe our friends, we owe the bank and we owe the original owner of the shop. What a country.

TIFFANY

Doesn't it keep you up at night knowing how much you're in debt?

BOBBY
I never lose sleep over it. Everybody's in debt—it's the American way.

TIFFANY
It's not my way.

BOBBY
What, you don't owe anybody?

TIFFANY
No.

BOBBY
No credit card debt?

TIFFANY
I don't have one.

BOBBY
You don't... You gotta be kidding.

TIFFANY
Why should I be?

BOBBY
I never heard of such a thing.

TIFFANY
What so unusual?

BOBBY
You don't think it is?

TIFFANY
No.

BOBBY
How do get by without a credit card?

TIFFANY
I have no problem.

BOBBY
How do you pay your bills? You do have bills?

I have bills. TIFFANY

How do you pay them? BOBBY

Cash. TIFFANY

You can't always use cash. BOBBY

A money order. TIFFANY

Never met anyone like you. BOBBY

Is that good or bad? TIFFANY

Oh, good...very good...a little weird...but good— BOBBY

Weird? TIFFANY

In *good* way...weirdly good. BOBBY

Weirdly good. TIFFANY

Bad choice of words...interesting—that's a better word. BOBBY

Weirdly interesting. TIFFANY

Yea, ...weirdly interesting. ...Are you gonna arrest me now for insulting you? BOBBY

Arrest you? TIFFANY

Jerry said you're an MP. JERRY

I have no jurisdiction over civilians. TIFFANY

They sent you to MP school? BOBBY

Yes....after Basic Training. TIFFANY

They didn't, like...combine the two? BOBBY

They're two separate courses. TIFFANY

What was it like? BOBBY

What was what like? TIFFANY

Basic Training. Pretty tough, huh? BOBBY

Lots of running and jumping and sweating...and classroom time...more than I thought. TIFFANY

High dropout rate? BOBBY

It's very demanding. TIFFANY

And you stuck it out. BOBBY

It was either that or back to Burger King. ...I wasn't going back there no matter what. TIFFANY

BOBBY
Where did you do your Basic?

TIFFANY
Parris Island.

BOBBY
Where's that?

TIFFANY
South Carolina.

BOBBY
Nice area?

TIFFANY
Very nice...people are real friendly down south.

BOBBY
How long is the course?

TIFFANY
Basic?

BOBBY
Yea.

TIFFANY
Thirteen weeks.

BOBBY
You get a graduation party?

TIFFANY
"Warriors Breakfast."

BOBBY
Huh?

TIFFANY
Our graduation party: They let us eat any kind of food we wanted, and as much as we wanted.

BOBBY

What's so special about that?—

TIFFANY

We had just been through thirteen weeks of Marine Corps food. Now we could eat ice cream, chocolate cake and potato chips. I ate four Big Macs. We all pigged out.

BOBBY

And then it was off to MP school?

TIFFANY

First I got ten days leave. Then it was off to Missouri .

BOBBY

That's where the school is?

TIFFANY

Yea. Fort Leonard Wood. After I leave the Marines, I'll have a skill I can market...maybe get a job as a cop. Whatever the case, I'm never going back to Burger King...never.

BOBBY

So they taught you all that police stuff? How to shoot a gun and all that?

TIFFANY

I already knew how—they teach you in Basic Training.

BOBBY

What kind of gun?

TIFFANY

M16.

BOBBY

M16?—

TIFFANY

M16A2.

BOBBY

Wow! That's really wild stuff!

TIFFANY

It's only a gun.

BOBBY

I've never been out with a girl who could shoot an M16—

TIFFANY

M16A2. It's standard issue—been around since Viet Nam.

BOBBY

How much do they cost?

TIFFANY

Five hundred eighty-six dollars.

BOBBY

How do you know?

TIFFANY

I know everything about my weapon.

BOBBY

Is it heavy?

TIFFANY

3.99 kilograms.

BOBBY

What's that in regular weight?

TIFFANY

8.79 pounds.

BOBBY

That's all?

TIFFANY

Yea.

BOBBY

That's not heavy.

TIFFANY

That's including the 30-round magazine.

BOBBY

I've got a gun permit.... Always wanted to learn how to work an M16...that is...M16A2.

TIFFANY

It's not hard...I could show you.

BOBBY

...I'd like that.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(A LONE DOWN CENTER SPOTLIGHT, INTO WHICH STEPS GEORGE W. BUSH, DRESSED IN DARK BUSINESS SUIT, WHITE SHIRT AND DARK TIE; HE GRIMLY ADDRESS THE AUDIENCE. IT IS SEPTEMBER 11, 2001)

BUSH

Good evening. Today, our fellow citizens, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. The pictures of airplanes flying into buildings, fires burning, huge structures collapsing, have filled us with disbelief, terrible sadness and a quiet, unyielding anger. These acts of mass murder were intended to frighten our nation into chaos and retreat. But they have failed; our country is strong. A great people has been moved to defend a great nation. Terrorist attacks can shake the foundation of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shattered steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve. Our military is powerful, and it's prepared. Our emergency teams are working in New York City and Washington, D.C. to help with local rescue efforts.

Tonight, I ask for your prayers for all those who grieve, for the children whose world has been shattered. And I pray they will be comforted by a power greater than any of us, spoken through the ages in Psalm 23: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me."

(SPOTLIGHT DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN STAGE LEFT WORKBENCH, THE REST OF THE STAGE DARK. IT IS THE NEXT DAY. JERRY AND BOBBY ARE SITTING, PLAYING POKER. BOTH ARE IN THEIR WORK CLOTHES. A DECK OF CARDS LIES BETWEEN THEM. NO MONEY IS PRESENT, AND BOBBY IS NOT REALLY PAYING ATTENTION)

JERRY

(LOOKING AT HIS CARDS)

How many?

(BOBBY IS NOT LISTENING)

Hey!

BOBBY

Huh?

JERRY

How *many*?

BOBBY

Uh...two.

(THROWS DOWN TWO CARDS)

(JERRY PICKS UP THE DECK; HANDS BOBBY TWO CARDS)

JERRY

I'll take two.

(THROWS DOWN TWO CARDS; GIVES HIMSELF TWO CARDS; PUTS THE
DECK DOWN)

I'll call you. What have you got?

BOBBY

What? Oh... Pairs of sevens.

JERRY

Two pairs.

JERRY

You deal.

(BOBBY, LOST IN THOUGHT, IS SILENT)

Earth to person! Earth to person!

BOBBY

Huh?

JERRY

You deal.

(BOBBY COLLECTS ALL THE CARDS, STARTS DEALING THEM OUT)

Aren't you going to shuffle them?

BOBBY

Oh, yea. ...I'm not in the mood for this.

(PUTS THE CARDS ON THE BENCH)

JERRY

What are you so fogged out about?

BOBBY

Who says so?

JERRY

You've been like this all day.

BOBBY

Did you hear Bush on TV?

JERRY

What Bush?

BOBBY

The guy who runs the country.

JERRY

Oh, the President? What about him?

JERRY

He was on TV?

BOBBY

Yea.

JERRY

He's got a coupla cute daughters—I saw them in the National Inquirer.

BOBBY

That's not what he talked about last night.

JERRY

I'm not into that.

BOBBY

I watched.

JERRY

I guess he was pissed after what happened.

BOBBY
Wouldn't you be?

JERRY
Seeing what they did...those planes smashing into...yea....I mean, it's unbelievable.

BOBBY
...Yea.

JERRY
How could they let this happen?

BOBBY
I don't know.

JERRY
They're gonna catch the guys who did this—that Arab guy—what's his name?

BOBBY
Bin Laden.

JERRY
He'll be dead by the end of the week.

BOBBY
Maybe.

JERRY
No "maybe" about it. That guy's life isn't worth a bucket of cold shit.

BOBBY
It's not just him. There's the whole bunch of 'em.

JERRY
Where are they?

BOBBY
The Middle East...that's where all the Arabs are.

JERRY
Okay, then. Let's go get 'em. Let's go kick some ass. ...What are you doing tonight?

BOBBY
I don't know.

I'm going to the bar—come along. JERRY

Not tonight. BOBBY

What's stopping you? JERRY

I don't feel like it. BOBBY

What is it, that time to the month? JERRY

Not tonight, okay? BOBBY

Something's bothering you. JERRY

Nothing's bothering me? BOBBY

Might have something to do with....Tiffany! JERRY

Up yours. BOBBY

Tiffany and Bobby! Tiffany and Bobby!— JERRY

You know you're a real dick. BOBBY

I'm a dick? JERRY

You're a dick. BOBBY

Here a dick, there a dick, everywhere a dick dick— JERRY

Idiot. BOBBY

So it's getting serious with you and Tiffany. JERRY

Who said so? BOBBY

It's pretty obvious. JERRY

Since when? BOBBY

Since always. JERRY

What kind of a kid was she? BOBBY

What do you care? JERRY

I'm asking you a question—don't bust my balls. BOBBY

I don't know...quiet...like she is now. JERRY

Yea...she's quiet alright. BOBBY

And a goody two-shoes. JERRY

Was she? BOBBY

Not like her old lady. JERRY

What about her? BOBBY

JERRY

She was a junkie and a whore. If you leave that out, she was a model citizen..

BOBBY

Where's she now?

JERRY

Nobody knows...maybe Tiffany does.

BOBBY

She never mentioned her to me.

JERRY

Tiffany was always a straight arrow. I tried my best to drag her down.

BOBBY

I'm sure of that.

JERRY

You're really stuck on her?

BOBBY

...Yea.

JERRY

You're asking all these questions—that tells me you're stuck on her.

BOBBY

That was the giveaway.

JERRY

Gonna marry her?

BOBBY

I'm not sure.

JERRY

Marriage is a very serious thing.

BOBBY

Thanks, dad.

JERRY

It involves...what *does* it involve?

BOBBY

You've got all the answers—you tell me.

JERRY

It involves...commitment...understanding...patience...and sex—lots of sex.

BOBBY

I had a feeling you'd get to that.

JERRY

Have you mentioned it to her?

BOBBY

What, sex?

JERRY

Marriage.

BOBBY

Not in so many words.

JERRY

I'm not sure I'd want you for a relative...a business partner, maybe, but not a relative.

BOBBY

I'm not exactly eager to become your relative, either; and if I did, you would have to stop eating spaghetti with your fingers.

JERRY

You drive a hard bargain.

BOBBY

I keep thinking about something Bush said last night on TV.

JERRY

What was that?

BOBBY

He said..."Our military is powerful...and it's prepared."

JERRY

...So what?

BOBBY

When he said “military,” I thought of Tiffany.

JERRY

She’s an MP. She’s got nothing to do with that.

BOBBY

She’s in the military, and you never know what’ll happen—

JERRY

She’s military police, a cop. What does a cop do? Direct traffic and help little old ladies across the street. And even if we did go to war, they don’t let women in combat.

BOBBY

...That’s right...they don’t.

JERRY

So what’s the problem?

BOBBY

I guess you’re right.

JERRY

Of course I’m right...I usually am.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN LEFT PORTION OF THE PLAYING AREA; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. IT IS SUMMER, 2002. BOBBY STANDS UPSTAGE RIGHT. TIFFANY IS DOWN LEFT. THERE IS NO SET. HE IS DRESSED AS BEFORE, SHE IN FATIGUES)

BOBBY

What did you do today?

TIFFANY

In the morning, classroom...in the afternoon, physical training.

BOBBY

Running?

TIFFANY

Running, calisthenics.

BOBBY

I’d rather do running than sit in a classroom.

TIFFANY
I like it. You learn things in a classroom.

BOBBY
They give you homework?

TIFFANY
Just things to read.

BOBBY
You read them?

TIFFANY
Some of it.

BOBBY
What did you learn today?

TIFFANY
About the Middle East.

BOBBY
Why do they want you to learn about that?

TIFFANY
I'm probably going to end up there.

BOBBY
Really think so?

TIFFANY
Probably...somebody's got to pay for 9/11. So far, nobody has, at least not enough to satisfy us. I don't know when or where, but somebody's got to pay...if we don't fight back, they'll hit us again.

BOBBY
I never took much interest in that sort of thing.

TIFFANY
What sort of thing?

Politics.

BOBBY

This isn't politics. It's survival.

TIFFANY

Sounds dramatic.

BOBBY

Survival usually is.

TIFFANY

Me—I'm just a work-and-play kind of guy.

BOBBY

You see things differently in the Marines....pay more attention to what's happening in other countries, especially countries you may end up in.

TIFFANY

What are the chances they'll send you anywhere?

BOBBY

There's a reason they're teaching us about the Middle East—they wouldn't do it unless they figured to send me there.

TIFFANY

What did you learn about the Middle East?

BOBBY

It's really different from here.

TIFFANY

I hear they treat their women like slaves.

BOBBY

You just said you didn't know anything about the Middle East.

TIFFANY

I know *that* much.

BOBBY

It depends on which country you're talking about: Saudi Arabia—they're very strict. They don't even let women drive.

BOBBY

How come?

TIFFANY

It's how they practice their Muslim religion.

BOBBY

So no Muslim woman can drive a car?

TIFFANY

Like I said: It depends on the country. In Saudi Arabia, you can't. In Jordan, you can.

BOBBY

So if you were to go to Saudi Arabia, you couldn't drive a car?

TIFFANY

That's only for Saudi Arabian women, not Marines. But they told us not to do anything that'll make them angry.

BOBBY

Bud Light?

TIFFANY

I think that would qualify. They don't allow alcohol in Saudi Arabia.

BOBBY

Sounds like a fun place to live.

TIFFANY

It's their country.

BOBBY

What else did you learn in the classroom?

TIFFANY

That 9/11 was planned in Afghanistan.

BOBBY

Oh, South America?

TIFFANY

It's in Asia...next to Pakistan.

Near Japan?

BOBBY

No.

TIFFANY

BOBBY

Why do we have to bother with all that foreign country crap? ...Let the politicians do it—it's what they're paid for. I work on cars; they work on countries....I'd rather talk about us.

TIFFANY

What do you wish to talk about?

BOBBY

We've been together for a while now.

TIFFANY

Five, six months.

BOBBY

That long?

TIFFANY

I think so.

BOBBY

Boy, how time flies.

TIFFANY

It does now—for me, at least...not like when I was a kid. Back then, each day was like forever.

BOBBY

...Well...anyway...we've been going together for a while and—

TIFFANY

You want to break up?

BOBBY

Break up?

TIFFANY

Is that what you want to tell me?

No—what gave you that idea?
BOBBY

I had a feeling that you....
TIFFANY

Nothing could be further from the truth...unless you want to—
BOBBY

No, I don't...want to.
TIFFANY

Glad to hear it, because by now I've gotten used to being with you.
BOBBY

Like a pair of old shoes?
TIFFANY

I meant that nicer.
BOBBY

I was just teasing.
TIFFANY

You? Teasing? I never knew you had it in you.
BOBBY

I didn't...till I met you.
TIFFANY

So...you like being with me?
BOBBY

I think I do.
TIFFANY

So what are we going to do about it?
BOBBY

What do you want to do?
TIFFANY

Usually the next step is, uh....
BOBBY

TIFFANY

You want me to move in with you?

BOBBY

(A SWEET, AFFIRMATIVE NOD)

...If you don't mind.

TIFFANY

Why?

BOBBY

(MILDLY INCREDULOUS)

Why? Because I...care about you...haven't you noticed?

TIFFANY

I've noticed...I just wanted you to say it out loud.

BOBBY

I feel kind of stupid doing so.

TIFFANY

...Somehow makes it official.

BOBBY

Like it was notarized?

TIFFANY

Yes.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

In high school, I went out with lots of girls...I was very popular, you know.

I'm sure you were.

TIFFANY

But they never meant that much to me....

BOBBY

I never went out in high school.

TIFFANY

Why not?

BOBBY

I didn't want anyone to meet my mother.

TIFFANY

You never see you mother at all, do you?

BOBBY
(GINGERLY)

No. ...I'd rather not talk about it.

TIFFANY

(PAUSE)

You wanna get married?

BOBBY

(PAUSE)

Never thought about it.

TIFFANY

Me neither...till now...what do you say?

BOBBY

TIFFANY

Let me think about it.

BOBBY

...If you think about it, you'll end up saying no.

TIFFANY

Let's just live together for the time being...I don't know what's going to happen...where they'll send me...or if they'll send me anywhere at all...everything's up in the air...so let's hold off on marriage.

(QUIETLY HEARTFELT)

But I thank you just the same. ...I thank you for everything.

(SHORT PAUSE)

(THEY EMBRACE; LIGHTS DOWN)

(DOWNSTAGE SPOTLIGHT, THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. INTO THE SPOTLIGHT STEPS GEORGE W. BUSH, DRESSED AS BEFORE AND ADDRESSING THE AUDIENCE; IT IS MARCH 19,2003)

BUSH

My fellow citizens, at this time American and coalition forces are in the early stage of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger. On my orders, coalition forces have begun striking selected targets of military importance to undermine Saddam Hussein's ability to wage war. These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign. More than thirty-five countries are giving crucial support from the use of naval and air bases, to the deployment of combat units. To all of the men and women of the United States armed forces now in the Middle East, the peace of a troubled world and the hopes of an oppressed people now depend on you.

We come to Iraq with respect for its citizens, for their great civilization and for the religious faiths they practice. I know that the families of our military are praying that those who serve will return safely and soon.

(SPOTLIGHT DOWN)

ACT II

(THE DOWN CENTER PORTION OF THE PLAYING AREA IS ILLUMINATED;
THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. THERE IS NO SET.

FROM OUT OF THE DARKNESS, TIFFANY ENTERS THE PLAYING AREA
FROM UP STAGE LEFT, ARRIVING AT DOWN STAGE CENTER . A MOMENT
LATER BOBBY ENTERS FROM THE SAME DIRECTION. HE STOPS SEVERAL
FEET UPSTAGE RIGHT OF TIFFANY. SHE WEARS FATIGUES; HE IS DRESSED
CASUALLY IN BLACK JEANS, LIGHT BLUE SPORTS SHIRT.

IT IS JUNE, 2003. THE MOOD IS SOLEMN, LOW-KEY. THEY ARE NOT
TECHNICALLY MARRIED, BUT BEHAVE WITH AN EASY, UNSELF-
CONSCIOUS FAMILIARITY CHARACTERISTIC OF MARRIED COUPLES)

BOBBY

The movie wasn't bad.

TIFFANY

I liked it.

BOBBY

They must've used a lot of tomato sauce for the bloody scenes...Del Monte?

TIFFANY
Looked like Del Monte.

BOBBY
Wouldn't it be funny if they actually shot the actors and filmed it?

TIFFANY
Wouldn't be funny to them.

BOBBY
Seeing all that tomato sauce made me hungry. ...Where do you wanna eat?

TIFFANY
Don't know.

BOBBY
Wendy's?

TIFFANY
Don't feel like it.

BOBBY
What *do* you feel like?

TIFFANY
I'm not hungry.

BOBBY
You gotta eat....

(SHORT PAUSE)

TIFFANY
We'll order a pizza...we can freeze what we don't eat.

(PAUSE)

You all packed?
BOBBY

Yes.
TIFFANY

Jerry said he had a present for you.
BOBBY

He gave it to me.
TIFFANY

What was it?
BOBBY

A Teddy Bear.
TIFFANY

From *him*?
BOBBY

He's not the type for it.
TIFFANY

BOBBY
Knowing him, I thought he's give you a box of condoms. ...A Teddy Bear, huh? I'll never let him live it down—

TIFFANY
Don't tease him about it.

BOBBY

He wouldn't think twice about teasing *me*—

TIFFANY

Don't...please...I don't feel in a teasing mood...not now.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

My landlord wishes you all the best...I should say *our* landlord.

TIFFANY

You're paying the rent, so she's not my landlord.

BOBBY

Anyway, she's wishes you the best of luck.

TIFFANY

Tell her I said thank you.

BOBBY

She asked me why you have to go to Iraq.

TIFFANY

What did you tell her?

BOBBY

I told her I forgot.

(SHORT PAUSE)

TIFFANY

It has to do with weapons...that's what they told us.

BOBBY

(A FEW STEPS STAGE RIGHT)

Oh, I remember now...that guy has nuclear weapons.

TIFFANY

He has something...whatever it is, we're going to take them away from him.

BOBBY

Did anybody ask him to give them up, so you wouldn't have to go there?

TIFFANY

They did. ...He said he didn't have any, but nobody believes him...so we're going in.

BOBBY

If we do, won't he use his weapons against us?—

TIFFANY

(SLIGHTLY ANNOYED)

How do *I* know?

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

(WOUNDED LOOK)

I'm sorry.

TIFFANY

...No, *I'm* sorry.

BOBBY

It's just that I'm worried that you'll be at the wrong end of one of those weapons.

TIFFANY

You don't have to worry. ...I'm the one who's going, not you.

(SHORT PAUSE)

BOBBY
(DEFLATED)

I'm worried for *you*...not *me*.

TIFFANY
I know...nice to have someone who does...a new experience for me.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY
(BLURTING OUT HIS WORDS)

Maybe *I* should join up.

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY
(INCREDULOUS)

What did you say?

BOBBY
Maybe I should join the Marines.

TIFFANY
(TO STAGE CENTER)

You?

BOBBY
Why not?

TIFFANY
Are you kidding?

BOBBY
I'm in good shape—it's not so farfetched.

TIFFANY
All of a sudden do you want to join the Marines? Why?

BOBBY
Because...I...want to.

TIFFANY
Patriotic?

BOBBY
(UNCONVINCINGLY)
That's it—patriotic.

TIFFANY
Is that so—

BOBBY
I'm really into it: You know, God bless America, and all that.

TIFFANY
Maybe there's another reason.

BOBBY
No—that's the reason: Patriotic—

TIFFANY
Maybe you think you and I could serve together.

BOBBY
(INNOCENTLY)
Hey, that's a good idea!

TIFFANY

Since I'm shipping out tomorrow, you would have to take an accelerated course in order to join me in Iraq.

BOBBY

I'll hook up with you in a few months—as long as we're together.

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY

I suppose I should be touched by your offer...and I am...but it's out of the question.

BOBBY

Why?

TIFFANY

You wouldn't last ten minutes as a Marine—

BOBBY

Come on now—

TIFFANY

You wouldn't even make a good hostage.

BOBBY

I would make a very *good* hostage—and a very good Marine—

TIFFANY

What do you think Boot Camp is, high school gym class?

BOBBY

I know it's no picnic—

TIFFANY

No, it's *no* picnic.

BOBBY

I think I could hack it—

TIFFANY

And what if you could? Do you know the odds of our ending up together? Practically zero. You go wherever they send you—you have no choice in the matter.

(SHORT PAUSE)

BOBBY

I didn't think of that.

(PAUSE)

(SHE REMOVES A WHITE ENVELOPE FROM HER BACK LEFT POCKET, OPENS THE ENVELOPE AND REMOVES A SINGLE FOLDED SHEET OF PAPER; SHE GOES TO HIM AND HANDS HIM THE PAPER)

BOBBY

What's this?

TIFFANY

Read it.

(HE SCANS THE PAPER FOR A FEW SECONDS)

BOBBY
(TO HER)

It's a will.

TIFFANY

That's right.

(GLANCES AT THE PAPER, THEN AT HER)

Your will.

BOBBY

My will.

TIFFANY

(PAUSE)

I don't get it.

BOBBY

(SHE MOVES TO STAGE RIGHT)

It's all quite obvious.

TIFFANY

What made you do this?

BOBBY

They advised me to.

TIFFANY

But this is for old people...you're just a kid...you've got your whole life in front of you.

BOBBY

I hope.

TIFFANY

You're not supposed to be thinking about stuff like this—

BOBBY
(DISTRESSED)

I'm entering a war zone.

TIFFANY

So...so what?

BOBBY

So *what*?

TIFFANY

You're not going into combat. They don't let women in combat.

BOBBY

You really believe that?

TIFFANY

It's the law....

BOBBY

Isn't it?

(MEEKLY)

It's the law, but it doesn't mean anything over there.

TIFFANY

If it doesn't mean anything, why pass it in the first place?—

BOBBY

Anybody wearing a uniform is a target. The insurgents don't stop to notice who's male and who's female.

TIFFANY

(PAUSE)

I didn't know it was like that.

BOBBY
(BLEAKLY)

TIFFANY

Yes you did...deep down, you knew.

(SHORT PAUSE)

Look at the will.

(HE LOOKS IT OVER)

I left everything to you....I've saved up some money...I live very frugally...and there's the life insurance policy...that's nothing to sneeze at, either.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

(MOVED)

Why me? ...Why did you leave everything to me?

TIFFANY

You're the only real friend I ever had....

(SHORT PAUSE)

(HE GOES TO HER; THEY KISS AND EMBRACE)

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(A DOWN CENTER SPOTLIGHT; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. GEORGE W. BUSH ENTERS FROM UP RIGHT, DRESSED AS BEFORE. HE ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE)

BUSH

The troop size in Iraq is not driven here in the White House. It is driven by the decisions and recommendations of John Abizaid and General George Casey. And it's really important that that's how a war be fought, and that, I would hope, brings comfort to you as a concerned citizen as I make the military decisions based upon the recommendations from the field. But there's no change in policy as far as I'm concerned: No women in combat. Having said that, let me explain, we've got to make sure we define combat properly. We've got women flying choppers and women flying fighters, which I'm content with.

(SPOTLIGHT DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN LEFT PORTION OF THE STAGE; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. TIFFANY, IN FATIGUES, SITS SLUMPED IN A STAGE LEFT FOLDING CHAIR, THE ONLY PIECE OF FURNITURE PRESENT. SHE IS FACING STAGE LEFT, LOOKING DAZED. IT IS A FEW DAYS SINCE SHE LEFT CALIFORNIA—HER FIRST FULL DAY IN IRAQ, SPECIFICALLY THE GREEN ZONE IN BAGHDAD.

A FEW MOMENTS PASS. THEN LANCE CORPORAL VALERIE SWENSON, IN HER MID TWENTIES AND WEARING FATIGUES, ENTERS THE PLAYING AREA FROM UP STAGE RIGHT. VALERIE IS THIN AND BONY AND A BIT ON THE HYPERACTIVE SIDE. SHE HAS A WARMLY LUSTY, CHEERFULLY BLUNT MANNER THAT IS MORE CHARMING, NEVER OBNOXIOUS)

VALERIE

You hoo!

(TIFFANY QUICKLY STANDS; VALERIE APPROACHES HER)

Hello there!

(THEY SHAKE HANDS)

TIFFANY
(GUARDEDLY)

Hello.

VALERIE

Name's Valerie.

TIFFANY

Tiffany.

VALERIE

Hello, Tiffany. Welcome to Baghdad.

TIFFANY

Thanks.

VALERIE

Hot as hell, ain't it ?.

TIFFANY

You said it...not like San Diego.

(TO STAGE RIGHT)

VALERIE

You're based in Pendleton?

(TIFFANY NODS AFFIRMATIVELY)

So am I. Yessirree, typical desert here—ninety-eight during the day, fifty-five at night.

I'm not sure which is more fun: roasting alive or freezing your ass off. You're an MP?

(TIFFANY NODS AFFIRMATIVELY)

TIFFANY

How long have you been here?

VALERIE

Fourth tour.

TIFFANY

Fourth?

VALERIE

There are several reasons I'm still here. One of which is my husband. I'm here because he's *not* here. If you knew my husband, you would understand what I'm talking about. . Do you know that men are assholes?

TIFFANY
(GIGGLES)

I don't know about that.

VALERIE

You married?

TIFFANY

No.

VALERIE

You'll find out. *Boy*, will you find out.

Any kids? TIFFANY

Two. VALERIE

Who takes care of them? TIFFANY

My mother—not my *husband*—he’s too busy screwing one of his girlfriends. VALERIE

How come you’re still with him? TIFFANY

I often ask myself that question. VALERIE
(WHIMSICALLY)

What’s the answer? TIFFANY

I’ve no idea. He’s not a *bad* person...just an asshole. You and I have only just met and you know my whole life story already. But that’s the way I am. “Hi! My name is Valerie and my husband is an asshole!” VALERIE

(TIFFANY LAUGHS HEARTILY)
I should do standup comedy.

You married him before you joined up? TIFFANY

After. Boy was *he* surprised. Then he threw a fit. VALERIE

(BREEZILY)

But he soon changed his mind and we had two kids.

TIFFANY

Just like that.

VALERIE

Well, it took a couple of years,

(VALERIE GOES TO THE CHAIR AND SITS, LEGS SPREAD APART)

They briefed you about your duties?

TIFFANY

Yes.

VALERIE

We need people to interview the local women.

TIFFANY

They talk to us?—

VALERIE

They'll talk to *women*, not men; and they know everything that's happening in the neighborhood. We get a lot of good intelligence from them.

TIFFANY

What's *your* job?

VALERIE

EOT.

TIFFANY
(TAKEN ABACK)

Explosives Ordnance...

VALERIE
(GRINNING PROUDLY)

Technician. ...Surprised?

TIFFANY

I didn't know there *were* female EOTs.

VALERIE

About a half dozen in the entire Marine Corps.

TIFFANY

You work on the roadside bombs?

VALERIE

We work in teams. The MPs guard us when we go out to disarm IEDs. That's where *you* come in. Before this thing is over, you and I are going to get to know each other real well.

TIFFANY

(SHAKING HER HEAD IN ADMIRATION)

Talk about a high-pressure job....

VALERIE

It's not boring, *that's* for sure. My grandfather can't believe I'm doing this. He's World War II generation; and he's got this 1940s view that women are delicate porcelain dolls. When I told him what I did, he was, like "Holy Shit!"; and then he gives me pointers on how to stay safe in a combat zone. How would *he* know? He spent World War II in New Jersey!

TIFFANY

You're really on your *fourth* deployment?

VALERIE

Number four.

(SHORT PAUSE)

You think I'm nuts for doing so.

TIFFANY

No...just curious

VALERIE
(WITH SENSITIVITY)

I already gave you a reason—or one of them. But it also has to do with loyalty...not to country—I'm not one of those flag-waving schmucks. No, it's loyalty to my unit. ...I had to be with them—the original members, anyway. The problem is, by the time they're all rotated back home, you've gotten to know a new group, and the result is, you don't want to leave *them* behind. So you hang around until *they're* safely home...and the merry-go-round starts all over again.

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY

You miss your kids?

VALERIE

You can say *that* again. ...My mother tries to make me feel guilty about it...but she doesn't know what it's like to be a Marine, to be in a place like this. I try to explain it, but it's a foreign language to her. Right now, it's a foreign language to *you*. But after you've been here a while, you might feel the way I do. ...But this it—I promised myself—no more deployments. I'm gonna go home, buy a rocking chair and spend the rest of my life eating oreo cookies.

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY

The local population...they don't like us.

VALERIE

They don't *hate* us—except for the insurgents—but even many of *them* change sides depending on where their next meal comes from. After we won the war, we lost the peace. We stood by and allowed all the looting to go on; and we didn't provide enough electricity either—we still don't. So they've soured on us. That's why you've got to watch yourself all the time when you're outside the green zone. Outside the zone, it's Viet Nam without trees.

TIFFANY

I'll keep that in mind.

VALERIE

And never take your cell phone when you're out in the field. In the first place, you might be tempted to use it. But more important, the cell phone signal can detonate the IEDs. The insurgents use the signal to do just that.

TIFFANY

I'll remember.

VALERIE

Here's something else to remember...

(SHE GETS UP, REMOVES A SHEATHED BOWIE KNIFE FROM HER SIDE POCKET, GOES TO TIFFANY AND GIVES HER THE KNIFE)

TIFFANY

What's this for?

VALERIE

Protection.

TIFFANY

From what?

VALERIE

From *guys*.

TIFFANY

Guys?

VALERIE

Around here, you've got two enemies: The insurgents...and the guys—male Marines who assault female Marines. They think its one of the job benefits—like free food and housing.

(INDICATING THE KNIFE)

Keep that with you at all times, especially when you're in the shower; that seems to be a favorite spot for them.

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY
(DISAPPOINTED)

So that's how it is...

VALERIE
(SELF-DIRECTED SARCASM)

That's how it is.

Welcome to Baghdad.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(TWO DOWNSTAGE SPOTLIGHTS AT OPPOSITE END OF THE STAGE, WHICH IS OTHERWISE DARK. BOBBY STEPS INTO THE STAGE RIGHT SPOTLIGHT, DRESSED IN HIS WORK CLOTHES AND HOLDING A CELL PHONE IN HIS HAND. AT THE SAME TIME, TIFFANY STEPS INTO THE STAGE LEFT SPOTLIGHT. SHE IS DRESSED AS BEFORE AND HAS HER OWN CELL PHONE. EACH PLACES THE PHONE TO THEIR EAR. THE TONE OF THEIR CONVERSATION IS ONE OF FORCED GOOD CHEER
IT IS THE DAY AFTER THE PREVIOUS SCENE)

BOBBY
Hello.

TIFFANY
Hello.

BOBBY
Tiffany?

TIFFANY
Bobby?

BOBBY
Yea.

TIFFANY
(GRATIFIED)

How are you?

BOBBY

I'm fine—how are *you*?

TIFFANY

I'm fine.

BOBBY

How's the weather over there?

TIFFANY

Pretty hot.

BOBBY

A regular furnace.

TIFFANY

Guess so.

BOBBY

What time is it where you are?

TIFFANY

About 10:00PM

BOBBY

It's twelve noon here. Amazing, huh? Like we were talking through a time machine or something.

Amazing. TIFFANY

How was the trip? BOBBY

My first time on a plane. TIFFANY

I know. BOBBY

Next time, I'm walking. TIFFANY

Didn't like it? BOBBY

Rough trip. TIFFANY

Too bad. BOBBY

You told me *you* flew in a plane. TIFFANY

Twice—that doesn't make me an expert. BOBBY

Maybe I'm just hard to please. TIFFANY

BOBBY

Not *you*—I know you long enough to know that...so what do you think of the place?

TIFFANY

Unlike anywhere else *I've* ever been.

BOBBY

That so?

TIFFANY

Not that I've seen so much so far—only the green zone. But from what I *have* seen, it's like I'm on another planet. But we've got all the comforts of home—inside the green zone, that is. Outside, it's a mess.

BOBBY

Have you got air conditioning?

TIFFANY

We have it; and a big swimming pool, and a restaurant—all in the green zone. In fact, if you didn't know better, you'd think you were still in the States....except for some damaged buildings, and a few craters.

BOBBY

Where did *they* come from?

TIFFANY

Mortar attacks. I haven't seen any since I got here.

BOBBY

(ENDEARINGLY DOPY)

Boy, that sounds *exciting*!

TIFFANY

I wouldn't want to be caught in one

BOBBY

You keep away from those mortar attacks.

(THEY BOTH LAUGH—UNCOMFORTABLY)

TIFFANY

Hey, I found out something incredible a few hours ago.

BOBBY

What is it?

TIFFANY

Somebody told me that all the cell phones here have a 914 area code.

BOBBY

Where's that?

TIFFANY

Upstate New York.

BOBBY

Upstate New York?

TIFFANY

Isn't that the craziest thing?

BOBBY

You're pulling my leg.

TIFFANY

I'm not—I swear it. If I want to call someone in California, I have to go thru Upstate New York. In fact, if I want to call someone *next block*, the call is routed thru Upstate New York and back to Baghdad.

BOBBY

Makes no sense.

TIFFANY

MCI has the wireless contract, and they're based in Upstate New York.

BOBBY

So MCI is making money off the war, huh?

TIFFANY

Somebody has to, or else there wouldn't *be* a war.

BOBBY

I guess the government knows what it's doing.

TIFFANY

But you know, I'm glad the calls go thru New York because it makes me feel closer to home...closer to you.

BOBBY

In that case, hooray for MCI.

(THEY BOTH LAUGH)

Make any friends yet?

TIFFANY

One, so far.

BOBBY

What's her name?

TIFFANY
(RIBBING HIM)

How do you know it's a "she?"

BOBBY

It's a *guy*?

TIFFANY

No, her name is Valerie. She's an EOT—and quite a character.

BOBBY

What is she?

TIFFANY

E...O...T.: Explosives Ordnance Technician.

BOBBY

Explosives? Holy mackerel! They really let her handle explosives?

TIFFANY

She's on a team that deactivates roadside bombs.

BOBBY

Stay away from her.

TIFFANY

I can't. I help protect her from snipers—at least, that's what I'm going to do.

BOBBY

(JOLTED WITH SUDDEN REALIZATION, HIS FACE NOW PALE, HIS VOICE SOBER)

That's what you'll be doing?

TIFFANY

One of the things.

BOBBY

You...you be sure to be careful.

TIFFANY

I'll try—

BOBBY
(EMPHATIC)

Don't just try—*do* it.

I'll do it—

TIFFANY

Promise?

BOBBY

(SHORT PAUSE)

Promise.

TIFFANY

(SHORT PAUSE)

BOBBY
(HALTINGLY)
Before I forget, I want to tell you that I...sort of...miss you. I know it's only been a few days, but the fact is...I miss you.

(LONG PAUSE)

TIFFANY
(QUIETLY; DEEPLY TOUCHED)
I miss you too.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN STAGE CENTER PORTION OF THE STAGE; THE REST OF THE STAGE IS DARK. THE WORKBENCH REAPPEARS—THE ONLY PIECE OF FURNITURE PRESENT—SIGNIFYING THE REPAIR SHOP IN CALIFORNIA. JERRY SITS AT THE BENCH IN HIS WORK CLOTHES. HE IS WIPING HIS HANDS WITH A DIRTY TOWEL. IT IS LATER THE SAME DAY)

JERRY
(CALLING OUT)

Bobby.

BOBBY
(OFFSTAGE)

Coming....

(JERRY SETS THE TOWEL DOWN BESIDE HIM. BOBBY ENTERS FROM UP STAGE RIGHT WEARING HIS WORK CLOTHES, LOOKING FATIGUED AND TROUBLED. HE PROCEEDS TO THE BENCH, PICKS UP THE TOWEL AND MINDLESSLY WIPES HIS HANDS)

JERRY
They called about the Mercury Marquis.

BOBBY
So what?

JERRY
(IMPATIENTLY)
So when are you gonna be done with it?

BOBBY
I'll be done with it when I'm done with it.

JERRY
It's just a freakin' radiator—

BOBBY
I found some other stuff.

JERRY
(FLUSTERED)
Why didn't you tell me before so I could tell *them*?

BOBBY
I'm telling you now.

JERRY

What did you find?

BOBBY

(THROWS THE TOWEL ONTO THE WORKBENCH)

The intake manifold has to be replaced, and the fan belt, and the exhaust gaskets—they ran that car into the ground and they expect me to wave a magic wand and make it brand new.

JERRY

...What do I tell them?

BOBBY

I ordered a new intake manifold. It'll come in tomorrow.

JERRY

So I tell them tomorrow?—

BOBBY
(TESTILY)

Day after—don't rush me, okay?

(UNDER HIS BREATH)

...Pain in the ass.

(PAUSE)

JERRY

What's the matter? Somebody piss on your Cheerios?

BOBBY
(TO STAGE LEFT)

Nothing.

JERRY

Something is. ...Is it Tiffany?

What gave you that idea?

BOBBY

What else *could* it be?

JERRY

(PAUSE)

...Spoke to her before.

BOBBY

How is she?

JERRY

She's okay. ...Talking to her—it finally hit me where she is...what's she's gotten herself into.

BOBBY

You didn't realize that until now?

JERRY

Maybe I didn't want to. ...But now that she's there...and after what she told me today...it finally sunk in big time.

BOBBY

It's not like she's unprepared.

JERRY

I know she's prepared.

BOBBY

(OMINOUSLY)

But there are things you can't prepare for. ...The unexpected things that rise up and bite you in the neck.

Stop worrying.

JERRY

(SHORT PAUSE)

I offered to join up.

BOBBY

(PAUSE)

You?—

JERRY

I told Tiffany.

BOBBY

Come on!

JERRY
(LAUGHING)

I really meant it.

BOBBY

What did she say?

JERRY

She said I wouldn't even make a good hostage.

BOBBY
(JERRY ROARS WITH LAUGHTER)

I never knew she was that funny!

JERRY

I only wanted to be with her. Is that so terrible?

BOBBY

JERRY

If you ever *do* join up, I'm moving to Canada.

BOBBY

Kiss my ass.

(SHORT PAUSE)

(A FEW STEPS TOWARD STAGE CENTER)

(FEAR IN HIS VOICE)

She made out her will.

JERRY

(BOWLED OVER)

She did?

(BOBBY NODS AFFIRMATIVELY)

Where did she the idea to do that?

BOBBY

They recommended it.... When she told me, I felt like all the blood had been sucked out of me. That's when I started to get nervous about all this...and when I spoke to her today, it confirmed it.

(SHORT PAUSE)

JERRY

(AWED)

Her *will*. ...Man, that's heavy. ...She showed you the will?

BOBBY

Yea.

(SHORT PAUSE)

JERRY

(DELICATELY)

Did she leave me anything?

BOBBY
(ANGRILY, HE GOES TO JERRY)
Did she...that's all you give a shit about?
(JERRY STANDS)

JERRY
(HOLLOW, RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION)
How could you say such terrible thing?

BOBBY
I read you like a book—

JERRY
It's only natural I'd be curious.

BOBBY
(TO STAGE RIGHT)
Natural my ass.

JERRY
...Well, *did* she?

BOBBY
Did she what?

JERRY
Leave me anything?

BOBBY
No!

JERRY
Then who *did* get it?

BOBBY

...I did.

JERRY

You did? Everything?

(GOES TO BOBBY)

BOBBY

Yea.

JERRY

What the hell did you do, brainwash her?

BOBBY

Yea, I hypnotized her—

JERRY
(WHINING)

How could she do this? I'm her cousin...her *beloved* cousin.

BOBBY

But I'm gonna marry her...I *wanted* to before she left, but she said no. Not until this stupid-ass war is over.

(THREATINGLY)

And if you ever tell her you know about the will, I'll beat the shit out of you like you've never been beaten.

JERRY

I won't talk.

(WOUNDED PUPPY EXPRESSION)

She might've at least told me...I mean, I *am* her beloved cousin.

(SHORT PAUSE)

BOBBY
(BITTERLY, TO HIMSELF)

The way the politicians play with other people's lives...like they were toys they got for Christmas...it burns my *fucking* ass.

JERRY
(PHILOSOPHICAL)

That's the way it's always been.

BOBBY

There's something terribly wrong with that.

JERRY

The big shots go to their fancy colleges, and when they get out, they run the country. ...You and me and Tiffany—we take their orders...we're nobodys.

BOBBY
(GRUMBLING)

Nobodys....

JERRY

She *did* volunteer. She wasn't drafted. It's a good life—the military life—as long as there's no war. But that's the chance you take when you sign up...Tiffany lost the bet. ...Kind of funny in a way.

BOBBY

What is?

JERRY

You know those old war movies they show sometimes on TV?

BOBBY

What about them?

JERRY

It's always the guy who goes off to fight and the girl who stays home waiting for him.

BOBBY

What of it?

JERRY

Don't you *see*? Now it's the other way around—with you and Tiffany.

(JOKINGLY)

Maybe that's how it *should* be: Let the women fight and the men stay home and have babies.

(LAUGHS)

(BOBBY IMMEDIATELY GOES TO JERRY, ANGRILY GRABS HIM BY THE COLLAR AND DRAGS HIM TO DOWN STAGE CENTER)

BOBBY

That's *not* funny!

JERRY

(THOROUGHLY INTIMIDATED)

What's going on?

BOBBY

You know!

JERRY

Can't you take a joke?

BOBBY

Not that kind!

(HE LETS GO OF JERRY; MOVES TO STAGE RIGHT)

I don't need you to remind me. ...Fucking imbecile.

JERRY

Remind you of what? What did I say?

(SHORT PAUSE)

BOBBY

(DISGUSTED)

Shut up...just shut up.

(LIGHTS DOWN))

(FIVE MONTHS HAVE PASSED; IN THE DARKNESS, THE SOUND OF RAPID GUNFIRE IS HEARD FOR SEVERAL SECONDS, FOLLOWED BY THE SOUND OF TIFFANY SHRIEKING, “OH MY GOD! WHAT HAVE I DONE? WHAT HAVE I DONE?”)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN LEFT PORTION OF THE STAGE, THE REST OF THE STAGE IN DARKNESS. IT IS BAGHDAD, LATER THE SAME DAY. TIFFANY, IN FATIGUES, SITS IN A WOODEN FOLDING CHAIR FACING THE AUDIENCE, NO OTHER PIECE OF FURNITURE IS PRESENT. TIFFANY LOOKS SHATTERED. SHE IS CURRENTLY BREATHING MORE HEAVILY THAN NORMAL. SEVERAL MOMENTS FOLLOW. SHE THEN LEANS FORWARD, HER ELBOWS RESTING ON HER KNEES, THE DEVASTATION IN HER FACE EVEN MORE PRONOUNCED.

SHE THEN STANDS, MOVES A FEW STEPS STAGE LEFT, A FEW STEPS STAGE RIGHT—SHE DOES NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HERSELF. SHE NOW MOVES TO THE REAR OF THE CHAIR AND, FACING THE AUDIENCE, LEANS ON IT.

VALERIE, IN FATIGUES, ENTERS FROM UP STAGE RIGHT AND STOPS MIDWAY BETWEEN TIFFANY AND HER POINT OF ENTRY. TIFFANY HAS HEARD HER ENTER BUT UNCHARACTERISTICALLY DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE HER PRESENCE. VALERIE’S EXPRESSION IS BLEAK, HER MANNER SORROWFUL)

VALERIE

Hi.

TIFFANY

(HER BREATHING BY NOW BACK TO NORMAL)

Hi.

VALERIE

You had supper yet?

TIFFANY

No....

(SHORT PAUSE)

VALERIE
Don't you think you should?—

TIFFANY
I couldn't hold it down.

(SHORT PAUSE)

(VALERIE MOVES STAGE LEFT, STILL UPSTAGE OF TIFFANY)

VALERIE
Anyone come to talk to you yet...I mean, officially?

TIFFANY
No.

VALERIE
They will. ...What'll you tell them?

TIFFANY
That I killed a little girl...murdered...that's what I'll tell them

(PAUSE)

(VALERIE TAKES A BOTTLE OF SOUTHERN COMFORT OUT FROM HER
RIGHT FRONT POCKET)

VALERIE
It's a pity you're not a drinking lady.
(UNSCREWS THE CAP)

TIFFANY

...Burns my throat.

VALERIE

Burns *my* throat, too. But that doesn't stop me. I'm a Marine—I'm tough—

TIFFANY

If you don't mind, I'd rather be alone.

(SHORT PAUSE)

VALERIE

(TAKES A SWIG)

That's good shit.

(PUTS THE CAP BACK ON THE BOTTLE, SCREWS IT SHUT AND PUTS THE
BOTTLE BACK IN HER POCKET)

I know you want to be alone. That's why I came...this is not the time to be alone. ...So
you killed a little girl—

TIFFANY

Please go.

(SHORT PAUSE)

VALERIE

It couldn't be helped.

TIFFANY

I never knew I could feel so horrible.

VALERIE

What'll you tell the inquiry?—

TIFFANY

(SHARPLY)

What difference does it make *what* I tell them?

VALERIE

You've got to tell them something—

TIFFANY
(QUICKLY, ABRUPTLY)

Alright—I'll tell them something.

(PAUSE)

VALERIE
(COMMANDINGLY)

You're going to tell them it was an accident, because it was.

TIFFANY
(NOT LISTENING TO HER)

I've got to see her mother. I'll explain it to her—

VALERIE

It'll make things worse.

TIFFANY

I've got to do *something*.

VALERIE

Do your *job*—that's what you're here for.

(PAUSE)

(MOVES TO STAGE RIGHT)

You've got to get your story clear before they talk to you...I lost sight of you after you after you entered the building. What happened then?

(SHORY PAUSE)

TIFFANY
(GRADUALLY GATHERING HER THOUGHTS)

We climbed the stairs...me and Willoughby...the sniper was on the roof, firing down on us...he didn't have time to leave the building—we knew he was still there...we got to the middle of the second floor...heard someone coming down the stairway...we waited...but

then we heard a door open and close on the third floor...we went to the door. We heard the click of a firing pin from a gun...and someone breathing hard. So I fired through the door...and we broke the door down...and there he was on the floor...and there was the girl...lying next to him...

(HER VOICE CRACKING)

Her eyes half-closed...her mouth open, as if she wanted to scream...*I* wanted to scream, too, but nothing came out...nothing came....

(SOBS; VALERIE IS MOTIONLESS)

(LONG PAUSE)

VALERIE

It happened so quickly.

TIFFANY
(STILL SOBBING)

I didn't know the girl was there...I heard the firing pin click...and I opened up.

VALERIE

What else could you do?

TIFFANY
What will her mother do when she sees her daughter splattered all over their apartment?—

VALERIE
(AUTHORITATIVE)

Stop it. ...I would've done the same thing...hear what I said?

TIFFANY

But it didn't happen to *you*.

VALERIE
If you want to blame someone, blame the insurgents. *They're* the ones trying to kill us. . If they stop *trying* to kill us, we can finish our job and get the hell out of this god damn country.

(SHORT PAUSE)

TIFFANY
(NO LONGER SOBBING, THOUGH STILL SHAKEN)

I'm going down to the morgue—

VALERIE

You're *not* going—

TIFFANY

I have to—

VALERIE

You may think it's the end of the world, but it's not.

(SHE GOES TO TIFFANY, AND NOW SPEAKING WITH MORE SERIOUSNESS
THAN SHE EVER HAS BEFORE)

I depend on you to protect us when we're out there with the IEDs—you and Willoughby both. When we're out there, exposed to sniper fire, I know I'm safe because you two are there to cover us. The other MPs—I've got nothing against them—but you and Willoughby are the only ones I trust. More so now than ever...because I...I think I've used up all my nine lives...that's what I feel...that's why I need you to help me get through this...I *know* you'll never let me down. ...Understand?

(TIFFANY NODS AFFIRMATIVELY)

I've got two kids back in Oceanside...next time they see me, I don't want it to be in a wooden box at Dover Air Force Base. ...So I can count on you?

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY
(BARELY AUDIBLE)

Yes.

VALERIE

Next month you go home on leave, right?

(AFFIRMATIVE NOD FROM TIFFANY)

Two weeks?

(ANOTHER NOD)

Give you a chance to relax...to get yourself together...of course, *I'll* be shitting in my pants while you're away.

(DESPERATE)

But knowing you'll be coming back—that'll help me a lot...my luck is running out—I can feel it. But I've still got two more months here...two more months.

(SHORT PAUSE)

You'll come back?

TIFFANY

...I'll come back...don't worry...I'll come back.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN LEFT PORTION OF THE STAGE, THE REST IS IN DARKNESS. IT IS THE REPAIR SHOP, THE FOLLOWING MONTH. THE WORKBENCH IS IN ITS FORMER SPOT, WITH TIFFANY, DRESSED IN FATIGUES, SITTING AT ITS CENTER. JERRY SITS NEXT TO HER, STAGE LEFT. BOBBY IS DOWN STAGE RIGHT. HE AND JERRY ARE IN THEIR WORK CLOTHES. BOBBY IS STARING AT TIFFANY: HE NOTICES SOMETHING IS BOTHERING HER BASED ON HER EERILY LIFELESS FACIAL EXPRESSION. JERRY, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS UNAWARE OF TIFFANY'S FRAME OF MIND)

JERRY

Boy, it's great to see you again, Tif!

TIFFANY

Same here.

JERRY

How ya doin'?

TIFFANY

Great...just great.

JERRY

They been keeping you busy in Baghdad?

You could say that. TIFFANY

I'll bet it's been pretty exciting. JERRY

You can say that too. TIFFANY

You put on some weight? JERRY

Have I? TIFFANY

Hasn't she? JERRY
(TO BOBBY)

No. BOBBY

No? JERRY
(TO TIFFANY)

No. TIFFANY

Maybe it's the uniform. So, tell me, did you win the war yet? JERRY

No. TIFFANY

What are you waiting for?—
JERRY
(STUPID LAUGH)

She's had long trip—
BOBBY
(TO JERRY)

JERRY
(IGNORING THE HINT; TO TIFFANY)
What do the girls look like over there?

TIFFANY
They look...female.

JERRY
Are they good-looking?

TIFFANY
I was too busy to notice.

JERRY
I'd love to go out with one of them, but if they didn't have a good time, they'd blow themselves up.
(SOME MORE STUPID CACKLING)

BOBBY
(TO JERRY)
Moron.

JERRY
(PROTESTING)
I'm only curious to learn about different cultures.

BOBBY

You mean “different females.” And you’re still a moron.

JERRY

You know, I could take that the wrong way.

(TO TIFFANY)

How long you back for?

TIFFANY

Two weeks.

JERRY

You know, Tif, I’m *really* impressed how you turned out. I mean you could’ve ended up a drug addict and a whore, just like your mother—

BOBBY

(ABRUPTLY; TO JERRY)

Go and wash up, so we can leave.

JERRY

What about you?—

BOBBY

I’ll follow you in a minute—go on.

(JERRY STANDS, TURNS TO LEAVE, THEN TURNS TOWARD TIFFANY AND, BEAMING WITH PRIDE, SALUTES HER. SHE DOES NOT RETURN THE SALUTE. HE EXITS UP STAGE RIGHT INTO THE SHADOWS)

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY

That’s not the right way to salute.

BOBBY

You've got two weeks to show him...you'll need all of it, too.

(SHORT PAUSE)

TIFFANY

(LOOKS ABOUT THE PLACE; DAZED)

I'm not sure if this is the real world and Baghdad is a dream...or maybe it's the other way around.

BOBBY

They're both real.

TIFFANY
(FORLORN)

...What a pity.

(PAUSE)

(HE GOES TO HER)

BOBBY

You...you've been like a zombie since you got back...is it jet lag?

TIFFANY

No.

BOBBY

Maybe you're just tired after the trip.

TIFFANY

I don't think so....

(HE SITS BESIDE HER IN JERRY'S OLD SPOT)

BOBBY

(DEEP CONCERN)

You won't have to do anything for the next two weeks...I'll take care of everything. Every day, breakfast in bed, watching TV, eating Italian food...give you a chance to rest up.

TIFFANY

My head is still in Baghdad...with my fellow Marines...they're probably sleeping now.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

Forget about Baghdad—at least, for the next couple of weeks.

TIFFANY

I don't think I should've come back.

BOBBY

But I...I wanted to see you.

TIFFANY

I wanted to see you, too...but I'm not sure...I should've left Baghdad.

BOBBY

(CAUTIOUSLY, SO AS NOT TO OFFEND HER)

I watch a lot of TV, and I've got some idea of what's going on there—not that I know what you're going through...but I've got some small idea. ...Looks like things are getting better over there.

TIFFANY

Are they?

(SHE STANDS, MOVES DOWN STAGE RIGHT, HER BACK TO HIM)

BOBBY

Seems that way.

TIFFANY

I'll tell them when I get back...they'll be happy to know.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

Before you left for Baghdad, you said our phone calls might be monitored for security reasons.

TIFFANY

Probably were.

BOBBY

So I figured you couldn't tell me the whole story.

TIFFANY

No, I couldn't.

BOBBY

You can tell me now.

TIFFANY

Yes...I could.

BOBBY

Like what?

TIFFANY

The dead bodies in the streets.

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

Where do they come from?

TIFFANY

From us...and the insurgents. ...They don't like it when we talk about things like that...it makes civilians depressed...are you depressed?

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

...No.

TIFFANY

That's very encouraging.

(LONG PAUSE)

BOBBY
(DELICATELY)

Did you...shoot anyone?

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY

What made you ask that?

BOBBY

You mentioned dead bodies. It's only natural I would....maybe it's better if you don't tell me.

(PAUSE)

TIFFANY

(HER BACK STILL TO HIM; MOTIONLESS, SOMBER, HAUNTED)

You'd be surprised how easy it is to kill...I know I was...oh, the first time is always rough; especially in my case: it was a six-year-old girl...we chased a sniper into a building. I ended up killing him...and the girl. I don't know who died first. I fired

through the front door, so I couldn't tell...I should've opened the door before firing, but he would've fired first and killed me. So I played it safe and opened up while the door was closed. It was all rather easy...I gently pressed the trigger and the bullets came flying out; an M16 is like that, you know...and that's how I killed my first two people...a sniper...and a girl...the next time was a week later...another sniper...I aimed at his chest and hit him in the head...like a water melon exploding into pieces...I didn't feel anything then...could've been a video game, for all I know...so you see, it's easy to kill...if you can get over the first time...if you could get over the six-year-old girl...after that, it's a piece of cake.

(LIGHTS DOWN; THEN A DOWN LEFT SPOTLIGHT ON GEORGE W. BUSH, DRESSED AS BEFORE. IT IS MAY 1, 2004. HE ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE)

BUSH

One year later, despite many challenges, life for the Iraqi people is a world away from the cruelty and corruption of the Saddam regime. At the most basic level of justice, people are no longer disappearing into political prisons, torture chambers and mass graves—because the former dictator Saddam is in prison himself. And their daily life is improving.

(SPOTLIGHT DOWN. IN THE DARKNESS, THE SOUND OF CONTINUOUS GUNFIRE IS HEARD THROUGHOUT THE SCENE; THEN LIGHTS UP ON THE ENTIRE STAGE, WHICH IS BARE, GUNFIRE STILL HEARD. IT IS BAGHDAD, THE SAME DAY, AND TIFFANY, DRESSED IN FATIGUES AND NOW WEARING COMBAT GEAR—E.G. CARTRIDGE BELT, HELMET, M16, FLAK JACKET—EMERGES STAGE LEFT REAR AND RUSHES ACROSS THE BACK OF THE STAGE. NOW STAGE RIGHT REAR AND FACING THE AUDIENCE, SHE CROUCHES MOMENTARILY, THEN STANDS UP, MIMES FIRING HER WEAPON, MOVES SEVERAL FEET DOWNSTAGE, BRIEFLY CROUCHES, THEN SLOWLY STANDS, THIS TIME NOT FIRING, DELIBERATELY EXPOSING HERSELF TO ENEMY GUNFIRE)

VALERIE

(OFF STAGE; SCREAMING)

Tiffany—GET DOWN! GET DOWN! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!!!

(TIFFANY IS SHOT AND FALLS LIKE A SACK OF POTATOES)

(LIGHTS DOWN)

(LIGHTS UP ON THE DOWN LEFT PORTION OF THE STAGE: THE REPAIR SHOP IN CALIFORNIA, TWO MONTHS LATER, THE WORKBENCH IN ITS USUAL PLACE, THE REST OF THE STAGE DARK. BOBBY, IN HIS WORK CLOTHES, IS SITTING AT THE CENTER OF THE BENCH, DEEPLY SAD OF EXPRESSION, STARING BLANKLY AT AN INVOICE IN HIS LEFT HAND. A FEW MOMENTS FOLLOW, HE PLACES THE INVOICE BESIDE HIM, LOWERS HIS HEAD AND STAYS IN THIS POSITION FOR A FEW MOMENTS. VALERIE QUIETLY ENTERS UP STAGE RIGHT, WEARING MARINE DRESS BLUES. SHE IS RESTRAINED AND RESPECTFUL. BOBBY AT FIRST DOES NOT NOTICE HER PRESENCE)

VALERIE

Excuse me.

(HE TURNS TOWARD HER)

BOBBY

Can I help you?

VALERIE

I'm looking for Bobby Keneally.

BOBBY

I'm Bobby.

VALERIE

My name is Valerie.

BOBBY

(SUDDEN RECOGNITION)

Tiffany's friend?

(QUICKLY STANDS)

VALERIE

Uh huh.

BOBBY

(GRATIFIED)

Oh, it's good to meet you.

(SHE SLOWLY GOES TO HIM)

I always *wanted* to meet you.

VALERIE

Hope you're not disappointed.

BOBBY

Not after what Tiffany told me about you.

VALERIE

I appreciate it. ...So, you're the famous Bobby.

BOBBY

Famous?

VALERIE

She talked a lot about you, too. She thought the world of you.

(PAUSE)

(SHE SITS AT THE BENCH, STAGE RIGHT SIDE)

You okay?

BOBBY
(TO STAGE RIGHT)

Would *you* be?

VALERIE

Of course not.

(SHORT PAUSE)

I live down the road...in Oceanside.

BOBBY

Nice place.

VALERIE

I like it.

BOBBY

When do you have to go back to Iraq?

VALERIE

I don't have to...I'm finished with Iraq.

BOBBY

I'm glad to hear that...at least you're safe now...they won't be able to kill you, like they killed Tiffany.

(SHORT PAUSE)

As for me, I don't know what to do with myself....fidgety...very fidgety...if we'd been together twenty or thirty years, it would've been different. I would've had a bank account of memories...but we had very little time together. ...Never got to marry her. That's something else I think about....because I thought if we were married, we'd be together in the next world. I'd like to think she's looking down on me from above...watching out for me.

VALERIE

(TO HERSELF)

...Like she watched out for me.

(TO HIM)

I wasn't going to come here...she asked me to...in case something happened to her.

BOBBY

What did she want you to tell me?

VALERIE

I don't know...I asked her myself. She said, "Just go and see him."

(PAUSE)

BOBBY

(RELUCTANTLY)

Were you there...when she got it?

VALERIE

Yes.

(PAUSE; HE MOVES TO STAGE CENTER)

BOBBY
(A SENSE OF DREAD)

Did she...suffer?

VALERIE

It was instantaneous.

BOBBY
(MOURNFUL)

I should be grateful for that, I suppose.

(PAUSE)

VALERIE

They told you she was killed in action?

BOBBY

Yea.

VALERIE

That's all?

BOBBY

Why? Is there more to it?

VALERIE

Well, I...

(HE GOES TO HER)

BOBBY
(RISING DISTRESS)

What else happened?

(PAUSE)

VALERIE

You better sit down for this.

(HE SITS TO HER LEFT)

(PAUSE)

She did it deliberately.

BOBBY

Did *what* deliberately?

VALERIE

She exposed herself to enemy fire.

(LONG PAUSE)

BOBBY

No...she couldn't have.

VALERIE

She committed suicide.

BOBBY

You've got to be mistaken.

VALERIE

I was there—

BOBBY
(ANGRILY)

How the hell could you say this? I thought you two were friends.

VALERIE
(EMPHATIC)

She was like a sister to me.

BOBBY
(STILL FURIOUS)

I don't believe it!

VALERIE
I told her to get down—I screamed at her. But she just stood there like a statue...it was deliberate—I know it was. After it was over, I told my superior. ...He didn't want to hear about it—Marines don't kill themselves while in combat. ...He told me to keep my mouth shut...so it's not in the official record.

(PAUSE)
(HE STANDS, LOOKING DEFEATED, AND MINDLESSLY MOVES TO STAGE RIGHT)

BOBBY
You knew how I'd feel if you told me this.

VALERIE
I know.

BOBBY
But you told me anyway.

VALERIE
I had to.

BOBBY
Why?

(LONG PAUSE)

VALERIE
(PENT-UP, SELF-LOATHING ANGUISH)

I knew she was falling apart...after she killed the girl...I knew. I was just a matter of time...she had the bad luck to not be an alcoholic like me, so she couldn't drink her troubles away...nobody else saw it coming but me. But I kept telling her she would be alright, knowing full well that she was *not* alright, that she had no business being there anymore, that she needed psychiatric help...but I egged her on because I had to keep her there to guard me, to make sure *I* live long enough to get out of there and see my kids again. I played her like a violin--I mentioned my kids as much as possible, so she'd feel guilty enough to continue doing her job...to keep me alive...and this is *really* why I came here to you. ...I didn't come because she asked me to. You see, I left the church years ago, but I still felt the need to confess...and you're my priest. ...

(HER VOICE CRACKING)

Forgive me Father for I have sinned....

(BREAKS DOWN, CRYING)

(LONG PAUSE)

BOBBY
(STONE-FACED)

You want me to forgive you....

VALERIE
(STILL SOBBING)

Maybe...a little.

(LONG PAUSE)

BOBBY
(LOOKS AWAY FROM HER; WITH GRUDGING ACCEPTANCE)

Who am I to judge you? ...Nobody ever shot at me...nobody ever tried to kill me...I don't know how I'd handle it...maybe I would stand and fight...maybe I would run away like a coward...who the hell knows? ...What you and Tiffany went through....

(TO HER)

I have no right to judge you. ...I wouldn't even try.

(LONG PAUSE)

(SHE STANDS, NOW COMPOSED)

(SHE BEGINS TO LEAVE)

BOBBY

Wait...please.

(SHE STOPS)

I bet you've got plenty of war stories to tell...about you and Tiffany.

VALERIE

...A few.

BOBBY

...I'd like to hear 'em...it'll make me feel closer to her. ...Do you mind?

(PAUSE)

VALERIE

I don't mind.

(SHORT PAUSE)

(HE GOES TO HER; TOGETHER THEY EXIT INTO THE UPSTAGE RIGHT DARKNESS TO THE SLOW, PLAINITIVE SOUND OF A PIANO PLAYING "HALLS OF MONTEZUMA")

(LIGHTS DOWN)

End

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: *The inspiration for this play came from two sources: The Memoir "A Journal for Jordan," By Dana Canady; and the 1946 film "The Best Years of Our Lives." Canady's book, written for her son Jordan, details her life with her companion (and Jordan's father), an Army sergeant who was later killed in Iraq. The*

film tells the story of three returning WWII veterans and their problems in adjusting to life back home.

For this play, I chose to have a female lead rather than a male in order to give a different twist to the standard man-goes-off-to-war-while-his-woman-waits-for-him motif. The psychological effect of her deployment both on her and her boyfriend Bobby is examined, as is her reaction to her subsequent accidental killing of an Iraqi girl.

The play makes the point that Tiffany serves in combat even though women were at the time officially barred from doing so by act of congress. Indeed, this play could not have been written before the Iraq war because the social conditions did not exist: Iraq is the first American conflict in which women serve in combat on a large scale. Almost five hundred women were killed in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan.

AUTHOR BIO: Steve Gold is a New York City-based playwright and the author of the full-length plays *Outlive the Bastards* and *Smash the State*. For several years he was associated with the Off-Off Broadway group The Enigma Theater Company; they produced a couple of his plays before disbanding.