- LIBRETTO -

Big Fish

Book by JOHN AUGUST
Music and Lyrics by ANDREW LIPPA

Based on the novel by Daniel Wallace
and the Columbia Motion Picture
written by John August

Theatrical Rights
WORLDWIDE

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Character Ranges

EDWARD BLOOM

KARL

THE WITCH

WILL BLOOM

JENNY HILL

YOUNG WILL

SANDRA BLOOM

AMOS CALLOWAY

DON PRICE

ZACKY PRICE

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ACT I
SCENE 1

RIVER BANK

(Lights rise on a river)

#1 PROLOGUE

(Reveal EDWARD at the river’s edge. He’s dressed in a suit, tie loosened. He skips a stone across the water. WILL enters stage right. He’s dressed in a jacket and tie.)

WILL

Dad? Mom’s looking for you.

EDWARD

I don’t know why we need rehearsal dinners. These people have been eating dinner their whole lives. They don’t need practice.

WILL

(a smile)

Is this where you taught me to fish?

EDWARD

You caught a catfish this big.

(He measures three feet with his hands)

WILL

It was about half that size, but thank you. And thank you for cleaning it.

(beat)

Dad, about tomorrow...

EDWARD

You’re nervous.

WILL

I’m not.

EDWARD

You are. You got that twitch. I recognize it.
WILL

Dad...

EDWARD

When you were a kid, you’d never jump in the pool. I’d have to sneak up and push ya.

WILL

Yeah, that was fun for me. Actually, I wanted to talk about you...

EDWARD

My favorite subject!

WILL

So, Josephine and I would appreciate it if you didn’t tell any of your stories at the wedding.

EDWARD

My stories.

WILL

And jokes. No stories, no jokes. No anecdotes.

EDWARD


WILL

Thanks.

EDWARD

You used to like my stories, though -- especially the one about the witch.

WILL

I was six.

EDWARD

You were never six. You were born a tiny middle-aged man.

(EDWARD has a pain in his side)

WILL

You okay?

EDWARD

I’m fine. You’re the one in trouble here. You ready to get married?
WILL

I am.

EDWARD
(tossing WILL a stone)
Then here’s to what’s next.

WILL

To what’s next.

(EDWARD exits. WILL holds a moment, thinking back.)

[MUSIC SEGUES]
SCENE 2

A BOY’S BEDROOM

#2 BE THE HERO

(WILL trades places with YOUNG WILL, who sits on his bed. WILL exits. EDWARD enters with a traveling case.)

EDWARD

Evening, son.

YOUNG WILL

Where were you? You missed my game.

EDWARD

How do you know I wasn’t hiding in the stands? Maybe I didn’t want to spook you, keep you from hittin’ that home run.

YOUNG WILL

We were playing soccer.

EDWARD

That’s barely a sport. Now, what story’s it gonna be tonight?

YOUNG WILL

I already marked it. Here.

(He hands EDWARD a book--it’s "The Iliad")

EDWARD

You don’t want this. These are prefabricated. Predigested. Let me tell you a real story -

YOUNG WILL

(wary)
You mean another story about you.

EDWARD

A story about life!

YOUNG WILL

Dad -- can you even read?

EDWARD

I can read just fine! Look...
EDWARD (CON’T)
(Clearing throat; making a real effort)

Chapter nine: “Thus kept the Trojans watch, but the ay-KEE-uns were holden of wondrous Panic…”
(checking book cover)
The hell is this book?

YOUNG WILL
It’s about the Trojan War.

EDWARD
Okay. Ancient Rome and all that.

YOUNG WILL
They’re actually Greek.

EDWARD
That’s my point! We live in Alabama, Will. We got stories under every leaf and every stone.

WHAT IF I TOLD YOU
YOU COULD CHANGE THE WORLD WITH JUST ONE THOUGHT
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU
YOU COULD BE A KING
ANYTHING YOU DESIRED, BOY
ANYTHING ON A PLATE
ALL WITHIN YOUR POWER TO CREATE

I KNOW SOMEWHERE IN THE DARKNESS
THERE’S A STORY MEANT FOR ME
WHERE I ALWAYS KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO SAY
I KNOW SOMEWHERE SOME SURPRISING ENDING
WAITS FOR ME TO TELL IT MY OWN WAY

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY IF YOU CAN
BE THE CHAMPION IN THE FIGHT
NOT JUST THE MAN
DON’T DEPEND ON OTHER PEOPLE
TO PUT PAPER NEXT TO PEN
BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY, BOY, AND THEN
YOU CAN RISE TO BE THE HERO ONCE AGAIN

Now, best part of an adventure is the people you meet.

(Reveal THE WITCH—EDWARD greets her.)
EDWARD (CON’T)

WHAT IF I SAID
I MET A WITCH WHEN I WAS VERY YOUNG
WHAT IF I SAID
SHE SHOWED ME HOW I DIE

YOUNG WILL

How you die?

EDWARD

POWERLESS IN THE FACE OF IT
TERRIFIED IN THE WOOD
THAT WAS WHERE MY LIFE WAS CHANGED FOR GOOD

(THE WITCH exits; reveal THE GIANT--EDWARD shakes his hand.)

EDWARD

HEY!
WHAT IF I SAID
I MET A GIANT WASTING IN A CAVE
WHAT IF I CLAIMED I ROSE TO BE FAR BRAVER THAN THE BRAVE
ALL MY LIFE OF STORIES, SON, AND EVERY ONE IS TRUE
SO BELIEVE ME AS I’M TELLING YOU

TO BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY WHILE YOU MAY
BE THE GUY WHO GETS THE GIRL AND SAVES THE DAY
YOU DON’T NEED A BOOK OF GREEKS
TO TEACH YOU HOW TO STAY ALIVE
BE THE HERO OF EACH STORY YOU DERIVE
THEN FOREVER YOU’RE THE STORY WHO’LL SURVIVE

EVERY TALE THAT YOU INVENT
CAN BE A LIFE THAT YOU MAKE REAL
WHERE EACH CHARACTER YOU MEET
BECOMES YOUR FRIEND

(ENSEMBLE enters, each one dressed as we will see them later in the show.)

YOU DON’T NEED TO BE A NOVELIST
TO MAKE BELIEVE WHAT'S WAITING 'ROUND THE BEND

EDWARD AND ENSEMBLE

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY ’TIL IT’S DONE
WHY GO PROMENADE WHEN YOU WERE BORN TO RUN
EDWARD
IF YOU UNDERSTAND THIS PREMISE
YOU WILL NEVER BE ALONE

EDWARD AND SOME ENSEMBLE
YOU CAN CONQUER EVERY CHALLENGE
YOU CAN FACE EACH STEPPING STONE

EDWARD AND FULL ENSEMBLE
BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY

(EDWARD spots THE MERMAID in the river)

EDWARD
WHAT IF I SWORE
I SAW A MERMAID SWIMMING IN THE MIST
WHAT IF I TOLD YOU
SHE WOULD BE THE FIRST GIRL THAT I KISSED
OUT THERE NEAR THE WATER
FILLED WITH EAGERNESS AND FEAR
HERE IS WHAT SHE WHISPERED IN MY EAR:

EDWARD AND FULL ENSEMBLE
BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY
BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY
BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY

(Quick kiss--As music builds, EDWARD helps
THE MERMAID out of the river.)

EDWARD
Something about that kiss transformed her.

(She now has legs! She dances.)

Pretty as she was in the water, she was even more beautiful out of it.

(she blows a kiss and spins out)

One day, I met this fisherman...

(A FRUSTRATED FISHERMAN enters)

FRUSTRATED FISHERMAN
You gottta help me! If I don’t catch a fish, my family’s gonna starve!
EDWARD
The fish are sleepin’! You gotta get ‘em movin’.
(an idea)
Try the Alabama Stomp!

(EDWARD launches into a stomping dance step. One fish jumps out of the river, landing on stage --it’s incredible!)

EDWARD
Works every time!
(then)
C’mon, Will!

(EDWARD dances again. YOUNG WILL tries to follow, but gives up halfway through. Another fish jumps out! THE FISHERMAN catches it in his bucket.)

EDWARD
(to THE FISHERMAN)
C’mon, pilgrim. Let’s see what you got.

(THE FISHERMAN joins EDWARD in the Alabama Stomp)

EDWARD
Something about this rhythm really gets their fins movin’.

(They finish the step -- but this time, no fish jump out.)

YOUNG WILL
Dad -- Couldn’t you just give him some money?

EDWARD
(to YOUNG WILL)
See Will, give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. Teach a man the Alabama Stomp, you feed his soul!

(to the others)
C’mon! Everybody! We gotta help this guy.

[MUSIC BUILDS]
(More and more people join in)

[SFX: WATERY SOUNDS]

(The river begins to churn)

[MUSIC BUILDS]

[SFX: RUMBLE]

(Then suddenly, fish shoot out of the river—As they celebrate, the ENSEMBLE gathers up the fish.)

EDWARD (CON’T)
I KNOW SOMEWHERE IN THE FUTURE
THERE’S ADVENTURE MADE FOR ME
FILLED WITH MYSTERY AND PEOPLE I CAN LOVE
I KNOW OUT THERE ON THE ROAD OF LIFE
I’LL LIVE THE STORY I’VE BEEN DREAMING OF

EDWARD AND ENSEMBLE
LIVE THE STORY I’VE BEEN DREAMING OF
BE THE HERO EVERY TIME YOU GET THE CHANCE
IF THE MUSIC STOPS CONTINUE WITH THE DANCE

EDWARD
ON A WING OR ON A PRAYER
YOU GET THERE ONLY WITH YOUR VOICE

EDWARD AND ENSEMBLE
BE ATTENTIVE
BE INVENTIVE
BE THE FIRST ONE TO REJOICE
WITH A STORY IN YOUR HEART
YOU WON’T NEED ANY OTHER CHOICE
YOU’RE A HERO, FIGHTING DRAGONS, WINNING WARS
BE THE HERO AND THE WORLD WILL SOON BE YOURS!!

#2A BE THE HERO (PLAYOFF)

(ENSEMBLE exits)

YOUNG WILL

What the hell was that?
EDWARD
It was a miracle, Will! C’mon.

YOUNG WILL
It doesn’t seem plausible.

EDWARD
Will...

YOUNG WILL
Dad, why do you tell so many crazy stories?

EDWARD
(momentarily stumped)
It’s who I am. Why does the sun shine?

Because of fusion.

EDWARD
Lord, Will. It was a rhetorical question.

SANDRA
(offstage)
Edward!

EDWARD
(to YOUNG WILL)
Quick! Where’s that book?

SANDRA
(offstage)
Why is the light still on?

YOUNG WILL
Now you’re in trouble.

(SANDRA enters)

SANDRA
Edward Bloom! It’s nine o’clock on a school night. Let this boy sleep.

EDWARD
I was just finishing this chapter on...

(random page from book)
Ag-UR-men-non. Why can’t anyone have a normal name like Chuck?
YOUNG WILL
Mom, can you really get fish to jump out of a river by doing the Alabama Stomp?

SANDRA
I suppose anything’s possible.

(a look to EDWARD)

For example, I’ve heard legend of a brave and handsome man who happily fixed the leaky sink in the bathroom the very first time his wife asked without excuses or delay.

EDWARD
(to YOUNG WILL)
That there’s a myth. Except for the brave and handsome part.

SANDRA
(smile)
Lights out, both of you.

EDWARD
You heard your Mom.

(YOUNG WILL gets into bed. SANDRA exits. EDWARD gives WILL a kiss on the top of his head and turns off the bedside lamp. Just as EDWARD is about to exit --)

YOUNG WILL
Dad?

EDWARD
Son.

YOUNG WILL
Did you really meet a Witch?

EDWARD
(knows he’s hooked him)
I did. But now, see...your Mom says I can’t tell you that story. You’ll get nightmares.

YOUNG WILL
I’m not scared!
EDWARD

Neither was I -- at first.

(EDWARD sneaks back, getting in bed with YOUNG WILL)

EDWARD

Now, it’s a well-established fact that most southern towns of a certain size have a witch.

YOUNG WILL

Do we have a witch?

EDWARD

No, but we got two Dairy Queens, so we’re still comin’ out ahead.

#2B BEFORE THE SWAMP

Now, small-town witches mostly keep to the minor incantations, love spells, whatnot. But of all the witches in Alabama, there was one who was the most renowned, for she could see the future.

YOUNG WILL

And she told you the future?

EDWARD

She showed me! That night in the swamp, three of us went looking for her -- just three teenage boys on a dare.

[MUSIC STOPS]

I didn’t know she would change my life forever.
SCENE 3

THE SWAMP

(A title card: “THE WITCH.”)

(EDWARD changes into a teenage version of himself. The set changes, placing EDWARD in the swamp.

“Teenage” DON PRICE and his little brother ZACKY PRICE enter downstage right with flashlights.)

[SFX: SWAMP NOISES and CROWS]

(EDWARD joins them. YOUNG WILL watches)

DON PRICE

Shhh! Quiet, Zacky!

ZACKY PRICE

I gotta bug in my drawers! (tries to shake it out)
Help me, Don!

DON PRICE

I ain’t gettin’ near your drawers.

ZACKY PRICE

Oh oh oh it’s on the move!

(He grabs at his seat, like a dog chasing its tail)

EDWARD

Use your flashlight! It’ll go towards the light. (ZACKY shoves his flashlight down his crotch)

DON PRICE

Not that way!

EDWARD

You want it to move down to your feet!
(ZACKY sits on the ground, sticking the flashlight up his pant leg.)

**ZACKY PRICE**

It’s working!

(wriggling)

It’s out!

(DON stomps the bug)

**DON PRICE**

C’mon, let’s find that Witch.

(DON and EDWARD head off. ZACKY picks up the carcass of the insect, then throws it in the river.)

**ZACKY PRICE**

(realizing he’s alone)

Wait for me!

(He chases after them. As THE BOYS exit, the trees begin to come to life. The roots undulate, then magically transform into WITCHES, who fill the stage with a rhythmic dance.

When THE THREE BOYS re-enter, THE DANCING WITCHES instantly wrap themselves in their capes and become trees in the forest.)

**EDWARD**

We’re walkin’ in circles, Don.

**DON PRICE**

(getting in his face)

You wanna lead, go ahead Bloom. I don’t think there even is a Witch.

(Suddenly, the WITCHES swirl apart and reveal THE WITCH, a backwoods sorceress)

**WITCH**

Boys, you have broken a sacred circle. You better have a good reason.
ZACKY PRICE
(tight squeal)

DON PRICE
We wanted our fortunes read.

WITCH
I can tell you the future with uncanny accuracy. Your loves, your lives, your deaths. Dollar apiece.

(DON hands over his dollar)

ZACKY PRICE
(checking his pockets)
Can I borrow a dollar? I’ll pay you back.

WITCH
No he won’t.

ZACKY PRICE
(awed)
She knows!

DON PRICE
(to WITCH)
C’mon. Tell me my future.

WITCH
You asked for it.
(re: crystal ball)
Oh. Yes. The future is quite clear.

DON PRICE
What do you see? Do I get quarterback?

WITCH
You lead an unexceptional life, filled with minor triumphs and major disappointments.

(beat)
And then you die.

DON PRICE
What? That’s it?!
WITCH
That’s all the spirits see for you.

DON PRICE
I want to know how rich I’m going to be.

WITCH
A dollar poorer than when you started.
(to EDWARD)
Now, as for you...

(EDWARD is surprised to be singled out)

DON PRICE
I want my money back!

(he grabs the crystal ball)

ZACKY PRICE
Don, don’t! She’ll hex you.

EDWARD
Give it back.

DON PRICE
How ‘bout I smash it?
(to the WITCH)
How you gonna do fortunes without your crystal ball?

[MUSIC OUT]

EDWARD
I said give it back.

DON PRICE
Or what? You think you can take me, Bloom?

(EDWARD reaches into his pocket and digs out a bill)

EDWARD
Here’s your money back. Now hand it over.

DON PRICE
(handing it over)
Witch-lover.
Act 1 - Scene 3

ZACKY PRICE
(weakly imitating)
Witch-lover.

(ZACKY and DON exit)

EDWARD
(handing crystal ball)
Here you go.

("goodnight")
Ma’am.

WITCH
Don’t you want your fortune?

EDWARD
Let me guess:

#3 I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

I lead a “disappointing life and then I die.”

WITCH
Everyone dies, Edward Bloom.
(he turns)
But your death is glorious.
(re: crystal ball)
Let me show you.

EDWARD
Why would I want to see how I die?

WITCH
WHAT’S YOUR CONCERN?
ARE YOU SCARED OF HEARING ONE THING NEW
WHEN YOU COULD LEARN
SOMETHING SECRET THAT COULD HELP YOU THROUGH
IN ONE GOOD TURN
I CAN SHOW YOU COUNTERFEIT FROM TRUE
LIFE BEGINS WHEN YOU KNOW HOW IT ENDS

And yours is no ordinary life.

YOU BECOME IMPORTANT
YOU’RE THE BRAVEST MAN AROUND
YOU’RE THE KIND WITH VIRTUE
WITCH (CON’T)
ALWAYS FINDING COMMON GROUND
YOU CLIMB EACH HILL IN FRONT OF YOU
WITHOUT A SUFFERING SOUND
COMPASSIONATE AND WARM
THE CALM IN ANY STORM

OTHER WITCHES
SO, TAKE A CHANCE

WITCH
LET ME SHOW YOU HOW YOUR DAYS UNFOLD

OTHER WITCHES
AND IN ADVANCE

WITCH
YOU AND ME CAN PLAY THE HAND YOU HOLD

OTHER WITCHES
NOW JOIN THE DANCE

WITCH
WHEN YOU GAMBLE THEN YOU GET THE GOLD

OTHER WITCHES
LIFE BEGINS WHEN YOU KNOW HOW IT ENDS

WITCH
DON’T BELIEVE THE FAIRY TALES
THAT SAY LIFE IS A BREEZE
EVERY MAN MUST FACE A TRIAL
THAT BRINGS HIM TO HIS KNEES
BUT LET ME SHARE A MAGIC TRUTH

A PROOF OF ALL THAT THRIVES
THE ONES WHO FACE THEIR FEARS
LEAD THE MOST INTERESTING LIVES

OTHER WITCHES
INTERESTING LIVES
INTERESTING LIVES!!

(Dance sequence)

WITCH
SO TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT
EDWARD

I WANT A BIG LIFE

WITCH

AND TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE

EDWARD

I SEE A ROAD

WITCH

TELL ME WHERE IT GOES

EDWARD

IN ONE DIRECTION

WITCH

SO, DON’T YOU WANT TO SEE WHAT’S NEXT
WHAT’S WAITING IN THE VOID
YOU MAY BE DISAPPOINTED
BUT YOU MAY BE OVERJOYED!

[MUSIC SEGUES]

THE WITCH holds out the crystal ball. EDWARD peers in.

Lights shift—Spooky, but also glorious. It’s what EDWARD will see at the end of the play. As the moment ends, YOUNG WILL appears.)

YOUNG WILL

What did she show you?

EDWARD

The last moments of my life.

YOUNG WILL

What were they? What did you see?

EDWARD

Surprise ending. Wouldn’t want to ruin it for you.

[MUSIC SEGUES]
#3B I KNOW WHAT YOU WANT (REPRISE)

EDWARD (CON’T)
(leading YOUNG WILL)
Though you were there. Your mother too -- but I didn’t know her yet. She was just a girl with red hair.

(YOUNG WILL disappears)

WITCH
You’re gonna find that girl. But it won’t be easy.

(THE WITCH meets EDWARD center stage)

WITCH (CON’T)

SO...

ALL WITCHES
DON’T BE SAD
DON’T BE SCARED
BE ALERT
BE PREPARED
TAKE A BREATH
TAKE IT SLOW
LET UNCERTAINTY GO

(THE WITCHES cover EDWARD, who disappears)

WHEN YOU KNOW

(Reveal EDWARD, now transformed into his older self. He readies a skipping stone.)

ALL WITCHES
HOW IT ENDS YOU BEGIN

OTHER WITCHES
WHEN YOU TRY

WITCH
YOU CAN FLY

ALL WITCHES
FLY!
(As THE WITCHES exit, reveal GROWN-UP WILL in a tuxedo. He trades places with YOUNG WILL.)
SCENE 4

NEAR THE BANKS OF A RIVER

(Sunlight and trees. EDWARD is skipping more stones.)

WILL
Dad, seriously, you need to get dressed. The wedding’s in forty-five minutes.

EDWARD
(re: skipping stones)
See that? I almost got seven. Seven’s good luck.
(looks over)
You’ll need luck, what with that baby coming.

WILL
(trying to play it cool)
What are you talking about?

EDWARD
(watching WILL, a smile)
Josephine’s pregnant.

WILL
How do you..?

EDWARD
(re: WILL’s face)
‘Cuz you just told me, just now. See, back when I worked at the circus, I developed a knack for reading expressions -- useful with lions. Plus she didn’t drink at the rehearsal dinner.

WILL
Okay, Dad, nobody knows she’s pregnant. You can’t tell Mom.

EDWARD
Why not?

WILL
Because it’s super-early. Statistically, there’s a good chance it could not happen so...

EDWARD
Statistically.
WILL

Yes.

EDWARD

You -- an Alabama boy -- meet an American girl all the way over in Baghdad. What are the odds of that, statistically?

WILL

We’re both reporters so it’s not that remarkable.

EDWARD

Lord, Will. I would hate to see the rainbows in your world. Bet they’re all-shades of gray.

WILL

It’s just, the baby, I don’t want to jinx it.

(EDWARD tosses another stone. We hear it skip across the water.)

EDWARD

(re: stone)

Relax, Will. That’s seven. Everything’s gonna be fine.

WILL

Promise me you won’t say anything. And what we talked about earlier: no stories. No toasts.

EDWARD

C’mon. When have I ever embarrassed you?

(off WILL’s reaction)

Fine. I’m not good around orchestras. But I really thought I could play that violin. It doesn’t look that hard.

(SANDRA enters wearing a beautiful dress)

SANDRA

Honey, get dressed.

EDWARD

Will was holding me up! Look at you. Give me a kiss.

SANDRA

I just did my face. Go put on clothes.
(As EDWARD exits, he spots a man carrying a violin case)

EDWARD

Oh, hey! Is that a violin? Let me see that.

SANDRA

(to WILL)
Are you nervous?

WILL

No. Yes. Mom, about Dad... I know you can’t control him...

SANDRA

I could just as easily control the weather.

WILL

Dad is like the weather. I can predict him, sort of, but I fundamentally don’t understand him. I don’t get him. He’s this baffling hurricane.

SANDRA

If you’re going to worry about anyone, worry about your poor mother. Abandoning me for a woman on television.

WILL

You love Josephine.

SANDRA

I do. We turn on the cable news sometimes just to watch her. She’s smart and pretty and kind. But you’re my little Alabama lamb, all the way up there in New York.

(then)
You want to practice one more time?

WILL

Absolutely.

#4 ALABAMA WEDDING

(takes her hand, a box step)
Forward, together, side, together. Back, together...

SANDRA

Not out loud, Will.
WILL

Right.

SANDRA

Better! That’s it.

[MUSIC SEGUES]
SCENE 5

WEDDING RECEPTION AT THE WATER’S EDGE

(Lights shift as WEDDING DANCERS sweep in--WILL begins dancing with his new bride, JOSEPHINE. Her wedding gown is stunning.)

EDWARD
Son, let me help you out there.

(EDWARD cuts in, sweeping JOSEPHINE off her feet. He’s quite the dancer. As they finish...)

EDWARD
See, Will! That’s how you do it.

(WILL checks that JOSEPHINE is alright -- she is. They greet the crowd.)

WILL
Thank you all so much for coming. Josephine and I are unbelievably grateful to have so many friends here to help us celebrate.

JOSEPHINE
For people who don’t know, this is actually where Will proposed to me. One year ago, right here on the banks of this river. I had just met Edward and Sandra, and I knew -- I knew -- that I wanted to be part of this family.

(Some coos as JOSEPHINE and WILL kiss)

WILL
So before we get to dinner, we have a couple of things to...

(EDWARD interrupts)

EDWARD
Yes, good evenin’! My name is Edward Bloom. On behalf of me and my wife Sandra -- she’s the gorgeous one right there -- it is a pleasure to welcome y’all to Alabama!

(noticing WILL’s objection)
EDWARD (CON’T)
Will told me I was not allowed to give a toast. You’ll notice there is no glass in my hand.

WILL
Technicality.

EDWARD
Technicality, he says!

(WILL and JOSEPHINE yield the floor to him)

EDWARD
Will thinks I talk too much -- but I would have loved to have a talkative father. My own Daddy, he was a farmer. Lucky to get four words outta him. But one day -- one day I heard him out in the field, just blathering at length. Said he couldn’t get a word in between me and my mother, but the corn -- the corn was all ears.

(THE CROWD laughs. Some groans.)

EDWARD
(to WAITER)
Oh, hey, back up here.

(He snags a glass of champagne from the WAITER)

EDWARD
On the topic of fatherhood, I have an announcement. After careful consideration, I have decided to become a grandfather.

WILL
Dad!

EDWARD
Now, I’m sworn to secrecy, but I’m told my ambition may be fulfilled sooner than I dared hope.

(a silent beat)

(All eyes on WILL and JOSEPHINE. A look between them. Finally, JOSEPHINE makes the save--
JOSEPHINE
Okay. Okay. It’s time to catch the bouquet. Ladies, follow me.
(JOSEPHINE leads the women s the exit. WILL joins his mother, explaining and apologizing, sotto. EDWARD approaches--)

EDWARD
C’mon, Will. It’s good news!

WILL
(moving downstage)
It’s too early. A thousand things could go wrong.

EDWARD
They won’t! Why are you such a pessimist?

WILL
I’m a realist, Dad. And yes, it’s good news. But it’s our news. Why do you have to make everything about you?

EDWARD
I’m excited! I got carried away.

WILL
You always get carried away. I’m sick of it.

EDWARD
I’m sick of you treating me like a child! What kind of son doesn’t let his father give a toast at his wedding?

WILL
(overlapping)
The son whose father does this.

EDWARD
Grow up, Will.

WILL
I did! You weren’t there. You were never there.

(SANDRA tries to intervene)

SANDRA
Calm down.

EDWARD
I was building a business!
WILL
You were running away.

EDWARD
From what, from you?

WILL
From reality. All I got from you is a bunch of crazy stories about how awesome you are and I’m sorry Dad, that’s not the man I see.

EDWARD
Maybe you never bothered lookin’.

SANDRA
Stop it! Both of you. Before you say something you can’t take back.

WILL
I’m done.

EDWARD
So am I.
(WILL exits. SANDRA follows him.

After a beat, EDWARD adjusts himself—another pain in his side. DOCTOR BENNETT approaches.)

DR. BENNETT
You alright?

EDWARD
That boy is bull-headed. I don’t know where he gets it.

DR. BENNETT
Askin’ about you.
(re: his side)
What’s going on there?

EDWARD
Put your stethoscope away, Doc. I’m fine.

DR. BENNETT
How long’s this been going on?
EDWARD
I dunno. A while. It’s nothing.

DR. BENNETT
You lost weight.

EDWARD
Exercise! What, you didn’t see me dancing? I’m fine.

DR. BENNETT
I’m sure you are. But come in Monday, and we’ll be doubly-sure.
SCENE 6

TWO DIFFERENT DOCTORS’ OFFICES

(JOSEPHINE reclines on an examination table for an ultrasound conducted by a NEW YORK
DOCTOR. Holding JOSEPHINE’s hand, WILL stares in frustration at a screen. Somewhere
in there is a fetus.)

JOSEPHINE

JUST TAKE ANOTHER LOOK

WILL

I’m trying!

JOSEPHINE

IT’S JUST OFF TO THE RIGHT

WILL

My right or its right?

JOSEPHINE

A LITTLE BIT OF PATIENCE, WILL
(to THE DOCTOR)
NOW HOLD IT STILL
AND THERE, VOILÀ!
WITH LIGHT!

WILL

A penis! It’s a boy!

JOSEPHINE

Yes!

WILL

We’re having a son.

(Lights rise on another part of the stage, where DR. BENNETT enters, followed by EDWARD
and SANDRA. DR. BENNETT reviews lab results.)

EDWARD

If it’s bad news, just tell me.

DR. BENNETT

It’s not what we want to see.
SANDRA

The tumor didn’t shrink?

DR. BENNETT

No. It’s spread beyond where we thought.

SANDRA

But that doesn’t mean...

EDWARD

‘Course it doesn’t honey. I just have ambitious cancer is all. Right, Doc?

DR. BENNETT

Exactly.

SANDRA

We’ll keep going though, right? Or try something new.

DR. BENNETT

There’s a conversation to have about what’s next.

(SANDRA starts to tear up. Seeing this, EDWARD takes her hand.)

EDWARD

Now, Sandra...

SANDRA

I need to call Will. We never should have kept this from him.

EDWARD

Fine. But you needn’t worry him.

(SANDRA exits)

DR. BENNETT

Will doesn’t know about any of this?

EDWARD

He’s got his own life up in New York. No sense bothering him.

(Lights shift back to WILL and JOSEPHINE)
(re: her belly)
This is really happening.

(played)
You thought I was making it up?

No.

I’ll get dressed.

Meet you outside.

(JOSEPHINE gets up. One last thought--)

Will -- we’re going to have a son.

I know!

(alone for a moment)

A son.

#5 STRANGER

I’m feeling stranger than I’ve ever felt before
and so much more

Like something old has joined with something new
but still feels true

I’m passing through a rite that every parent does
I’m walking on some shared familiar ground
yet every step I take is not a step that was
and I’ve found, I like the sound

[MUSIC CONTINUES]

(WILL shifts as we arrive at--)

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SCENE 7

NEW YORK CITY / CENTRAL PARK

(Skyscrapers in the distance. New Yorkers go about their day. A boy walks past with his father.)

WILL (CON’T)

OF STRANGER

A CHILD I’VE YET TO MEET BECOMES MY EVERYTHING
MY SONG TO SING

FATHER
AND SUDDENLY THE WEIGHT OF IT IS REAL
WHAT DO I FEEL?
I FEEL CONNECTED IN A WAY I’VE NEVER KNOWN
A LINE FROM DAD TO ME TO NEW-BORN SON
SO FROM TODAY I’LL NEVER MAKE A CHOICE ALONE
ONE FOR ALL
ALL FOR ONE

AND WHEN HE’S BORN
I’LL TEACH HIM HOW TO USE HIS COMMON SENSE
HE’LL LISTEN AND HE’LL LEARN AND HE’LL EXCEL
I’LL TELL MY SON
THAT LIFE IS LIVED IN CLEAR AND PRESENT TENSE
NOT ONLY IN THE STORIES WE CAN TELL

MY FATHER TOLD ME STORIES
I COULD NEVER COMPREHEND
IN EVERY TALE HE’D CLAIM TO BE THE HERO
I’VE TRIED TO UNDERSTAND HIM
BUT I WONDER IF I CAN
BECAUSE AFTER ALMOST THIRTY YEARS

I STILL DON’T KNOW THE MAN
I WISH I KNEW THE MAN

BUT HE’S A STRANGER
MY FATHER IS A STRANGER I KNOW VERY WELL
A PUZZLING SHELL

HOPEFUL
WHAT’S ON ITS WAY MAY HELP US BOTH TO GROW
BUT I DON’T KNOW
WILL (CON’T)
I DON’T KNOW WHEN I’LL UNDERSTAND WHAT MADE HIM WILD
I DON’T KNOW WHY HE HAS THE URGE TO FLY
I WANT TO FACE HIM LIKE A MAN AND NOT A CHILD

SO I’LL TRY
I’LL REALLY TRY
AND IN TIME, MY BOY IS SURE TO SEE
BRIGHTER DAYS FOR DAD AND ME
WE CAN DO THINGS BETTER THAN BEFORE
SO THAT STRANGERS WE WILL BE NO MORE

(WILL’s phone rings. He checks the number and answers)

#5A PHONE CALL

WILL
Mom! I was just about to call you. What’s...what’s wrong? Mom?
(hearing the news)
I’m coming home. We’ll be on the next flight.

[MUSIC SEGUES]

(WILL exits)
SCENE 8

GARAGE—NIGHT

#5B AFTER STRANGER

(EDWARD’s desk and file cabinet are buried under mounds of file boxes. SANDRA enters, speaking to offstage WILL.)

SANDRA
I wanted to tell you right away, but your father didn’t want anyone to know he was sick. How dare anyone think Edward Bloom is mortal.

(WILL enters with a bucket. SANDRA folds towels.)

SANDRA (CON’T)
The treatment was a longshot. But your father was convinced it would work.

WILL
What does Dr. Bennett say?

SANDRA
He says comforting things. But we all know where this is headed.

WILL
I’m so sorry, Mom. I want to do something. How can I help?

SANDRA
I’m just glad you know. Family shouldn’t have secrets.

WILL
Mom, have you and Dad talked about money?

SANDRA
We have plenty of money.

WILL
Is the house paid off?

SANDRA
Years ago. The day we sent in the last check, we had champagne. Your father opened it with a sword.

(demonstrates)
SANDRA (CON’ T)
There was glass in the carpet for weeks.

WILL
(re: files and boxes)
Mom, you won’t mind if I look for the mortgage? The insurance...
(off her reaction)
I’m worried about you, about what’s going to happen. We have to keep a roof over your head.

SANDRA
I am not worried about the house. I’m not worried about me -- I’m worried about you.

WILL
I’m fine, Mom. I’ll be fine, you don’t...

SANDRA
Oh, “I’m fine.” You sound like your father.

#6 TWO MEN IN MY LIFE

You are the two most stubborn men on Earth, and it is my curse that I love you both.

THERE ARE TWO MEN IN MY LIFE
HIM AND YOU
THERE ARE TWO MEN WHO’LL BE SPEAKING WHEN I’M THROUGH
THERE ARE FEW MEN LIKE YOUR DAD
NOT EASY TO DEFINE
I KNOW HE ISN’T PERFECT
BUT HE’S MINE

(They exit the garage, which moves offstage. WILL sets up chairs.)

THERE ARE TWO MEN IN MY LIFE
HIM AND YOU
AND I NEVER WANT TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE TWO
HE DISTORTS AND HE INVENTS
SOME STORIES DON’T MAKE SENSE
BUT WHY SHOULD THAT CONFUSE YOU
WHY NOT LET THE MAN AMUSE YOU—

(EDWARD and JOSEPHINE enter. She’s laughing.
A title card: ”THE GIRL IN THE WATER”)

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EDWARD
I was always a good swimmer -- people said I was born for the water. Plus I had a helluva teacher.

(A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN sits in the river. A tail lifts up. EDWARD continues his story, sotto, as THE MERMAID swims.)

SANDRA
HE TELLS A HARMLESS TALE
THAT ALWAYS DRIVES YOU MAD
BUT AREN'T YOU TELLING STORIES TOO
YOUR POINT OF VIEW
JUST DIFFERENT FROM YOUR DAD

EDWARD
This girl, she couldn’t speak a word. But it was clear she was under some kind of curse.

SANDRA
THERE ARE TWO MEN IN MY LIFE
HIM AND YOU
AND THE STORIES I BELIEVE IN ALL COME TRUE
HE CAN GIVE YOU WHAT YOU NEED
BUT YOU SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD
THERE IS MAGIC IN THE MAN
PLEASE FIND IT WHILE YOU CAN

EDWARD
(to JOSEPHINE)
Only way to lift the spell...was with a kiss.

(EDWARD kneels to kiss THE MERMAID, but before he can--)

WILL
(worried)
Dad?!

(THE MERMAID gets spooked and disappears beneath the water)

EDWARD
Will.
(EDWARD has a hard time getting back up. WILL tries to help him, but EDWARD won’t have it.)

EDWARD (CON’T)
I’m fine! You don’t need to baby me.

WILL

Sorry.

EDWARD
People needn’t worry so much. It’s not my time yet. This isn’t how I go.

WILL
Right. The Witch.

JOSEPHINE
The Witch?

WILL
There was a woman in the swamp who told him how he died.

EDWARD
She showed me how I go, and this is not it.

JOSEPHINE
So how does it happen?

EDWARD
Surprise ending -- wouldn’t want to ruin it for ya. (to WILL)
And you! Well, forget the life you know, because having a kid changes everything. I mean, there’s the diapers and the burping and the midnight feedings...

WILL
(to SANDRA)
Did he do any of that?

EDWARD
No, but I hear it’s terrible. Just awful.

SANDRA
(checking her watch)
Well, I should probably get dinner started.
EDWARD AND WILL

I can help.

SANDRA
No, no. You stay out here and talk.

(SANDRA and EDWARD fuss, but he relents. SANDRA exits.)

EDWARD
Oh hey, you come sit with me.

(EDWARD and JOSEPHINE sit in the lawn chairs)

WILL
So Dad, I can probably get the pump working if you wanted to swim.

EDWARD
Don’t put yourself out.

WILL
It’s fine.

EDWARD
You know where the chemicals are?

WILL
I used to do it when you were gone, remember?

EDWARD
(prickly)
I was a traveling salesman, Will. I couldn't exactly stay at home.

WILL
I wasn’t trying to pick a fight.

JOSEPHINE
Oh! Here. You can feel him kick.

(JOSEPHINE puts EDWARD’s hand on her belly. He smiles.)

EDWARD
He’s strong! When is he coming?
JOSEPHINE

Twenty-two weeks. So--

WILL

Five months.

EDWARD

Five months. Well. You’ll tell him about me. Only the good stuff.

JOSEPHINE

Of course.

(A crack in his facade – his mortality suddenly feels very real. WILL and JOSEPHINE both clock this.)

WILL

Yeah, Dad, I’d really love to know more about the real versions of events, stories, you. Maybe we can go over some things while I’m here.

EDWARD

You mean while I’m here.

(an awkward moment)

JOSEPHINE

So, I want to know the full history. Now, I know you grew up in Alabama, but was it here in Montgomery?

EDWARD

Not too far away. A tiny little place called Ashton. Our town was so small our phone book was the Yellow Page.

(topping it)
Our town was so small the zip code was a fraction.

(topping it)
Our town was so small we only had three jokes.

(he stands)

But I’ll tell you: the best thing about growing up in a small town like Ashton -- a boy with ambition can be a pretty big deal.
#7 ASHTON’S FAVORITE SON

(Montage begins showing EDWARD in high school--WILL and JOSEPHINE remain on stage.)

TOWNSFOLK

EDWARD BLOOM
YOU’RE ASHTON’S FAVORITE SON
YES YOU ARE!

(He swings the bat -- CRACK - and hits a home run. He is awarded a giant trophy.)

EDWARD BLOOM
JUST LOOK AT WHAT YOU’VE DONE
SUPERSTAR!
HERO OF THE BASEBALL DIAMOND
HITS A HOME RUN

CHAMPION OF THE SCIENCE FAIR

(At a science fair lab table, EDWARD demonstrates his experiment. He receives an A+.)

HE’S “A-NUMBER ONE!”

(EDWARD stands on his school desk, surrounded by supporters holding signs for his campaign for STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT.)

CAPTAIN OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL
WINS THE DEBATE
ALWAYS KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT TO SAY

(Signs flip--“WINNER!”)

(EDWARD becomes a football player)

FOOTBALL HERO, TOO
LOOK WHAT HE CAN DO
ASHTON’S FAVORITE SON IN EVERY WAY

(EDWARD kicks a football. REFEREES lift their hands -- he’s kicked the winning field goal.)
(Final transformation as EDWARD links arms with JENNY HILL, his date for prom. Each wears a sash and a crown: PROM KING AND QUEEN. They start to dance.)

**JENNY HILL**

HE’S THE MAN I TREASURE  
HE’S THE MAN I’LL WED  
THOUGH HE DOESN’T KNOW IT YET  
HE’LL BE WITH ME UNTIL WE’RE DEAD  
JENNY HILL NO MORE WILL BE MY NAME  
AND I’VE HANDSOME EDWARD BLOOM TO BLAME!

[MUSIC CONTINUES]

(The set changes as a group of CHEERLEADERS bring us to--)
SCENE 9

ASHTON TOWN SQUARE

CHEERLEADERS
EDWARD! EDWARD!
GO EDWARD!
EDWARD BLOOM
OUR FAVORITE SON!!!!!

(As TOWNSFOLK exit, JENNY approaches.)

JENNY HILL
Edward Bloom, do you love me like I love you?

EDWARD
Of course not.

JENNY HILL
You don’t?

(EDWARD hops down, following JENNY downstage)

EDWARD
Jenny Hill, you are the prettiest—
(she coos)
Smartest—
(she coos more)
And blondest girl in Ashton.
(she coos the most)
How I could love you like you love me when you are an angel and I am just a simple boy in love.

JENNY HILL
(melting)
Nothing will ever come between us.

(a chaste kiss)

(Suddenly, a CROWD OF TOWNSFOLK pushes through. The town’s MAYOR tries to control the growing mob.)

MAYOR
Now, calm down. Calm down!
SCHOOLTEACHER
Mayor, there is a giant living in them hills.

SHARECROPPER
I seen him! He’s ten feet tall, with crazy eyes of fire!

LITTLE GIRL WITH ORANGE CAT
He might eat my cat!

HOT-BLOODED SHOTGUN TOTER
If you ain’t gonna stop him Mayor, we will!

MAYOR
I won’t have mob violence in this town. Not without a permit.

DON PRICE
(holding up baseball bat)
I got your permit right here! We gotta smash that giant before he smashes us.

CROWD
(various)
Yeah!/Absolutely!/He’s right!/Uh-huh!

DON PRICE
Alright: we need torches and pitchforks.

EDWARD
Wait, wait! Has someone tried talking to this giant?

BARBER
You can’t reason with ‘im!

SHEPHERD
He’s a monster!

EDWARD
I’ll do it! I’ll talk to him. See if I can get him to move on.

DON PRICE
Edward Bloom.

EDWARD
Don Price.
DON PRICE
You wanna sweet-talk a giant, go ahead, Bloom. It’s your funeral.

EDWARD
That’s just it, Don. The witch showed me how my life ends. It don’t happen like this.

#7A EDWARD WALKS

Bye, Jenny!

(As EDWARD walks, the town and TOWNSFOLK recede; bringing us to--)

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SCENE 10

FANTASTICAL FOREST

(A title card: —“THE GIANT.”)

(Reaching the entrance to a cave --)

EDWARD

Hello? Hello!

(bats fly out!)

My name is Edward Bloom, and I want to talk to you!

(A deep rumbling voice, seeming to come from all around)

THE GIANT

Go away!

EDWARD

I will not! Not until you show yourself. Come on out here, and face me like a man!

THE GIANT

I said GO AWAY!

EDWARD

Fine! I’m coming in.

(EDWARD enters)
SCENE 11

THE CAVE

(Wet and dripping. Empty but for a pile of rubble center stage. EDWARD looks for shapes in the darkness.)

EDWARD
Just like I thought. Only kinda giant you are is a giant coward.

(The cave shudders. EDWARD thinks it’s an earthquake. KARL THE GIANT enters from behind the rubble. EDWARD looks up to see KARL towering over him.)

KARL
I will smash your bones and eat you for dinner!

EDWARD
You’ll still be hungry. I’m more of an appetizer size.

(offering hand)

Edward Bloom...

KARL

(knocks hand away)
Get out of my cave!

EDWARD
No. I came up here to talk to you.

KARL
I don’t want to talk! I just want to be alone.

(KARL moves downstage)

EDWARD
Bullcrap. You are alone, so you’re only pretendin’ it’s what you want. Under those dead animals and death threats, I see a guy who might need a friend.

KARL
You don’t know me.
EDWARD
Sure I do! See, up ‘til now I’ve been the biggest thing in Ashton. But you showin’ up is a reminder: there’s something bigger out there.

KARL
So go.

EDWARD
Come with me.

(off KARL’s reaction)
Look, this town is too small for you, and it’s too small for a man of my ambition.

(smelling KARL)
When was the last time you left this cave?

KARL
I’m agoraphobic.

EDWARD
I don’t know what that means, but you gotta get outside.

(a laugh)
You’re not very bright.

KARL
Well, how smart are you?

EDWARD
Real knowledge is to know the extent of one’s ignorance.

KARL
Whoa! That’s deep. Wow.

EDWARD
There’s nothing for me out there. I don’t fit in! I’ve never even been in a car.

KARL
You got those big legs! So walk.

I can’t fit in a house.

EDWARD
We’ll sleep under the sky!
KARL

(sheepish)
I’ll never find a girl.

EDWARD

Giant -- this is the South! We like our women big and beautiful.

But I--

#8 OUT THERE ON THE ROAD

EDWARD

YOU CAN PINE YOUR LIFE AWAY
WISHIN’ THINGS WERE BETTER
WAITIN’ HERE FOR JUDGEMENT DAY
WHILE KNITTIN’ YOU A SWEATER
BUT I BELIEVE THAT KIND OF LIFE
WON’T SET YOUR SPIRIT FREE
SO MY FRIEND, ONE SMALL SUGGESTION
WHERE YOU OUGHTTA BE...

WE CAN TAKE A JOURNEY
THROUGH THIS COUNTRY’S FLESH AND BLOOD
ON A RIDE PAST COUNTRYSIDE
AND MISSISSIPPI MUD
HIT THE STREET WITH TWO BIG FEET
TO BEAR YOUR HEAVY LOAD
AND LIVE LIFE OUT THERE ON THE ROAD

ANYONE WE WANNA BE
AND ANYTHING WE SAY
COME TOMORROW WE’LL BE FREE
OF WHO WE ARE TODAY
ACTION AND ADVENTURE
WHEN WE CHANGE OUR FIXED ABODE
GO LIVE LIFE OUT THERE ON THE ROAD

(EDWARD gets THE GIANT to dance a few steps
back, closer to the entrance of the cave.)

EDWARD (CON’T)

WOULDN’T YOU RATHER BE
LIKE ROYALTY
RESPECTED LIKE A KING
WHERE IT’S ALL CIVILIZED
YOU’LL BE SURPRISED
EDWARD (CON’T)
THE SONG YOU’LL HEAR ‘EM SING
PEOPLE’LL GREET YOU THERE
SOME WANNA SHARE
ENTHUSIASTIC NEWS
AND ALL YOU NEED IS GUARANTEED
WITH ONE BIG PAIR OF SHOES
ONE BIG PAIR OF SHOES!

What’s your name, giant?

KARL
Karl.

EDWARD
Listen, Karl. The world is huge!

KARL
One hundred and ninety-seven million square miles. Approximately.

EDWARD
Say, you’re good with numbers.

KARL
Only big ones.

EDWARD
Well, naturally! Now c’mon! Let’s get out of this cave!

DON’T YOU WANNA
STEP OUTSIDE
LOOK AROUND
SEE WHAT’S WAITING THERE!

(EDWARD leads the way out of the cave.
As KARL EXITS -- squinting in the sunlight -- the set changes to exterior.)

WE WERE BORN TO WAKE EACH MORN
SOME PLACE WE’VE NEVER BEEN
CHECKIN’ OUT THE LOCALS
AS THEY WATCH US CHECKIN’ IN
EVERY NEW ENCOUNTER
IN ANOTHER NEW ZIP CODE
WE’LL FIND IT OUT THERE –
(The TOWNSFOLK arrive with pitchforks and rifles)

TOWNSFOLK

THAT’S HIM, RIGHT THERE!

EDWARD

WAIT! HE’S NOT A MONSTER
HE’S A THINKER
HE’S A WHIZ
THIS BOY ISN’T HALF AS BAD
AS YOU ALL THINK HE IS

Karl, tell ‘em a joke.

KARL

What do you get when you cross a hippo, an elephant, and a rhino?

(beat)

Helephino!

(TOWNSFOLK laugh)

EDWARD

I’VE BEEN SO INSPIRED
I’VE DECIDED WE’RE A PAIR
EDWARD AND KARL
WE’RE HEADING OUT THERE ON THE ROAD

Yes!

DON PRICE

JENNY HILL

You’re leaving? Now?!

EDWARD

Jenny, I can’t imagine any place better than Ashton. But if I don’t see the world, I’ll never know.

JENNY HILL

EDWARD BLOOM
DON’T TELL ME THAT YOU’RE LEAVING US FOR GOOD
EDWARD

JENNY, YES I’M LEAVING
BUT “FOR GOOD” I NEVER COULD
I’LL BE BACK SOME DAY

JENNY

AND I’LL BE WAITING WHILE YOU’RE GONE

(A chaste kiss between JENNY and EDWARD)

TOWNSFOLK

’TIL THEN, BE HAPPY ON THE ROAD

EDWARD

C’mon, Karl! Let’s show ‘em our traveling step!

(demonstrates, to the crowd)

Every road trip needs a traveling step.

(EDWARD and KARL teach the town their traveling step. Soon everyone joins in the dancing celebration.)

MAYOR

Edward Bloom, first son of Ashton, take with you this Key to the City, and know our doors will always be open to you.

(THE MAYOR gives EDWARD a giant key)

EDWARD

I swear on my name I’ll never forget Ashton. I’ll come back, I promise.

SUDDENLY, I’M THE KING
WHO HOLDS THE KEY
BUT EVERYBODY SECRETLY
IS DYING TO BE MORE AND MORE LIKE WHO?

KARL

Like you?

ALL BUT KARL

LIKE YOU!
EDWARD, KARL AND ALL
I CAN SEE AMERICA
DEPENDABLE AND TRUE
OPEN SKY AND PASSERSBY
CONGRATULATING YOU
FIND THE OPEN HIGHWAY
AND YOU’VE HIT THE MOTHER LODE
GO CRAZY

EDWARD, KARL AND MEN
OUT THERE ON THE

EDWARD, KARL AND ALL
HAPPY!
OUT THERE ON THE
FINALLY OUT THERE

JENNY
PROMISE YOU’LL RETURN TO US!

EDWARD, KARL AND ALL
ON THE ROAD!!
(The TOWNSFOLK march EDWARD and KARL out of town)

TOWNSFOLK
ON THE ROAD!!

#8A WILL AND JOSEPHINE

(Crossover--WILL rolls in a stack of file boxes. JOSEPHINE catches up with him, carrying a giant key.)

JOSEPHINE
Will! Look what I found.

WILL
What is that?

JOSEPHINE
It’s the Key to the City! From when he was a teenager. He left Ashton in search of adventure.

WILL
Oh, God. He got to you, didn’t he? He seduced you.
JOSEPHINE
Do you know how your mother and father met?

WILL
They met in college. Wait -- which story did he tell you? There are at least seven versions of how he met my mother.

JOSEPHINE
This was romantic.

WILL
They’re all romantic. My father is romantic. Was the giant in it?

JOSEPHINE
Yes! Karl.

#8B THE TORNADO

(Reveal KARL and EDWARD. After a beat, they go dark.)

WILL
So, Karl the Giant. Supposedly my Dad’s best friend, but I never met him. There’s no photo, no evidence he actually existed. I’m worried my father is going to--
(not saying “die”)
--be gone and I’ll never know what was true.

JOSEPHINE
But does it really matter what was true? Your father is telling these stories for a reason. If you understand the stories, you’ll understand the man.

(beat)

How many stories are there?

WILL
I don’t know. I’ve never counted.

JOSEPHINE
You should! You should make a list.
WILL

(considers, then...)
Okay. Let’s do it. Chronologically, it starts with the Witch. She teaches him, what, not to fear death? Then he meets the mermaid.

JOSEPHINE
She teaches him about love. How love transforms a person.

WILL
I thought she taught him how to swim.

JOSEPHINE
You never listen.

WILL
So my father leaves Ashton with Karl the Giant. They have a series of wacky misadventures that roughly approximate the twelve labors of Hercules --

JOSEPHINE
What about the tornado --

WILL
Fine, the tornado.

(He swirls his hand. As he does, TOWNSFOLK blow across stage. A title card: "THE TORNADO." EDWARD and KARL exit as a cat flies across stage with howl.)

WILL
It’s not important.

JOSEPHINE
It’s incredibly important! Your father was headed for the Big City.

(suddenly teary)
But then fate -- fate pushes him towards love.

WILL
You have a lot of hormones in your body right now.

(she nods, a bit overcome)
Fine--the Winds of Destiny bring him to the Calloway Circus.

#8C CALLOWAY CIRCUS
SCENE 12

THE CALLOWAY CIRCUS

(On a platform outside the bigtop, a juggling act finishes its set. AMOS CALLOWAY arrives center-ring.)

AMOS

Yes, ladies and gentlemen. Any one of these acts could join the Calloway Circus!

(a juggler’s ball falls at his feet)

AMOS (CON’T)

Except you! C’mere.

(JUGGLER approaches)

If I was lookin’ for a Miscellaneous Object Dropper, you’d be at the top of my list. But I’m not. Next up #73--

(checking clipboard)

--the Alabama Lambs.

(TEENAGE SANDRA rushes forward with her two FRIENDS. They’re dressed in the traditional garb of some undiscovered European country.)

SANDRA

That’s us! We’re the Alabama Lambs!

(WILL and JOSEPHINE take a seat to watch)

AMOS (recognizes her, disapproving)

Miss Templeton! Does your daddy know you’re here?

SANDRA

He knows I’m with my two best friends.

AMOS

Tell me, your father -- is he still a small town sheriff with unmedicated rage issues?

SANDRA

That’s Dad!
AMOS
Best you get along home and breathe not a word of this folly.

SANDRA
Wait, Mr. Calloway, I am supposed to be here, I know it.

AMOS
And I know I don’t want to be hangin’ on your Daddy’s wall like this.
(terrified expression; checking clipboard)
Next up, #74--Zaximus the Zensational.

SANDRA
Haven’t you ever had a dream, a hope, a wish! Please, Mr. Calloway! Just let us try!

AMOS
Fine. Let’s hear it.

(SANDRA cues the music. Their song and dance is exuberant, goofy, and occasionally dirtier than they meant it to be.)

#9 LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA

SANDRA AND TWO GIRLS
SHIM-SHAM
I’M A LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA
FLIM-FLAM
I’M A LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA
WAITIN’ TO BE FED
HOPIN’ TO BE LED
BY A LITTLE SHEPHERD BOY FROM

GIRL ONE
M-I-S-S

GIRL TWO
I-S-S-I

SANDRA
P-P-

(THE TWO GIRLS gasp!)
SANDRA AND TWO GIRLS

I WHAM! BAM!
LIKE A LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA
HOT DAMN
WHO’S A LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA?
I’M A LITTLE MISS
PRAYIN’ FOR A KISS
JUST A LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA

(They dance. As they do, EDWARD arrives at the edge of the crowd.)

SANDRA AND TWO GIRLS

JUST A LITTLE LAMB FROM ALABAMA

(As EDWARD spots SANDRA, everything slows to a fraction of normal speed. He is completely entranced.)

#10 TIME STOPS

EDWARD

TIME STOPS
WHEN SUDDENLY YOU SEE HER
TIME STOPS
AND WHAT YOU THOUGHT YOU KNEW
CHANGES
AND LIFE BEYOND THIS MOMENT
IS BETTER
BIGGER

TIME STOPS
BUT STILL YOUR HEART IS BEATING
TIME STOPS
THOUGH YOU DON’T TAKE A BREATH
SHE’S THERE
AND ALL YOU’VE EVER WANTED
IS NEARER
CLEARER

I USED TO THINK THE WORLD WAS SMALL
NOW I DON’T THINK THAT WAY AT ALL
EDWARD (CON’T)

TIME STOPS
WHEN DREAMS COME TRUE BEFORE YOU
TIME STOPS
WHEN FANTASY IS REAL
I KNEW
THIS MOMENT WAS EXPECTED
BUT THIS GOOD
WHO COULD?

(SANDRA spots EDWARD. She loses her
place in the routine.)

SANDRA

THAT BOY IS STARING
AND I FEEL A CHILL
I DON’T KNOW WHY
THAT BOY IS STARING
AND THE WORLD IS STILL
NOT TUMBLING BY
THERE’S NO ONE TALKING
BUT I CAN HEAR A THOUSAND VOICES
WHAT’S GOING ON INSIDE ME?

THAT BOY IS STARING
IS IT ME HE SEES?
I CAN’T BE SURE
IF HE IS STARING
SHOULD I TRY TO PLEASE
OR BE DEMURE?
MY HAND IS TREMBLING
BUT IN THIS MOMENT NOTHING SCARES ME
WHAT’S GOING ON?

(Everything freezes as SANDRA and EDWARD
slowly approach each other.)

EDWARD

I USED TO SEE WHAT LIES AHEAD

SANDRA

I THOUGHT MY LIFE MIGHT BE A BORE

EDWARD

NOW I JUST SEE THIS GIRL INSTEAD
SANDRA
COULD BE I BOUND FOR SOMETHING MORE

EDWARD
TIME STOPS

EDWARD AND SANDRA
AND TROUBLES ARE ABANDONED TIME STOPS THE MINUTE HE/SHE ARRIVES I’VE SEEN THE FUTURE IN THIS INSTANT SUBVERSIVE SUBLIME! I’D LIVE FOREVER IN THIS MOMENT IF I COULD STOP

(face to face)

EDWARD
STOP TIME

(their hands nearly touch)

SANDRA
THAT BOY IS STARING AND I FEEL A CHILL I DON’T KNOW WHY

(SANDRA rejoins THE DANCERS. As the moment concludes, SANDRA snaps back to reality. Time resumes normally.)

#10A ALABAMA TAG

AMOS
Ladies, I’ll tell you: That was terrific. But no one wants to see that in a circus. Teach those steps to an elephant, and then you’d have something. People want to see things beyond their imagination! Bigger than life! People want--

(stops, pointing)
You!

(KARL THE GIANT enters behind EDWARD)

EDWARD
Hey, buddy.

(Panic as everyone flees from THE GIANT. SANDRA’s friends pull her away.)
EDWARD (chasing her offstage)
Wait! Wait!

(WILL and JOSEPHINE exit past KARL)

WILL
(re: KARL)
It’s not plausible.

JOSEPHINE
It’s romantic!

AMOS
(introducing himself)
Amos Calloway. What’s your name, Giant? You got a name? Doesn’t matter. More exotic if you don’t.

KARL
It’s Karl.

AMOS
That works. Say, Karl, have you ever considered a career in the world of entertainment? More importantly, have you ever heard of this term -- wait, what is it? -- um -- “unconscionable contract?”

KARL
It’s an agreement in which one party grossly misrepresents facts in order to take advantage of the other party’s perceived ignorance.

AMOS
Well. That’s a thorough definition.

KARL
I want thirty percent off the top and all the food I can eat.

AMOS
Ten percent.

KARL
Twenty -- and I won’t do nudity.

AMOS
No one’s asking!
KARL

Done.

(EDWARD returns, defeated)

KARL

Edward. What’s wrong?

EDWARD

Karl, I just saw the woman I’m going to marry, I know it. But then I lost her.

AMOS

Heartbreaking! Most men gotta get married before they lose their wives. But good news! I’m gonna make your friend here a star.

EDWARD

That’s great. ’Least one of us should be happy.

AMOS

Jesus, kid. This girl -- real pretty? Blue dress? Red hair?

EDWARD

(grabs AMOS)

Who is she? Where does she live?

(AMOS snarls, then catches himself)

AMOS

Kid -- don’t waste your time. I know her daddy. She’s out of your league.

EDWARD

What do you mean? You don’t even know me.

AMOS

Lemme guess: you were the Hero of Hickville, a big fish in a small pond. This here is the ocean, and you’re drowning. Take my advice and go back to Puddleville. You’ll be happy there.

EDWARD

Look, I may not have much, but I have more determination than any man you’re ever going to meet. I’m gonna find that woman and marry her and spend the rest of my life with her.
AMOS
Go write your Harlequin Romance somewhere else. I got a circus to run.

#11 CLOSER TO HER

EDWARD
IF YOU TELL ME WHO SHE IS
I’LL WORK NIGHT AND DAY
AND YOU WON’T EVEN HAVE TO PAY ME

(Tri: “ding”)

AMOS
Okay.

ONCE A MONTH
IF YOU WORK
IF YOU SLAVE
IF YOU CRY FOR ME
THEN I’LL GIVE YOU A CLUE

ONCE A MONTH
IF YOU CLEAN
IF YOU HAUL
IF YOU DIE FOR ME
THEN THE CLUE WILL BE TRUE

ONCE A MONTH
IT COULD BE WHAT SHE THINKS
WHAT SHE LOVES
WHERE SHE LIVES
WHAT SHE DRINKS
WHAT SHE HOPES
AND ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS PULL THE ROPES

(CIRCUS WORKERS rehearse. AMOS
gives EDWARD his first chore.)

AMOS
CLOSER TO HER
I’LL GET YOU CLOSER TO HER
YOU ONLY NEED TO BE
MY DEVOTEE BECAUSE
I’LL TELL YOU WHERE SHE WAS BORN
OR IF SHE PLAYS THE FRENCH HORN
THEN YOU’LL BE CLOSER THAN YOU EVER WAS
AMOS (CON’T)

First clue—She likes dancing.

EDWARD

Dancing!

(EDWARD dances with a dream vision of SANDRA.)

AMOS

BACK TO WORK!

CIRCUS FOLK

CLOSER TO HER

YOU’RE ONE STEP CLOSER TO HER

EDWARD

I’M NOT AFRAID TO STOOP

TO SCOOPING POOP BECAUSE

CIRCUS FOLK

HE’LL STOOP FOR POOP!

AMOS

YOU’LL LEARN WHAT PERFUME SHE WEARS

OR WHAT SHE SAYS IN HER PRAYERS

EDWARD

AND BE MUCH CLOSER THAN I EVER WAS

(A line of dancing elephant butts do a little dance. AMOS watches from stage left, proud of his elephants.)

EDWARD

Mr. Calloway, it’s time.

AMOS

For what?

EDWARD

My clue! About the girl I’m gonna marry.

AMOS

If you got a clue, you wouldn’t get married at all.

(to the CIRCUS FOLK)

BACK TO WORK!
CIRCUS FOLK
DAYS INTO WEEKS INTO MONTHS INTO YEARS
INTO CLUE AFTER CLUE AFTER CLUE

AMOS
SHE LIKES BLUE!

(DREAM SANDRA passes with a blue scarf)

CIRCUS FOLK
SEASONS GO BY IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE
BUT THE DREAM DOESN’T SEEM TO COME TRUE

AMOS
BARBECUE!

(DREAM SANDRA eats barbecue as she passes)

EDWARD
YEAR AFTER YEAR
WITH THE HOPE I WOULD HEAR
SOMETHING KIND
SOMETHING FRESH
SOMETHING NEW –

(finding AMOS)
Mr. Calloway, it’s been three years!

AMOS
Kid! There’s other fish in the sea!

EDWARD
But I’m already hooked. Why do you insist keeping her name secret?

AMOS
SECRETS ARE THE BACKBONE OF SOCIETY
EVERYBODY OUGHT TO HAVE A FEW
I BELIEVE IN SECRETS
AND I’LL KEEP MINE FOR A WHILE
THEY KEEP ME A SUCCESS
THEY MAKE YOU WORK FOR LESS

But I’m a man of my word. Your girl -- she’s going to college.

EDWARD
College!
Edward  Circus Folk
Closer to her  Closer to her
One textbook

(Dream Sandra passes with a book)

Closer to her
But I’ve  But you’ve
Been working hard  Been working hard
And time is flying  And time is flying
By

Edward
I’ve paid his price, I should go
Still, there’s one thing I don’t know—

(A “howl!” Edward reveals--)

Edward (Con’t)

Mr. Calloway?

(--a furry, clawed Amos)

Amos
This is...difficult to explain.

Edward
You’re a werewolf.

Amos
Or maybe not so difficult.

Edward
Mr. Calloway, this is your secret? You don’t have to be ashamed of being a werewolf.

Amos
Really?

Edward
Heck no! Just be yourself and be happy.

(Edward scratches Amos’s head)

Amos
I like you, kid. How about a bonus clue? Daffodils!
EDWARD
Daffodils?

AMOS
Her favorite flower -- those yellow ones. Real pretty.

EDWARD
Mr. Calloway, let me give her those daffodils! Tell me who she is!

(a chord of conscience)

AMOS
Hell. Her name is Sandra Templeton. She goes to Auburn University.

EDWARD
Thank you, Mr. Calloway. Thank you!

(EDWARD drops a ball from his box;
AMOS chases it offstage)

AMOS
My ball! My ball! My ball!

(EDWARD finding KARL --)

EDWARD
Karl, how far away is Auburn University?

KARL
Seven hundred and sixty-three miles.

EDWARD
Then I’m gonna need your help.

KARL
Fellas, bring it out!

(WORKERS wheel out a massive circus cannon. EDWARD takes the helmet.)

CIRCUS FOLK
LIKE A CANNON BALL
SOON TO BE A HUMAN COMET ABOVE
LIKE A CANNON BALL
CIRCLING A CONSTELLATION OF LOVE
FILLING UP THE HEAVENS
CIRCUS FOLK (CON’T)
MAKING WATERS PART
AIMING STRAIGHT FOR HIS BELOVED’S WELCOMING HEART

(EDWARD climbs into the cannon)

(Downstage, WILL looks through a file box. JOSEPHINE enters with a red file.)

JOSEPHINE
Will. Who is Jenny Hill? I know that name.

WILL
She was my Dad’s high school girlfriend. “The prettiest, blondest girl in Ashton.”
(re: folder)
What is that?

JOSEPHINE
(wary)
It’s a mortgage for a house in Ashton. Your father co-signed a loan with “Jenny Hill.”

WILL
She’s real? This doesn’t make sense. Why would my father buy a house with another woman?

(He looks up. A new thought--)

CIRCUS FOLK

BOOM!

(EDWARD is shot out of the cannon. WILL and JOSEPHINE exit. CIRCUS FOLK track EDWARD’s progress across the heavens.)

CIRCUS FOLK
CLOSER IT’S TRUE
THERE’S NOT MUCH MORE HE CAN DO
THE YEARS GONE BY WILL SEEM A KIND OF DREAMY BLUR
AND WHEN AT AUBURN HE LANDS
HE’LL DO WHAT FORTUNE DEMANDS
WHEN FINALLY CLOSER THAN CLOSER TO

(A body falls from the sky, landing at-- AUBURN UNIVERSITY)
SCENE 13

auburn university

edward

(Offstage)

Ooof!

(Edward stands up, dusting himself off. He carries a bouquet of yellow daffodils. He tries to find Sandra amid many red-haired women.)

#12 daffodils

edward

(various)

Sandra! Sandra Temple--sorry, I thought you were...wait, Sandra, hi...oh. Apologies. There are a lot of red-heads at this school. Oh -- “Auburn” -- yeah, makes sense.

(finally)

Sandra! Sandra Templeton!

(sandra stands with a group of her sorority sisters.)

Sandra

(not recognizing)

Yes?

Edward

You don’t know me, but my name is Edward Bloom and I am in love with you. I’ve spent the last three years working to find out who you are but it’s all worth it to see you here, now, and to finally get to talk to you.

Sandra

I’m sorry...

Edward

Don’t need to apologize to me. I mean, I’m the luckiest person you’re going to find today.

I was indentured to a traveling circus
Elephants and all
I was shot out of a cannon
When they up and lost the ball
EDWARD (CON’T)
I MET WEREWOLVES, GIANTS, DANCING BEARS
IF YOU DON’T THINK IT’S TRUE
THEN HOW ON EARTH
CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE ROAD
THAT LED ME HERE TO YOU?

SANDRA
(recognizing)
Wait, are you...

EDWARD
LOOK, I SAW YOU
AND ALL OF TIME IN ALL THE WORLD STOOD STILL
AND I PROMISE
I’LL PROVE MY WORTH
I’LL ROAM THE EARTH UNTIL
YOU BELIEVE ME
AND WE CAN BE, AT LAST FOREVER ONE
DON’T BE AFRAID
BE MY CRUSADE

SANDRA
You’re too late. I’m engaged to be married. She shows him the ring.

EDWARD
TELL ME WHAT I HAVE TO GO AND DO
TO MAKE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND
ANYTHING I HAVE TO PROMISE TO
I’LL GLADLY GET BEHIND
I’M THE MAN WHO YOU SHOULD MARRY
YOUR INTENDED THROUGH AND THROUGH
OTHERWISE I’D NEVER WALK THE ROAD
THAT LED ME HERE TO YOU

SANDRA
You’re the boy from the circus!

EDWARD
I am!

SANDRA
I wasn’t sure you were real. I imagine things a lot.

EDWARD
Then imagine us together: Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bloom.
Wait, Edward Bloom?

Yes.

From Ashton?

How did you know?

The boy I’m engaged to, he’s from Ashton. Don Price.

Don Price?! They let him into college?

He’s studying political science.

He’d fail gravity if it were a subject!

(smiles)
I help him where I can.

Bandage his knuckles where he drags them on the ground?

That’s a terrible thing to say.

A terrible Price to pay. Don’t marry that cretin.

Don.

Moron.

(looking past him)
No, Don.
(EDWARD turns to see DON PRICE approaching with a bunch of his FRATERNITY BUDDIES. DON PRICE is pissed.)

EDWARD

Oh, hey Don.

DON PRICE

Bloom?! What the hell are you doing?

SANDRA

(to Don)
Promise me you won’t hurt him.

EDWARD

I promise.

DON PRICE

This is my girl. Mine. Look!

(DON roughly grabs SANDRA’s hand to show EDWARD the diamond ring.)

SANDRA

Don!

EDWARD

Take your hands off her.

DON PRICE

Or what? You’re not so big without a giant to back you up.

EDWARD

But I’ll always be the bigger man.

(DON PRICE suddenly clobbers EDWARD. His buddies join in, roundly kicking the crap out of EDWARD, who, true to his word, doesn’t fight back.)

SANDRA

Don, stop! Stop! Don, I will never marry you. This was a mistake.

DON PRICE

What? You actually love this guy?
(hands him the ring)
He’s almost a stranger, yet I prefer him to you.

(Disbelieving, DON AND HIS BUDDIES exit)

DON PRICE
Witch lover.

ZACKY PRICE
(weakly imitating)
Witch-lover.

(SANDRA helps EDWARD up)

SANDRA
Are you alright?

EDWARD
ONCE A MONTH
A SCRAP OF NEWS
IT FELT LIKE YOU WERE THERE
ONCE A MONTH
I HEARD YOUR VOICE
I HELD YOU, SOLITAIRE

AMOS SAID THAT YOU LOVED MUSIC
SAID THAT YOU WERE COLLEGE BOUND
BUT ONE THING
MORE THAN ALL THE REST
FILLED THE HEART INSIDE MY CHEST
HE TOLD ME YOU LOVED--

DAFFODILS
AND COUNTLESS AS THE STARS THAT SHINE
THEY STRETCHED IN NEVER ENDING LINE
’TIL ALL I SAW WAS--

DAFFODILS
BESIDE THE LAKE BENEATH THE TREES
ALL FLUTTERING AND DANCING IN THE BREEZE

AND LIKE THAT MOMENT RIGHT BETWEEN ASLEEP AND WAKING
I THOUGHT I SAW TEN THOUSAND STRONG IN ONE QUICK GLANCE
BUT WHEN I SAW YOUR FACE, I KNEW BEYOND MISTAKING
A MILLION FLOWERS COULDN’T STAND A CHANCE
SO, I’LL PRETEND THE--
EDWARD (CON’T)
DAFFODILS
ARE JUST AN INTRODUCTION TO
THE BLOSSOMING OF ME AND YOU
BESIDE THE LAKE
BENEATH A TREE
BEYOND MISTAKE
PLEASE MARRY ME
PLEASE MARRY ME

SANDRA
But you hardly know me...

EDWARD
I have the rest of my life to find out.

(Center stage, EDWARD and SANDRA. He points
to a small bunch of daffodils--and then
others as they appear.)

EDWARD
These, these, and these...

[MUSIC BUILDS]

(Ultimately, the whole stage is completely
covered with daffodils.)

EDWARD
THESE ARE FOR YOU
ONLY FOR YOU

EDWARD AND SANDRA
LET’S BUILD A WORLD OF DAFFODILS
 THAT NEVER FADES AND NEVER DIES
 I SEE THE ANSWER IN YOUR EYES

YOU’LL/I’LL BE THE BRIDE
I’LL/YOU’LL BE THE GROOM
A DAFFODIL IN EVERY ROOM

EDWARD
AND I WILL SHOWER YOU WITH FLOWERS
OR MY NAME ISN’T
EDWARD--
(EDWARD and SANDRA lean in. And they kiss.)

BLACKOUT—END OF ACT I
Act 2 - Scene 1

ACT II
SCENE 1

#13 ENTR’ACTE

(The entr’acte resolves to reveal WILL and JOSEPHINE downstage in their same positions from ACT I.)

(WILL is reeling)

WILL
Why would my father have a mortgage to a house I’ve never heard about? And what’s the deal with Jenny Hill?

JOSEPHINE
Maybe she’s a friend.

WILL
Maybe she’s more than that. My father was a traveling salesman. He could have easily had a second life. A second family!

JOSEPHINE
Stop! That’s not real.

WILL
What is real with my father? What if all these crazy stories are just a smokescreen so we don’t bother looking for the truth? (re: folder)
My father bought a secret house in Ashton. I can’t pretend we didn’t find this.

JOSEPHINE
Okay, okay. I know you want to find answers, but think about the time you have left. You’re here to make peace, Will, not start a war.

WILL
War? Did he tell you the war story? Because that’s when I first realized he was making it all up.

[MUSIC SEGUES]

#14 RED, WHITE AND TRUE
(A title card—"THE WAR." As WILL and JOSEPHINE exit, EDWARD BLOOM enters downstage left. He’s dressed in a uniform, followed by SCOUTS, including YOUNG WILL.)

OVER-EXCITED SCOUT
I’ll get the fire started.

EDWARD
Now, I don’t like to talk too much about the war.

(With a groan, YOUNG WILL turns away, reading his book.)

EDWARD
Truth is, I was just a common soldier like all the other Alabama boys. But then one night, I intercepted an enemy message--

(He “magics” a folded slip from behind YOUNG WILL’s ear.)

OVER-EXCITED SCOUT
What did it say?

EDWARD
That very night at the big USO show, the enemy was planning to kill General Patterson.

(He points stage right, where GENERAL PATTERSON enters.)

OVER-EXCITED SCOUT
How?

EDWARD
With a poison blow-dart shot by a deadly assassin. Only I could save him.

OVER-EXCITED SCOUT
Weren’t you scared?

EDWARD
A man does what he must. A Hero does what no other man can.
(EDWARD brings a stool to GENERAL PATTERSON. A beautiful USO SINGER is revealed. It’s SANDRA in a gorgeous dress.)

OVER-EXCITED SCOUT
(to YOUNG WILL)
Isn’t that your Mom?

YOUNG WILL
In my Dad’s stories, the most beautiful woman is always my Mom.

(SANDRA begins to sing)

SANDRA
THERE’S A BOY WHO KNOWS THE WAY I FEEL
SOMEONE WHO IS CONFIDENT AND REAL
ALWAYS AT THE READY
ALWAYS BY MY SIDE
HOW I HOPE SOME DAY I’LL BE HIS BRIDE

(Beautiful PATRIOTIC DANCERS enter)

COMPANY
WHAT ARE THE COLORS OF
THE ONLY MAN I LOVE?
RED, WHITE AND TRUE!
WHO IS THE GUY FOR ME
ANNOUNCING VICTORY?
RED, WHITE AND TRUE!
WHEREVER TENSIONS SEEM TO FLARE
HE IS THE ONE WHO’S STANDING THERE
AND WHEN HE LEADS THE WAY
WE CAN STAND AND SAY
RED, WHITE AND TRUE!

(Spotlight ON RED FANG, who readies a blowgun.)

RED FANG
Die, General Patterson!
(EDWARD BLOOM leaps in, grabbing the blowgun. THE TWO MEN grapple--THE DANCERS don’t acknowledge any of this.)

EDWARD
It was at that moment I realized who my opponent was -- (rips off black mask to reveal red mask)
-- Red Fang, the Poison Assassin.

(the two men battle)

WOMEN

WHAT ARE THE COLORS OF
THE ONLY MAN I LOVE?
RED, WHITE AND TRUE!
WHO IS THE GUY FOR US
FOREVER GLORIOUS
RED, WHITE AND TRUE!
WHenever evil comes to town
He is the one who brings it --
(He’s the one who brings it down)
So let him lead the way

(RED FANG knocks out EDWARD)

WOMEN

AS WE SHOUT “HOORAY!”

RED FANG

Hooray!

WOMEN

RED!
HE'S RED, WHITE AND—

(THE WOMEN begin a stunning tap
time. THE GENERAL weaves
between the girls. RED FANG can’t
get a clear shot at him.)

GENERAL

Hey! Hey! Not part of the show. Not part of the show!

(Face-to-face with RED FANG, THE GENERAL
grabs hold of the blowgun. A tug-of-war,
with the girls helping THE GENERAL. Finally,
THE GENERAL loses hold of the blowgun and
stumbles onto the steps. THE WOMEN cover him
up as they dance. RED FANG, determined to
get to THE GENERAL, pulls each of the girls
out of his way, finally exposing THE
GENERAL.)
RED FANG

No one to save you now!

[SFX: thwwk!]

(REDD FANG shoots a blow dart - but EDWARD jumps in the way, “taking the bullet” for THE GENERAL. With a blowdart stuck in his neck, EDWARD stumbles downstage, reeling. EDWARD falls, dead.)

YOUNG WILL

Logically, that doesn’t make sense—

EDWARD

(popping up)

Luckily, years earlier I had been bitten by the choocalabra snake of Tanzania. I was immune to Red Fang’s poison.

(EDWARD pulls the dart from his neck and throws it back at RED FANG. THE ASSASSIN falls--)

RED FANG

(dying gasp)
Choooo-cuh-labra!

GENERAL

(stepping forward)
Private, what’s your name?

EDWARD

Don’t matter, sir. I’m just a soldier like all these men. And I think they deserve a show. Ladies? What do you say?

(EDWARD joins them for a showstopping finale)

SANDRA AND WOMEN
WHEREVER TENSIONS
SEEM TO FLARE
HE IS THE ONE
WHO’S STANDING THERE

EDWARD AND MEN
I’M/HE’S JUST A
PROUD AMERICAN
I/HE WON’T PRESUME
I’M/HE’S BETTER THAN
ALL
AND WHEN HE LEADS THE WAY
WE CAN STAND AND SAY
RED! RED! RED!
RED! RED! RED!
RED! RED! RED!
HE’S/I’M RED, WHITE AND TRUE!

#14A RED, WHITE AND TRUE PLAYOFF

(As THE DANCERS file out, downstage
a campfire appears. EDWARD BLOOM
finishes telling this story to the
group of SCOUTS.)

EDWARD
Lots of people say that was the turning point of the war. I like
to think it was just one man doing his part.

(THE SCOUTS cheer)

SCOUTS (VARIOUS)
Yeah! Cool./Go Mr. Bloom!/Your dad is awesome.

EDWARD
G’night, scouts.

SCOUTS (VARIOUS)
(exiting)
‘Night! / Goodnight Mr. Bloom!

(YOUNG WILL stays behind with HIS FATHER)

YOUNG WILL
Dad -- when did that all happen?

EDWARD
During the war!

YOUNG WILL
But...which war?

EDWARD
(incredulous)
Which war? Don’t they teach you anything in school?
Act 2 - Scene 1

YOUNG WILL
That’s just it. They do teach us.

#14B CAMPFIRE DANCE/DAFFODILS TRANSITION

(YOUNG WILL exits. EDWARD doubles back to blow out the fire, then exits. We transition to--)

83
SCENE 2

BEDROOM. PAST.

(SANDRA makes the bed. YOUNG WILL enters with a baseball and mitt --)

YOUNG WILL

I can help!

SANDRA

What would I do without you?

(As they make the bed --)

YOUNG WILL

Mom, are there really witches?

SANDRA

Why -- did your father have another run-in with Miss Johnson at the library? That woman is terrifying -- and honestly, your Dad doesn’t really know how to whisper.

(EDWARD enters, surprising SANDRA with a bouquet of flowers.)

SANDRA

(playful)
Daffodils. Well, now I know you did something.

EDWARD

Bob Ray quit, so they’re giving me his route. All the way to Dallas!

SANDRA

That’s a lot of driving.

EDWARD

Helluva chance to expand my region.

SANDRA

I don’t care how far you go, Edward Bloom. Just as long as you make it back.

(With a kiss, she heads off with a laundry basket. EDWARD chases after her, frisky--)

84
SANDRA

(on exit)

There is a young child right there!

(EDWARD stays back with YOUNG WILL--)

EDWARD

So, you got another soccer game this week?

YOUNG WILL

It’s not soccer season anymore.

EDWARD

’Course not. Will, I’m gonna need you to look after your mother. You’re the man of the house while I’m on the road.

YOUNG WILL

On the road to where?

EDWARD

Everywhere. How do I explain it?

#15 FIGHT THE DRAGONS

It’s not about a destination, Will. The road is something that’s in you. A need. You don’t drive it – it drives you. Understand?

YOUNG WILL

No.

EDWARD

I’VE NEVER BEEN A MAN WHO LIVED AN OFFICE LIFE
I’VE NEVER BEEN A MAN BEHIND A DESK
I’VE ALWAYS BEEN A MAN WHO SAID
THAT STAYIN’ STILL IS PLAYIN’ DEAD
THE KIND WHO’S LOOKIN’ FORWARD TO THE CHALLENGES AHEAD
PEOPLE SAY THAT’S IRRESPONSIBLE
PEOPLE TELL ME STAY AT HOME
BUT I’M NOT MADE FOR THINGS
LIKE MOWIN’ LAWNS OR APRON STRINGS
I’M MY BEST
WHEN NOT AT REST

SO I FIGHT THE DRAGONS
AND I STORM THE CASTLES
AND I WIN A BATTLE OR TWO
EDWARD (CON’ T)
THEN COMES THE DAY IT’S TIME
I’M PACKIN’ UP AND I AM
BRINGING ALL MY STORIES HOME TO YOU

ALL I CAN SEE IS MILES AHEAD WITH MILES TO GO
ALL I CAN FEEL IS WIND AND SUN AND SKY
STOP FOR A COFFEE, MAKE A FRIEND
AND PRAY THE DAY WILL NEVER END
‘CUZ THERE’S ONE MORE ADVENTURE WAITIN’ ROUND ANOTHER BEND

WHERE I FIGHT THE DRAGONS
AND I STORM THE CASTLES
AND I WIN A BATTLE OR TWO
BUT THEN A FEELING COMES
LIKE FIFTY THOUSAND DRUMS
ALL BANGING “BRING MY STORIES HOME TO YOU”

AND I WONDER AS I WANDER
ON THE ROAD FROM DOOR TO DOOR
EXACTLY WHAT YOU THINK OF WHERE I’VE BEEN
DO YOU KNOW I JOINED THE CIRCUS
MET A MERMAID
FOUGHT A WAR
DO YOU KNOW I THINK OF YOU THROUGH THICK AND THIN

BECAUSE EVEN THOUGH I’M MAKING DEALS
AND BRINGING PEOPLE JOY
I’M USUALLY ONLY THINKING OF MY BOY

OUT THERE ON THE ROAD I PRAY
YOU’LL COME TO ME ONE DAY
AND SAY--

EDWARD AND YOUNG WILL
LET’S FIGHT THE DRAGONS
AND THEN STORM THE CASTLES

EDWARD
‘TIL WE WIN WHAT NEEDS TO BE WON
SO WHEN I’M OLD AND TIRED
YOU’LL DO THE JOB REQUIRED
YOU’LL BE THERE TELLING STORIES TO YOUR SON

(EDWARD and YOUNG WILL move downstage)
EDWARD (CON’T)
THEN WE FIGHT THE DRAGONS
AND WE STORM THE CASTLES
AND I DO THE BEST THAT I CAN
BUT EVERYBODY KNOWS
THAT’S HOW THE STORY GOES
TO TURN EACH BOY INTO A BIGGER MAN

SO I’LL FIGHT THE DRAGONS
‘TIL YOU CAN

#15A STRANGER REPRISE

(EDWARD exits. YOUNG WILL realizes he still has his mitt. He throws his ball off stage left. No one throws it back. WILL enters, carrying the red folder. He trades places with YOUNG WILL, who exits.)

WILL

STRANGER
I’M FEELING STRANGER THAN I’VE EVER FELT BEFORE
AND SO MUCH MORE

DIFFERENT
LIKE SOMETHING OLD HAS JOINED WITH SOMETHING NEW
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

(As WILL exits, reveal --)
Act 2 - Scene 3

SCENE 3

BEDROOM. PRESENT.

(EDWARD lies in bed. SANDRA turns on the TV. Western theme music plays.)

#15B EDEN RIVER

SANDRA

A Western! You love Westerns.

TV NARRATOR

Eden River. The story of the great frontier and one man determined to make his mark on it - a hero, a champion, a brave pioneer.

(WILL enters. A sotto conversation with SANDRA before she exits.)

WILL

Dad?

(Ignored, WILL switches off the TV.)

EDWARD

Son?

WILL

Can we talk?

EDWARD

I believe we have permission.

(A wince of pain)

(WILL helps him with a glass of water as EDWARD takes some medicine.)

WILL

Do the pills help?

EDWARD

Mostly. But they got me floatin’ a bit. Not entirely sure what’s real.
WILL

I know that feeling.

(EDWARD smiles. He walked into that one.)

WILL (CON’T)

Do you know much about icebergs, Dad?

EDWARD

I saw an iceberg once. They were hauling it down to Texas for drinking water, only they didn’t count on an elephant being frozen inside. The woolly kind. A mammoth.

WILL

(interrupting)

Dad!

[MUSIC OUT]

EDWARD

What?

WILL

I’m trying to make a metaphor here.

EDWARD

Then you shouldn’t have started with a question. Because people want to answer questions. You should have started with, “The thing about icebergs is...”

WILL

(frustrated)

The thing about icebergs is you only see 10 percent of them. The other 90 percent is below the water where you can’t see it. And that’s what it is with you, Dad. I’m only seeing this little bit that sticks above the water.

EDWARD

(joking)

What, you’re seeing down to my nose? My chin?

WILL

I have no idea who you are...because you have never told me a single fact.

EDWARD

I talk about myself all the time! I tell stories.
WILL
Yes, you tell stories, Dad. You make stuff up. And I’m wondering if it’s all to conceal something you don’t want people to know.

EDWARD
You got me. My secret identity.
(dramatically)
Superman.

(Unamused, WILL cuts to the chase--)

WILL
Can we talk about Ashton, Dad?

#15C PRE-SHOWDOWN

EDWARD
Ashton? I grew up there. You know that.

(a shift)

WILL
So why did we never visit? It’s not that far a drive.

Nothing to see there.

EDWARD

WILL
Dad, I’m about to have a kid of my own here. It would kill me if he went through his whole life with...doubts.

EDWARD
It would kill you, huh?
(sitting up)
Let’s hear it, then. What exactly are you accusing me of, Will?

WILL
I’m not. I’m just trying to get a handle on some things.

EDWARD
Handle ‘em as you will. I think we’re done talking.

WILL
Dad...
Act 2 - Scene 3

EDWARD
GET OUT!

(WILL takes the folder. He crosses with SANDRA and she enters.)

SANDRA
Will -- What did you do?

WILL
I didn’t do anything.

JOSEPHINE
(intercepting)
Calm down. Calm down, Will.

WILL
I know you’re trying to protect me. But you can’t.

(WILL and JOSEPHINE exit)

SANDRA
(to EDWARD)
What happened?

EDWARD
He attacked me. Come after me like I’m a villain.

SANDRA
I’m sure he didn’t mean to. Let’s get you back to bed.

EDWARD
He’s got it wrong. I’m not the bad guy.

(SANDRA sits in the chair beside the bed, shuts her eyes. As EDWARD tries to sleep, the television comes to life.)

[SFX: STATIC. BUZZING. (Sounds from a Western)]

(The beginning of a dementia dream. COWBOYS and WESTERN TOWNSFOLK emerge from the TV. The bedroom transforms into an Old West saloon.)
EDWARD
Who are you people?! Get out of my room!

(WILL appears downstage dressed as a Wild West sheriff.)

EDWARD
Oh, you want to do this, Will? We can do this, right here.

#16 SHOWDOWN

WILL
YOU SEE THIS MAN?
THIS TIRED MAN?
HE’S A LIAR AND SCOUNDREL TO THE CORE

EDWARD
YOU SEE THIS BOY?
UNGRATEFUL BOY
KNOCKIN’ ON A LONG FORGOTTEN DOOR

WILL
NOW I KNOW
I KNOW
SOMETHING HE’S BEEN HIDING
SOMETHING THAT HIS PRIDE WILL NOT REVEAL

EDWARD
HE WASTES HIS TIME ACCUSING ME
WHAT EXACTLY DOES THIS FELLOW FEEL?

WILL
I FEEL LIKE THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT

COWBOY
Damn right!

WILL
THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT

VARIOUS
‘Bout time!/String him up!

WILL
THERE’S GONNA BE
I GUARANTEE
A WRONG AND A RIGHT
WILL (CON’T)
AND THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT

(THE TOWNSFOLK cheer and dance)

THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT

ALL
THAT’S RIGHT!
YES, THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT!

WILL
YOU SEE THIS FOLDER IN MY HAND?
YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IT IS

EDWARD
Do I?

WILL
WHO’LL BE THE FIRST TO TELL US

EDWARD
TELL ALL YOU WANT
BUT YOU WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND

WILL
SO WHAT COMES NEXT?

MEN AND WOMEN
WHAT COMES NEXT
ABIDE THE LAW
BEGIN A TRIAL
A TRIAL
A TRIAL

(MEN and WOMEN gather together to form A JURY)

EDWARD
Friends, life is a trial.

(THE JURY laughs and nods)

WILL
Now, you claim...
Act 2 - Scene 3

EDWARD

SON--
YOU CAN'T GO BACK TO WHAT YOU WERE
YOUR LIFE WON'T RERUN
AND YOU CAN'T UNDO THE THINGS
THAT YOU'D PREFER BE UNDONE
YOU CAN NEVER CHANGE THE PAST
THOUGH IT MAY HAUNT EVERY BREATH
YOU CAN DROWN BUT BE REBORN
IF YOU'RE NOT FRIGHTENED OF DEATH

JURY

Oooh.

EDWARD

YOU'RE SO SURE THAT I'M A ROTTEN FATHER
ABSENT AND LAME
NEVER INTERESTED IN STAYING HOME
OR HOMECOMING GAME
MAYBE YOU'RE THE ONE
IMPERFECT SON
WHO OVERREACTS
BETTER CHECK WITH ALL YOUR SOURCES
BEFORE TWISTING THE FACTS

WILL

SO, BY NO MEANS DID YOU VISIT ASHTON?

EDWARD

BACK IN MY YOUTH

WILL AND ALL BUT JUDGE
CAN YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN PRECISELY
WHY YOU'RE HIDING THE TRUTH?

EDWARD

I'M NOT HIDING THE TRUTH

WILL

(overlap)
YOUR HONOR, I WOULD LIKE TO SUBMIT
ONE MORE MAJOR PIECE OF EVIDENCE

EDWARD, GROCER AND WIFE

AND THEN YOU'LL ACQUIT!
WILL
WOULD YOU KINDLY TELL THE JURY
WHAT YOU HOLD IN THE AIR

EDWARD
SAYS RIGHT HERE THAT IT’S A DEED

WILL AND ALL BUT JUDGE
TO WHAT?

EDWARD
A HOUSE

WILL
TELL ME WHERE

EDWARD
REALLY, SON, I DON’T KNOW
WHAT YOU THINK YOU’RE TRYING TO PROVE

WILL AND ALL BUT JUDGE
WHERE’S THE HOUSE?

EDWARD
IT SAYS IN ASHTON

WILL
AND THAT’S SOMEWHERE THAT YOU’VE
NEVER BEEN TO SINCE YOUR BOYHOOD
BUT THIS DEED SPELLS IT OUT
THERE IS SOMEONE LIVING IN THAT HOUSE

EDWARD
NOW, WHAT’S THIS ABOUT

WILL
YOU INSIST YOU’VE NEVER BEEN THERE

EDWARD
WELL, THAT MIGHT BE THE CASE

WILL
NOW, YOU’RE LYING

EDWARD
THAT’S ENOUGH
WILL
YOU’RE LYING RIGHT TO MY FACE
(re: folder)
Who is Jenny Hill?
(EDWARD won’t answer)

WILL
(to the JUDGE)
Your honor?

EDWARD
Doc, how long we been friends?

JUDGE
Take him away.

(THE COWBOYS lift EDWARD onto the
bed. He feels an imaginary noose
around his neck.)

ALL
NOW THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT
THERE’S GONNA BE A HANGIN’ TONIGHT
THERE’S GOTTA BE
A STURDY TREE
AND IN THE MOONLIGHT

MEN
THERE’S GONNA BE A
HANGIN’
THERE’S GONNA BE A
HANGIN’
THERE’S GONNA BE

WOMEN
THERE’S GONNA BE A
HANGIN’
THERE’S GONNA BE A
HANGIN’
THERE’S GONNA BE

TOWNSFOLK AND WILL
A HANGIN’
A HANGIN’
A HANGIN’
A HANGIN’
A HANGIN’
A HANGIN’!!

(WILL and all the WESTERN CHARACTERS exit.
The bedroom returns to normal.)

[SFX: THUNDER]
(EDWARD screams, clutching his neck. Moving downstage, he takes his hands away, surprised to find there’s no noose. SANDRA wakes, panicked to see EDWARD in this state.)

SANDRA

Edward? Honey?

EDWARD

He attacked me. Come after me like I’m a villain.

SANDRA

You’re okay! Let’s calm down. Tell me what happened.

EDWARD

I just did!

(beat)

I did, didn’t I? It’s all got kinda blurry.

(He crumples to the floor. SANDRA joins him.)

SANDRA

It’s okay honey. It was just a nightmare. You’re right here with me.

(They both listen to the rain)

[SFX: THUNDER]

#17 I DON’T NEED A ROOF

EDWARD

The roof should hold up. The shingles still got at least ten years in ‘em. You’ll be fine.

(off her reaction)

Ah, honey. What’d I say?

SANDRA

IN YOUR FACE
I SEE A LIFETIME
IN THIS PLACE
SANDRA  (CON’T)

I FEEL AT EASE
WALLPAPER PEELING
PAINT WEARING THIN
HERE’S WHERE I END AND BEGIN

I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO SAY I’M COVERED
I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO KNOW I’M HOME
THERE COULD BE A SINGLE SHINGLE DANGLING OVERHEAD
I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO MAKE MY BED

(EDWARD lays his head in SANDRA’s lap)

CLOSE YOUR EYES
I’M STILL BESIDE YOU
NO GOODBYES
NEEDED TODAY
HEAR WHAT THE RAIN SAYS
KNOW WHAT IT KNOWS
AFTER THE RAIN SOMETHING GROWS

I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO SAY I LOVE YOU
I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO CALL YOU MINE
I DON’T NEED ADVENTURE IN SOME FAR AWAY FRONTIER
I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO FEEL YOU NEAR
ALL I NEED IS YOU AND YOU FOREVER
ALL I FEEL IS TRUE AND ABSOLUTE
I DON’T NEED A LEGAL DEED TO HELP ME PLAY MY PART
I DON’T NEED A ROOF TO HOLD MY HEART
STAY WITH ME
STAY WITH ME

[MUSIC SEGUES TO #17A]

(As EDWARD and SANDRA exit, segue to--)

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SCENE 4

OUTSIDE A TIDY, LITTLE HOUSE

#17A JENNY HILL

(JENNY HILL ENTERS, kneeling at the river’s edge to fill up her watering can. Her back is to WILL as he enters, carrying the red folder.)

WILL

Excuse me. Hi.

JENNY HILL

Oh.

(recognizing him)

Oh!

WILL

Hello.

JENNY HILL

I wasn’t expecting you.

WILL

Are you Jenny Hill?

JENNY HILL

I am. And you’re Will, Eddie’s son. You look so much like him.

WILL

How did you know my father?

JENNY HILL

From high school. Before that, even.

(A beat—not flinching)

WILL

Were you and my father having an affair?

JENNY HILL

(taken back)

Wow. You just said it.
WILL
I’ve seen him with women. He flirts. He always has. On some level, I presumed he was cheating on my mother. I just never had proof.

(shows her the folder)
That’s your signature, right? The deed to this house. He co-signed the loan.

JENNY HILL
Can I ask you a question? Why did you come here today? If you found this, why didn’t you just ask Eddie?

WILL
Because he’s dying.

(JENNY is taken back by the suddenness of it. She’s a tangle of conflicting emotions.)

JENNY HILL
Look, I don’t know how much you want to know about any of this. You have one image of your father and it would be wrong of me to go and change it.

WILL
My father talked about a lot of things he never did, and I’m sure he did a lot of things he never talked about. I’m just trying to reconcile the two.

(beat)
You said you went to high school with him. Was that here, in Ashton?

JENNY HILL
It was in Ashton, but Ashton wasn’t here. You do know what happened to the town, right?

WILL
No.

JENNY HILL
Oh honey. That’s the only reason your father came back. The state was building a new reservoir -- the whole valley was gonna be flooded. In just a few hours, the town of Ashton would be thirty feet under water.

(making space on the porch)
Edward Bloom came back to take one last look at the town he left so long ago.
SCENE 5

ASHTON TOWN SQUARE

(Lights up--THE CITIZENS OF ASHTON have chained themselves to the buildings in protest. Banners and signs read "Save Ashton" and "Don’t Drown Our Town." DON PRICE leads a chant from the base of a statue--)

DON PRICE

What do we want?

TOWNSFOLK

Nothing to change!

DON PRICE

When do we want it?

TOWNSFOLK

Forever!

DON PRICE

What do we want?

TOWNSFOLK

Nothing to change!

DON PRICE

When do we want it?

TOWNSFOLK

Forever!

DON PRICE

As long as we’re chained here, the state won’t dare drown this town.

(EDWARD enters. ZACKY is the first to spot him.)

ZACKY PRICE

Edward Bloom?

SHARECROPPER

It can’t be.
EDWARD

It is!

ZACKY PRICE
We knew you’d come. When you left, you said quote, “I’ll never forget Ashton. I’ll come back, I promise.”

SHARECROPPER
We just thought it’d be sooner!

EDWARD

Edward Bloom.

DON PRICE

Don Price.

EDWARD

That’s Mayor Don Price.

DON PRICE

Congratulations. Look, I came because I read in the paper that they were floodin’ the valley.

ZACKY PRICE

So what’s your plan, Edward?

EDWARD

(confused)
What, me? You think I’m here to save you?

#18 START OVER

ZACKY PRICE

You’re persuasive! You can talk to them, get them to stop building the dam.

EDWARD

The dam’s already built. The river’s already rising.

DON PRICE

The state’s not gonna let us all drown.

EDWARD

Does anyone even know you’re here?

DON PRICE

Yeah!
ZACKY PRICE
Wait, nobody knows we’re here?! Edward, you gotta help us. You’re the only one who can save the town.

DON PRICE
Uh-uh! Not this time!

EDWARD’S NOT A SAVIOR
EDWARD’S NOT A SAINT
HOW CAN HE BE GOOD FOR US?
HE’S NOT THE THING HE SAYS HE AIN’T
WE CAN CHANGE OUR FATE
YOU BET WE CAN
WE DON’T NEED THIS INTERLOPING MAN

EDWARD
He’s right!

DON PRICE
I am not! I mean...what?

EDWARD
You gotta let go of the past.

I SUGGEST THAT YOU
START OVER

DON PRICE
Now?

START OVER

EDWARD
How?

DON PRICE

INSTEAD OF DROWN
WE MOVE THE TOWN
AND START OVER

TOWNSFOLK
Wow.
(DON grumbles)

EDWARD

YOU CAN SWEAT
YOU CAN FRET
‘TIL WE’RE ALL SOAKING WET
‘CUZ GOOD GOD THERE’S A FLOOD ON THE WAY
IF YOU START OVER
TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

What’s so great about these buildings? Nothin’. These roads are full of potholes. But that’s not what makes a town -- a town is made of people and memories and dreams. You got those! You don’t have to stay here to stay together!

FARM GIRL

But where we movin’ to?!

CHEERLEADER

We gotta get some new land first.

DON PRICE

We couldn’t afford to build a new town anyway.

EDWARD

(undeterred)

What if I got you the land and the money?

ZACKY PRICE

(re: chains)

Well, you’d know where to find us.

(EDWARD leaves THE TOWSFOLK to meet up with AMOS CALLOWAY, seated at his desk, along with a BEAUTIFUL WOMAN.)

AMOS

I’ll tell ya, Edward --

WHEN WE MET I LIVED A KIND OF SECRETIVE LIFE
I WAS A MYSTERIOUS MAN
AFTER MEETING YOU I MET MYSELF AND MY WIFE
ALL BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME I CAN
YOU’RE UPSET
YOU’RE IN NEED
I’VE GOT LAND
AND A DEED
AMOS (CON’T)

YOU CAN HAVE EVERY WEED
EVERY STONE
YOU’RE THE ONLY MAN WHO I WOULD EVER GIVE A THING TO
THE TRUEST FRIEND THAT I’VE EVER KNOWWWWN!

You’ll love this land. Lotsa tasty rabbits!

EDWARD

Thank you Amos, thank you!

(EDWARD leaves AMOS to find KARL THE GIANT,
who has become a Wall Street tycoon. He has
a GIANT GIRLFRIEND.)

KARL

Edward! When I met you, I was living in a cave.

YOU CONVINCED ME TO
START OVER
START OVER

We’d offset the construction costs by floating a thirty-year
fixed-rate bond tied to the Nikkei index.

(beat)

I know a guy.

IN A RUSH
YOU’LL BE FLUSH
I’LL GET CASH
BUT HUSH-HUSH
I WON’T DO THIS FOR JUST ANY JOE
YOU CAN START OVER
AND EDWARD I’LL GIVE YOU THE DOUGH

EDWARD

Thank you Karl, thank you!

(EDWARD returns to THE TOWNSFOLK)

I GOT YOU THE LAND JUST OVER THE HILL
AND MONEY TO BUILD A NEW TOWN

ZACKY PRICE

MONEY TO BUILD A NEW TOWN
DON PRICE
MONEY TO BUILD A NEW TOWN

TOWNSFOLK
MONEY TO BUILD A NEW TOWN

EDWARD, MEN AND WOMEN
START OVER
START OVER
INSTEAD OF DROWN
WE MOVE THE TOWN
AND START OVER

MEN AND WOMEN
WE CAN SWEAT
WE CAN FRET
‘TIL WE’RE ALL SOAKING WET

EDWARD, DON AND ZACKY
SO YOU BETTER BELIEVE WHAT WE SAY
IF WE START OVER TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

ALL
TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

EDWARD, DON AND ZACKY
TOMORROW BEGINS TODAY

(DON raises the deed and check triumphantly)

ALL
TOMORROW BEGINS
TOMORROW BEGINS!

(As the song starts to build toward its conclusion, everything suddenly freezes and we’re back to JENNY HILL’S PORCH)

WILL
Wait -- if what you’re saying is true, then that’s the biggest thing my father’s ever done. He saved a town. Why wouldn’t he tell me that story?

JENNY HILL
Because the story doesn’t end there.
(JENNY HILL crosses into the town square, where she chains herself. Everything unfreezes --)

ZACKY PRICE
Edward, you saved us again!

EDWARD
It was all Don’s idea.

(TOWNSFOLK cheer for DON instead)

DON PRICE
Water’s risin’! Let’s go!

(As CITIZENS exit, DON offers EDWARD a handshake. EDWARD notices a woman with her back to him. Doesn’t realize it’s JENNY.)

EDWARD
Ma’am? Ma’am, we gotta go. They already started flooding the valley.

JENNY HILL
You’re too late.

EDWARD
No -- we still got an hour, at least.

JENNY HILL
(turning to him)
You’re years too late.

#18A START OVER (REPRISE)

EDWARD
Jenny Hill. What are you -- I heard you married, moved away.

JENNY HILL
My husband left me, too. He could never compete with the fantasy. A girl only gets one true love, and that was you.

EDWARD
Jenny, I’m sorry.
JENNY HILL
Just forget me like you did before. Let me drown here, Edward Bloom.

EDWARD
I won’t.

JENNY HILL
You did! I have been drowning since the moment you left.

EDWARD
I'M NOT HERE TO ARGUE OR CONFESSION
ONLY HERE FOR DAMSELS IN DISTRESS
LEAVE THIS MESS AND THEN
START OVER
START OVER
SAY ‘BYE TO THE OLD FANTASY
AND START OVER

WHEN THERE’S PAIN
DON’T COMPLAIN
JUST HOLD ON THROUGH THE RAIN
AND YOU’LL WONDER WHAT CAUSED ALL THE FUSS
WHEN WE START OVER
TOMORROW BEGINS FOR US

(JENNY relents. EDWARD unlocks her chains and carries her off-stage. Water rises, eventually overtaking the town. WILL watches from the porch. A title card: “THE FLOOD.” As the waters retreat, EDWARD leads JENNY in, her eyes blindfolded.)

EDWARD
Little further. Little further. Now watch out for that poisonous snake!

(she squeals)
Just kiddin’. Alright, three...two...one...

(He pulls down the blindfold)

JENNY HILL
Oh my god. Is this really my house?

EDWARD
All you have to do is sign.
(He holds the red folder with the deed. JENNY signs. So does EDWARD.)

EDWARD

(signing)
Edward Bloom. I promised I’d come back, Jenny. I’m a man of my word.

(WILL takes the folder from EDWARD’s hand)

JENNY HILL

Thank you.

(A smile. A hug. The hug turns into a kiss. EDWARD lets it go on longer than he should. He finally pushes away.)

EDWARD

I am in love with my wife. From the moment I saw her until the moment I die, she’s the only one.

JENNY HILL

Lucky girl.

EDWARD

I’m sorry, Jenny. I am.

(With that, EDWARD exits. As we transition back to present day, JENNY sits on the porch with WILL.)

JENNY HILL

He never came back. And I guess he never said a word about saving Ashton. The greatest thing he ever did, and not a story to go with it.

WILL

He could have left you out of the story.

JENNY HILL

No, he could never risk you coming here, finding out. It had to go untold.

WILL

It was just a kiss.
JENNY HILL
(surprised)
You don’t understand him, do you?

WILL
I want to.

JENNY HILL
Honey, you’re the key to all of this. The way Eddie smiled when he talked about you -- well, you were just a boy, but you were smart. He was so proud of you. You knew that, didn’t you?

(WILL didn’t)
He wanted you to be proud of him, too.

(WILL’s phone rings. He checks the number and answers.)

WILL
Hi...What’s wrong, are you...When? Where is he? Is Mom...Okay. I’m coming, I’m coming.
(to Jenny)
I’m sorry. I have to...

JENNY HILL
Is it Eddie? Is he..?

WILL
I don’t know.

#18B TRANSITION TO HOSPITAL

(WILL exits as we reveal--)
SCENE 6

HOSPITAL ROOM

(EDWARD sleeps in a hospital bed. JOSEPHINE and SANDRA pace. WILL enters)

WILL

What happened?

JOSEPHINE

Your father stopped breathing. We called the ambulance --

WILL

Is he going to be okay? I mean, will he get back to the way he was when--

(She shakes her head)

WILL (CON’T)

Mom. I’m so sorry. I should have been there.

SANDRA

There’s nothing you could have done.

WILL

What does Dr. Bennett say?

SANDRA

They’ll know better in the morning. Some test. I’m supposed to go downstairs--fill out paperwork.

WILL

I’ll go with you.

SANDRA

No, one of us should stay with him.

JOSEPHINE

I’ll go with you.

#18C TIME STOPS REPRISE

(SANDRA hesitates, reluctant to leave, but then departs with JOSEPHINE. WILL sits beside the bed, writing in a note pad. DR. BENNETT enters.)
DR. BENNETT

WILL

Dr. Bennett.

DR. BENNETT

Will.

WILL

Dr. Bennett, how long have you known my father?

DR. BENNETT

(checking EDWARD’s chart)

How old are you? Add a couple years to that.

WILL

How would you describe him?

DR. BENNETT

(re: chart)

Five-nine. One-sixty. Regulated hypertension.

WILL

Can he hear us?

DR. BENNETT

Hard to say what anyone hears. Harder still to know if they’re listenin’.

(DR. BENNETT exits. WILL pulls a chair over next to his father’s bed. It’s the mirror image of the opening, with a son beside his father.)

WILL

I know about Ashton, Dad. I know what you did. You saved a town and broke a girl’s heart. I get why you didn’t want Mom to know. I do. But what you did was...heroic.

(re: notebook)

I made a list of your stories. There are thirty-six basic tales, with a lot of variations of course. Some are just jokes. Awful jokes, mostly. But you take the rest and it’s like a myth. An epic tale about a farmer’s son from Alabama who wanted to see the world. You never did, though. I did. And I think that’s because of you.

(takes EDWARD’s hand)

All this time, I thought you were trying to impress me. You were trying to inspire me.
[SFX: A LOW SOUND]

WILL (CON’T)

Dad?

(EDWARD coughs, gasps, panicked.)

Dad. Do you want me to get a nurse?

(EDWARD shakes his head unambiguously)


(WILL pours a glass from the pitcher on the nightstand. EDWARD pushes it away. He wanted something else.)

EDWARD

The river.

WILL

The river?

EDWARD

Tell me how it happens.

WILL

How what happens?

EDWARD

How I go.

WILL

I don’t...You mean what the Witch showed you? I don’t know that part of the story, Dad. You never told me what you saw.

EDWARD

(panicked)

Will...

WILL

I can’t. Dad, I don’t know how to do this.

(Every instinct tells WILL to get the doctor. EDWARD gives a louder noise. Desperate.)
WILL (CON’T)
I can try, Dad. If you help. Just tell me how it starts.

EDWARD

Like this.

#19 WHAT’S NEXT

WILL

Okay. Okay.

(WILL wings it, desperately trying to make up an Edward Bloom story on the spot. Looking around--)

FIRST THINGS FIRST
WE’RE IN THIS PRISON CELL
HAVE TO FIND A WAY TO BREAK OUT
FIND ANOTHER PLACE TO STAKE OUT
LOOK AROUND
BE SURE WE AREN’T SEEN
SLOWLY CHECK THE DOOR
BEFORE WE’RE SPOTTED
WERE WE SPOTTED?
I KNOW
YOU’VE BEEN
(really pouring it on)
A SECRET DOUBLE AGENT
BUT WE CAN TURN THE PAGE INTO ANOTHER KIND OF TALE

(Lights rise--EDWARD sits up in bed)

WILL

LET’S GO
THE DOOR
IS JUST OUR FIRST OPPONENT
SO STEP OUT OF YOUR STATE OF SHOCK
WE ONLY NEED TO PICK THIS LOCK--

EDWARD

No need!

(From his bed, EDWARD pulls out the Key to the City. Hands it to WILL. WILL finds a wheelchair. Helps his father climb in.)
WILL

"WHAT’S NEXT" IS ALL ANYONE NEEDS TO BEGIN
"WHAT’S NEXT" HAS BEEN A FRIEND TO YOU
WHAT’S NEXT TO DO?
ONE WORD AND THEN SUDDENLY ONE MORE AGAIN
JUST LIKE A PEN
WRITING A PERFECT TALE

(The key “unlocks” the door. WILL starts to wheel EDWARD through the “hallway.”)

OUT THE DOOR
AND PRAY THE COAST IS CLEAR

DR. BENNETT

Edward?

WILL

NOSES TO THE GROUND
BEFORE WE’RE SPOTTED

EDWARD

We were spotted!

WILL

SO, NOW WE FACE
THE ULTIMATE DECISION
RELINQUISH OUR CONTROL
AS WE SURRENDER UP THE FIGHT
OR ELSE WE SAY
HELLO TO THE COLLISION
JUST DO OUR JOB AND DO IT WELL

EDWARD

OR BETTER YET
LET’S RUN LIKE HELL!

(WILL pushes the chair fast, nearly slamming into DR. BENNETT.)

DR. BENNETT

Will! What are you doing?

EDWARD

Figured out what’s wrong with me, Doc. Been out of the water too long!
DR. BENNETT

Of course.

(Reaching an “elevator.”)

WILL

“What’s next” is all anyone needs to begin
“What’s next” has been a friend to you
What’s next to do?

(Crotale plays a “ding” indicating the
elevator doors opening. They enter with a
NURSE in scrubs.)

WILL (CON’T)

One word and then suddenly one more again
Just like that pen
Writing a perfect tale

EDWARD

(to NURSE)
Edward Bloom. Green’s a good color on you. Brings out your eyes.

(Another “ding.” WILL wheels EDWARD out of
the “elevator.”)

WILL

(“that’s enough”)
Alright, Dad.

EDWARD

You know who else had green eyes?

WILL

The mermaid?

EDWARD

The mermaid. Sea-green. Absolutely beautiful.

(Passing through the front doors of the
hospital--)

EDWARD

(points)
There! My old Chevy!

(EDWARD gulps from a water bottle)
WILL

EDWARD BLOOM
HOW DID YOU SWIM THROUGH DANGER IN THE WORLD
WHAT WAS IN THE HEART THAT BEATS INSIDE YOU?
WERE YOU SIMPLY WETTER THAN
THE ORDINARY AVERAGE MAN
OR WAS IT JUST YOUR FINS AND SCALES TO GUIDE YOU TO:
WHAT’S NEXT

EDWARD

WE START THE CAR

[SFX: ENGINE ROAR]

WILL

WHAT’S NEXT?

[SFX: Tire SQUEAL]

EDWARD

WE HIT THE ROAD!

WILL

WHAT’S NEXT?

EDWARD

WE FIND THE RIVER

WILL

WHAT’S NEXT?
WHAT’S NEXT?

EDWARD

I don’t, I...

(EDWARD is confused -- he knows and doesn’t
know.)

(Reveal The River Valley--CHARACTERS from
all parts of the story are waiting for
EDWARD, including AMOS, KARL, DON PRICE and
DR. BENNETT.)

WILL

AND WHO DO WE SEE AT THE RIVER TO GREET YOU
EVERYONE THERE AT THE RIVER TO MEET YOU
EVERYONE YOU EVER KNEW
WILL (CON’T)

EVER SPOKE OF
WAITING FOR YOU TO ARRIVE

NOW, CAN YOU SEE KARL BY THE TREE IN THE DISTANCE
AMOS ARRIVES WITH HIS USUAL FLAIR

ZACKY AND DON GATHERED ’ROUND,
CHEERING ON
YES, EVEN THE WITCH IS THERE
SHE IS THERE!

(The WITCH enters with her crystal ball.
EDWARD climbs out of the wheelchair,
revealing better clothes under his hospital
gown. He starts shaking hands. It’s almost a
receiving line.)

WILL

“WHAT’S NEXT” IS ALL ANYONE
NEEDS TO BEGIN
"WHAT’S NEXT” HAS BEEN
A FRIEND TO YOU
WHAT’S NEXT TO DO?

EDWARD’S FRIENDS

EDWARD BLOOM
WE’VE COME TO SAY GOODBYE
COME TO TELL YOU WHY
WE’VE ALWAYS LOVED YOU
YES, WE LOVE YOU

ONLY ONE DAD
ONLY INSPIRING ONE SON
EDWARD, YOU’RE DONE
WRITING YOUR PERFECT TALE
TELLING THE PERFECT TALE

EVERYONE

IT WAS A PERFECT TALE

(The MERMAID appears in the river)

EDWARD

Well I can’t say this was a surprise, exactly.
(gestures to THE WITCH)
But I thank you all for coming. A man is as rich as his friends.
I am a tycoon.

(EDWARD looks around--)
But someone’s missin’ here...

[MUSIC SEGUES]
(Sandra enters. She’s wearing a spectacular dress. Edward greets her center-stage.)

EDWARD (CON’T)
I’VE SEEN THIS ALL BEFORE
WHEN I WAS JUST A CHILD
I MET A WITCH WHO TOOK A BOW
AND SHOWED ME HOW IT ENDED
WE STOOD HERE ON THE SHORE
THE AIR WAS SWEET AND MILD
WITH DISBELIEF IMPLAUSIBLY SUSPENDED
AND IN MY CHILD’S IMAGINATION
I REMEMBER YOU

(To KARL)
THOUGH I DIDN’T KNOW IF WE WERE FOES OR FRIENDS
BUT NOW YOU’RE STANDING HERE
I SEE THE VISION COMING CLEAR
I KNOW EXACTLY HOW THIS ENDS

(Turns to SANDRA)
IT ENDS WITH YOU
IT ENDS WITH ME
IT ENDS THE WAY A STORY’S ENDING IS SUPPOSED TO BE
A BIT INSANE
A TOUCH OF PAIN
ADEPTLY TOLD
YET UNCONTROLLED

IT ENDS WITH FAITH
IT ENDS WITH LOVE
IT ENDS WITH WATER IN THE RIVER AND THE SUN ABOVE
PART EPIC TALE
PART FIRE SALE

BUT ALL SINCERE
AND STANDING HERE

(To WILL)
I KNOW I WASN’T PERFECT
EDWARD (CON’T)

I KNOW MY LIFE WAS SMALL
I KNOW THAT I PRETENDED
THAT I KNEW IT ALL
BUT WHEN YOU TELL MY STORY
AND I HOPE SOMEBODY DOES
REMEMBER ME AS SOMETHING
BIGGER THAN I WAS
IT ENDS WITH SONS
IT ENDS WITH WIVES
IT ENDS WITH KNOWING WHEN THE PAVEMENT BENDS
WE FIND OUR LIVES

SO LET IT COME
AND LET ME GO
SHOW ME THE WAVES
AND LET THEM FLOW
IT ALL ENDS WELL
THIS MUCH I KNOW

(EDWARD BLOOM’s departure is a big moment, a celebration, appropriately triumphant and unhurried. THE CHARACTERS of EDWARD’s stories slowly exit as we return to the hospital room.)

(WILL sits beside the bed, holding HIS FATHER’s hand.)

WILL

And that’s how it happens. That’s how you go.

(The flatline of EDWARD’s monitor)

[MUSIC SEGUES]

(We stay in the moment, leaving WILL alone. He kisses his father’s forehead. He then moves downstage to--
SCENE 7

THE RIVER’S EDGE

(WILL finishes telling a story at the funeral. A laugh from the guests. He and JOSEPHINE then greet a receiving line of MOURNERS, each of whom takes a daffodil to toss in the water.)

(Among the guests, we see the “real” versions of many of EDWARD’s characters. WILL recognizes them from his father’s stories. While the details were exaggerated, EDWARD’s friends were real, including AMOS and KARL THE GIANT -- a very tall man.)

#21 THE PROCESSION

MEN AND WOMEN

OOH, OOH, OOH, OOH
OOH, OOH
OOH, OOH
OOH, OOH
OOH (DOO DOO DOO DOO)
OOH (DOO DOO)

OOH

DOO, DOO

WILL

I don’t think we’ve met. I’m Will.

KARL

I’m Karl.

(KARL exits. Sharing a look, WILL and JOSEPHINE exit)

[MUSIC SEGUES]

#22 BE THE HERO (REPRISE)
(Lights shift as SANDRA enters, carrying a picnic basket. It’s not immediately clear if this is just after the funeral, or some time later.)

(WILL’s six-year-old SON runs in, carrying a fishing pole.)

WILL’S SON
Grandma! Grandma!

SANDRA
What is it?

WILL’S SON
We just saw the biggest fish in the whole world! It was as big as a car!

(WILL and JOSEPHINE enter)

WILL
Now, son. Let’s stick to the facts.

(look to SANDRA and JOSEPHINE)

It was at least as big as a truck.

WILL’S SON
Yeah, a truck! And we’re gonna catch it.

SANDRA
I can’t wait!

JOSEPHINE
(“get to it”)
I want to see this fish.

SANDRA
(to WILL and SON, re: basket)
You get hungry, there’s barbecue.

(JOSEPHINE takes SANDRA’s arm. They continue walking, and exit.)
WILL
You know, it was right here on this spot that your granddad helped me catch my first fish.

(gesturing wide)
It was this big.

WILL’S SON
How’d you do it?

WILL
That is a Bloom family secret -- passed only from father to son.

BE THE HERO OF YOUR STORY
IF YOU CAN
BE THE CHAMPION IN THE FIGHT
NOT JUST A MAN
ON A WING OR ON A PRAYER
YOU GET THERE ONLY WITH YOUR VOICE
WITH A STORY IN YOUR HEART
YOU WON'T NEED ANY OTHER CHOICE
YOU'RE THE HERO
FIGHTING DRAGONS
WINNING WARS

BE THE HERO AND THE WORLD WILL SOON BE YOURS!!

BLACKOUT

END OF MUSICAL

#23 BOWS

#24 EXIT MUSIC