

*Robert J. Litz*

FOUR PLAYS  
ABOUT  
HISTORIES



Metron Publications

# FOREWORD

*Robert Litz was both a spectacularly successful human being and a spectacularly good writer. He was a person who loved his work and knew it, whatever frustrations it entailed. I often called him a psycho-optimist, but everyone around him felt better after talking with him – and not primarily because of his incandescent smile, but because he managed, in every single conversation, to make it so clear what the true stakes are in life, and what’s worth fighting for.*

*This publication puts together four of his plays, two contemporary and two historical plays, that were dearest to his heart. The plays were optioned multiple times at the major Hollywood studios (e.g., Paramount), but the options always lapsed, and always for bizarre reasons, including this: at the time when Bob was pushing for Helen Mirren or Annette Benning, the studio executives were sure that these actors weren’t famous enough and that they needed to get Julia Roberts to play Cassatt instead.*

*Like most artists, Bob was usually stone-broke, because producing plays, writing scripts for documentary films, producing experimental work, and writing movies “on spec” does not usually conduce to making money. (Also, whenever he came into big money, as when offered a five-picture deal, he had no trouble giving most of that money away to people he admired, as well as to virtual strangers whom he knew to be poorer than himself.)*

*As Eudora Welty noted, “No art ever came out of not risking your neck. And risk – experiment – is a considerable part of the joy of doing, which is the lone, simple reason all [writers] are willing to work as hard as they do.” Bob had an exceptional talent for writing, as well as a passion for friendship. As a neighbor of mine says, “Bob could do anything, from fixing a piece of plumbing to building a lamp to writing a piece of theater that was so good that it left you breathless.” He was a romantic fool in the best possible sense of that word. The only tribute we can pay Bob is to read his work, and this book should further that project in his honor.*

*Michael Nylan*

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MOBILE  
HYMN



A PLAY IN TWO ACTS

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

*(in order of appearance)*

JULIE (*also* RANGER)

DAD

MOM

TOWTRUCKER

MOLL

BUSDRIVER

SWEETMEAT

PROFESSOR

BETTY

BILL

OPERATOR ONE

OPERATOR TWO

OPERATOR THREE

HITCHHIKER (*also* MOLL)

COP

WAITRESS

VAGRANT



threw a rod and Julie needed a new computer.

[REDACTED] My kids are out here someplace. Both of ‘em. Moll and Julie.

[REDACTED] JULIE [REDACTED] [REDACTED] u [REDACTED], [REDACTED] v [REDACTED] [REDACTED] m [REDACTED]

MOM: Julie?

JULIE [REDACTED] b [REDACTED]: Oh God.

DAD: Marge too. That’s my wife. You from these parts?

MOM: Are you all right?

TOWTRUCKER: Nope.

DAD: Ah... You got it too.

TOWTRUCKER: Got what?

DAD: The “itch.”

MOM: I hope Frank behaved himself.

JULIE: As well as could be expected from somebody who got a C-minus in Health.

MOM: Isn’t senior Health “human sexuality”?

JULIE: Not in Frank’s case.

MOM: Physical love between two people is not something to be taken lightly.

JULIE: I was about to become the oldest living virgin in Upstate New York.

MOM: Liberation’s one thing but...

JULIE: Can we talk tomorrow? I gotta lie down.

[REDACTED] JULIE [REDACTED] [REDACTED] “S [REDACTED]

MOM: The first time can be very upsetting.

JULIE: From the beer, Mom. I’ll be all right.

DAD: Bet you’ve seen a lotta guys like me.

TOWTRUCKER [REDACTED] [REDACTED]: I’ve seen my share.

JULIE: So what’s with Dad all of a sudden? Male menopause?

Or has he finally just flipped from the fumes at the mill?

[REDACTED] DAD, [REDACTED] b [REDACTED] f [REDACTED] u [REDACTED] m [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

DAD: I oughta get going.

TOWTRUCKER: Just give me a few more minutes.

DAD [REDACTED]: Your bike?

TOWTRUCKER: Naw. Some kid's. ... Aw, forget it. Let me see.

TOWTRUCKER [XXXXXXXXXXXX] [XXXXXXXXXXXX] [XXX] [XXXXXXXX] DAD [m]

DAD: I was thinking of heading down through Zion and then on to the Grand Canyon.

MOM [XXXXX] [XXXXXX] JULIE [XXXXX]: Your hair's so fine and soft. Like it was when you were a little girl.

JULIE [XXXXX] [XXXXX] [XXXX]

MOM [XXXX] [XD]: Have you been using that new conditioner I got?

JULIE: It doesn't work.

MOM: It has to, it's got egg in it.

JULIE: I put a whole raw egg on yesterday.

MOM: That was for your father's breakfast.

JULIE: He eats toast.

MOM: Because you put all the eggs on your head.

JULIE: Why'd I have to get your hair? Why couldn't I have gotten Dad's. Look! It just breaks off!

MOM: Your father's had to clear the bathroom traps twice in the past month. Maybe you should rinse in the basement.

TOWTRUCKER: Why don't you just follow the route you've got marked out?

DAD: I took that way ten years ago. I'd like to see something new. I'm not in any rush.

TOWTRUCKER: Just goin' around?

DAD: Yeah. Just me this time.

TOWTRUCKER: Only way to go.

MOM: We've all got to be careful not to do anything upsetting to him for a while.

TOWTRUCKER: If I were you, I'd go the same way. Ten years is a long time. You forget a lot. Where'd you say you were from?

DAD: Back East. ... Took me a long time to finally make the move and go. Kinda scary, just jumping off like that, not knowing where I'd land.

TOWTRUCKER [XXXX] [m] [XXXX] [XXXX]: Still, once you do it, you can't believe you made such a big deal out of it. Hell, by the time I hit high gear, they coulda tore the roads up behind me.

DAD: You ever been back?

TOWTRUCKER: Nope.

DAD: You don't want to? I mean, sometimes, just now and then?

TOWTRUCKER: I had this weird feeling when I crossed the Mississippi that somebody burned the bridge behind me and the road just... evaporated. And way back on the other side someplace there's this guy with a face kinda like mine but who's a total stranger – like somebody somebody like you told me about, like a story that sounded familiar when you heard it but you don't know why. ... If I ran into him now, we'd never even recognize each other.

DAD *f* *u* *m*  
JULIE MOM *c* *mb*  
TOWTRUCKER *c* *m*  
DAD *n* *c* *u* *b* *m* *v* *u* *Th* *B* *y* *u* *c* *b* *m* *b* *y* *u* *S* *b* *G* *u* *H* MOLL

MOLL: You're standing in my light.

DAD: Now what're you doing?

MOLL: What's it look like?

DAD: Like you're making a mess.

MOLL: Plug's just a little tight.

DAD: You're turning it the wrong way.

MOLL, *f* *f* *c*  
DAD, *by* *c* *m* *c* *y*

DAD: How's the job-hunting?

MOLL: Jobs are off-season.

DAD *mu*: Where'd you look today?

MOLL: Nowhere.

DAD: Yesterday.

MOLL: I was working on my bike.

DAD: Did you go see my friend over at the sporting goods store?

MOLL: Not yet.

DAD: Did you at least call him?





something nice. He didn't know.

DAD: I don't even give you that kind of stuff, Marge.

MOM: I know.

DAD: I'm too embarrassed to ask the salesgirl for chrissakes. Ten years old, Jesus.

MOM: I thought it was cute.

DAD: Cute? ... Like the motorcycle?

MOM [REDACTED]: Oh, John...

DAD: You think this is funny?

MOM: Not funny. Silly.

DAD: It's time, Marge. [REDACTED] As long as I can remember we've had somebody else to think about. I was his age when he was born and you weren't much older than Julie.

MOM: Maybe we should have waited.

DAD: I've pumped my paychecks into this crakerjack box for twenty years and what've we got to show for it?! ... I'm going for a drive.

MOM: Again?

DAD [REDACTED]: We oughta sell this place.

[REDACTED] BLU [REDACTED] LI [REDACTED] LIGHTS b [REDACTED] [REDACTED] j [REDACTED] L [REDACTED] MOLL, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] v [REDACTED] [REDACTED] f [REDACTED] v [REDACTED] [REDACTED] "D [REDACTED] DAD [REDACTED] [REDACTED] f [REDACTED] [REDACTED] b [REDACTED] c [REDACTED] MOLL [REDACTED]

MOLL: I was just running. I run all the time. I like to run. I was trying to work something out. Something personal.

So I was there, at the shop, so what? I've gone to lots of places looking for jobs. They didn't want me. I've got nothing against sporting goods – some of my best friends are softballs. ... Sorry. Look, I might have said something to the guy but I didn't go back and bust his windows.

[REDACTED] MOLL [REDACTED] qu [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] c [REDACTED] MOM [REDACTED] [REDACTED] j [REDACTED]

MOLL: Mom?

MOM: Oh, Moll, they said you –

MOLL: I didn't do anything.

MOM: You were frustrated and angry and –

MOLL: Mom, I didn't do anything!







JULIE: The statue of the guy with the pigeon on his head, with white streaks all over him?

MOLL: When Julie started playing tennis, Dad'd play with her all the time. He never spent much time with me. But he'd take me camping, once or twice a summer, just him and me.

JULIE: I checked the map. This has to be either the library or my dorm.

U DS f Bu S DAD b c m BUS DRIVER u c /

DRIVER: Outbound local, now boarding at Gate Six! Repeat: Now boarding at Gate Six!

MOLL f bu b u JULIE

JULIE m y u m]: Excuse me, do you know which way North is?

SWEETMEAT, m y u f u m b c u  
v b

SWEETMEAT: Those trees!!!

JULIE ff SWEETMEAT]: Where?

JULIE ff m c MOLL  
b "bu]

DRIVER: Please have your boarding passes ready.

SWEETMEAT: So many colors. God! It's amazing!

SWEETMEAT DRIVER b u  
f qu c MOLL SWEETMEAT f 'ff' bu  
f m DRIVER JULIE

JULIE m DRIVER]: Here's my dorm pass, my pre-registration, my comptroller's voucher, and my... I don't know what this is.

SWEETMEAT MOLL]: Hi.

DRIVER JULIE]: Go ahead.

JULIE ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ DRIVER

SWEETMEAT: You got a name?

MOLL: Uh... Mark.

SWEETMEAT: You on vacation? ... To see the leaves?

MOLL: Me? No. I'm going...

SWEETMEAT: Where?

MOLL: I just left home see, and uh...

DRIVER: First time away from home?

SWEETMEAT: Runaway?

JULIE: Besides girlscout camp. But that doesn't count.

SWEETMEAT: You look too old to be a runaway. But if you're not going anyplace in particular then I guess it doesn't much matter how old you are, right?

JULIE: How'd you know?

DRIVER: I see a lot of people.

SWEETMEAT: I used to run away a lot, up the coast and back. This time I'm going someplace particular – this place in the country. Lots of big red-orange and yellow trees. Sugar maples with the sap still running. Cook it down and toss that hot syrup on the snow, listen to it sizzle into candy.

MOLL: Sounds great.

SWEETMEAT ██████████/: Wanna come?

MOLL: You got family? ... There? This place you're going?

SWEETMEAT: I'll start with a garden and see what grows.

MOLL: Kids and everything?

SWEETMEAT: Decorative gourds mostly. God, I hope this is the right bus.

JULIE: You have buses that go to Vermont from here?

DRIVER: We go everywhere. Why do you ask?

SWEETMEAT: I feel like I've been traveling forever. I'm so afraid I'll fall asleep and get off in the wrong place or lose my ticket or my money or my... bags.

██████████ SWEETMEAT ██████████/ ██████████ b██████████/ ████████████ MOLL ██████████

JULIE: My brother's there.

DRIVER: He in school too?

JULIE: Naw. Living with some woman he met.

