

HEAVENLY COUNTRY

A Jukebox Musical

by

Joel Russell

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Lily L'Amoreaux: Young woman. Optimistic, feminine. Devout Christian from the South.

Nehemiah "Nemo" Slavikozlowski: Young man. Energetic, eager-to-please personality; alcoholic.

Albert "Boss" Ross: Older man who owns Ross Moving Co. Somewhat befuddled by life.

Danielle "Danny" Morris/Mrs. L'Amoreaux: Tough "urban cowgirl" tomboy. Alcoholic. She doubles in a brief cameo as Lily's mother.

Pastor James Roberts: African-American clergyman with a frank and dignified demeanor.

Sister Ruth Roberts: African-American woman, wife of Pastor James and director of the choir at the church. Intuitive, expressive, religious.

Scene: The front yard or courtyard of a working-class apartment building. It should have one central doorway and a deck or yard with a railing on one side of the stage that's accessible from inside the building. The architectural style should match those common in the locality where the play is produced.

Time: Present.

Song Lyrics Format: In a few instances, the lyrics in this script vary from the original lyrics (with permission). These are designated by underline of the variant words. The changes either adjust the verb tenses to match the action or adjust the meaning to the context of the story.

Note on Improvisation: This script is rooted in Country music, which values authenticity and spontaneity. During the songs, the script includes the lyrics, but little direction on how singers and non-singers act and react during the music. Directors and actors should bring their creativity to express their characters during these episodes. This could include improvised responses to the lyrics, dancing, action or listening. Occasionally the script suggests action or retorts, but the creative team should adapt them or ignore them based on their embodiment of the characters.

ACT I

*SETTING: Stage is dark except
for down center.*

LOUDSPEAKER

Ladies and gentlemen, Benny's Bar presents last week's
karaoke champions: Boss Ross and the Honky-Tonk Movers!

(Enter NEMO, BOSS
and DANNY wearing
cowboy hats.)

BOSS

Thank you! Thank you, kindly!

LOUDSPEAKER

What number will you perform tonight, Boss?

BOSS

You know -- my favorite! The one that tells my life story.
You ready, Danny?

DANNY

Standing by.

BOSS

Nemo?

NEMO

All geared up!

BOSS

(Gives a thumbs up.)

Let's get this show on the road!

(BOSS sings lead with DANNY and
NEMO on backup for the chorus. The
backups can perform a cowboy line
dance or act out the lyrics.)

Song: "All My Ex's Live in Texas"

BOSS

ALL MY EX'S LIVE IN TEXAS
AND TEXAS IS A PLACE I'D DEARLY LOVE TO BE.
BUT ALL MY EX'S LIVE IN TEXAS
AND THAT'S WHY I HANG MY HAT IN TENNESSEE.

BOSS (CONTINUED)

ROSANNA'S DOWN IN TEXARKANA,
WANTED ME TO PUSH HER BROOM.
SWEET EILEEN'S IN ABILENE;
SHE FORGOT I HUNG THE MOON.
AND ALLISON'S IN GALVESTON,
SOMEHOW LOST HER SANITY.
AND DIMPLES WHO NOW LIVES IN TEMPLE'S
GOT THE LAW LOOKING FOR ME.

BOSS, NEMO AND DANNY

ALL MY EX'S LIVE IN TEXAS
AND TEXAS IS A PLACE I'D DEARLY LOVE TO BE.

BOSS
(To audience)
Help us out here!

BOSS, NEMO AND DANNY

BUT ALL MY EX'S LIVE IN TEXAS
AND THAT'S WHY I HANG MY HAT IN TENNESSEE.

(Instrumental interlude, dancing
and improvised lines.)

BOSS

I REMEMBER THAT OLD FRIO RIVER
WHERE I LEARNED TO SWIM.
BUT IT BRINGS TO MIND ANOTHER TIME
WHERE I WORE MY WELCOME THIN.
BY TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION
I GO THERE EACH NIGHT,
BUT I ALWAYS COME BACK TO MYSELF
LONG BEFORE DAYLIGHT.

ALL MY EX'S LIVE IN TEXAS
AND TEXAS IS A PLACE I'D DEARLY LOVE TO BE.
BUT ALL MY EX'S LIVE IN TEXAS;
THEREFORE I RESIDE IN TENNESSEE.

(Exit NEMO and DANNY, leaving BOSS
alone to finish the song.)

BOSS (CONTINUED)

SOME FOLKS THINK I'M HIDING;
IT'S BEEN RUMORED THAT I DIED;
BUT I'M ALIVE AND WELL IN TENNESSEE.

(Applause.)

BOSS (CONTINUED)

Thank you! Thank you, kindly!

(BOSS exits.)

SETTING: Lights come up to reveal the façade of a working-class apartment building. It has one central doorway and a fenced yard or elevated deck accessible from the inside on one side. The architectural style should reflect the locale where the play is staged.

(Enter DANNY and NEMO, wearing movers uniforms/badges and carrying boxes and a folding chair.)

DANNY

Oh, the pain in my brain.

NEMO

Have a seat and you'll feel better.

(He opens the chair;
she sits in relief.)

DANNY

How come you don't feel it, Nemo? You had twice as many shots.

NEMO

I was born to drink. And snakes are immune to their own venom.

(Enter BOSS, also in uniform.)

BOSS

Danny, you hung over again?

DANNY

I danced for your karaoke number, didn't I?

BOSS

That was before you two drained every bottle in the bar.

NEMO

A body's got to unwind, Boss.

BOSS

Look, what happens on your free time is your business. But this here is my business. We have a client with a mother in delicate health, so she needs the move finished -- every item and piece of furniture in place by tomorrow. And no accidents!

NEMO

Like duct tape -- we're on it!

BOSS

Move this freight upstairs and I'll unload the medical gear from the truck.

(BOSS exits.)

NEMO

I'll make a few trips while you recuperate.

DANNY

Thanks. But why does this keep happening?

NEMO

It's only the second time this week.

DANNY

Nemo, this dream of yours is squeezing my veins.

NEMO

But it's part of the new life you introduced me to -- cowboy boots, twangy tawk and Southern Comfort. I'm becoming a hog-stomping, girl-getting country boy.

DANNY

Nemo, people can't change their innards. You ain't some Texas cattleman. You are Nehemiah Slavikozlowski. From Minneapolis. Folks in these parts can't even say them words.

NEMO

What about those reruns of "Gunsmoke" you showed me?

DANNY

Television westerns are fine fantasies, but you ain't that hunky Sheriff Matt Dillon.

NEMO

Well, you're not exactly that saloon-keeping Miss Kitty, either.

DANNY

Hey, I've poured more whiskey in my life than she ever will.

Song: "Should've Been a Cowboy"

NEMO

I'LL BET YOU NEVER HEARD OLD MARSHAL DILLON SAY,
"MISS KITTY, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT OF RUNNING AWAY?
SETTLING DOWN, WOULD YOU MARRY ME
IF I ASKED YOU TWICE AND BEGGED YOU PRETTY PLEASE?"

NEMO (CONTINUED)

SHE'D HAVE SAID YES IN A NEW YORK MINUTE.
 THEY NEVER TIED THE KNOT; HIS HEART WASN'T IN IT.
 HE JUST STOLE A KISS AS HE RODE AWAY;
 HE NEVER HUNG HIS HAT UP AT KITTY'S PLACE.

I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY
 I SHOULD'VE LEARNED TO ROPE AND RIDE.
 WEARING MY SIX-SHOOTER, RIDING MY PONY ON A CATTLE DRIVE

DANNY
 Yeah right.

STEALING THE YOUNG GIRLS' HEARTS,

DANNY
 You wish.

JUST LIKE GENE AND ROY
 SINGING THOSE CAMPFIRE SONGS
 OH, I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY.

I MIGHT'VE HAD A SIDEKICK WITH A FUNNY NAME,
 RUNNING WILD THROUGH THE HILLS CHASING JESSE JAMES.
 OR ENDING UP ON THE BRINK OF DANGER,
 RIDING SHOTGUN FOR THE TEXAS RANGERS.
 GO WEST YOUNG MAN, HAVEN'T YOU BEEN TOLD?
 CALIFORNIA'S FULL OF WHISKEY, WOMEN AND GOLD.
 SLEEPING OUT ALL NIGHT BENEATH THE DESERT STARS,
 WITH A DREAM IN MY EYE AND A PRAYER IN MY HEART.

I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY

DANNY
 All right, you
 convinced me.

I SHOULD'VE LEARNED TO ROPE AND RIDE
 WEARING MY SIX-SHOOTER, RIDING MY PONY ON A CATTLE DRIVE
 STEALING THE YOUNG GIRLS' HEARTS,

DANNY
 Don't push it!

JUST LIKE GENE AND ROY
 SINGING THOSE CAMPFIRE SONGS
 OH, I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY.

(Musical interlude; they pretend to
 have a gunfight, roping, or other
 cowboy-cowgirl antics.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)

I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY
 I SHOULD'VE LEARNED TO ROPE AND RIDE
 WEARING MY SIX-SHOOTER, RIDING MY PONY ON A CATTLE DRIVE
 STEALING THE YOUNG GIRLS' HEARTS,
 JUST LIKE GENE AND ROY
 SINGING THOSE CAMPFIRE SONGS
 OH, I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY.
 I SHOULD'VE BEEN A COWBOY.

BOSS

(From offstage)

OK, cowboy, I hear you. Stop lollygagging and get to work!

DANNY

We're shifting into overdrive, Boss.

(DANNY grabs her chair and exists.
 NEMO picks up a box and moves
 toward the central doorway until
 LILY enters the yard.)

NEMO

Hello. You must be Miss L'Amoreaux.

LILY

That's right. How did you know?

NEMO

I saw your name on the moving contract. Just in passing, I'm Nemo.

LILY

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Nemo. Call me Lily.

NEMO

I understand you hired us, so we're at your disposal.

LILY

Oh, I don't want to dispose of anybody. I just need those boxes and what-all moved upstairs.

NEMO

I'll hop on it lickety-split.

(Pauses)

Lily, you strike me as an authentic country woman, ain't that so?

LILY

I suppose. Natural born to these whereabouts.

NEMO

Well, keep talking -- it's music to my ears.

LILY

That's a funny request, Mr. Nemo.

NEMO

See, I love country life so much, I want to make it mine.

LILY

Where you from?

NEMO

Minnesota. My real name is Nehemiah Slavikozlowski.

LILY

That's not country. It's from the Bible.

NEMO

Yes, Nehemiah means "consolation." My father was a preacher -- he taught me what it meant.

LILY

Well, I could use some consolation about now. My daddy just passed away, so all that's left is to make Mama happy these final days.

NEMO

Sorry to hear that. But maybe she can turn a corner.

LILY

Ma's pretty tender in her ways now. It surprised me 'cause she had a rough life with Pa.

NEMO

Oh, how so?

LILY

He drank a lot of the time. Ma had to hold it together.

NEMO

I've heard that story before. Truth be told, it's sort of the way my life has gone, except the drinker was my stepdad.

Song: "Good Hearted Woman"

(LILY exits into the apartment and re-emerges from the front door. During the song, they may perform a cowboy line dance with one teaching and the other following, or they can improvise action and lines back and forth.)

NEMO

A LONG TIME FORGOTTEN ARE DREAMS
 THAT JUST FELL BY THE WAY.
 THE GOOD LIFE HE PROMISED
 AIN'T WHAT SHE'S LIVING TODAY.

LILY

BUT SHE NEVER COMPLAINS OF THE BAD TIMES
 OR BAD THINGS HE'S DONE.
 SHE JUST TALKS ABOUT THE GOOD TIMES THEY'VE HAD
 AND ALL THE GOOD TIMES TO COME.

(He starts dancing.)

NEMO AND LILY

SHE'S A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN IN LOVE WITH A GOOD-TIMING MAN.

NEMO

You know the
 steps?

LILY

Oh, I know them.

NEMO AND LILY

SHE LOVES HIM IN SPITE OF HIS WAYS
 THAT SHE DON'T UNDERSTAND.
 THROUGH TEARDROPS AND LAUGHTER
THEY PASSED THROUGH THIS WORLD HAND IN HAND,
 A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN LOVING HER GOOD-TIMING MAN.

NEMO

HE LIKED THE NIGHT LIFE AND BRIGHT LIGHTS
 WITH GOOD-TIMING FRIENDS.

LILY

WHEN THE PARTY WAS ALL OVER,
SHE'D WELCOME HIM BACK HOME AGAIN.

NEMO

SHE DON'T UNDERSTAND HIM,
 BUT SHE DOES THE BEST THAT SHE CAN.

LILY

'CAUSE SHE'S A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN
 SHE LOVES HER GOOD-TIMING MAN.

NEMO AND LILY

SHE'S A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN IN LOVE WITH A GOOD-TIMING MAN.

LILY

That all you
 got, cowboy?

NEMO AND LILY (CONTINUED)

SHE LOVES HIM IN SPITE OF HIS WAYS
THAT SHE DON'T UNDERSTAND.

(He takes her hand and they dance
as a couple.)

NEMO AND LILY (CONTINUED)

THROUGH TEARDROPS AND LAUGHTER,
THEY PASSED THROUGH THIS WORLD HAND IN HAND,
A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN LOVING A GOOD-TIMING MAN.
A GOOD-HEARTED WOMAN LOVING A GOOD-TIMING MAN.

(They end in a classic dance
position, face to face. Enter
PASTOR JAMES and SISTER RUTH. The
couple quickly breaks apart; RUTH
approaches LILY.)

RUTH

How you holding up, child?

LILY

Oh, greetings Sister Ruth. Just fixing to make this a proper
home for Mama.

RUTH

Don't fuss because we're here to help. Pastor James talked
with hospital and he'll bring her home tomorrow.

JAMES

(Shakes NEMO's hand)

Hello, I'm Pastor James Roberts of the Good Shepherd Church
where our devoted member Sister Lily attends.

NEMO

I'm Nemo with the moving company.

JAMES

And this is my wife, Sister Ruth. She runs the choir at the
church.

RUTH

Good morning, Nemo.

NEMO

Howdy.

RUTH

So how are the preparations for the arrival of Lily's
mother?

NEMO

We need to fetch some boxes and then I'll take a walking tour with Miss Lily to make sure everything's in its place.

LILY

Nemo, there's one particular box I haven't seen. It has "Fragile" written all over it.

NEMO

I'm afraid that's coming on the final truckload. If you don't mind my asking, what's inside?

LILY

A lamp. It's a brass standing chandelier, like a tree covered with leaves of shimmering glass. Mama calls it the Light of Christ, "which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." With her eyesight nearly gone, it's the only light she can see.

NEMO

Well, I can't promise it will arrive before her, but we'll take extra care when it does.

LILY

Much obliged.

NEMO

Let me grab that paperwork for the walk-through.

(NEMO exits.)

RUTH

Bless your heart, Lily, for showing such care of your mother.

LILY

She's not long for living, Sister Ruth, and frankly I haven't figured out how to manage once she's gone.

RUTH

You're not alone. You can count on us for help.

JAMES

But even without us, you're never alone, Sister Lily. You have faith as strong as an oak tree.

RUTH

What does the scripture say? "All things work together for good to them that love God."

Song: "Put Your Hand in the Hand"

JAMES

PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO STILLED THE WATERS.
 PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO CALMED THE SEA.
 TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF AND YOU CAN LOOK AT OTHERS
 DIFFERENTLY
 BY PUTTING YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN FROM GALILEE.

LILY

EVERY TIME I LOOK INTO THE HOLY BOOK I WANT TO TREMBLE,
 WHEN I READ ABOUT THE PART WHERE A CARPENTER CLEARED THE
 TEMPLE.
 FOR THOSE BUYERS AND SELLERS WERE NO DIFFERENT FELLERS
 THAN WHAT I PROFESS TO BE,
 AND IT CAUSES ME PAIN TO KNOW I'M NOT THE WOMAN I SHOULD BE.

JAMES, RUTH AND LILY

PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO STILLED THE WATERS.
 PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO CALMED THE SEA.
 TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF AND YOU CAN LOOK AT OTHERS
 DIFFERENTLY
 BY PUTTING YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN FROM GALILEE.

RUTH

MAMA TAUGHT ME HOW TO PRAY BEFORE I REACHED THE AGE OF
 SEVEN.
 AND WHEN I'M DOWN ON MY KNEES THAT'S WHEN I'M CLOSE TO
 HEAVEN.
 DADDY LIVED HIS LIFE WITH TWO KIDS AND A WIFE; YOU DO WHAT
 YOU MUST DO.
 BUT HE SHOWED ME ENOUGH OF WHAT IT TAKES TO GET YOU THROUGH.

JAMES, RUTH AND LILY

PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO STILLED THE WATERS.
 PUT YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN WHO CALMED THE SEA.
 TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF AND YOU CAN LOOK AT OTHERS
 DIFFERENTLY
 BY PUTTING YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN FROM GALILEE.
 TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF AND YOU CAN LOOK AT OTHERS
 DIFFERENTLY
 BY PUTTING YOUR HAND IN THE HAND OF THE MAN FROM GALILEE.

(PASTOR JAMES and SISTER RUTH exit
 holding hands. LILY begins to
 accompany them but NEMO enters with
 a clipboard in hand.)

LILY

Nemo -- you set with your checklist?

NEMO

Just about. But first I got a request.

(She nods acceptance.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)

See, I want to become a cowboy -- maybe even a Country and Western singer. But I need some tutoring.

LILY

Tutoring? Who's teaching what?

NEMO

You're instructing me on how to be a cowboy.

LILY

For a mover, you sure have a hankering for whatever except lifting boxes.

NEMO

Oh, I believe in hard work. But a soul needs more than daily bread, Lily. That's why I want to build my life based on Cowboy Manliness.

LILY

And what in tarnation do you mean by that?

NEMO

As the teacher, I reckon you should tell me.

LILY

Well, a cowboy's got an independent spirit, so you don't butter up to folks for neither money nor praise.

NEMO

Check!

LILY

Next, I'm partial to a family man who loves his wife and tends to their beautiful children. Plus providing for them all, of course.

NEMO

What the?

LILY

And finally, you might bring your own faith in God to tie the package together. Otherwise it's drudgery instead of joy.

NEMO

Hold on! Are we talking about my cowboy dream or yours?

LILY

I'm thinking beyond the daily bread, as you call it.

(He walks away, shaking his head.
She comes after him.)

LILY

But I accept your offer for the tutoring. I can teach you good manners and a lick about livestock. As for manliness, I'm not sure I'm equipped for it. But Mama always said the man and the woman are two halves of a whole, so you might learn something by watching my side of the fence.

NEMO

Oh, I've seen enough to start practicing my lessons.

(He closes his eyes and prepares
for a kiss.)

LILY

Nemo, cowboys don't pucker.

NEMO

OK. Well, teach me.

LILY

You feel the moment and kiss straight away. Let's try the Country singing part.

NEMO

Name a song.

LILY

How about a Country love song?

NEMO

But we ain't in love.

LILY

Just pretend. Down home we played a game called "Make Believe." I wasn't married with babies of my own, but I could make believe. Now, you haven't starred at the Grand Ole Opry. Just pretend.

Song: "It's Only Make Believe"

NEMO

PEOPLE SEE US HERE AND THERE,
THEY MAY THINK YOU REALLY CARE,
BUT MYSELF I CAN'T DECEIVE, I KNOW IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE.

MY ONE AND ONLY PRAYER IS THAT SOMEDAY YOU'LL CARE,
MY HOPES, MY DREAMS COME TRUE; MY ONE AND ONLY YOU.
NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU SO,
MY ONLY PRAYER WILL BE SOMEDAY YOU'LL CARE FOR ME
BUT IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE.

NEMO (CONTINUED)

MY HOPES, MY DREAMS COME TRUE, MY LIFE I'D GIVE FOR YOU,
MY HEART, A WEDDING RING, MY ALL, MY EVERYTHING.
MY HEART I CAN'T CONTROL, YOU RULE MY VERY SOUL.
MY PLANS, MY HOPES, MY SCHEMES, YOU ARE MY EVERYTHING,
BUT IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE.

MY ONE AND ONLY PRAYER, IS THAT SOMEDAY YOU'LL CARE,
MY HOPES, MY DREAMS COME TRUE; MY ONE AND ONLY YOU.
NO ONE WILL EVER KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU SO,
MY ONLY PRAYER WILL BE SOMEDAY YOU'LL CARE FOR ME,
BUT IT'S ONLY MAKE BELIEVE.

LILY

A fine rendition, but that's all the lesson for today.

NEMO

Shucks, we need this household in place for your Ma, so I
best get at it.

(NEMO lifts a distinctive box.)

LILY

No, don't take that one.

NEMO

Why not?

LILY

I told your boss to throw that box away. I don't know how it
ended up on the truck.

NEMO

(Puts down the box)

Ain't no nevermind to me, Miss Lily.

LILY

What's inside reminds me how drinking and romance don't mix.
It's too sad for my liking. That's why I've taken steps.

NEMO

What steps?

LILY

To make sure alcohol don't wreck my life. I promised as much
to Mama and to God, and I intend to keep that promise.

NEMO

Promises are for old folks. My dad talked every Sunday about
promises. But I've proven you can break them a-plenty and
nobody cares.

LILY

So you're stumping for the booze, is that it?

NEMO

Lily, I need your help. You can teach me to become a genuine cowboy. And getting drunk is part of the lifestyle. I know -- I've listened to all them Country songs.

LILY

You don't know jack.

NEMO

Now don't go badmouthing my favorite whiskey.

LILY

The booze is speaking through you, Nemo. You have to learn a man can be forgiven of his sins, but he can't wallow in them.

NEMO

Great. Now you're talking religion.

LILY

Yes, I talk a fair bit about faith. Because that hope deep inside is what makes me happy. I perceive you deserve some happiness, but --

NEMO

Oh, I can find happiness anytime I want -- in a bottle.

LILY

Then you best find another tutor for your rowdy cowboy dream -- and there be plenty of ladies who share your love for liquor.

NEMO

Lily, I was hoping we could get to know each other. I could sample some of your happiness and you could try some of mine. Then along comes this killjoy promise of yours.

LILY

Promises -- with an "s." One to Mama, and few more to God.

Song: "Promises I Keep"

LILY

IF WE SHARE THIS ROAD FOR A PORTION OF OUR WAY,
THERE'S SOMETHING I SHOULD TELL YOU IN THE LIGHT OF DAY.
BEFORE THIS GOES TOO FAR, BEFORE I FALL TOO DEEP,
YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND ABOUT THE PROMISES I KEEP.

BECAUSE THERE'S STRENGTH I WANT AND THERE'S PEACE I NEED,
IN THE WORDS I SAY, IN THE THINGS I READ,
FROM THE CLOTHES I WEAR TO THE PLACE I CHOOSE TO SLEEP,
EVERYTHING GOES BACK TO THESE PROMISES I KEEP.

LILY (CONTINUED)

IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T CARE FOR YOU
AND WANT TO HOLD YOU NEAR
WHEN THE HOUR GETS LATE, AND I SAY I HAVE TO GO;
CLOSER TO THE TRUTH IS THAT I'M HONORING THE ONE
WHO LOVES US BOTH MORE THAN WE KNOW.

SO YOU MAY THINK I'M WISE, OR YOU MAY THINK I'M STRANGE,
BUT MY MIND'S MADE UP AND MY HEART WON'T CHANGE.
AND WHEN THE WORLD FALLS DOWN, YOU CAN TRUST IN ME
BECAUSE I TRUST HIM, AND THERE ARE PROMISES I KEEP.
I TRUST IN HIM, AND THERE ARE PROMISES I KEEP.

(The lights fade as LILY and NEMO
exit. When the lights come up
again, DANNY and BOSS enter, each
carrying a box. Before they reach
the doorway, DANNY suddenly stops.
BOSS nearly collides with her; he
puts down his box for a word.)

BOSS

Careful on the brakes!

DANNY

(Puts down her box)

I'm telling you he was cavorting with her. Flirting --
there's no other word.

BOSS

That violates employee-customer protocol. And her reaction?

DANNY

Licking up every drop of it.

BOSS

I'll have to apologize to her during the walk-through.

DANNY

Except he's got the clipboard. He's doing the walk-through!

BOSS

Falling in love with a client. I have to put a stop to this.

DANNY

At this rate you'll lose a good worker -- not to mention the
karaoke routine.

BOSS

And he stole my clipboard!

(Enter NEMO with clipboard in hand. DANNY moves next to BOSS so it's two against one. DANNY backs up BOSS' comments, even echoing key phrases he utters.)

NEMO

It all checked out, Boss. No worries.

BOSS

Nemo, what's going on?

NEMO

Remember last week when you said the paperwork had buried you? I decided to lift the burden.

BOSS

By stealing the clipboard from under my nose?

NEMO

You said you couldn't abide dealing with customers.

BOSS

I see where this is going. We have a sugar-looking client and suddenly you get a sweet tooth, is that it?

DANNY

Sugar-looking! Sweet tooth!

NEMO

Oh, horse feathers! Let's take a team approach here.

BOSS

This has to stop. She's going to try to hoodwink you, and I can't let the company suffer.

DANNY

Hoodwink you.

NEMO

Boss, what's got into you?

BOSS

You need to limit contact with this customer, understand? For your own good. Falling in love is bad medicine.

DANNY

Bad medicine.

NEMO

We're not in love.

BOSS

Not yet. Look, the karaoke song in Benny's Bar covered my misadventures in marriage, but just so you understand the financial poison you're playing with, let me explain the disastrous consequences of love.

Song: "She Got the Goldmine"

BOSS

WELL, I GUESS IT WAS BACK IN 2003
WHEN EATING MY COOKING GOT THE BETTER OF ME
SO I ASKED THIS LITTLE GIRL I WAS GOING WITH TO BE MY WIFE.

WELL SHE SAID SHE WOULD, SO I SAID "I DO"
BUT I'D HAVE SAID I WOULDN'T
IF I HAD JUST KNEW HOW SAYING "I DO"
WAS GONNA SCREW UP ALL OF MY LIFE.

WELL THE FIRST FEW YEARS WEREN'T ALL THAT BAD;
I'LL NEVER FORGET THE GOOD TIMES WE HAD,
'CAUSE I'M REMINDED EVERY MONTH WHEN I SEND HER THE CHILD
SUPPORT.

IT WASN'T TOO LONG TILL THE LUST ALL DIED,
AND I'LL ADMIT I WASN'T TOO SURPRISED
THE DAY I COME HOME AND FOUND MY SUITCASE SITTING OUT ON THE
PORCH.

I TRIED TO GET IN -- SHE CHANGED THE LOCK.
THEN I FOUND THIS NOTE TAPED ON THE MAILBOX
THAT SAID, "GOODBYE TURKEY, MY ATTORNEY WILL BE IN TOUCH."

SO I DECIDED RIGHT THEN AND THERE
I WAS GONNA DO WHAT'S RIGHT, GIVE HER HER FAIR SHARE.
BUT BROTHER, I DIDN'T KNOW HER SHARE WAS GONNA BE THAT MUCH.

SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT.
THEY SPLIT IT RIGHT DOWN THE MIDDLE,
THEN THEY GIVE HER THE BETTER HALF.

WELL, IT ALL SOUNDS SORT OF FUNNY
BUT IT HURTS TOO MUCH TO LAUGH.
SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT.

NOW LISTEN, YOU AIN'T HEARD NOTHING YET
WHY, THEY GIVE HER THE COLOR TELEVISION SET
AND THEY GIVE HER THE HOUSE, THE KIDS AND BOTH OF THE CARS.

THEN THEY START TALKING ABOUT CHILD SUPPORT,
ALIMONY AND THE COST OF THE COURT --
DIDN'T TAKE LONG TO FIGURE OUT HOW FAR IN THE TOILET I WAS.

BOSS (CONTINUED)

I'M TELLING YOU THEY HAVE MADE A MISTAKE
'CAUSE IT ADDS UP TO MORE THAN THIS COWBOY MAKES.
BESIDES, EVERYTHING I EVER HAD WORTH TAKING THEY ALREADY
TOOK.

WHILE SHE'S LIVING LIKE A QUEEN ON ALIMONY,
I'M WORKING TWO SHIFTS, EATING BALONEY
ASKING MYSELF, "WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST LEARN HOW TO COOK?"

THEY GIVE HER THE GOLDMINE, THEY GIVE ME THE SHAFT.

THEY SAID THEY'RE SPLITTING IT ALL DOWN THE MIDDLE
BUT SHE GOT THE BETTER HALF.

WELL, IT ALL SOUNDS MIGHTY FUNNY
BUT IT HURTS TOO MUCH TO LAUGH
SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT.

(Instrumental interlude; BOSS takes
NEMO aside for a talk; DANNY
follows.)

BOSS (CONTINUED)

Nemo, I've learned that in business, you never work without
a contract. And marriage is the most serious contract in the
world. So my advice to you comes down to two words:
Prenuptial Agreement.

BOSS (CONTINUED)

SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT.
THEY SPLIT IT ALL DOWN THE MIDDLE
AND THEN THEY GIVE HER THE BETTER HALF.
WELL, I GUESS IT ALL SOUNDS FUNNY
BUT IT HURTS TOO MUCH TO LAUGH.
SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT.
SHE GOT THE GOLDMINE, I GOT THE SHAFT.

(After the song ends, lights fade
and the blackout extends to
indicate a passage of time. The
lights come up to reveal LILY in
the deck/yard. NEMO approaches.)

LILY

Nemo, why you on the job so early?

NEMO

Good morning, Lily. I woke up with a craving to talk ...
about this tutoring business.

LILY

Cut and dried in my mind. I have no interest to indulge your
vice.

NEMO

I respect that. But what if you teach me the other stuff and I indulge during my private time?

LILY

I'm not apt to coddle your vanity. Besides, I have dreams of my own.

NEMO

Whoa, you never let that slip before.

LILY

Well, I always wanted a big loving family of my very own, and I'm going to have one.

NEMO

Uh-oh. Boss was right. I'm in a heap of trouble. You're conniving to rope me into your dream. This tutoring business was a sham.

LILY

Now wait a second!

(She exits the yard into the apartment, then comes out the front door.)

LILY (CONTINUED)

If memory serves, you concocted that tutoring story as bait. To boot, honest talk don't mean I'm trying to hog-tie anybody. I have no airs about domesticating a wild stallion like you.

NEMO

Then what do you propose?

LILY

How about turning yourself into a bona fide man that's authentic, not some store-bought cowboy with a big hat and no cattle.

NEMO

A fellow don't take kindly to someone messing with his dreams.

LILY

Just calling what I see. God won't send you lightning bolts, Nemo. He sends people, if'n you'll let Him.

NEMO

I see. And how would I compensate you for this inspired tutoring? I aimed to show you a good time, but now you're switching trails on me.

LILY

Be a decent God-fearing man, that's payment enough. They're a rare breed nowadays.

(Enter PASTOR JAMES pushing MAMA in a wheelchair. SISTER RUTH walks beside them. The actress playing DANNY also plays MRS. L'AMOREAUX, as her face is covered by dark glasses and a breathing mask. She gestures, makes sounds and can echo others' lines as improvised.)

LILY

Mama! How's she faring?

JAMES

The trip took it out of her. She needs bed rest, but that doorway won't cooperate.

NEMO

Pastor, if you can navigate the chair inside, I can lift her and lay her square on the bed.

JAMES

You sure?

NEMO

Positive. You lift with your legs, not your back.

(NEMO exits through the door, followed by PASTOR JAMES guiding MRS. L'AMOREAUX's wheelchair. SISTER RUTH and LILY wait outside.)

RUTH

See, I told you he'd pitch in. Men are mighty convenient sometimes.

LILY

Now he'll crow about it till the cows come home.

RUTH

Easy girl! Seems to me you got all the makings here for a lovely ... friendship.

(NEMO and JAMES enter from the door.)

JAMES

Success! She's resting on the bed.

RUTH

Thanks to you, Nemo.

LILY

That was the act of a true gentleman.

NEMO

Not quite a cowboy, but I'll take it.

RUTH

Lily, if you can attend to Mama, I'll set the kettle to boil for her tea.

(LILY and SISTER RUTH exit through the door.)

JAMES

Appreciate your help with Lily's mama, Nemo.

NEMO

When a body has it in him to help someone, he should.

JAMES

Yes. That's why I'm here.

NEMO

Say what?

JAMES

To help, Nemo.

NEMO

Did Lily tell you about our discussion?

JAMES

She's concerned. And that inspired my concern. See, it takes one to know one, Nemo. So I can recognize an alcohol problem.

NEMO

Not a problem. A pastime.

JAMES

But I gather you have an addiction.

NEMO

I can stop any time I want to. Only I don't want to!

JAMES

What about Lily?

NEMO

Oh. We have a slight incompatibility. She believes in abstinence from alcohol -- a teetotaler, you might say. As for me, I've made my peace with the question of consumption. And I renew that peace nearly every night.

JAMES

It seems to me that you have a fondness for her.

NEMO

I do, but not enough to bend to her silly wishes!

(Catches himself.)

But I understand, they ain't silly to her. What she's been through has tinged her judgment, that's all.

JAMES

Brother, consider your choices. You won't get a better one.

NEMO

And what's your dog in this hunt? Why should you care?

JAMES

I had the habit once and with help I kicked it. After that, I promised to help others when they crossed my path.

NEMO

God helped you to stop drinking, I suppose?

JAMES

I can't deny it.

NEMO

No, He didn't. God didn't do anything for you that you couldn't have done yourself.

JAMES

You won't beat this alone, Nemo. It may sound crazy. Brother, it is crazy talk -- until you've lived it. That's the only difference between us. You gotta live it.

(Pause; music begins.)

JAMES (CONTINUED)

For years I've prayed for the chance to help folks like us. And the moment we shook hands, the question I've asked so many times welled up in my mind:

Song: "Why Me?"

JAMES

WHY ME LORD?

WHAT HAVE I EVER DONE, TO DESERVE EVEN ONE
OF THE PLEASURES I'VE KNOWN?

TELL ME LORD

WHAT DID I EVER DO, THAT WAS WORTH LOVING YOU
OR THE KINDNESS YOU'VE SHOWN?

JAMES (CONTINUED)

LORD, HELP ME JESUS
 I'VE WASTED IT, SO HELP ME JESUS
 I KNOW WHAT I AM.
 BUT NOW THAT I KNOW
 THAT I'VE NEEDED YOU SO HELP ME JESUS
 MY SOUL'S IN YOUR HANDS.

TRY ME LORD
 IF YOU THINK THERE'S A WAY, I CAN TRY TO REPAY
 ALL I'VE TAKEN FROM YOU.
 MAYBE LORD
 I CAN SHOW SOMEONE ELSE, WHAT I'VE BEEN THROUGH MYSELF
 ON MY WAY BACK TO YOU.

LORD, HELP ME JESUS
 I'VE WASTED IT, SO HELP ME JESUS
 I KNOW WHAT I AM.
 BUT NOW THAT I KNOW
 THAT I'VE NEEDED YOU SO HELP ME JESUS
 MY SOUL'S IN YOUR HANDS.
 JESUS, MY SOUL'S IN YOUR HANDS.

(Lights come up on the deck/yard.
 Enter LILY and DANNY carrying a
 box.)

DANNY

Where you want these?

LILY

Those are Mama's personals, set them down there.
 (DANNY starts to
 return, but
 LILY's words stop
 her short.)
 Miss Danny, how long have you known Nemo?

DANNY

A few moons. Ever since he came from Minnesote.

LILY

You spend time with him of a personal nature?

DANNY

Sure enough. Why you ask?

LILY

Maybe I fancy him.

DANNY

You?

LILY

Why not me? You jealous?

DANNY

No, no, no. I spend ample time with Nemo, but not out of romantic attraction. I'd call us drinking buddies.

LILY

(Pauses to consider.)

How often, Danny?

DANNY

Pert near every night.

LILY

I guessed as much.

(Enter SISTER RUTH with a box. She looks at DANNY, then LILY, and hands DANNY the box.)

RUTH

This here goes in the kitchen.

DANNY

I gotcha.

(Exit DANNY.)

RUTH

The bedroom looks beautiful for your mother.

LILY

You're too kind, Sister Ruth.

RUTH

Now that Mama's here, your jitters should be gone. But something's eating you.

LILY

I'm mighty torn, Sister Ruth. I can't rightly say why, but that man Nemo and I share a kindred spirit. Only all signs point to him being a drunk.

RUTH

Have you prayed about it?

LILY

I prayed, but I didn't get a prompting one way or the other.

RUTH

Then wait upon the Lord, child. Keep the commandments till the answer comes.

LILY

The one sin I swore against -- and he brags about it!

RUTH

I hear you. This won't work if he doesn't change.

LILY

But that's what drunkards' wives all say: "He's going to change," but they never do.

RUTH

Take some hope, Lily. When I first met James he had a bad habit. Still, ever since our wedding day he has stayed sober and responsible. I love that man.

LILY

Well, who'd have thought?

RUTH

We can't fight battles by ourselves. Give God a chance -- I mean, give Nemo a chance to soften his heart. Stop dithering and talk it out with the Lord.

Song: "I Know That Prayer Changes Things"

RUTH

OH, I'VE HEARD THE STORY OF DAVID.
AND I'VE HEARD OF DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN.
AND I'VE HEARD OF JOB WITH HIS AFFLICTIONS,
HOW THEY ALL KEPT THE FAITH RIGHT TO THE END,
LORD TO THE END.

BUT WHEN ALL HOPE HAD SEEMED TO FAIL
THAT'S WHEN GOD'S POWER DID PREVAIL.
I KNOW I KNOW, YES I REALLY KNOW,
PRAYER CHANGES THINGS.
GOD KNOWS IT CHANGES THINGS.

YES, I KNOW PRAYER CHANGES THINGS
DO YOU KNOW GOD, CHILD? PRAYER CHANGES THINGS.
WHEN I WAS OUT ON THE STORMY, RAGING SEA
GOD LIFTED ME.

I WAS HUNGRY, I WAS SICK, I WAS FILLED WITH MISERY.
BUT ALONG CAME JESUS, AND THERE HE RESCUED ME.
THAT'S HOW I KNOW, YES I REALLY KNOW,
PRAYER CHANGES THINGS, GOD KNOWS IT CHANGES THINGS.

YOU KNOW PRAYER, GIVES YOU STRENGTH WHEN YOU'RE FALLING.
IT UNLOCKS DOORS THAT BEEN CLOSED SO LONG IN YOUR FACE.
HE WILL RAISE UP FRIENDS WHEN YOU FEEL FRIENDLESS,
AND DRIVE ALL YOUR DOUBTS AND CARES AWAY.

RUTH (CONTINUED)

YES, THE WORLD MAY CRUSH YOU, BUT DON'T YOU FRET.
MY GOD REMEMBERS WHEN OTHERS FORGET.
THAT'S WHY I KNOW, YES, I SURELY KNOW,
PRAYER CHANGES THINGS.
YES, IT CHANGES THINGS.

I WAS HUNGRY, I WAS SICK, I WAS FILLED WITH MISERY.
BUT ALONG CAME JESUS, I TELL THE WORLD GOD RESCUED ME.
ONE THING I KNOW, YES I REALLY KNOW,
PRAYER CHANGES THINGS.

(Lights fade. They come up on DANNY
and BOSS, who distractedly reviews
his clipboard while she tries to
get his attention.)

DANNY

You know, your championship karaoke team is a package deal.
If you lose Nemo, I'm gone.

BOSS

I ... I never realized you were a couple.

DANNY

No. We're backup singers in Boss Ross and the Honky-Tonk
Movers. But if that woman takes him away, our fun goes with
him.

BOSS

I've warned him. Nothing more to say. Whether he chooses
happiness with us or misery with her, we have to accept it.

DANNY

When you're the Boss-man, with everybody wanting your
friendship, you can accept it. Not me.

BOSS

Like I said, nothing more we can do.

DANNY

Look, it's dead certain this love affair will end ugly. The
sooner the better. That way it will hurt him less.

(BOSS suddenly stands up with the
clipboard, talking to himself.)

BOSS

OK, you can do this -- a walk-through with an apology. Walk-
through with an apology ...

(BOSS exits through the doorway.
DANNY talks to herself.)

DANNY

Fiddlesticks! He never heard nothing I said.

(DANNY exits. BOSS re-appears in the yard/deck, accompanied by SISTER RUTH and LILY for the official inspection.)

BOSS

Besides the kitchen gear, all the small stuff is accounted for. As soon as we finish unloading this truckload, I'll drive back to the warehouse for your high-priority item.

LILY

Sounds good. The sentimental value of that lamp cannot be overstated.

BOSS

One more matter, Miss L'Amoreaux. I want to apologize for my employee. It's not right the way he went chasing after you.

LILY

Now, we can't lay all the blame on Nemo. Maybe I encouraged it.

RUTH

What do you mean?

LILY

Mmmm, I asked him to sing me a love song.

RUTH

Was he romantic?

BOSS

Did he kiss you?

LILY

No. I was coaching him on Country Gentlemanliness, so none of that.

RUTH

Not even a little?

BOSS

This calls for a formal investigation.

LILY

Please don't, Mr. Thompson. You'll only muddy the waters. I tried investigating it in my mind all night long, and I can't square it.

BOSS

Because love is nonsense!

RUTH

Mysterious perhaps, but love makes sense. I mean, babies happen somehow.

BOSS

(Shaking his head.)

Murky waters. ... But as you wish, Miss L'Amoreaux. No investigation.

(BOSS exits into the apartment.)

RUTH

When the stars line up right, love makes sense of everything else, Lily.

LILY

What if my stars steer me to a heartache?

RUTH

(Sighs.)

What's a big sister to do?

(Pause.)

Lily, my grandma told me a story about a man who walked through the woods looking for a straight stick. He found some that were pretty straight, but he said to himself, "I can find one straighter." Finally, he came to the end of the woods. There was only one stick on the trail, and it was as crooked as a dog's leg. But he had to take it because it was the only stick left.

LILY

Some forks in the road you can only choose once.

RUTH

Exercise wisdom, but also faith, Lily. Otherwise you'll never reach out and take hold of anything at all.

(LILY nods; she and RUTH exit inside the apartment. Enter BOSS, DANNY and NEMO in front of the building with the men hauling long boxes and a board. She carries the distinctive box.)

BOSS

OK, this job is near-about done. I'll take the truck back to the warehouse and bring the last crate in the van while you accommodate this stuff inside.

NEMO

Got it, Boss.

(BOSS exits. DANNY opens the distinctive box NEMO encountered earlier.)

NEMO

Hey, Lily said to put that box in the dumpster.

DANNY

No way. We sure as shooting ain't throwing this away.

(DANNY pulls out a liquor bottle.)

DANNY (CONTINUED)

Expensive stuff. And it goes down your throat like a diesel milkshake.

NEMO

Just store it away for now.

DANNY

Come on, you heard Boss say this job is over. Let's pay ourselves a decent "thank you" for once.

(DANNY places two tall boxes a few feet apart and finds the board. She lays the wood over the boxes to form a makeshift bar. She pulls bottles and shot glasses from the distinctive box.)

(NEMO starts wary, but as the song progresses he grows enthusiastic. By the end they both swig and guzzle with glee. DANNY plays bartender and NEMO the customer.)

Song: "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer"

DANNY

I WANT TO TELL YOU A STORY
ABOUT ME AND MY BEST FRIEND NEMO.
ONE DAY AFTER WORK WE FOUND A TREASURE CHEST
FULL OF LIQUID HAPPINESS.
I KNEW WE WERE DESTINED TO SHARE IT TOGETHER.
SO I SET UP A BAR, POPPED THE CORK AND SAID:
LET'S GET BENT -- AND DOWN THE TUBE IT WENT.

ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH AND ONE BEER.

NEMO

WELL, I AIN'T SEEN MY WOMAN SINCE I DON'T KNOW WHEN,
I'M GONNA DRINK BOURBON WHISKEY, SCOTCH AND GIN.

DANNY

I'M GONNA GET HIGH MAN, I GOTTA GET LOOSE,
NEED ME A TRIPLE SHOT OF THAT JUICE.
WE'RE GONNA GET DRUNK, DON'T YOU HAVE NO FEAR,
I WANT ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH AND ONE BEER.

DANNY AND NEMO

ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH, ONE BEER.

NEMO

NOW I AIN'T SEEN MY BABY SINCE THE NIGHT BEFORE LAST.
GOTTA GET A DRINK MAN, I'M GONNA GET GASSED.

DANNY

I'M GONNA GET HIGH MAN, I AIN'T HAD ENOUGH,
NEED ME A TRIPLE SHOT OF THAT STUFF.

NEMO

I'M GONNA GET DRUNK, WON'T YOU LISTEN RIGHT HERE:
I WANT ONE BOURBON, ONE SHOT AND ONE BEER.

DANNY AND NEMO

ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH, ONE BEER.

NEMO

NOW, I AIN'T SEEN MY BABY SINCE NIGH ON A WEEK,
I GOTTA GET DRUNK TILL I CAN'T EVEN SPEAK.

DANNY

I'M GONNA GET HIGH MAN, LISTEN TO ME,
ONE DRINK AIN'T ENOUGH JACK, YOU BETTER MAKE IT THREE.
I WANNA GET DRUNK, I'M GONNA MAKE IT REAL CLEAR:
I WANT ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH AND ONE BEER.

DANNY AND NEMO

ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH, ONE BEER.
ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH, ONE BEER.
ONE BOURBON, ONE SCOTCH, ONE BEER.

(BOSS makes noises of hefting a heavy load offstage. The workers scramble to put the bottles and glasses back in the box before he enters pushing a hand dolly or cart topped with a crate plastered with "Fragile" stickers.)

BOSS

Here's the last load. It almost killed me lowering it down the ramp.

DANNY

It's tough for a shipping crate to look expensive, but this does it.

NEMO

And the lady wants it treated special, so I'll take it up and deliver it to her myself.

BOSS

No, we're all going to lift this one. It's heavier than a hog in heat.

(BOSS sniffs the air.)

BOSS (CONTINUED)

Wait, you guys been drinking?

(He walks around, sniffing and peering.)

DANNY

Never on the job.

BOSS

OK, Danny hold the door while Nemo spots me from below and we'll take it inside.

(NEMO wraps his arms around the box.)

NEMO

Listen, I got it.

BOSS

Nemo, I say we work together.

(NEMO hoists the box and wobbles. After a pause he runs toward the doorway.)

NEMO

Look out, lazies!

(In his drunken state, he loses his balance and falls as the box lands with the crackle of shattering glass. BOSS and DANNY stand paralyzed.)

(LILY enters in a rush from the doorway, followed by SISTER RUTH and PASTOR JAMES.)

BOSS

Losses are inevitable, Miss Lily, that's why we have insurance --

(She raises her hand to silence him. She walks slowly around the scene, stopping to look first at the distinctive box, then Nemo on the ground, then the damaged crate. She sniffs the air to confirm the presence of alcohol.)

LILY

You broke more than a chandelier.

(BOSS and DANNY talk over each other.)

BOSS

Replacement lights are available for immediate delivery.

DANNY

I know a handyman who can fix that in a heartbeat.

BOSS

The claims adjuster is a friend of mine.

DANNY

We appreciate your business, Miss Lily.

(Disregarding their excuses, she confronts only NEMO.)

LILY

A cowboy fights for what he wants, Nemo. He works to make the best of himself. That's what God asks from each of us.

NEMO

Maybe I can't change, Lily. Folks got to accept me the way I am.

LILY

Same talk Daddy always gave. He had sober times once in a while. That's what I don't want -- a once-in-a-while man.

(She retreats to RUTH and JAMES, who console her. After a beat, she turns to BOSS and DANNY.)

LILY (CONTINUED)

Y'all shattered my trust tonight. Better to leave before you spill more salt in the wound.

(BOSS and DANNY scuttle off, taking boxes with them. BOSS pauses as he passes NEMO.)

BOSS

Nemo, look at me. You're fired!

(Exit BOSS and DANNY.)

LILY

I should of saw it coming. And it hurts more than it ought.

NEMO

No, Lily --

LILY

You played me real good, Mr. Nemo. But the game ends tonight. Remove yourself from my life so you can live yours as you please.

(Exit LILY, followed by SISTER RUTH and PASTOR JAMES into the apartment. NEMO moves to the distinctive box and extracts a bottle. He takes a hard swallow.)

Song: "The Bottle Let Me Down"

NEMO

EACH NIGHT I LEAVE THE BARROOM WHEN IT'S OVER,
NOT FEELING ANY PAIN AT CLOSING TIME.
BUT TONIGHT YOU FOUND ME MUCH TOO SOBER;
COULDN'T DRINK ENOUGH TO KEEP YOU OFF MY MIND.

TONIGHT THE BOTTLE LET ME DOWN
AND LET YOUR MEMORY COME AROUND.
THE ONE TRUE FRIEND I THOUGHT I'D FOUND;
TONIGHT THE BOTTLE LET ME DOWN.

(During the instrumental interlude,
BOSS and DANNY enter to haul off
remnants of the move.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)

I'VE ALWAYS HAD A BOTTLE I COULD TURN TO
AND LATELY I'VE BEEN TURNING EVERY DAY.
BUT THE WINE DON'T TAKE EFFECT THE WAY IT USED TO
AND I'M HURTING IN AN OLD FAMILIAR WAY.

TONIGHT THE BOTTLE LET ME DOWN
AND LET YOUR MEMORY COME AROUND.
THE ONE TRUE FRIEND I THOUGHT I'D FOUND;
TONIGHT THE BOTTLE LET ME DOWN.
TONIGHT THE BOTTLE LET ME DOWN.

(As the song fades, NEMO slogs
offstage.)

(Enter LILY. She stops to contemplate the symbols of her lost hope -- the box and crate on the floor. She directs her song heavenward.)

Song: "Tell Me What's So Good About Goodbye"

LILY

I THOUGHT LOVE WAS MEANT TO LAST FOREVER.
ISN'T THAT HOW LOVE'S SUPPOSED TO BE?
NOW IT SEEMS THE GOOD TIMES ARE ALL OVER;
IT'S SO FUNNY, I GUESS THE JOKE'S ON ME.

EVERY DAY I'LL SIT ALONE AND WONDER,
WHY I FELL IN LOVE SO EASILY,
AND THEN WOKE UP TO FIND THAT ALL HE LEFT BEHIND
ARE TATTERED DREAMS AND BROKEN PIECES IN MY MEMORY.

SO TELL ME WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOODBYE.
WHAT'S THE GOOD IN WATCHING GOOD LOVE DIE?
HE'S THE KIND YOU CAN'T FORGET,
SO I WON'T EVEN TRY.
BUT TELL ME WHAT'S THE GOOD,
I GAVE HIM ALL I COULD,
SO TELL ME WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOODBYE.

I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER LOVE ANOTHER;
I DIDN'T KNOW GOODBYE COULD HURT SO BAD.
I KNOW I'LL ALWAYS FIND HE'S SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND.
I STILL BELIEVE THE WORST OF HIM'S THE BEST I'LL EVER HAVE.

SO TELL ME WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOODBYE.
WHAT'S THE GOOD IN WATCHING GOOD LOVE DIE?
HE'S THE KIND YOU CAN'T FORGET,
SO I WON'T EVEN TRY.
BUT TELL ME WHAT'S THE GOOD,
I GAVE HIM ALL I COULD,
SO TELL ME WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOODBYE.

(Exit LILY through the doorway.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT I)

ACT II

(LILY, SISTER RUTH and PASTOR JAMES
enter the yard/deck in church
dress.)

LILY

Thank you for the funeral sermon, Pastor James. It was how
Mama wanted her life to end -- in peace.

JAMES

The teachings of Jesus are called good news for a reason.

LILY

I guess that explains why I'm not suffering.

RUTH

So what are you feeling, Lily?

LILY

That a chapter in my life has ended. Time to write another.

RUTH

Have you considered a co-writer?

LILY

With all respect to Mama, I pondered that at the funeral.
Someone sent a dozen flowers -- half red roses, half pink
lilies. I know what red roses stand for. And the pink ones?

JAMES

Lilies symbolize consolation.

LILY

Was it him, Ruth? Did Nehemiah send those flowers?

RUTH

I don't know, dear.

JAMES

None of us knows. He just up and disappeared six long months
ago. I can feel him out there, waging a battle for his soul.
He knows what's right in his heart, but how can a man bridle
his thirst for liquor when it rages inside him like a
runaway train?

Song: "Orange Blossom Special"

(SISTER RUTH, PASTOR JAMES and LILY exit as NEMO lunges on stage. He carries a bottle of liquor. As the violins scream (10 to 20 seconds into the song), he clutches his head in pain, struggles, then calms when he takes a gulp. From there he enters a frenzy of drink, fumbling to ingest every drop. Soon enough he hits "rock bottom," gorged and disgusted with himself. He collapses on stage, prostrate as the final train whistle sounds.)

(After a moment or two, he speaks, starting flat on his back, then sitting up, then standing. He looks upward into a light.)

NEMO

I can't go on. All this struggle -- the AA meetings, the staying home to avoid temptation, the aspirin to kill the pain -- ain't gonna cut it. The burning in my brain will return, and when somebody offers me a drink, I'll take it -- like always. I know I have to beat the demon, but I can't by myself. So God, help me beat it tonight. That's my prayer. Lend me strength till the temptation fades.

(Another spot lights up at center stage and he moves to it.)

Song: "Lead Kindly Light"

NEMO

LEAD KINDLY LIGHT, AMID THE ENCIRCLING GLOOM;
LEAD THOU ME ON.
THE NIGHT IS DARK, AND I AM FAR FROM HOME;
LEAD THOU ME ON.
KEEP THOU MY FEET; I DO NOT ASK TO SEE
THE DISTANT SCENE -- ONE STEP ENOUGH FOR ME.

I WAS NOT EVER THUS, NOR PRAYED THAT THOU
SHOULDST LEAD ME ON.
I LOVED TO CHOOSE AND SEE MY PATH; BUT NOW,
LEAD THOU ME ON.
I LOVED THE GARISH DAY, AND, SPITE OF FEARS,
PRIDE RULED MY WILL. REMEMBER NOT PAST YEARS.

SO LONG THY POWER HATH BLEST ME, SURE IT STILL
WILL LEAD ME ON
O'ER MOOR AND FEN, O'ER CRAG AND TORRENT, TILL
THE NIGHT IS GONE.

(The lights rise upstage to reveal PASTOR JAMES, SISTER RUTH, BOSS and DANNY at a street meeting in front of the apartment building.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)
AND WITH THE MORN THOSE ANGEL FACES SMILE,
WHICH I HAVE LOVED LONG SINCE -- AND LOST AWHILE.

JAMES
Brothers and sister, we will conclude our sidewalk
devotional today with the rousing song --

(SISTER RUTH looks across the stage
and sees NEMO.)

RUTH
Look! There's Nemo!

DANNY
We found him!

(They rush to gather around NEMO.)

JAMES
Nemo, you're back!

RUTH
We worried sick about you.

DANNY
Thank God you're home with us!

JAMES
We prayed, and our prayers are answered.

NEMO
I've spent some time on my knees, too, Pastor, asking for
sore forgiveness 'cause of the way I left y'all.

JAMES
Yes, you have work ahead.

NEMO
But I came back for a reason -- I just hope that reason will
talk to me.

(BOSS steps forward.)

BOSS
Well, if it isn't my former employee.

NEMO
What are you doing here?

BOSS

Remember that lovely lady and her mother we moved into the apartment? Well, her mother died so Lily is moving again.

DANNY

We're here to undo what we did before.

NEMO

I was pained to learn of Mrs. L'Amoreaux's passing. But I'm here to rebuild what I broke.

DANNY

Superglue won't help that chandelier!

NEMO

Look, since leaving I been working steady -- driving truck, construction, whatever -- and I saved every penny. So, just to settle an old score, here's compensation for what I done.

(He hands a check to BOSS, who examines it.)

BOSS

Impressive.

NEMO

I'm trying to make amends.

DANNY

Too late. She's moving on after what you did to her.

BOSS

Come on Danny, let's get this check to the bank before it bounces.

(BOSS and DANNY exit as LILY enters from the doorway. RUTH guides her downstage.)

RUTH

Lily, look who's here!

LILY

Nemo?

RUTH

He came back, like I said he would.

NEMO

Howdy Lily. So sorry to hear about your mother.

LILY

She's in a better place now.

NEMO

I'm more sorry about how I left you. And I mean to get this straight between us.

LILY

Quite right.

NEMO

Lily, I got money to pay for the chandelier, but I can never replace what I destroyed by folly. After I caused that terrible accident, I tried to fight the bottle by myself. For a while, the demon won all the battles, then I matched him. But even in good times I knew I could never win the war -- or your love -- by myself.

LILY

Speak on.

NEMO

I cried out in my weakness for help. And I felt something.

LILY

Help?

NEMO

Love, Lily. In spite of not deserving it. Love. And when it washed over me, I knew I could be forgiven -- not that it would be easy, because God sent me here to make me stronger. But I knew what I had to do. In that instant, I was given a new heart.

JAMES

A mighty change of heart, Brother Nemo. It calls to mind the scripture that talks about people with faith feeling they're strangers and pilgrims on this earth. "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country; that is, a heavenly one."

RUTH

That's you, Nemo, coming out of that bar and never going back.

NEMO

Then this must be my heavenly country.

JAMES

Welcome home, son!

RUTH

You showed up in the nick of time to help us sing the closing hymn at our street meeting.

NEMO

OK. Who are we singing for?

RUTH

(Gestures towards
the audience.)

Those lonely souls out there. It's our way of sharing hope.

NEMO

Glad to join the choir, Sister Ruth.

(Music begins.)

RUTH

Come on, everybody! Let's shout for joy!

Song: "We'll Understand It Better By and By"

CAST

BY AND BY, WHEN THE MORNING COMES,
ALL THE SAINTS OF GOD ARE GATHERED HOME,
WE WILL TELL THE STORY HOW WE'VE OVERCOME,
AND WE'LL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER BY AND BY.

RUTH

TRIALS DARK ON EVERY HAND,
AND WE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND,
ALL THE WAYS THAT GOD WOULD LEAD US
TO THAT BLESSED PROMISED LAND.

BUT HE'LL GUIDE US WITH HIS EYE
AND WE'LL FOLLOW TILL WE DIE.
AND WE'LL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER BY AND BY.

CAST

BY AND BY, WHEN THE MORNING COMES,
ALL THE SAINTS OF GOD ARE GATHERED HOME,
WE WILL TELL THE STORY HOW WE'VE OVERCOME,
AND WE'LL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER BY AND BY.

RUTH

TEMPTATIONS, HIDDEN SNARES
OFTEN TAKE US UNAWARES.
AND OUR HEARTS ARE MADE TO BLEED
FOR EACH THOUGHTLESS WORD OR DEED.

AND WE WONDER WHY THE TEST
WHEN WE TRY TO DO OUR BEST,
BUT WE WILL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER BY AND BY.

(DANNY and BOSS return with musical
instruments such as a tambourine or
hand drum for the last chorus.)

CAST

BY AND BY, WHEN THE MORNING COMES,
 ALL THE SAINTS OF GOD ARE GATHERED HOME,
 WE WILL TELL THE STORY HOW WE'VE OVERCOME,
 AND WE'LL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER BY AND BY.
 YES, WE'LL UNDERSTAND IT BETTER BY AND BY.

(As the group breaks up and exits,
 JAMES pulls NEMO aside for a talk;
 they end up alone on stage.)

JAMES

Nemo, no one's happier to see you than me. So what happened?

NEMO

I passed a spell in the wilderness, just like the Savior.
 And like Him, I met both God and the devil. Now I'm back at
 the fire pit with damp kindling and no matches.

JAMES

Brother Nemo, a man has private victories and public ones.
 Your moment with God has wrought a powerful change in your
 heart. That flippant Nemo I knew before has disappeared. But
 now the real struggle begins.

NEMO

You know, in those Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, they
 talked so much about loneliness. But for me, it was easier
 being alone. That's why I put off coming back.

JAMES

What's your big fear?

NEMO

That when someone entices me, I'll drink. I can't abide the
 temptation of friendship.

JAMES

Then that's where you need strength. Go over that moment in
 your mind until you see yourself acting right. Prepare for
 the challenge and you can prevail.

NEMO

When does it get easier?

JAMES

Step by step, a smidge here and there. Just take life as it
 comes -- one day at a time. Pretty soon all those days add
 up to a lifetime of happiness.

Song: "One Day at a Time"

JAMES

I'M ONLY HUMAN; I'M JUST A MAN.
 LORD, HELP ME BELIEVE IN WHAT I COULD BE,
 AND ALL THAT I AM.
 SHOW ME THE STAIRWAY
 I HAVE TO CLIMB.
 LORD FOR MY SAKE, TEACH ME TO TAKE
 ONE DAY AT A TIME.

ONE DAY AT A TIME, SWEET JESUS
 THAT'S ALL I'M ASKING OF YOU.
 JUST GIVE ME THE STRENGTH
 TO DO EVERY DAY, WHAT I HAVE TO DO.
 YESTERDAY'S GONE, SWEET JESUS,
 AND TOMORROW MAY NEVER BE MINE.
 LORD, HELP ME TODAY, SHOW ME THE WAY,
 ONE DAY AT A TIME.

LORD, DO YOU REMEMBER, WHEN YOU WALKED AMONG MEN?
 WELL JESUS YOU KNOW,
 IF YOU'RE LOOKING BELOW, THAT IT'S WORSE NOW THAN THEN.
LIES AND CONFUSION
ARE CROWING MY MIND.
 SO FOR MY SAKE, TEACH ME TO TAKE
 ONE DAY AT A TIME.

(Shift to higher
 key.)

JAMES AND NEMO

ONE DAY AT A TIME, SWEET JESUS,
 THAT'S ALL I'M ASKING OF YOU.
 JUST GIVE ME THE STRENGTH
 TO DO EVERY DAY, WHAT I HAVE TO DO.
 YESTERDAY'S GONE, SWEET JESUS,
 AND TOMORROW MAY NEVER BE MINE.
 LORD, HELP ME TODAY, SHOW ME THE WAY
 ONE DAY AT A TIME.

(They hug. JAMES exits. NEMO heads
 to the door of the apartment
 building and knocks. LILY appears.)

NEMO

Lily, can we go for a walk?

LILY

Fair enough.

(They stroll downstage.)

LILY (CONTINUED)

Oh Nemo, I have so much to tell you --

NEMO

But the burden rests on me, Lily. Give me a chance to bind the wound.

LILY

Well OK, you first.

NEMO

I want you to know that I've had a genuine change of heart from the inside out. I'll be forever sorry how I treated you. But all my sincerity won't smooth the road ahead. You know the first thing they tell you in AA? That I'll be an alcoholic the rest of my life. Even though I'll never touch another drink, that won't change.

LILY

You think I don't know that? But together we can overcome.

NEMO

And we might have a lean season in a few years when I start my own moving company.

LILY

Grit runs in the family.

NEMO

And I'm still a Northerner with an unpronounceable last name.

LILY

Nemo, when that change of heart soaks in, you'll forget about all that. You and I are nobody special. But there's three of us here -- you, me and God.

Song: "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden"

LILY

I BEG YOUR PARDON,
I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN.
ALONG WITH THE SUNSHINE,
THERE'S GOT TO BE A LITTLE RAIN SOMETIMES.

WHEN YOU TAKE YOU GOT TO GIVE
SO LIVE AND LET LIVE, OR LET GO, OH, OH, OH, OH
I BEG YOUR PARDON,
I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN.

YOU COULD PROMISE ME THINGS LIKE BIG DIAMOND RINGS,
BUT YOU DON'T FIND ROSES GROWING ON STALKS OF CLOVER.
SO YOU BETTER THINK IT OVER.

LILY (CONTINUED)

WELL, IF SWEET TALKING YOU COULD MAKE IT COME TRUE,
I WOULD GIVE YOU THE WORLD RIGHT NOW ON A SILVER PLATTER.
BUT WHAT WOULD IT MATTER?

SO SMILE FOR A WHILE AND LET'S BE JOLLY;
LOVE SHOULDN'T BE SO MELANCHOLY.
COME ALONG AND SHARE THE GOOD TIMES WHILE WE CAN.

I BEG YOUR PARDON,
I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN.
ALONG WITH THE SUNSHINE,
THERE'S GOT TO BE A LITTLE RAIN SOMETIMES.

(Instrumental interlude)

LILY

It can't be all daffodils and lollipops! All part of the
beauty!

LILY (CONTINUED)

I BEG YOUR PARDON,
I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN.

I COULD SING YOU A TUNE AND PROMISE YOU THE MOON
BUT IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES TO HOLD YOU,
I'D JUST AS SOON LET YOU GO.
BUT THERE'S ONE THING I WANT YOU TO KNOW.

YOU BETTER LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP;
STILL WATERS RUN DEEP,
AND THERE WON'T ALWAYS BE SOMEONE THERE TO PULL YOU OUT.
AND YOU KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.

SO SMILE FOR A WHILE AND LET'S BE JOLLY;
LOVE SHOULDN'T BE SO MELANCHOLY.
COME ALONG AND SHARE THE GOOD TIMES WHILE WE CAN.

I BEG YOUR PARDON,
I NEVER PROMISED YOU A ROSE GARDEN.
ALONG WITH THE SUNSHINE,
THERE'S GOT TO BE A LITTLE RAIN SOMETIMES.

NEMO

Lily, you mustered true compassion to give me another
chance. I don't aim to fritter it away.

LILY

Well, I sense some humility. As a downright expert, I say
you're halfway home to becoming a real cowboy.

NEMO

You reckon so?

LILY

I can smell the bacon on the stove.

NEMO

It's funny -- not sure as I want to wrangle cattle anymore. Something's changed. I want to be your husband -- and the father of your children.

LILY

You mean it?

NEMO

I planned on waiting, but now I gotta ask: Lily, will you marry me?

LILY

I thought about it too. I prayed so hard, I think God lost patience with me. But the answer was clear: If I make a promise to marry and love you, I need a promise that you'll never take another drink and love me back. Promise?

(NEMO turns his back to her.)

NEMO

What did the preacher say? I gotta see it in my mind.

LILY

What are you mumbling?

NEMO

I agree, Lily. I promise never to drink again. I love you and I want to build a life with you.

(He pulls her close as if to kiss,
then smiles and steps back.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)

Lily, I felt from the first that meeting you was no accident. God joined our paths from the get-go. Now I pray he can join our hearts.

LILY

Thank you for saying the very words of my soul. Let's share the news!

(They take each other by the hand
and run offstage. Lights fade to
black to indicate a passage of
time. When they come up, BOSS paces
the floor, dressed in a fancy suit.
Enter PASTOR JAMES and SISTER
RUTH.)

JAMES

You wanted to see me?

BOSS

Pastor, I don't think I can go through with this.

RUTH

But Lily is counting on you to walk her down the aisle.
You're the closest to a father figure she's got.

BOSS

That puts me in a bind. I don't want to curse their marriage
with my presence.

JAMES

Is it the wedding you're avoiding, or something else?

BOSS

You got me there. I swore never to darken the door of a
church again.

RUTH

We've noticed your enthusiasm at the street meetings. But
you never seem to show up on Sunday.

JAMES

You have a sin to clear up, Brother Boss?

BOSS

No. Yes. Arghh. What a muddle! This whole business with Nemo
and Lily has awakened my spiritual side. I'd love to attend
church -- except for that memory.

RUTH

I feel a confession coming on.

JAMES

Brother, whatever is holding you back from church -- and
from walking Lily down the aisle -- let's resolve it right
now.

BOSS

OK. I'll just lay it out there and let you decide.

Song: "Mississippi Squirrel Revival"

BOSS

WHEN I WAS A KID I'D TAKE A TRIP
EVERY SUMMER DOWN TO MISSISSIP,
TO VISIT MY GRANNY IN HER ANTEBELLUM WORLD.
I'D RUN BAREFOOT ALL DAY LONG
CLIMBING TREES, FREE AS A SONG,
AND ONE DAY I HAPPENED TO CATCH MYSELF A SQUIRREL.

BOSS (CONTINUED)

I STUFFED HIM DOWN IN AN OLD SHOE BOX,
 PUNCHED A COUPLE OF HOLES IN THE TOP
 AND WHEN SUNDAY CAME I SNUCK HIM INTO CHURCH.
 I WAS SITTING WAY BACK IN THE VERY LAST PEW,
 SHOWING HIM TO MY GOOD BUDDY HUGH,
 WHEN THAT SQUIRREL GOT LOOSE AND WENT TOTALLY BERSERK.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT IS HARD TO TELL;
 SOME THOUGHT IT WAS HEAVEN, OTHERS THOUGHT IT WAS HELL,
 BUT THE FACT THAT SOMETHING WAS AMONG US WAS PLAIN TO SEE.
 AS THE CHOIR SANG "I SURRENDER ALL,"
 THE SQUIRREL RAN UP HARV NEWLAN'S COVERALLS.
 HARV LEAPED TO HIS FEET AND SAID,
 "SOMETHING'S GOT A HOLD ON ME!" YEOW!

THE DAY THE SQUIRREL WENT BERSERK
 IN THE FIRST SELF-RIGHTEOUS CHURCH
 IN THAT SLEEPY LITTLE TOWN OF PASCAGOULA.
 IT WAS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL THAT BROKE OUT IN REVIVAL
 THEY WERE JUMPING PEWS AND SHOUTING HALLELUJAH!

WELL, HARV HIT THE AISLES A-DANCING AND A-SCREAMING,
 SOME THOUGHT HE HAD RELIGION, OTHERS THOUGHT HE HAD A DEMON
 AND HARV THOUGHT HE HAD A WEED-EATER LOOSE IN HIS FRUIT-OF-
 THE-LOOMS.

HE FELL TO HIS KNEES TO PLEAD AND BEG,
 AND THAT SQUIRREL RAN OUT OF HIS BRITCHES LEG,
 UNOBSERVED, TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM.
 ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE AMEN PEW,
 WHERE SAT SISTER BERTHA BETTER-THAN-YOU
 WHO'D BEEN WATCHING ALL THE COMMOTION WITH SADISTIC GLEE.

BUT YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE LOOK IN HER EYES
 WHEN THAT SQUIRREL JUMPED HER GARTERS AND CROSSED HER
 THIGHS.
 SHE JUMPED TO HER FEET AND SAID "LORD, HAVE MERCY ON ME."

AS THE SQUIRREL MADE LAPS INSIDE HER DRESS
 SHE BEGAN TO CRY AND THEN TO CONFESS
 TO SINS THAT WOULD MAKE A SAILOR BLUSH WITH SHAME.

SHE TOLD OF GOSSIP AND CHURCH DISSENSION,
 BUT THE THING THAT GOT THE MOST ATTENTION
 WAS WHEN SHE TALKED ABOUT HER LOVE LIFE,
 AND THEN SHE STARTED NAMING NAMES.

THE DAY THE SQUIRREL WENT BERSERK
 IN THE FIRST SELF-RIGHTEOUS CHURCH
 IN THAT SLEEPY LITTLE TOWN OF PASCAGOULA.
 IT WAS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL THAT BROKE OUT IN REVIVAL
 THEY WERE JUMPING PEWS AND SHOUTING HALLELUJAH!

BOSS (CONTINUED)

WELL, SEVEN DEACONS AND THE PASTOR GOT SAVED,
AND TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DOLLARS GOT RAISED
AND FIFTY VOLUNTEERED FOR MISSIONS IN THE CONGO ON THE SPOT.
EVEN WITHOUT AN INVITATION,
THERE WERE AT LEAST FIVE HUNDRED REDEDICATIONS,
AND WE ALL GOT RE-BAPTIZED WHETHER WE NEEDED IT OR NOT.

NOW YOU'VE HEARD THE BIBLE STORY I GUESS,
HOW HE PARTED THE WATERS FOR MOSES TO PASS.
OH, THE MIRACLES GOD HAS WROUGHT IN THIS OLD WORLD!

BUT THE ONE I'LL REMEMBER TILL MY DYING DAY
IS HOW HE PUT THAT CHURCH BACK ON THE NARROW WAY
WITH A HALF-CRAZED MISSISSIPPI SQUIRREL.

THE DAY THE SQUIRREL WENT BERSERK
IN THE FIRST SELF-RIGHTEOUS CHURCH
IN THAT SLEEPY LITTLE TOWN OF PASCAGOULA.
IT WAS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL THAT BROKE OUT IN REVIVAL
THEY WERE JUMPING PEWS AND SHOUTING HALLELUJAH!

(Exit BOSS, PASTOR JAMES and SISTER
RUTH. Enter NEMO wearing his
wedding outfit. After a moment
DANNY enters with a box of
champagne bottles.)

DANNY

Delivery!

(Approaches NEMO)

Hey champ, you ready to celebrate?

NEMO

What you got there?

DANNY

The main ingredient for a happy marriage. Remember how the
fun always started after we got to Benny's Bar? That recipe
works perfect for a wedding.

NEMO

What are you saying?

DANNY

She's all over your case about drinking. But it's your life.
She needs to wake up to reality, starting with a big bash as
soon as the ceremony is over.

(DANNY hoists a bottle from a box.)

NEMO

Now why did you bring that here?

DANNY

Come on, a wedding is the one time when you should get drunk. All I want is for you to be yourself. Isn't that the best foot to put forward in a marriage?

NEMO

The Nemo you drank with -- I'm not that guy anymore.

DANNY

She compelled you to swear off drinking! Maybe you want to stop -- but you know you won't. Time to be honest, stand up like the real cowboy you've become and share a drink with your friends.

Song: "Alcohol"

(During the song DANNY listens to the bottle and comments how it's talking, not her.)

DANNY

I CAN MAKE ANYBODY PRETTY.
I CAN MAKE YOU BELIEVE ANY LIE.
I CAN MAKE YOU PICK A FIGHT
WITH SOMEBODY TWICE YOUR SIZE.

WELL, I BEEN KNOWN TO CAUSE A FEW BREAK UPS.
AND I BEEN KNOWN TO CAUSE A FEW BIRTHS.
I CAN MAKE YOU NEW FRIENDS
OR GET YOU FIRED FROM WORK.

NEMO

Yeah, thanks
a whole lot.

DANNY

Sorry about that.

DANNY (CONTINUED)

AND SINCE THE DAY I LEFT MILWAUKEE,
LYNCHBURG AND BORDEAUX FRANCE,
BEEN MAKING THE BARS LOTS OF BIG MONEY
AND HELPING WHITE PEOPLE DANCE.

I GOT YOU IN TROUBLE IN HIGH SCHOOL,
BUT COLLEGE, NOW THAT WAS A BALL.
YOU HAD SOME OF THE BEST TIMES
YOU'LL NEVER REMEMBER WITH ME:
ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL

DANNY (CONTINUED)

I'LL GET BLAMED AT YOUR WEDDING RECEPTION
FOR YOUR BEST MAN'S EMBARRASSING SPEECH,

NEMO
Please don't.

DANNY (CONTINUED)

AND ALSO FOR THOSE NAKED PICTURES OF YOU AT THE BEACH.

NEMO
How did you?

DANNY (CONTINUED)

I'VE INFLUENCED KINGS AND WORLD LEADERS.
I HELPED HEMINGWAY WRITE LIKE HE DID.
AND I'LL BET YOU A DRINK OR TWO THAT I CAN MAKE YOU
PUT THAT LAMPSHADE ON YOUR HEAD.

'CAUSE SINCE THE DAY I LEFT MILWAUKEE,
LYNCHBURG AND BORDEAUX FRANCE
BEEN MAKING A FOOL OUT OF FOLKS JUST LIKE YOU,
AND HELPING WHITE PEOPLE DANCE.

I AM MEDICINE AND I AM POISON;
I CAN HELP YOU UP OR MAKE YOU FALL.
YOU HAD SOME OF THE BEST TIMES
YOU'LL NEVER REMEMBER WITH ME:
ALCOHOL

AND SINCE THE DAY I LEFT MILWAUKEE,
LYNCHBURG AND BORDEAUX FRANCE,
BEEN MAKING THE BARS LOTS OF BIG MONEY
AND HELPING WHITE PEOPLE DANCE.

I GOT YOU IN TROUBLE IN HIGH SCHOOL,
BUT COLLEGE, NOW THAT WAS A BALL.
YOU HAD SOME OF THE BEST TIMES
YOU'LL NEVER REMEMBER WITH ME:
ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL, ALCOHOL

(The song ends with her putting the
bottle in his hand. She stands
waiting for him to open it. He
hesitates -- and sets it down.)

NEMO
Danny, send the booze back to the store.

DANNY
But you want it.

NEMO
Can't you see that I need your help? We're friends. But I
got to change.

DANNY

I see how it is.

NEMO

And don't go blaming Lily. It's not her call -- it's mine. You're welcome to the wedding. Just leave the bottles behind.

Song: Wagner's "Bridal Chorus"

DANNY

What's that noise?

NEMO

A song.

(Another phrase of music.)

DANNY

Wedding music!

NEMO

My wedding music! So haul this out of here while I get to the altar.

(DANNY exits with the champagne.)

(Enter PASTOR JAMES and SISTER RUTH. The pastor takes his place at center stage. NEMO takes his place beside the pastor. Enter LILY in a wedding dress, accompanied by BOSS. He escorts her to the altar. DANNY appears on the edge of the stage, but BOSS waves her to join the circle next to him. As the ceremony begins, BOSS and DANNY are on NEMO's side, RUTH on LILY's side. Music ends.)

JAMES

Dearly beloved, we gather today to join Nehemiah and Lily in holy matrimony. If any persons have cause why they may not be joined, let them speak now or forever hold their peace.

(The cast slowly turns their heads to stare at DANNY.)

DANNY

What?

JAMES

Nehemiah, do you take Lily L'Amoreaux to be your wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish from this day till death do you part?

NEMO

I do.

JAMES

Lily, do you take Nehemiah Slavikozlowski --

LILY

Boy, I plumb forgot about that last name.

JAMES

-- to be your husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness or in health, to love and to cherish from this day till death do you part?

(Silence.)

JAMES (CONTINUED)

We will respect your decision, Lily.

(Another silence.)

NEMO

Pastor, I get it. Her next words touch on delicate feelings.

(Music starts.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)

Allow me to share feelings from my own heart to lay her doubts to rest.

Song: "Forever and Ever, Amen"

NEMO

YOU MAY THINK THAT I'M TALKING FOOLISH;

LILY

Yeah, sometimes.

NEMO (CONTINUED)

YOU'VE HEARD THAT I'M WILD AND I'M FREE.

LILY

For sure.

NEMO (CONTINUED)

YOU MAY WONDER HOW I CAN PROMISE YOU NOW
THIS LOVE THAT I FEEL FOR YOU ALWAYS WILL BE.

NEMO (CONTINUED)

BUT YOU'RE NOT JUST TIME THAT I'M KILLING;
I'M NO LONGER ONE OF THOSE GUYS.
AS SURE AS I LIVE, THIS LOVE THAT I GIVE
IS GONNA BE YOURS UNTIL THE DAY THAT I DIE.

OH LILY, I'M GONNA LOVE YOU FOREVER,
FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.
AS LONG AS OLD MEN SIT AND TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER,
AS LONG AS OLD WOMEN SIT AND TALK ABOUT OLD MEN.

IF YOU WONDER HOW LONG I'LL BE FAITHFUL,
I'LL BE HAPPY TO TELL YOU AGAIN.
I'M GONNA LOVE YOU FOREVER AND EVER, FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.

(Instrumental interlude)

LILY

Oh, I think he really means it! Any advice, Ruth?

(NEMO looks to BOSS, who gives him
a positive signal -- thumbs up.)

NEMO (CONTINUED)

THEY SAY TIME TAKES ITS TOLL ON A BODY,
MAKES A YOUNG GIRL'S BROWN HAIR TURN GRAY.
BUT HONEY, I DON'T CARE, I AIN'T IN LOVE WITH YOUR HAIR,
AND IF IT ALL FELL OUT, WELL, I'D LOVE YOU ANYWAY.

THEY SAY TIME CAN PLAY TRICKS ON A MEMORY,
MAKE PEOPLE FORGET THINGS THEY KNEW.
WELL, IT'S EASY TO SEE IT'S HAPPENING TO ME
I'VE ALREADY FORGOTTEN EVERY WOMAN BUT YOU.

OH LILY, I'M GONNA LOVE YOU FOREVER, FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.
AS LONG AS OLD MEN SIT AND TALK ABOUT THE WEATHER,
AS LONG AS OLD WOMEN SIT AND TALK ABOUT OLD MEN,

IF YOU WONDER HOW LONG I'LL BE FAITHFUL,
JUST LISTEN TO HOW THIS SONG ENDS.
I'M GONNA LOVE YOU FOREVER AND EVER, FOREVER AND EVER, AMEN.
I'M GONNA LOVE YOU FOREVER AND EVER, FOREVER AND EVER,
FOREVER AND EVER, FOREVER AND EVER --

CAST

(Everyone joins on
final word.)

AMEN.

(LILY rushes to NEMO, but PASTOR
JAMES intervenes.)

JAMES

What do you say now, Lily?

LILY

Amen and amen. I mean, I do! I do!

JAMES

I now pronounce you husband and wife. Nemo, you may now kiss the bride.

(They kiss. Cheers and applause from the cast.)

(NEMO and LILY move downstage, holding hands. The cast forms three couples -- BOSS with DANNY, the lead couple and PASTOR JAMES with SISTER RUTH. During the choruses, the couples dance. They stop and NEMO and LILY come downstage center holding hands for her to sing the verses.)

Song: "Could I Have This Dance?"

LILY

I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER, THE SONG THEY WERE PLAYING,
THE FIRST TIME WE DANCED AND I KNEW
AS WE SWAYED TO THE MUSIC, AND HELD TO EACH OTHER,
I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU.

CAST

COULD I HAVE THIS DANCE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?
WOULD YOU BE MY PARTNER EVERY NIGHT?
WHEN WE'RE TOGETHER, IT FEELS SO RIGHT.
COULD I HAVE THIS DANCE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?

LILY

I'LL ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT MAGIC MOMENT,
WHEN I HELD YOU CLOSE TO ME.
AS WE MOVED TOGETHER, I KNEW FOREVER,
YOU'RE ALL I'LL EVER NEED.

CAST

COULD I HAVE THIS DANCE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?
WOULD YOU BE MY PARTNER EVERY NIGHT?
WHEN WE'RE TOGETHER, IT FEELS SO RIGHT.
COULD I HAVE THIS DANCE FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE?

Song: "All My Ex's Live in Texas"

(No vocals. An instrumental clip of the song plays while the cast comes forward for curtain calls. They exit through the central doorway and the music fades.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT II)