

A BOTTLE OF WORTH

The lights rise on a bare area. No movement for a long period. From the distance we hear a whimper, perhaps behind us. Someone is crying quietly. The sound continues and seems to be moving. After a moment, a YOUNG MAN slowly enters, in tattered clothing, clutching a lone bottle of water...filled... sealed, no label. He slowly looks around, still crying silently. He sits on the ground and stares at the bottle. After a moment, he hears something and looks up...

YOUNG MAN. Who's there? *(No response)* Is anyone there?*(No response)* No one? *(Another pause, he cries)* Where is everyone?!!

MAN'S VOICE. For god's sake, stop crying!

YOUNG MAN. Who's there?

MAN'S VOICE. Someone who doesn't want to listen to you whimper like a whipped puppy!

YOUNG MAN. Show yourself! *(Laughter from offstage)*

MAN'S VOICE. Alright. If you promise to stop the goddamn waterworks, *(From another part of the theatre, a man in a ratty suit carrying a charred briefcase stumbles on. He's blind. His face is grotesquely burned and his eyes are solid white.)* Happy? No boogie man. Just a char-broiled freak. *(He laughs.)* I'd shake your hand, but I don't know where you are.

YOUNG MAN. You're blind?

MAN. Well, I'm not an albino. *(He laughs.)* Actually, I'm worse than that...I'm a lawyer. Was...a lawyer. Now, I guess there's no law. Just a lot of...yer.

YOUNG MAN. What's in the case?

MAN. *(Suddenly violent)* What do you care? Huh? *You stay away!!! STAY AWAY FROM MY FUCKING CASE!! I'LL KILL YOU!*

YOUNG MAN. I don't want your case. I just asked what was in it.

MAN. Yeah. You asked. You asked so you can steal it.

YOUNG MAN. You can't see. If I wanted it, I could just take it.

MAN. Think so?

YOUNG MAN. Yeah, I think so.

MAN. What to try? The last guy didn't fare so well. *(He laughs)*
Thieving bastard lost an ear. Like Van Gogh...but...not.

YOUNG MAN. How did he do that?

MAN. I ate it. *(Silence. The Young Man regards the Man.)*

YOUNG MAN. You ate it? *(The Man nods for a moment in silence, then slowly says...)*

MAN. I was a little . . .snacky.

YOUNG MAN. Well, I don't want your briefcase. I'm sorry if it sounded that way...but I don't. *(Silence. This catches Man off guard.)*

MAN. How about that? No one apologizes for anything anymore.

YOUNG MAN. I'm not no one.

MAN. Sure you are. We're all no one. Everyone that's left is no one. Do you know me? Have you seen me? Am I important to you?

YOUNG MAN. No.

MAN. Exactly. I'm...no one to you. *(Pause)* Being no one is a weird feeling. I can remember being someone, but it all went up in a flash. Poof! Everyone is gone. Well, not everyone. I'm here. Thought I was dead for a long while. I saw a bright light, then everything went hot and dark...I thought great...not only am I spending eternity in Hell, but God or the Devil, or whomever is in charge is gonna make me crawl around in the dark forever. So, I thought to myself, this is a sad state of affairs. How can God love me enough to allow me to build myself to a point where I finally have not only a pot to pee in, but a nice porcelain one as well – then send me to Hell in a blinding ball of white light? But it wasn't God. Nope. Turns out he didn't send me anywhere. He didn't save me. Well, maybe he saved my life, but he didn't save me from my fate! *(He looks up)* Thanks, God! Thanks a helluva lot!!! *(The YOUNG MAN stuffs the bottle of water in his pocket. From offstage...)*

WOMAN. He's not listening.

MAN. Jesus! Not again!

WOMAN. *(Entering, her clothes are in rags.)* Yeah, it's me. God is not listening! You can take a look around and see...oh...no, I guess you can't can you? *(She laughs)* Well, take my word for it...if you could see

what got let happen to his backyard, you know that we *(She yells up)*
THE ANTS – *(Back)* don't even register on his radar these days. *(She gets in Man's face.)* So, yeah, it's me- reminding you that you don't matter. *(She grabs his burned face and pulls him into a kiss, he screams in pain the entire time. Finally, she releases him and he retreats.)* Don't forget that, My Love. *(She turns to Young Man.)* Hello. Nice to see a new face.

YOUNG MAN. Hello, my name is...

WOMAN. Stop right there...I don't want to know your name.

YOUNG MAN. Why?

WOMAN. *(Suddenly violent.)* Why are you grilling me? Huh? Why are you asking me so many questions? Why are you such a pathetic worm of a man who has the audacity to come to my part of my world and ask the tough questions? Who the fuck do you think you are?!!

YOUNG MAN. All I asked was "why?".

WOMAN. Get out of here.

YOUNG MAN. I...

WOMAN. I SAID GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!! *(She stands, angry, defensive. There's a long moment of silence, then Young Man takes out the bottle of water and turns to leave, about to open it.)* Wait!

YOUNG MAN. Gotta go. You said so.

WOMAN. *(On her knees)* Wait! Please! *(He stops)* Is that what I think it is?

MAN. *(Suddenly interested.)* What? What is it?

WOMAN. I haven't seen one of those in almost a week.

MAN. What?

WOMAN. Shutup, Fool! *(To Young Man)* Is it? What I think? *(The Young Man puts the bottle back in his pants pocket.)* No! Don't! If it is, I want it!

YOUNG MAN. You can't have it. I found it! It's mine!

WOMAN. I'll do anything for it! Give it to me!

MAN. What is it?

WOMAN. Can I touch it? *(She walks over to the Young Man.)* Just a bit?

YOUNG MAN. No.

WOMAN. Just the tip. Show me the tip!!

MAN. I want to know what it is! Damn you! Godddamn you both!

WOMAN. He already has. (*Young Man turns to go.*)

YOUNG MAN. Good bye. Good luck. Find your own bottle.

WOMAN. Wait! That's water, isn't it? (*The Young Man stops.*)

MAN. Water? Bottled water? Are you serious?

WOMAN. Shutup! (*Woman walks up to Young Man and begins rubbing his crotch.*) Surely, we can work something out.

YOUNG MAN. Um...

WOMAN. Oh, yeah. You like that don't you? See? A woman of my age and experience can still make a little magic happen. Oooo, you're so big...and hard....

YOUNG MAN. You're rubbing the bottle. (*She stops*)

WOMAN. Shit. (*Long Pause*) I thought you felt like plastic.

YOUNG MAN. Goodbye.

MAN. Wait! (*He stops again.*) Take my briefcase. I'll give you my briefcase for your bottle.

YOUNG MAN. What good is a briefcase? And a locked one at that!

MAN. There's money inside.

YOUNG MAN. Money? (*The Man nods*) In a briefcase...that's locked.

MAN. Money – you can buy anything! More money than you can spend in a lifetime!

WOMAN. Which is about 10 days without water.

YOUNG MAN. No. Sorry.

MAN. There has to be something you'll take!

YOUNG MAN. No.

WOMAN. You won't share? Not a drop?

YOUNG MAN. Why should I?

WOMAN. Because...because... (*She walks over to Man and puts her arm around him. He flinches in pain.*) Because we're such nice people. (*They both smile a big toothy smile.*)

YOUNG MAN. No

MAN. Come on! What's it worth to you?

YOUNG MAN. What?

MAN. Worth! What's it worth! Come on, everyone has a price. What's it worth to you?

YOUNG MAN. What's it worth to you?

MAN/WOMAN. What?

YOUNG MAN. What's it worth to you? My bottle.

MAN. What do you want? That's my question.

YOUNG MAN. Consider this – you're asking me to possibly give up my life. I mean, if we need water to live and I only have one bottle...isn't that what you're doing? Asking me to sacrifice that which is most precious to me? So, I need something in return. What is most precious to you? What are you willing to give me in return that means the most? (*Dead silence.*) No answer, huh?

MAN. I've already given my most precious thing...I've given my sight.

YOUNG MAN. Not to me...and you didn't give it willingly. It was taken from you.

MAN. I've offered you my briefcase!

YOUNG MAN. I want more. If you're asking me to die, what are you willing to give me that's of equal value to my life?

MAN. I...I don't know.

YOUNG MAN. I do. Your dignity. (*Shocked silence. Then, the Man laughs slightly.*)

MAN. My what?

YOUNG MAN. You heard me. Your dignity. I want it. If you want the bottle...I want all of your dignity.

WOMAN. Give it to him! What are you waiting on?

MAN. I don't know what he wants.

YOUNG MAN. Sell it.

MAN. Sell what?

YOUNG MAN. Sell your dignity to me.

MAN. Sell me...?

WOMAN. Sell it!

MAN. I can't sell my dignity!

YOUNG MAN. Sure you can. You were a lawyer, Weren't you supposed to sell the truth? Or at least a version of it?

MAN. That was different.

YOUNG MAN. How?

MAN. My life didn't count on it!

YOUNG MAN. Some else's did.

MAN. I wasn't that kind of lawyer!

YOUNG MAN. Every lawyer is "that kind" of lawyer. So, sell it. (*Long pause.*)

MAN. I can't.

YOUNG MAN. Then, you don't get it. (*He starts to walk away. The woman steps up.*)

WOMAN. Wait! (*He keeps walking.*) Please, stop. (*He turns back and stares at her.*) I will. I'll give you my dignity. (*The Young Man nods and holds up the water bottle. She pulls back her top revealing her charred bare breast. The Young Man stares for a long moment, She reaches up to reveal the other. He raises his hand.*)

YOUNG MAN. Stop.

WOMAN. But, don't you...

YOUNG MAN. No, leave it. (*The Woman stops. She stands there confused.*)

WOMAN. Does it, excite you? (*The Young Man slowly walks up to her, gets in her face, looks at her breast, then up at her and slowly starts to laugh. His laughs grow in intensity. He continues laughing over the following dialogue.*)

MAN. What? What is he laughing at?

WOMAN. I don't know.

MAN. Yes, you do. You can see! What is he laughing at?

WOMAN. I don't know!

MAN. You do! You do you lying bitch! What is he laughing at? (*The Young Man abruptly stops.*) Why did he stop? Tell me! Why did he stop?

WOMAN. I don't know.

MAN. Yes, you do! You can see! Why did he stop laughing?

YOUNG MAN. This is the best you can do?

WOMAN. It's all I have.

YOUNG MAN. NO! You expect me to give you my life and all you offer in return is a burned up tit! Cover it up! (*She does. He turns to the*

Man.) Okay, she offered up a burned tit. Can you beat that? (*Awkward silence. The Man starts to unzip his pants.*) No, don't do that. If I'm not interested in a burned tit, you're chicken fried penis has zero chance of popping this top. (*He holds up the bottle.*) So, what now? (*He gets an idea.*) Okay, I have an idea. I want you to bring everything that is in your possession and put it right here in front of me. I'll look it over and see if there is anything worthwhile.

MAN. All I have is my briefcase.

WOMAN. I have nothing else either! My daughter and I ...

YOUNG MAN. (*Overlapping*) Daughter? (*Pause.*) You never said anything about a daughter.

WOMAN. I didn't think...

YOUNG MAN. Maybe she will do.

WOMAN. Maybe she will do what?

YOUNG MAN. Maybe she has something to offer.

WOMAN. No! She would be of no use to you!

YOUNG MAN. How do you know?

WOMAN. I just do!

YOUNG MAN. You do?

WOMAN. I do.

YOUNG MAN. Do you?

MAN. She does.

YOUNG MAN. Does she?

MAN. Trust me...

YOUNG MAN. Get one thing straight – I don't trust you at all. (*To Woman.*) Bring her. (*He raises the bottle and shakes it again. Woman relents and crosses offstage, After a moment she comes back with a YOUNG WOMAN about the age of the Young Man. She is terribly burned, but you can tell she was lovely before "the flash". She mumbles to herself. The Woman carefully lies her on the ground. She screams the entire time she is being handled, the skin contact is excruciating. Finally, she lies on the ground and goes quiet.*) Nice. (*He kneels down next to her and strokes her hair. Instantly, she begins screaming again. The Woman instinctively starts to her daughter.*) **STAY BACK OR I**

*SWEAR YOU WILL NEVER GET THIS!!! (The Woman stops.) Good.
(He lets go of the Young Woman's hair. She goes quiet.)*

WOMAN. Alright, you have her here. Now, what do you want for the bottle?

YOUNG MAN. Let's play a game of elimination, shall we?

WOMAN. What do you mean?

YOUNG MAN. In every game where there is a Grand Prize, there are always elimination rounds. So, let's begin. The Grand Prize is a bottle of water. So, what do we have? A Man, A Woman, A Sweet Little Burned Freak, a charred tit, and a locked briefcase full of "something". So, Round One: Let's get rid of the Briefcase.

MAN. NO! NO! It's all I have!

YOUNG MAN. Are you removing yourself from the game? No water?

MAN. Please don't make me lose the one thing I can feel!

YOUNG MAN. Oh, my friend, I suspect you lost feeling when you started your career. Are you playing?

WOMAN. I have nothing else. My tit is attached.

YOUNG MAN. Can your daughter think for herself anymore?

WOMAN. What?

YOUNG MAN. It's a simple question – can your daughter think for herself? Or do you pretty much do it all for her?

WOMAN. No, she doesn't look after herself anymore.

YOUNG MAN. Okay, good. So, she's like the briefcase. Want to bet her on the bottle?

WOMAN. What?

YOUNG MAN. Just think of her as a big ole' poker chip, just lying there.

WOMAN. Don't you call her that? You hear me? Don't you call her that!

YOUNG MAN. What term would you use?

WOMAN. My daughter.

YOUNG MAN. Barely.

WOMAN. She's alive!

YOUNG MAN. Barely. I'll tell you what. Since we aren't allowed to tell each other our real names – I'll give her one. How about...broccoli?

It was always my favorite vegetable, and since she appears to be the only vegetable here – *(The Woman slaps him hard in the face.)* I'd watch that if I were you. *(She slaps him again.)* For the last time...stop it. *She raises her hand.)* There are consequences for actions. *(She slaps him.)* Alright. *(He walks over to the Young Woman and yanks her up. She immediately begins screaming in pain.)* You think I'm fuckin' around? Huh? You think I won't do away with all of you? Test me!

WOMAN. Stop! Please! *(He spins the Young Woman around and begins rubbing his hands all over her. Every touch is like a thousand knives piercing her skin. Her screaming continues.)*

YOUNG MAN. FUCKING TEST ME!

MAN. What's happening?

WOMAN. I'm sorry!

YOUNG MAN. What?

WOMAN. I'm sorry!

YOUNG MAN. Say it loud!

WOMAN. I'M SORRY!! *(The Young Man drops the Young Woman in a heap, she screams one last time, then goes quiet. All we hear is slight whimpering from her.)*

YOUNG MAN. Yes, you are. Sorry. On so many levels. *(He speaks with growing intensity.)* What must you think of me? I wonder. You think I haven't adapted quickly to living in a world where pain is the only meal on the menu? Huh? You expect me to not only give up my life, but you insult me with a slap in the face when I merely ask that you give me something equal in return? Let's get one thing straight. I feel pain – you feel pain. Got it?

WOMAN. Yes.

YOUNG MAN. Say it.

WOMAN. I said yes.

MAN. She said yes.

YOUNG MAN. *(To Man)* I wasn't talking to you. *(To Woman)* Yes what? Say , "I got it."

WOMAN. I got it. *(Long pause)*

YOUNG MAN. Okay. Good. *(He turns to Man.)* Alright. Your turn.

MAN. Are you talking to me?

YOUNG MAN. I'm talking to you.

MAN. Please! I just want to be left alone!

YOUNG MAN. No – you chose to play the game. So, you're in.

MAN. I officially declare my briefcase eliminated

YOUNG MAN. You do?

MAN. Yes, it no longer wants to play.

YOUNG MAN. It doesn't get to choose. It must be eliminated fairly.

MAN. It's locked – and I never share the combination.

YOUNG MAN. What if I insist?

MAN. The purchase amount of the water was my dignity...not my security.

YOUNG MAN. Fair enough.

MAN. It no longer wants to play.

YOUNG MAN. Okay.

MAN. But I do. *(Pause.)* But not at these stakes.

YOUNG MAN. Really?

MAN. I want to up the ante.

YOUNG MAN. Up the ante?

MAN. Yes. *(Pause)*

YOUNG MAN. Alright. Consider me in. My bottle of water for... what?

MAN. The contents of my case...not the case itself...but the contents.

YOUNG MAN. I've already told you, that...

MAN. *(Overlapping)* I lied. There isn't money in here. It's something else. Something even better. Something, unexpected. I hold death in this case.

YOUNG MAN. Death?

MAN. Death and Life are always connected. Usually, one person's death gives life to another. Not fair for the one who dies, but that's simply the nature of things.

YOUNG MAN. You learn that in court?

MAN. One can learn things in the oddest of places.

YOUNG MAN. So I've heard. Go on.

MAN. Well, it's simple. You see...

WOMAN. *(Overlapping)* Don't do it.

YOUNG MAN. I'll hear him out.

WOMAN. Don't play his game. The last thing you want to do is get into it on his terms, my boy.

YOUNG MAN. He is no threat.

MAN. I'm no threat. I'm a blind man.

WOMAN. Last chance, My Boy. Say no.

YOUNG MAN. I'll take my chances.

MAN. Good. GOOD! This one has guts! I like it! *(He turns to the Woman.)* Give it to him.

WOMAN. You're sure?

YOUNG MAN. Give me what?

MAN. He's worthy. *(The Woman relents and walks offstage.)*

YOUNG MAN. Where are you going? *(To Man)* Where is she going?

MAN. You'll see. It will all be explained soon. After all, a game of life and death should be interesting, right? *(The Man smiles and begins whistling an eerie tune. The Young Woman begins to hum along with him. The Young Man looks back and forth between them. After a moment, the Woman re-enters with a gun. The Young Man immediately backs up, leaving the bottle in the middle of the floor.)*

YOUNG MAN. A gun? Okay, okay...the water is yours, take it. Take it. Just let me walk out of here.

WOMAN. Don't be ridiculous. I'm not going to shoot you.

MAN. Take the gun.

YOUNG MAN. I'm sorry?

MAN. Take it. Take the gun. You're gonna need it.

YOUNG MAN. Seriously?

MAN. It's simple. You and I race for the bottle. You have the gun. I'll be willing to bet that I can get to the bottle before you do. As a matter of fact, I'll bet you don't even touch the bottle before me.

YOUNG MAN. And I have the gun.

MAN. You have the gun.

WOMAN. I'm imploring you to not do it.

YOUNG MAN. This is insane. *(The Woman relents and hands him the gun.)*

WOMAN. I tried. *(She goes to the edge of the stage and sits.)*

MAN. Alright, now...

YOUNG MAN. You just handed me a gun. What's to keep me from shooting you?

MAN. Nothing, but that's not very sporting, is it? Besides, it's not loaded.

YOUNG MAN. Why would you give me the gun if it's not loaded?

MAN. Why would I give you a loaded gun? *(There is a moment of silence. The men just stare.)* Ready? Now, I will put my briefcase over here, out of the way. *(He walks effortlessly over to near Woman and sets down his briefcase.)* There, now I don't have to have that hamper my grabbing of the bottle. *(He holds up his hands.)* Empty. *(The Young Man looks at the gun, opens it up, sees it is indeed unloaded, then closes it.)*

YOUNG MAN. Fine. I'm not carrying this either. It's not much help.

MAN. That all really depends on your perspective.

YOUNG MAN. That may be true, but it's a hindrance in a footrace. I'll decline to use it. *(He sets the gun down near the Young Woman, then step up with his back to her. Immediately, she reaches into her pocket and pulls out bullets and silently loads them into the gun.)* So, before we start, tell me one last time why you believe that you will touch the bottle before me? You're blind, I'm younger, I'm faster...

MAN. All of those things are true enough, however, take my word, there are things in this world that throw us curveballs at the worst possible moment.

YOUNG MAN. Such as? *(The Young Woman stands and points the gun directly at the Young Man.)*

YOUNG WOMAN. Such as me, Baby! *(The Young Man spins around in time to see her beautiful yet horrific smile. She fires the gun. He falls to the ground, wounded. She fires the gun again. He screams. The Young Woman immediately jumps on top of him, biting him all over. The Man and Woman jump up and start maniacally laughing and clapping. The Young Woman does nothing but repeat gibberish that sounds stuck somewhere between sexual moaning and carnal feeding. The Young Man turns over on his stomach and begins crawling toward the bottle. He almost gets there when the Woman races over and helps pin back his arms. The Man slowly walks over, leans down and says...)*

MAN. What do you know? Maybe I am an albino. Turns out I can see better than I thought. *(He laughs. The Women laugh. He grabs the bottle, twists off the top and takes a sip.)* I win. Time to pay up. *(The Woman holds back the Young Man's arms while the Young Woman looks into his eyes and says almost like a child..)*

YOUNG WOMAN. Loooooveeee, you. *(The Young Woman snaps his neck and the Young Man lies dead. The Young Woman looks up to Man and Woman.)* Can I have him?

WOMAN. No, Honey. Not this one. We need to eat this one. We'll get you a new one.

YOUNG WOMAN. Can I set the trap?

MAN. You sure can. *(He walks over to his briefcase and opens it up. It is filled with sealed bottles of water. He grabs one and hands it to her.)* Remember, put it where it can be seen. *(She smiles and raises her hand. He holds out the filled bottle.)*

CURTAIN