

The Easy-Lovin' Blues

**a play
by**

EVAN GUILFORD-BLAKE

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THE EASY-LOVIN' BLUES

Honors

Winner, Georgia Theatre Conference Competition (2015)
Winner, 2010 Bottle Tree Prods. (Kingston, ON) Competition
Winner, Kernodle Competition (Univ. of Arkansas) (2009)
Winner, Ronald Williams Playwriting Competition (2004)
Semi-finalist, Hidden River Arts Competition (2007)
Selected for The Play-Pen Series, The Asylum Theatre, Las Vegas (1997)
Finalist, Tennessee Williams Competition (1998)

Production/development history

PRODUCTIONS: Hypothetical Theatre Co., NYC (1998 - workshop)
Raven Theatre, Chicago (1997 - workshop)
READINGS: Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago (1997)
The Asylum Theatre (1997)

synopsis

The Easy-Lovin' Blues is a 70-75-minute play (performed without intermission) with a cast of 3w and 2m. The play is highly visual and uses music extensively, including one, original, song. One actor must play the trumpet (or saxophone); one actress must sing. The set is a flexible interior/exterior.

Set in 1962, the play examines two triangular relationships, one between an illusive 41-year-old woman and her young, manipulative, would-be lover, the second between an aging musician (and drug addict) and his lover, a dominant and disturbed blues singer. The two couples are conjoined by a young woman (the older woman's daughter), a dreamer who serves as the point both triangles have in common.

Each character is in pursuit -- actively or in his/her fantasies -- of some dream, and it is the collision of those pursuits that, metaphorically and cinematically, explores the hope, and the loss of hope, that combine in the dreams of urban society of the mid-twentieth century and of the present day.

That's how life is, but I don't like to observe it.
--- Bethanny Alexander

If we can so misunderstand, well then, why have we invented the word love in the first place?
--- Edward Albee
The Zoo Story

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

There are a *lot* of opportunities for humor in the script. Look for it, don't ever shy away from it because you think it isn't appropriate to the subject.

Production notes: The actress playing **Ladyblue** should sing. As written, the role of **Trumpy** requires an actor who plays the trumpet moderately well. If the best available actor, however, is proficient on the saxophone (preferably the tenor), "Trumpy" may be changed to "Sax" and the changes noted at the end of the script should be incorporated.

THE EASY-LOVIN' BLUES

THE PLACE: A major urban area

THE TIME: A Friday through Monday in the fall, 1962

THE SETTING: Three playing areas. The suggested layout is, upstage, a set of raised platforms which serve as TRUMPY and LADYBLUE's dwelling; center, NAUREAN and AMANDA's apartment; and down left or right, a set of steps which serves as the stoop to the apartment building.

CHARACTERS:

NAUREAN - A private teacher of ballroom dance.

AMANDA - Her daughter.

YOUNG NAUREAN

}played by the

}same actress

REX - A professional dancer.

THE YOUNG MAN - Young Naurean's dance partners.

}played by the

}same actor

GRETCHEN - A neighbor of Naurean and Amanda.

LADYBLUE - An upstairs neighbor of Naurean and Amanda.

}played by the

}same actress

TRUMPY - An upstairs neighbor of Naurean and Amanda.

Playwright's note: There are, throughout the script, what appear to be numerous misspellings of common words. These are deliberate, phonetic, renderings of the characters' pronunciation of those words.

The sheet music (for trumpet), and a demo tape, of *The Easy-Lovin' Blues* are available from the playwright and will be provided on request to any theatre presenting *The Easy-Lovin' Blues*.

Dedicated to the memory of Tennessee Williams

for Greg Kolack; and Bethanny Alexander, Larry Dahlke, Gilmary Doyle, Steve Gillam and Mary Zentmyer

PLAYWRIGHT'S PROGRAM NOTES:

The Easy-Lovin' Blues received developmental readings at Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago, and The Asylum Theatre, Las Vegas; and additional development at Raven Theatre, Chicago and the Hypothetical Theatre, New York.

The Easy-Lovin' Blues was developed in part at Chicago Dramatists. The playwright would like to thank Greg Kolack, Dianne Rossell, Keith Tadrowski, Dale Heinen and particularly Steven Gillam and the insistent and incomparable David Rush for their assistance.

AT RISE: In black, a TRUMPET is heard, playing the intro to “The Easy-Lovin’ Blues.” The LIGHTS rise slowly on TRUMPY and LADYBLUE, on platforms upstage, and SHE sings.

LADYBLUE

I GOT THE EASY-LOVIN’ BLUES,
THOSE EASY-LOVIN’ BLUES.
I FALL IN LOVE ON MONDAY, COME THE WEEKEND I FEEL USED
'CAUSE ALL THE THINGS HE SAID,
WHISPERED IN MY BED,
THEY JUST LED TO THE BLUES.
I’M SINGIN’ THE BLUES.

I GOT THE EASY-LOVIN’ BLUES,
THOSE EASY LOVIN’ BLUES
AND NO MATTER HOW YOU TELL IT, GAL, IT’S JUST BAD NEWS
'CAUSE EACH MAN THAT GOES AWAY
LEAVES ME SPENDIN’ DAYS
JUST SINGIN’ THESE BLUES.
I’M SO FULL OF THE BLUES.

AT EV’RY FIRST KISS I SWOON AND I SIGH,
BEWITCHED, BOTHERED, BEGUILED.
I NEVER LEARN. I THINK I GOT A GUY
BUT ALL I EVER GOT ...

(The MUSIC changes to an instrumental bridge of the song that continues until indicated. As it changes, YOUNG NAUREAN dances on, in a wedding dress, followed several moments later by the YOUNG MAN. HE takes her into a dance embrace and THEY dance across the stage. Simultaneously, the LIGHTS slowly fade on TRUMPY and LADYBLUE and rise on NAUREAN, center, listening to a record player; SHE indicates an awareness of the COUPLE as THEY dance in wide arcs around her as SHE speaks.)

NAUREAN

My mama always wanted me t’ be a dancer. When I was a little girl?, she would take me to Danceland at *all* hours, and we’d watch the girls swoop ‘cross the floor, graceful as swans, the boys whirlin’ them so their pretty dresses fluttered. She never danced; not

NAUREAN (cont.)

there, anyhow -- she couldn't, what with her leg and all -- but she did at home, with me; that's how I learned: "Naurean, you got to learn," she said; "a girl's only really alive when she's dancin'"; so I learned. And *when* I did?, -- I was afeven -- she was so proud. That summer? she picked out a boy for me -- Jim was his name -- and she stood watchin' with this look of complete rapture 'cross her face as though bein' with Jim made me the most beautiful thing that ever walked upon the earth.

GRETCHEN (*Offstage*)

(As SHE speaks, the LIGHTS on the COUPLE fade.)

Mrs. Rossell? Hey! Turn that record down, people're tryin' t' sleep. ... Mrs. Rossell! *Naurean Rossell?* You gone deaf?

NAUREAN

(To herself)

What? ...

(LIGHTS out on the COUPLE.)

(To GRETCHEN)

What?

GRETCHEN (*Offstage*)

C'n you hear me? I said turn that record down. It's past nine o'clock at night! Decent people're sleepin' this hour.

NAUREAN

I'm - sorry, Mrs. Andrews.

NAUREAN

(*Offstage*)

(As SHE turns the sound down)

Is that better?

(TOGETHER)

AMANDA

I'll do it, Gretchen. Leave her alone.

(MUSIC down. The song plays to its conclusion.)

GRETCHEN (*Offstage*)

Oh, *you're* home.

AMANDA

(As SHE enters)

Yes, Gretchen, *I'm* home. Now *you c'n* go home too.

GRETCHEN (*Offstage*)

A' right. Just, you tell 'er t' *keep* that noise down. Decent people're

GRETCHEN (*Offstage*) and AMANDA

tryin' t' sleep

AMANDA

I know, I know. G'd evenin', Gretchen.

NAUREAN

She is such a...

AMANDA

I know, I know. Sorry I'm s' late; I, um -- it was so busy, all day, I had t' stay late t' balance the drawer and then I um, stopped for some supper; I was *so* hungry. Then I took a ---

NAUREAN

Wretch-en; that ought t' be her name. How was work?

AMANDA

Oh, work is just fine and dandy, Mama. You *know* I just love smilin' and gettin' pinched and givin' other people money eight hours ev'ry day.

NAUREAN

Well... It's only for a little while longer.

AMANDA

Mm.

NAUREAN

It *is* only for a little longer. You'll finish up your course, you'll get yourself a *good* job, executive secretary or somethin'. Everything'll change.

AMANDA

Executive secretary!

(SHE snorts)

I'll get t' sit in 'n office all day 'stead a standin' in the bank. The only thing *that*'ll change is where I'm gettin' pinched.

NAUREAN

Or somethin'. I said "or somethin'." You got all kinds 'f potential; I expect you c'd work your way up t' one of those administrative assistant positions. *That's* where you'll meet the really --- I mean, those are the really good jobs. Responsible.

AMANDA

Mm. ... I, I was thinkin', t'day?, maybe I c'd, I don't know, work in a nightclub or somethin'.

NAUREAN

A nightclub? Now what put *that* idea in your head?

AMANDA

I don't know.

NAUREAN

Well!

AMANDA

Or, maybe one of those travel places. This girl at the bank? her sister's at one; she gets t' fly all over the world, practic'ly f'r free. See ev'rything. ... Well, that's just a dream.

NAUREAN

You shouldn't be so negative, Mandy. You got to think good things'll happen in order t' make them happen.

AMANDA

Yeah. I'm always *thinkin'* good things're gonna happen, but... You seem t' be in 'n awful good mood.

NAUREAN

Oh, I am. I had five students t'day, two of them new, little girls; and you know what? One 'f them, she was brought in by this young man, her uncle, such a nice young gentleman, and he's a professional dancer, travels *all* over, said he heard about me and told his brother *I* was the one who ought t' be teachin' Lynn Ann -- that's her name, the little girl, his niece? And the uncle -- he was such a nice young gentleman.

(SHE laughs)

He actually asked me t' dance with him. *Insisted*.

AMANDA

He did?

NAUREAN

You don't need to act so surprised.

AMANDA

Mama, I just -...

NAUREAN

Anyway, I said -- fin'ly -- I said I would.

AMANDA

Oh?

NAUREAN

Not in front of the *students*, of course. But he was practic'ly pleadin'. *And* he paid in advance. For *three* weeks.

AMANDA

Well, that's good. When you goin'?

NAUREAN

Oh, we're not going; out, I mean. He's comin' over here. T'morrow night. -- I - I thought it would be - easier.

AMANDA

Mm. Well, I s'pose I can go t' the movies.

NAUREAN

You don't have t' go any place. We're just gonna dance one 'r two dances, then maybe talk a little while.

AMANDA

Mama, I don't think a man wants t' come over on a Saturday night f'r one 'r two dances and a little talk.

NAUREAN

(With teasing affection)

Now, what would you know about what men want t' do?

AMANDA

Oh, I hear all sorts a things 'bout it, from the girls at the bank. The boys, too.

NAUREAN

And when're you gonna start finding out for yourself?

AMANDA

Prob'ly 'bout the same time you start gettin' gray hairs. Anybody else pay you?

NAUREAN

Mrs. Doyle gave me six dollars toward Stevie.

AMANDA

Mm. So now she's only *five* weeks behind.

NAUREAN

No; just three. It *was* five, includin' today's, but now it's only three.

AMANDA

Mama, you need to make her stay up to date. All of them.

NAUREAN

I know; but I can't just turn them out. 'Specially Stevie. He's just about the only little *boy* I have.

AMANDA

Yes, you can. We got bills too. And I'm not gettin' a raise till the spring.

NAUREAN

Well, I'll talk to her. *All* of them.

AMANDA

Mm. I'm gonna change.

NAUREAN

(Hopefully; as AMANDA exits)
You goin' somewhere?

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Not unless the bathtub counts.

NAUREAN

Y' know, it *is* Friday night.

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Mama!

NAUREAN

(Innocently)
Yes?

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Don't you start up on that. 'Sides, you never go anywhere either.

NAUREAN

Well, I'm - not a girl any more. And anyway, I used to. It's not normal, Mandy, a girl your age *never* goin' anywhere. I worry about you, what's gonna happen if I, I mean... I ---

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

I *know* what you mean, Mama.

NAUREAN

(Without break)

--- mean, my goodness, here you are *already* twenty; how're you gonna *meet* a --- anyone? I used t' have lots of friends when I was twenty. Boys *and* girls. And, and, why, when I was your age I went

AMANDA (*Offstage*) and NAUREAN

dancin' ev'ry night ---

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

(Without break)

--- I know, I know.

NAUREAN

Well I did! It was my duty -- those boys, they needed someone to dance with them. The world was comin' apart, I was just a nice little - flower, *planted*, right there, in the middle of it. ...

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

(Softly)

Oh, Mama.

NAUREAN

(MUSIC rises slowly.)

One of th'm told me that. Jim, his name was. You're a flower, he said. And he smiled at me -- like a young gentleman *would* smile at a flower. Not like your father smiled, of course.

(YOUNG NAUREAN and the YOUNG MAN enter and dance. HE has a flower in his lapel. At the appropriate

moment,
to her.)

HE removes it and gives it

He - only *he* smiled like a young gentleman would smile at a, I don't know, exactly, at a chorus of dancin' girls, I guess, that sly, slick sort of smile that looked so - dashing, in his

uniform. All the girls at the USO wanted t' dance with him, the minute he came in we all started talkin'.

NAUREAN (cont.)

(Giggles)

Even me. He was so handsome; when he came up t' me and asked me t' dance?, I blushed. Honest to Pete I did. But he danced so well, I could close my eyes and it felt like we were some place else, some place wonderful. I fell in love with him, that very first dance, b'cause, - ... because he had a flower in his lapel, this beautiful little white rose, and while we were dancin'?, he stopped and he took it off and he gave it to me. And then he smiled again, and he said: Naurean, you are a wonderful partner. And I said: You mean, a dancin' partner? And he said: I mean, a partner. For dancing, and for always. ...
(The COUPLE dances off as the MUSIC fades out.)

And three days later we got married, and two days after that he was sent to - the war... And I never saw him again. And then nine months later...

AMANDA

(Re-entering in a robe)

He had a *white rose* in his lapel?

NAUREAN

Hm? Oh -- yes, he did.

AMANDA

Hnh. You never told me that before. About the flower.

NAUREAN

I didn't? Well, silly me. It was *only* the highlight of my twenty-first year.

(OFF, TRUMPY is heard playing.)

AMANDA

Mm.

NAUREAN

He was such a gentleman. ... Trumpy better be quiet or Gretchen'll be after him. Though I suppose she can't hear him like we do. She pro'bly can't hear *him* at all. I mean, the way she fawns in the hall whenever he's goin' upstairs. ... You'd think he was Louis
(Loo-is, NOT Loo-ee)

Armstrong, somebody like that. And *her* -- she must think she's some kinda royalty, the way she carries on. "*Lady-blue.*" Hmp. Been here not even a month and she acts like she owns the place. This mornin'? She was sittin' right in the *middle* of the steps when I got back from the grocery and I asked her, very nicely, to please move so I could get by?, and *she* said?, she said ---

AMANDA

Oh, well, they'll be leavin' in a little while.

NAUREAN

(Without break)

--- somethin' *awful*, I can't even --- Leavin'?; they are?

AMANDA

Goin' out. They're startin' another job. For a month this time.

NAUREAN

Well!

AMANDA

Some little club; The Paradise *Café* it's called.

NAUREAN

When'd you find all this out?

AMANDA

Oh, I ---, um, he was just - um, comin' into the bank t'day. Just 's I was goin' out. T' lunch.

NAUREAN

You *talked* t' him?

AMANDA

Of course I *talked* t' him, Mama... I talk t' him

(TRUMPY's playing is replaced by MUSIC. LIGHTS rise on TRUMPY on the upstage platforms, carefully aiming a gun directly at the house.)

all the time. -- He's n---not so bad.

LADYBLUE (*Offstage*)

You about ready?

NAUREAN

Well... You just be careful.

TRUMPY

Uh-huh. 'Bout.

AMANDA

I *am* careful, Mama.

LADYBLUE

(Enters with a syringe in hand)

Hey! Gimme that.

(SHE grabs the gun)

You dumb piece of shit. You f'git already? About ---

(SHE slaps him.)

TRUMPY

No, no, I remember. I'm, uh, sorry.

(HE pulls a belt around his arm.)

NAUREAN

Well...

LADYBLUE

Yeah, you're one sorry motherfucker, all right.

(SHE preps the syringe.)

AMANDA

I'm real careful.

TRUMPY

(As: Don't hurt me?)

Be careful?

LADYBLUE

I am plenty careful.

TRUMPY

(TOGETHER)

AMANDA

I --- ...

I'm a big girl, Mama. I been takin' care 'f myself for a long time now.

TRUMPY

I didn't mean nothin'.

NAUREAN

I - know...

LADYBLUE

Then shut the fuck up an' gimme your arm.

(Through the following, LADYBLUE approaches TRUMPY with the

syringe.
it, and injects
closes his eyes.)

As SHE prepares to insert
him, HE winces, then

NAUREAN

I just, I love you so much...

AMANDA

I love you too, Mama.

(LIGHTS fade slowly on AMANDA and
NAUREAN. MUSIC out.)

LADYBLUE

You better hope nothin' ever happens t' me 'n' you gotta take care a y'urself.

TRUMPY

Yeah.

LADYBLUE

Your little girlfrien' know you're a junkie?

TRUMPY

She ain't, she ain't ---

LADYBLUE

Goddam right she ain't. *Goddam* right.

TRUMPY

... It hurts.

LADYBLUE

You want me t' stop?

TRUMPY

No.

LADYBLUE

You act like a goddam six year old.

TRUMPY

I can't help it.

LADYBLUE

Goddam junkie scairt a needles. Jesus.

I'm sorry. TRUMPY
You oughta be. LADYBLUE
Don't go too fast. TRUMPY
Shit. LADYBLUE
There. Oh, there. Oh yeah. TRUMPY
You c'n open your goddam eyes now. LADYBLUE
Okay. Okay. TRUMPY
How you feel? LADYBLUE
I feel, I feel like dancin'. TRUMPY
Yeah? LADYBLUE
Oh yeah. Oh, yeah. TRUMPY
You wanna dance for me? LADYBLUE
Anything you say. TRUMPY
That's right. Anything I say. LADYBLUE

(SHE draws him into her, opens his shirt,
grasping his nipple.)

(Softly)
Go fix this up f'r me.

(SHE indicates the needle.)

TRUMPY

We gotta go? Gotta go?

LADYBLUE

When I say we gotta go. Now go fix this up f'r me, and come back here, and then *you're gonna...*

(SHE indicates: Inject it in her arm.)

TRUMPY

Lady...

LADYBLUE

You're, *gonna*, do, it.

(Slowly, HE nods. SHE releases his nipple.)

That's a good boy.

(LIGHTS change. MUSIC UP: An up-tempo blues. NAUREAN is seen puttering around the apartment anxiously. The MUSIC fades slowly as AMANDA enters.)

NAUREAN

... should be here any minute and *nothing* is ready

AMANDA (*Offstage*)
Mama, *why* are you makin' *such*
a fuss, I mean, you're acting like
the President and Jackie're comin' ---

(TOGETHER)

NAUREAN
yet, I haven't even finished the
dustin' and -- oh, would you plug
in the coffee maker, I want it t' be

NAUREAN
fresh and it's not a fuss, I just want things t' look - nice.

AMANDA

Things look fine.

NAUREAN

Well... Did you plug in ---

AMANDA

I turned on the coffee.

NAUREAN

Good! Well... My, you look pretty. Here, let me fix your hair.

AMANDA

My hair looks fine, Mama.

NAUREAN

It needs a little more... There. You c'd use a little more color, honey. You look pale.

AMANDA

I am goin' t' the movies? Not dancin'? And I think ---

(There is a KNOCK. MUSIC fades out.)

NAUREAN

Oh, he--- Now, you go put on that rouge, Mandy.

AMANDA

For Pete's sake, Mama.

NAUREAN

Go ahead.

(AMANDA exits. NAUREAN
straightens herself and goes to the door.
REX enters, in a worn suit and tie.)

Why, Mr. Petterson. Good evening.

REX

Good evenin', Mrs. Rossell. And it's Rex; remember?

NAUREAN

Rex. Well - Rex: please; come in; make yourself comf' table.

REX

Thank you.

NAUREAN

I hope you didn't have any trouble gettin' here. Saturday night, the buses don't run so often.

REX

Oh, no. No trouble at all. 'Sides, I'm used t' waitin' on buses. Goin' from city t' city, they're always late.

NAUREAN

Well... that's good. Not that they're late, just that you're ---

REX

I know. I know what y' meant.

(AMANDA enters.)

NAUREAN

C'n I get you somethin' t' drink? There's fresh coffee, and I know we've got ---

REX

Now, some coffee w'd be nice, thank you. This your sister?

NAUREAN

My sist---? Oh...

(SHE laughs)

-- *Mister* Petterson: This is my daughter. Amanda: Mr. Rex Petterson.

REX

I'm very pleased to meet you.

AMANDA

Hello.

NAUREAN

Well, why don't you two sit for a minute and I'll get some coffee -- cream and sugar, Mr. Petterson?

REX

Uh, no. A little cream.

AMANDA

Mama, I'll get the coffee, why don't you and ---

NAUREAN

No, it's all right, I'll get it. You just entertain Mr. Petterson for a minute.

AMANDA

... All right.

NAUREAN

Mr. Petterson, if you'd like some music Amanda will be glad to put it on for you. I won't be a minute.

(SHE exits.)

REX

She's, um, she's an interestin' woman. And a charming one.

AMANDA

Oh, she is.

REX

Ev'rybody says that. I expect her charm is half a what makes her so successful.

AMANDA

Successful?

REX

Runnin' a big dance school like she does. All by herself.

AMANDA

Oh. Mr. Petterson, I don't know what Mama told ---

REX

With your help, of course. And, course, she's a fine teacher, too. I heard that; and I *observed* it, first hand. Handles children *real* well.

(Laughs)

I expect I could learn somethin' about that from her.

AMANDA

Mm. Mama said you travel; all over.

REX

I do indeed.

AMANDA

It must be interesting, seein' all those dif^{er}ent places.

REX

Oh, it wa--- it *is*; but, *but* I been doin' it all the time. All the time. Least, till the past month 'r so. I needed a little time t'... kinda take a break, y' know?

AMANDA

Mm.

REX

It gets kind a wearin'; bein' by yourself?, all that time. Still, it's a livin'. Course, if I met a nice girl I might like t' settle down. I mean, y' can dance anywhere. I might even like t' have a little dance school myself. And seein' how well Mrs. Rossell does it...

AMANDA

... Of course. *Would* you like some music, Mr. Petterson?

REX

Why sure. Anything you like.

AMANDA

Most 'f we have is from the '30s and '40s.

(AMANDA puts on MUSIC: '40s big band.)

REX

Oh, you don't have to 'polagize, but I do have to say it's unusual. Girls t'day, they don't usu'ly care for that. The boys too, the ones *my* age. They all seem t' favor rock an' roll.

AMANDA

What *is* your age, Mr. Petterson? If I may ask.

REX

'Bout yours, I guess.

AMANDA

I'm twenty. Mama's forty-one.

REX

Oh, I expect *she*'d 'f kept that a secret. But I like that: You're straightforward. Directness, that's a *good* quality. I bet you don't go teasin' like some girls do. But now, I'd 've taken you for closer t' twenty-five; not that you look old -- hardly. Just, you *got* that direct quality about you, and that - look, 'f someone who's more mature an', an' sophisticated. Not like those girls I meet on the road. Unh-uh. They're forward, all right; but there's *nothin'* straight about them. I mean, they don't have - grace, there's no style. When I'm on the road?, why, the way those girls act, you'd think they never met someone who really knew what *dancin'* is about. The way they carry on, I mean -- well, sometimes it c'n get --- well; I could tell you some things.

AMANDA

Mm.

REX

This, it's nice music. Nice. 'Specially for dancin'.

AMANDA

I guess.

REX

I'll bet you're quite a dancer. I expect you'd be goin' out most ev'ry night.

AMANDA

Unh-uh.

REX

You don't?

(SHE shrugs)

I'll bet all the boys'd want t' dance with you.

AMANDA

I don't know those new dances.

REX

Then I bet they'd love t' teach you. All about it.

AMANDA

Maybe I just don't care t' learn.

REX

Now, I think you're just bein' modest. That's a good thing in a girl, though. Lot a girls t'day, they're not modest at all. One of the problems with bein' a dancer: Bein' on the road, bein' a *performer*, you meet a lot a girls like that. Not many with good manners; quiet. Homey.

AMANDA

Umm.

(Faintly, in-and-out, a TRUMPET is heard.)

REX

And pretty, too. Real pretty. About the rosiest cheeks I think I have ever seen.

AMANDA

Y' know, I can't imagine what's keepin' Mama with that coffee, I'll just go ---

REX

Amanda? Long 's you're here, 'n' long 's there's music playin' anyhow: Would you care t' dance?

AMANDA

I - don't think ---... And I have to go out. In fact I was just ---

REX

Now, you got time for one dance.

(HE reaches for her, starts to pull her into a dance embrace. SHE resists.)

AMANDA

Mr. Petterson, Mama said you were comin' over t' dance with *her* t'night, and I think maybe you ought t' ---

REX

Of course I'm gonna dance with *her*. When she gets here. But in the meantime, it's a way f'r us t' get t' know each other a little.

AMANDA

I -...

REX

Course, if you'd rather, *we* could go somewhere; some other time?

(HE touches her in an intimate but non-sexual way. SHE slaps him.)

Now, I was only tryin' to dance with you.

AMANDA

Mama? If I don't hurry I'm gonna miss the beginning. I'll be home by ten. Mama? You hear me?

NAUREAN

(TOGETHER)

AMANDA

(Re-entering)

Night.

Mandy? I thought you said the picture doesn't start till ---

(SHE exits.)

NAUREAN

Well... I can't imagine what got into her.

REX

Oh, I expect she just remembered her engagement. Girls, they're like that: things just - accur to them.

NAUREAN

Her engagement? Oh, Amanda doesn't... Yes; I suppose.

REX

She's 'n int'restin' girl.

NAUREAN

Oh, she is.

REX

Got a lot 'f - imagination.

(Laughs)

Bet she gets that from you.

NAUREAN

Oh, yes; we're a lot alike. Always have been.

REX

Um-hmm.

NAUREAN

Well... I'm sorry t' be takin' so long; the coffee wasn't quite brewed yet. It'll just be another minute.

(SHE exits.)

REX

Take your time. I'm enjoyin' the music.

NAUREAN (*Offstage*)

It's this new electric pot. I can't get used to it. But it's all percalated now.

REX

Yes; it *is* a lovely place you got here.

NAUREAN

(Beginning offstage)

Well, thank you. It's kinda old; not very - stylish any more, I'm afraid. I'd like t' move someplace a little nicer, but Amanda? -- she's just a home body and she's used t' this. I guess I am too. Y' get used t' somewhere, y' just - stay. And it's - modest; some people, they just got t' show off about ev'rything, but I don't think there's a need for that. I mean, you are what you *are*.

REX

You don't have t' always *wear* a lot 'f lace an' ruffles t' prove you *own* a pretty dress.

NAUREAN

Exactly. I'm glad *you* understand that. Here you are.

REX

Thank you. This your picture?

NAUREAN

Uh-huh. At - my debut. When I was 'bout Mandy's age.

REX

Hard t' believe you got a daughter who's --- how old is she?

NAUREAN

- Eighteen. -- Just.

REX

Eighteen! You look too young.

NAUREAN

Oh... I don't.

REX

Yes; you do.

NAUREAN

You think so?

REX

I do indeed.

NAUREAN

Well...

REX

Nice music.

NAUREAN

My fav'rite. When I was y--- I mean: I used t' go dancin' to it ev'ry night. And this song? It was playin' the first time I met my husband. It was his fav'rite.

REX

It doesn't make you sad? To listen?

NAUREAN

Oh, no. He was a wonderful man, we loved each other very much. Hearin' it? I remember how we were happy. ... The, the only sad mem'ry I have of it was, they played it at his wake. A recording. And I kissed him there, for the last time, while it was playin'.

(SHE sings or scats a bar or two with the song, then laughs)

I *never* could sing. Just dance. Jim -- my husband? -- Jim 'n' me, we danced t' this all the time. I think he could've been a professional too; if he'd wanted.

REX

I'm sure.

NAUREAN

He was a good man; very kind.

(With a laugh)

Just *doted* on Amanda. And he made sure, Amanda 'n' me?, he made sure we'd be provided for. Not that there was ever anything t' worry about, but he didn't want me ever t' *have* t' work. The dance lessons, they're just t' keep me busy -- *and they do* -- I mean, I think it's important for a woman t' have a purpose in her life; b'sides raisin' a daughter, I mean, I don't know what I'd do *without* her, she's all I got since, since... Just, I think it's important for ev'ryone, t' have a purpose. Don't you?

REX

I do indeed. I do indeed.

NAUREAN

That enough cream, Mr. Petterson?

REX

Oh, it's fine, it's just still hot; but I, um, Mrs. Rossell, I was wonderin' -...

NAUREAN

Yes?

REX

If you would, um, like to dance.

NAUREAN

You really want t' dance with me?

REX

I would be honored.

NAUREAN

Really -- I haven't danced *with* anyone in years. Except my students of course. After Jim, after, he... And then, I don't know -- y' know, you raise a child all by yourself, and givin' all those dance *lessons*, it doesn't leave a lot a time.

REX

That's a shame. Woman like you -- I bet all the boys'd want t' dance with you.

NAUREAN

Well... maybe when I was a girl.

REX

Oh? and you're not a girl any more?

(NAUREAN laughs)

You're a fine dancer -- that's what ev'rybody says.

NAUREAN

Oh, they do?

REX

I asked around.

(NAUREAN laughs)

-- And, and...

NAUREAN

And?

REX

And you're a beautiful woman.

NAUREAN

I... Well...

REX

Maybe we could put on somethin' a little - slower?

NAUREAN

... All right.

REX

Who's that? Outside.

NAUREAN

Oh, that's prob'ly just Trumpy. He lives right above us.

(A whisper)

With a woman. We c'n hear them *all* the time.

REX

(Knowingly)
Oh.

NAUREAN

They're both musicians. -- How's this?

REX

Perfect.

NAUREAN

Well...

REX

Mrs. Rossell, may I have this dance?

NAUREAN

(Willfully Southern)
Mr. Pette'son, I would be cha'med.

(THEY dance.)

REX

Yes, you are a *fine* dancer, Mrs. Rossell.

NAUREAN

Not like I used t' be.

REX

Why, I can't b'lieve there aren't men askin' you to dance ev'-ry-where you go.

NAUREAN

... No.

REX

Well, if you ask me, they're makin' a big mistake then.

NAUREAN

Oh, Mr. Petterson.

REX

Rex.

(Intimately)
It's Greek for "King."

dancing

(TRUMPY is discovered, playing -- the
song REX and NAUREAN are
to -- on the steps as AMANDA enters.)

Evenin', Trumpy.

AMANDA

Oh, my.

NAUREAN

Oh. Evenin', 'Manda.

TRUMPY

Mm?

REX

Y' workin' t'night?

AMANDA

You're holding me so...

NAUREAN

Oh.

REX

(HE starts to ease his hold.)

Uh-huh. Start 't nine.

TRUMPY

(HE plays.)

Mm.

AMANDA

It's all right. It's just, it's been a long time since anybody ... - like that, too.

NAUREAN

I see.

REX

(HE draws her closer. THEY dance.)

AMANDA

C'n I sit with you a minute? Just listen?

(TRUMPY nods.)

REX

How long has it been since anyone kissed you?

NAUREAN

I - don't remember.

AMANDA

Nice out.

(TRUMPY nods and continues to play,
as REX kisses NAUREAN.)

REX

Will you remember that?

NAUREAN

Oh, yes, Rex. I *will* remember that. I will.

(HE kisses her again as LIGHTS and
recorded MUSIC fade. TRUMPY

segues

into a blues.)

AMANDA

Didn't have much weather *like* this, this summer. Been hot. ... Wish *we* had air conditioning; like the bank. Maybe next year we c'n get one, though. 'R move someplace that's got it 'stead a this old dump. After I finish up with school. ... That's real sad music. That what they call "blues"?

(TRUMPY nods.)

I like it. Mostly, Mama 'n' me listen to --- You mind me always talkin' t' you like this?

TRUMPY

I like it.

(HE plays.)

AMANDA

You sure love that trumpet.

TRUMPY

... ' do.

AMANDA

What're you doin' out here?

TRUMPY

Oh, just -- ... the Lady wanted t' be by herself a while.

AMANDA

I still think it's a funny kind a name, Ladyblue.

TRUMPY

She likes it. An' it's - right, I guess. She had a lot a blue times too...

AMANDA

Mm.

TRUMPY

You're waitin' on a date, looks like.

AMANDA

No. Just - waitin'.

TRUMPY

Your boyfriend workin'?

AMANDA

Don't have one; I told you that.

TRUMPY

I forgot.

AMANDA

Mm. The boys I know?, they're all real - young. All *they* wanna do is, -- I don't know...

TRUMPY

Uh-huh.

AMANDA

I'm goin' to the movies, but it doesn't start till eight. Mama's - got company.

TRUMPY

Uh-huh.

(HE plays.)

AMANDA

Trumpy? You ever wonder? About the world, I mean?

TRUMPY

Unh-uh.

AMANDA

I do. All the people I know, except you I guess, they all seem so, so, like they're just doin' what they're *supposed* t' be doin'. Not what they want t' do. And they all seem so - unhappy. Inside.

TRUMPY

Most people, they *don't* get t' do what they want. Too busy doin' what they got t' do. End up dreamin' 'bout what they want t' do, makin' it up 'stead a doin' it.

(Small laugh)

Once? I knew this retarded kid. 'Bout, oh long time ago -- before the war. His Pa -- Dave was his name -- him 'n' me were friends; he'd come into the club with this kid, kid had a trumpet -- little toy, but he loved it too, y' c'd tell. And one day, the kid, he asks his Pa: C'n I blow on the man's horn? And me 'n' Dave laughed, but I gave it to 'im and he blew on it, an' man, he made sound come out like I never heard before, just clear an' blue as heav'n. Made me jealous: I wasn't never gonna make a sound 's pure as that. ... Kid couldn't've been, oh, ten years old. "All he wants t' do is play" Dave said. All he was ever gonna do, too; bein' a retard. But that kid, he'd be doin' what he wanted. Not just dreamin'. Most of us, most of us just *got* dreams. And inside?, we got a sadness. Way down deep.

AMANDA

You do?

TRUMPY

- I s'pose. I s'pose most ev'rybody does. ... Always wondered what happen'd t' him. That kid.

AMANDA

(Pause)

... You're - really nice.

TRUMPY

So 're you.

AMANDA

Trumpy?

TRUMPY

Yeah?

AMANDA

I - liked havin' supper last night. Thanks.

TRUMPY

Uh-huh.

AMANDA

And thanks for talkin' t' me.

(SHE touches him. HE nods
and plays; long beat)

Sometimes?, I don't know... sometimes *I* dream too, 'bout things the rest a the girls I know?, and Mama, too, they don't even think about. Sometimes I think I'd be better off if I was a retard; I mean, I'm *always* thinkin'. Dumb stuff; like, like there was this thing they had, in high school, where one day? this lady came in t' talk t' us; career day, they called it; and she talked about all the things people c'd do -- be a doctor or a lawyer, or, or fly planes 'r be an engineer; and then she talked about bein' a nurse 'r a kindergarden teacher or a mother, the things *girls* c'd do; and I kept thinkin', what if *I* wanted t' be a lawyer 'r fly a plane, *c'd* I do it? I mean, sometimes I dream about doin' that kind a stuff, and, and all I'm ever gonna *be* is a secretary for some damn ---

LADYBLUE

What're you doin'?' ---

TRUMPY

Oh. -- Nothin', I was just sittin' 'n' playin' 'n' ---

LADYBLUE

(Without break)
--- 'n' whattayou want.

AMANDA

I was ---

LADYBLUE

Never mind. Git upstairs.

(TRUMPY, with a glance at AMANDA,
exits.)

You leave him alone, you hear.

AMANDA

We, I wasn't ---

LADYBLUE

You leave him alone, y' understand? You 'n' that nose-in-the-air mother a yours both better leave him be.

AMANDA

Or else what.

(LADYBLUE grins, then exits slowly as LIGHTS fade on AMANDA and MUSIC up. NAUREAN is discovered dancing with a "partner." SHE stops, strokes his face and, closing her eyes, leans to kiss him.)

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Mama? ---

NAUREAN

I ---

NAUREAN
... Oh. ... Well.

(TOGETHER)

AMANDA (*Offstage*)
(Without break)
--- *Ma-ma*. You turn that down a little?
(MUSIC volume and LIGHTS change.)

NAUREAN

Time you got up anyhow! It's nearly eight o'clock.

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Mama, it's Sunday!

NAUREAN

Best part of the day's the mornin'! It's when you got the most energy!

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

It's when I can sleep late.

NAUREAN

You'll get plenty of sleep when you're dead.

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Mama!

NAUREAN

Now, *I've* been up for over an hour. I ---

AMANDA

(Entering sleepily in a robe and
continuing to the kitchen)

Oh, *good*.

NAUREAN

(Without break)

--- went t' the bakery; -- there's fresh coffee and I got some 'f those sticky buns you like,
they're in the oven and keepin' nice and ---

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Mm.

NAUREAN

I already poured you some coffee. The buns're in the oven. How was the picture?

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

Okay.

NAUREAN

Good.

AMANDA (*Offstage*)

You - have a good time?

NAUREAN

Oh, yes. ---

AMANDA

(Entering with a roll)

Mmm.

NAUREAN

(Without break)

--- I had a wonderful time.

AMANDA

Oh. I thought maybe, I mean, y' went t' bed awful early.

NAUREAN

Early?

AMANDA

I got home at ten; your door was closed.

NAUREAN

Oh -- we - went out.

AMANDA

You did.

NAUREAN

To the Paradise Café. Oh, it's so lovely.

AMANDA

Yeah; Trumpy says it's pretty expensive.

NAUREAN

We saw them there; him; and that woman, singin'. And it's not so bad.

AMANDA

Oh?

NAUREAN

The whole evening didn't cost more than thirty-five dollars.

AMANDA

How d' --- who paid for it?

NAUREAN

Why he did, of course.

AMANDA

Well, that's ---

NAUREAN

Least, he's going to. Pay me back. -- And we danced; oh, we danced.

(SHE laughs)

I didn't get home till after one.

AMANDA

I see.

NAUREAN

He is a *wonderful* dancer; and so polite: He spent the whole evening making me talk about myself.

AMANDA

Mama, how come you paid?

NAUREAN

Why, I imagine he didn't expect t' be going out. We just - decided; on the spur of the moment.

AMANDA

Uh-huh.

NAUREAN

He's quite a young man: Got all these plans; knows exactly what he wants t' do with his life.

AMANDA

Oh?

NAUREAN

Uh-huh. He wants t' have a school, too. A *real* dance *school*. Thinks he's almost ready t' do it, just needs a little more time t' get organized. He thinks there's a real need for it, so children c'n grow up with manners and, and grace. And, he might even want me t' be his partner in it.

AMANDA

Partn--- Mama?, all those - plans of his?, where's he gonna get the money.

NAUREAN

I --- I suppose he's been savin' it.

AMANDA

Suppose?

NAUREAN

It's not something we - discussed.

