

THE BILLY CHRONICLES

by Art Shulman

TIME: The present

PLACE: Various indoor and outdoor settings in Cedar Glen, a city anywhere

CAST

BILLY	Male, clean-cut, outgoing, 17
JOANNIE	Billy's girlfriend, female, 17
MOM	Billy's Mom, female, 40
DAD	Billy's Dad, male, 42
UTILITY ACTOR 1	Male, 15-40
UTILITY ACTOR 2	Male, 15-40
UTILITY ACTOR 3	Female, 15-40
UTILITY ACTOR 4	Female, 15-40

AGE OF ACTORS: As the play opens Billy Harrington is seventeen. Later, there are flashbacks to when Billy is different ages -- two through fifteen. It's necessary for the same actor to play Billy throughout as well as for actors playing Billy's parents (Mom and Dad), and his girlfriend Joannie. The ages provided are for Billy at seventeen.

NOTE: It's important to understand Billy's function as both a narrator and participant, the use of Utility actors, and the set.

Billy's Lines: Billy speaks both as a narrator and a participant. When he is a participant in the scene, interacting with other actors, his lines are surrounded by quotation marks. Otherwise, he is functioning as a narrator and his lines have no quotation marks.

Utility Actors: Except for the roles of Billy, Mom, Dad, and Joannie, it's intended that Utility actors play all remaining roles. These Utility actors wear all black and may utilize props and other costume pieces or accessories to distinguish between characters.

Set: The play uses many different settings, both indoor and outdoor, that often switch quickly within a given scene. To accommodate fluid staging we suggest an unrealistic set, using a small number of moveable multi-purpose pieces, such as large cubes and benches.

Actors are often in scenes very briefly. To facilitate entrances and exits, it may be helpful to place screens on the stage, to conceal actors not in a scene.

Behind the screens are tables or ledges where props and costume pieces are set.

ACT 1

SCENE 1

BILLY

Up until a week ago my life had been only updings and blessings. Flowers were brilliantly in bloom all over Cedar Glen, and I had a new splendid pair of Air Kobe Air-Cushioned X22-33's. I was leading the school Huckle Buckle team in bangles, and I was just voted by schoolmates as most popular boy in the class, though I'd have preferred most likely to succeed. I was about to spend a warm spring evening with Joannie, with prospects of ending up on Moonlight Bluffs.

(Two YOUNG LOVERS come out and neck.)

I felt vibrant and eager to rumdingle with my adorable Joannie, as I pulled up for our Friday night date.

(JOANNIE enters the car.)

From the start, Joannie acted odd. Normally talkative...

(JOANNIE sighs.)

On the way to the multiplex, when I offered a choice of movies...

JOANNIE

I don't care. You can choose. (Beat) Pull over, Billy. I have something quite important we need to discuss.

(BILLY pulls over.)

I'm pregnant.

BILLY

"Whoopsy-doopsy!"

(Realizing the significance) Whoopsy-doopsy! Pregnant? That meant she was expecting a baby. There was little question I was responsible. Partly responsible, that is. I couldn't be totally responsible, since Joannie was a willing participant, and had given much thought to mattressing. In fact, Joannie told me she'd talked with her mom about it before she did it the first time.

JOANNIE'S MOM

I'm so proud to have a daughter who feels close enough with me to seek my advice. But I recommend against it...

BILLY

Citing the usual reasons...

JOANNIE'S MOM

...venereal disease, loss of self-esteem, placing too much importance on a relationship at such an early age, pregnancy.

BILLY

But then she assured Joannie...

JOANNIE'S MOM

It's your decision. You're a big girl now.

BILLY

Just like I'd have handled it, if it was a child of mine, I thought at first. Treating Joannie like an adult. Then I reflected that maybe she wasn't at all treating Joannie like an adult. If her mom was talking to a real adult, she'd have told Joannie in no uncertain terms...

JOANNIE'S MOM

Don't do it, honey. Wait.

BILLY

But she was being a typical understanding mother of a teenager, trying to outsmart her daughter by assuming Joannie was no more than a defiant adolescent who'd rebel against whatever she was told not to do. (Beat) The next time I was at Joannie's house, I felt squigglish, sensing her mom thinking...

JOANNIE'S MOM.

So this is the boy who wants to deflower my little Joannie!

BILLY

(*To Joannie*) "Have you been taking the pills?"

JOANNIE

Of course! I've taken them every day, except for once or twice when I forgot.

BILLY

"Are you sure you're pregnant?"

JOANNIE

The doctor told me this morning. She was very certain about it.

BILLY

"Do your parents know?"

JOANNIE

No, I haven't said a thing to anyone. (Beat) I could get an abortion.

BILLY

Abortion?!! This could not be happening to Billy Harrington, high school junior, popular boy, college bound! Careful! Well, usually careful! (Beat) The shock of her news was so thunderful, I needed to deal with it right now!

(*Meekly*) "Why don't we think about it?"

JOANNIE

Okay. Let's just go to the movies.... (Beat) Billy, I really like you. A lot.

BILLY

"I like you too. A lot."

Needless to say, that night we didn't visit Moonlight Bluffs. An even greater void was Joannie making no comment about my new splendid Air Kobe Air-Cushioned X22-33's. (Beat) We left each other with nothing resolved. I was discrappled -- that is, ashamed, guilty, angry, inept, and cornered. My personal universe was altered, not slowly, but toppling down on me. It reminded me of my second birthday.

ACT 1
SCENE 2

ANDREW

WAAH-WAAH-WAAH!

BILLY

My second birthday party is going to be today!

ANDREW

WAAH-WAAH-WAAH!

BILLY

But life isn't perfect. (Beat) My new baby brother!

(MOM goes to ANDREW and sings a lullaby.)

Why can't the brat have his own lullabies? The stupid baby can't understand what Mom's singing anyway! He doesn't know any words.

ANDREW

GA-GA! GOO-GOO! GEE-GEE!

BILLY

The new baby! That's all anybody talks about. He isn't even as cute as I was when I was born.

DAD

You are so lucky...

MOM

So lucky.

DAD

...to have a baby brother to play with.

MOM and DAD

A baby brother!

BILLY

But I don't think the brat will ever be able to play anything. He can't even hold a rattle!

(ANDREW throws a rattle.)

I hope the brat won't come to my birthday party. I hope they lock him up in our bedroom. That's another thing. Before, I had my own room. Now I have to share.

(MOM and DAD blow up balloons. BILLY tries to blow up a balloon, but can't do it.)

MOM

You don't have enough air in you, Andrew.

BILLY

"Billy."

MOM

Billy. But in a few years, when you grow up, you will. Just like your father.

BILLY

Some neighbors and friends come over.

(The OTHERS enter, including JOANNIE and JOANNIE'S MOM)

JOANNIE'S MOM

Joannie, go play with Billy.

(BILLY and JOANNIE stick tongues out at each other, and otherwise act antagonistically. Meanwhile, DAD flirts with JOANNIE'S MOM.)

I had so much fun with you last New Year's Eve. After my husband passed out.

(DAD seats BILLY at the head of the table.)

DAD

Billy, you sit in the seat of honor.

BILLY

I know I'll have to tell the truth as long as I am in that seat. That is what honor is about! I wonder why, except for my birthday, Dad always gets to sit in the seat of honor. Why doesn't Dad let Mom sit there once in a while? Does Mom tell the truth less often than Dad? Hmm. Maybe that's a difference between boys and girls that I don't know about yet.

MOM

Time for birthday cake.

(DAD enters with a birthday cake with lit candles. ALL sing "Happy Birthday")

DAD

OK, Billy, before you blow out the candles, make a wish.

BILLY

I know what a wish is.

(BILLY blows out, making a whishing sound. The flame goes out.)

ALL

Hooray!, Way to go! etc.

(But then the flame comes on again. THEY stop cheering.)

JOANNIE

Stupidface Billy!

JOANNIE'S MOM

Joannie!

DAD

Try again, Billy.

BILLY

I wish again.

(BILLY makes a wishing sound. The flames go out.)

ALL

Hooray!, Way to go, etc..

(And then the flame comes on again. The cheering stops..)

JOANNIE

Dumbellhead Billy!

JOANNIE'S MOM

Joannie!

MOM

Oh, Gordon.

DAD

OK Billy, let's take out those candles from the cake and instead, put in these candles.

(DAD replaces the candles and lights them. BILLY blows and the flame goes out.)

ALL

Hooray!, Way to go, etc..

(THEY stop, awaiting the flame going on again. When it doesn't...)

Hooray!, Way to go, etc..

BILLY

"I bwowed it out!"

(JOANNIE is disappointed. BILLY sticks out his tongue at her, then notices his presents.)

"Pwesents"!

(BILLY opens presents. But JOANNIE starts to play with a present.)

JOANNIE'S MOM

No, Joannie. These presents are for Billy.

(JOANNIE'S MOM leads HER away. JOANNIE sticks out HER tongue at HIM.)

DAD

How can I thank you for saving Billy's present, Carol?

JOANNIE'S MOM

I'll think about it. Until next time.

JOANNIE

(To BILLY) I hope something bops you on the head.

(As the OTHER GUESTS leave...)

MOM

Me casa ess su casa!

BILLY

Then, I pick up some of my presents to take them to my closet.

(BILLY takes presents to his room, stands on a stool, and puts them away. He returns for more gifts. DAD approaches him.)

DAD

What a sturdy boy you are, Billy! You are developing muscles. Muscles are crucial, for they allow us to control our movements so we can manipulate the world according to our needs.

BILLY

I really don't always understand what Dad is talking about.

(BILLY picks up presents and trudges to the closet. But stuff crashes down on HIM.)
Something bops me on the head.

ANDREW

WAAH! WAAH! WAAH!

(MOM enters. ANDREW stops crying.)

MOM

There there, little sweetkins Andrew.

(BILLY sobs. MOM notices BILLY's head.)

Billy! What happened to you? Wow! What a bruise you have.

(SHE examines HIM.)

It'll be fine. We'll just wash it up with soap and water. How did this happen, poor Billy?

BILLY

I hope Mom will not tell me that if it wasn't for the baby, I might be dead by now!

MOM

Billy...

BILLY
Here it comes.

MOM
Why didn't you ask me to help you?

BILLY
I explain it to her in detail.

"Because".

MOM
My golly goodness! You must have been really scared. Are you feeling all right?

BILLY
"Uh-huh."

DAD
You're so brave!

MOM
So brave!

BILLY
Everything is like before the new baby.
(BILLY tiptoes over to ANDREW.)
"Andew. Fank you for saving my yife."

(BILLY extends his hand and pats ANDREW ever-so-gently on the head.)

ANDREW
WAAH-WAAH-WAAH!

(BILLY panics, realizing HE will be blamed for ANDREW crying. HE runs away.)
