

CHRISTMAS BAR ANGEL

By Lewis Routh

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Henry Bernstein – a bar patron, early 50's to mid sixties

Gilda Lilly – a bartender, 20's to 30's, androgynous

Raguel "Ray" — an angel, 18 to 25, youthful, muscular, well built, great smile

Calvin Logan — a good soul, the same actor as Ray

Scene: In a bar at Christmas

The bar, decorated for Christmas in old, tarnished tinsel, is also indicated by a neon beer sign, has two stools flanking a small "U" shaped bar, behind which stands Gilda, wearing a Santa hat, wiping the top of the bar with a towel. Henry, an older man who dyes his hair to hide the gray, enters the door at up right.

GILDA

(Singing as she puts on more make-up.)

"Don we now our gay apparel. Fa la la la la la.."

(She sees Henry,)

Lordy mercy! Merry Christmas, Henry Bernstein!

HENRY

(Disenchanted, sits on a stool.)

Yeah, sure.

GILDA

Rum and cranberry?

(Henry nods, Gilda fixes his drink.)

So, what did you bring me?

HENRY

(Looks at Gilda questioningly.)

What?

GILDA

What did you bring me? For Christmas. What did you bring me?

(Sets Henry's drink on a napkin in front of him.)

I brought you a rum and cranberry; what did you bring me?

(Henry takes a packaged toothbrush from his shirt pocket and hands it to her.)

A toothbrush? Gee, I don't know what to say. Didn't have time to wrap it?

HENRY

It was a stocking-stuffer for Gerald.

GILDA

Yeah, where is that little tramp anyways?

HENRY

He's gone.

GILDA

Oh, migod, Henry! Did he O.D.? I always knew he'd O.D. if he didn't watch mixing...

HENRY

(Irritated.)

He didn't die. He left me. Moved to Biloxi — right after he emptied my bank account.

GILDA

Henry, don't scare me like that! The way you were acting I thought somebody had died.

HENRY

Just my Christmas spirit.

GILDA

Listen, Honey, look on the bright side — there's plenty of untrustworthy, crack head, hustlers out there!

HENRY

Apparently that's the only type I ever attract.

GILDA

You want some whine to go with that Pity Party? Come on, Honey, it's Christmas! Get in the spirit — go buy me something!

HENRY

With what? I told you, Gerald cleared out the bank account.

GILDA

Checking and savings?

HENRY

No, just the checking account.

GILDA

Henry Bernstein — all is not lost — an old Jew like you ought to have a ton of cash tucked away in that savings account!

HENRY

I'll survive.

GILDA

Sure you will! Forget Gerald. He's old news. Focus on someone else. Oh, I'm the only one here. That's okay, shower me with love and admiration.

HENRY

Can I buy you a drink?

GILDA

Just one?

HENRY

To start.

GILDA

That's the Christmas spirit! I'm gonna have me some egg nog! You wanna egg nog, too, Henry?

HENRY

Sure.

GILDA

It's in the cooler. I haven't brought it out yet. I'll be right back.

(Exits singing.)

"We swish you a Merry Christmas, we swish you a merry Christmas."

HENRY

(Talking to himself, with his eyes closed, what sounds like a prayer.)

How am I supposed to go on? What am I going to do? Please, tell me what to do.

(An eerie glow comes on opposite Henry and Raguel appears on the bar stool.

Raguel is stunningly beautiful, his speech patterns are strange, clipped, articulate. Henry's eyes are still closed.)

RAY

Open your eyes, Henry.

HENRY

(Startled.)

What? Oh, I didn't hear you come in.

RAY

That's the first step, you know.

HENRY

What is?

RAY

Opening your eyes. You can't find happiness with your eyes closed, only memories of Gerald.

HENRY

Do you know Gerald? Are you a friend of his? Is he coming back? I'll take him back.

RAY

Yes, I know him. No, I am not a friend of Gerald. No, I can see your future, Henry — Gerald is not coming back and because you would take Gerald back, Henry, is the reason I am here.

HENRY

Who are you?

RAY

My name is Raguel.

(Pronounced like "Miguel.")

And I am your personal angel.

GILDA

(Enters singing, with the egg nog.)

"Giddy-up, giddy-up, giddy-up let's go, Let's look at the snow..."

(Sees Ray.)

Oh! Hello! Merry Christmas, you little stud-muffin. Henry, you shouldn't have! It's just what I've always wanted.

RAY

I am not for you, Gilda. I am for Henry.

HENRY

Gilda, this is Raguel, my angel.

RAY

Your personal angel.

GILDA

(To Henry.)

You work fast, Henry. That's one way to forget about Gerald.

RAY

Oh, he has not forgotten Gerald, Gilda. Henry will never forget Gerald.

HENRY

Is that supposed to make me feel better?

RAY

Humans can never forget the one's they have truly loved. It is impossible.

GILDA

Dasher, and Dancer, and Slasher and Vixen, and Comment on Cupid and Donner and Blitzen. I've loved them all!

(Ala Marlene Deitrich.)

But my favorite was Rudolph!

HENRY

I was so looking forward to my first Christmas — with Gerald.

RAY

That is why you purchased a Christmas tree — Gerald wanted one. A real one.

HENRY

Gerald was like a little kid. A real Christmas tree! He loved the way it smelled.

RAY

Gerald said, "It smells like Christmas!"

HENRY

(Shaking off the memory.)

Will you PLEASE stop bringing up Gerald?

RAY

I did not mention Gerald, Henry. You mentioned Gerald.

HENRY

Gilda, how am I going to get rid of him?

GILDA

Gerald? I thought Gerald had already gone.

HENRY

(Frustrated.)

Not Gerald, damn it! Would everyone just please stop talking about Gerald! I want to get rid of —

(Pointing at Ray. Sarcastic.)

Him! This “precious little angel!”

RAY

I am only here to help, Henry.

GILDA

Henry, he’s only here to help, there’s no reason to be snippy.

HENRY

Yeah, and you’re Miss Congeniality.

GILDA

(Sweetly.)

How would you like to see your testicles up close?

RAY

He can’t help it, Gilda. Henry’s emotions are worn like a fashion statement. Today he is wearing “Disappointment.”

GILDA

He’s gonna be wearing hairy earrings, if he keeps snapping at me. You want to spar with me, Henry? Fine; I can defend myself, but don’t take it out on other people.

HENRY

People are idiots. I know, I know — and I’m a lonely homosexual.

RAY

(Fascinated by the people outside, as if he has not had an opportunity to see this many people at once.)

Gilda, Henry may have a point. Look at humanity parading by out there. Fascinating. The intelligence level of the human race has always been a disappointment. They’re capable of so much more.

HENRY

See, Gilda? Even Raguel thinks they’re idiots.

RAY

Henry, that is not what I said at all. I never used the word “idiot.” Ever. Especially in describing humans. I said their intelligence level is a disappointment.

GILDA

A disappointment? Ah ha! You see, Henry, that proves it! Raguel can’t be a real angel! A real angel would never say, “God’s greatest creation — man — is a disappointment.”

RAY

What ever He may have had in mind when He first created man, it seems certain — to even the most unpracticed eye — that it cannot evolve in the way the creator had envisioned, unless man fully participates in the process.

GILDA

Did you understand that, Henry? That went over my head so fast, it knocked off my tiara.

RAY

Let me get it for you.

(Ray looks over the bar for it.)

GILDA

That's a joke, Ray. Don't they have humor where you're from?

HENRY

Well, that's perfect! That's pitiful —there's no doubt about that — it's a truth. It's a fact. This is pitiful. Him — an angel.

RAY

(Correcting him.)

Your personal angel.

GILDA

(Confidential to Henry.)

Henry, he may not be an angel; but he has the body of a God. I say keep him.

RAY

Oh, I cannot stay with Henry, Gilda, as soon as Henry discovers his blessings, I will be gone.

GILDA

That's your life in a nut-shell, Henry. The minute you find one with a good body, they leave you high and dry! But in your case, Gerald was just high.

HENRY

Would everyone please stop bringing up Gerald?

RAY

It's a fundamentally human characteristic, Gilda, — especially among androgynous men and female illusionists — to be able to see the absolute truth — and then express it with cynicism.

GILDA

Is that a crack? If I knew what that meant, I'd probably have to smack you.

HENRY

Okay, Ray — since you're an angel and you know everything — tell me: What is the truth — the absolute truth?

RAY

The real truth, Mr. Henry Bernstein, is that this discussion isn't about me at all — it's about you.

GILDA

No, let's make it about me! I've always wanted to see my name up in lights!

(Pantomimes the shining marquee.)

Tonight! Onstage live! Gilda Lilly!

RAY

Ah, but that's the whole problem. I am not your angel, Gilda. I am Henry's angel.

HENRY

You can have him, Gilda, I don't want an angel.

RAY

What a man wants and what a man needs are two entirely different things.

GILDA

Ewww! I hate a man with two entirely different things!

RAY

Everyone needs someone — but only a few are willing to make the sacrifices to achieve what they desire.

HENRY

I've sacrificed enough —

(Brandishing a toothbrush from his shirt pocket.)

I even bought Gerald a new toothbrush — and I still don't need an angel.

RAY

Then you shouldn't have prayed.

HENRY

(Frustrated.)

I wasn't praying. I told you that. I was not praying.

RAY

It sounded like a prayer.

HENRY

To who?

GILDA

To God; right?

RAY

To the creator.

GILDA

It sounded like a prayer to the creator.

RAY

— and He is rarely ever wrong. That is why He sent me to you.

HENRY

What is this? *It's A Wonderful Life?* I didn't ask for God's help.

RAY

If not to God, then to whom were you addressing your prayer, Henry?

GILDA

"To whom were you addressing your prayer?" Maybe he is an angel — nobody on earth would ever say, "to whom were you addressing your prayer."

HENRY

I wasn't "addressing" anybody. I wasn't praying. I was — just — talking to myself.

RAY

(Disappointed.)

It truly distresses me when humans lie.

HENRY

I'm not lying.

GILDA

Everybody lies, but it doesn't matter because no one ever listens.

RAY

I find it so distressing when humans lie. Especially you, Henry; since I'm your personal angel.

HENRY

I'm not lying. I wasn't praying. I was — talking to myself.

RAY

(Clucking his tongue at Henry. Tch-tch-tch.)

Whenever a human being lies, another little evil is let loose in the world.

GILDA

Every time.

RAY

Every lie, large and small, spoken aloud releases another little evil into the world.

GILDA

That explains why the world is so full of vicious queens — somebody keeps telling them they're pretty!

HENRY

The world is full of liars — everyone of them — liars and thieves!

RAY

Not everyone in the world is a liar and a thief, Henry.

GILDA

Just the one's you're attracted to.

RAY

Every little lie, no matter how small, can weaken the integrity of humanity — integrity is the foundation of man's life — and if the foundation is weak enough, failure is inevitable.

GILDA

So, if I told my landlord that I'd — like — pay him tomorrow — when I know there is — like — no way in hell I will earn those kind of tips in one day — what kind of damage are we talking about?

RAY

Significantly no damage at all; because you will pay your landlord tomorrow.

GILDA

(Gilda looks questioningly at Ray. Then speaks to Henry.)

Henry, when you tip me today, you're going to leave \$850.00 on the bar.

I like you.

RAY

Your friend, Calvin, is going to bring you the money he borrowed last year.

GILDA

That's who you remind me of — Calvin Logan!

RAY

If I had come to earth looking like myself, it would have frightened everyone. So, I chose a form that I thought Henry would enjoy speaking with — Calvin — and he will repay his debt to you.

GILDA

Honey, if you can get Calvin Logan to pay me you're a miracle worker! That bitch said he'd pay me in a week; it's been — over a year. Where did you hear that he's going to pay me?

RAY

I didn't hear it — I see it.

HENRY

My angel can see the future, Gilda. At least that's what he told me; perhaps he's lying, too. He also told me I'd be happy again. Ha!

(Gilda shares this "Ha!" with Henry)

RAY

I am an angel, Henry, I am incapable of lying.

GILDA

So, every time some queen tells me, "I hope you win," another little evil is let loose on the world?

RAY

Not every time. Some of them actually mean it.

GILDA

You don't know my friends.

RAY

No, Gilda. You do not know your friends.

HENRY

Well, I was not lying! And I wasn't praying either!

RAY

Gilda, I'll let you be the judge.

(Ray snaps his fingers; the lights go to blue and Henry relives the moment of his original prayer.)

HENRY

How am I supposed to go on? What am I going to do? Please, tell me what to do.

(Lights resume and Henry is back to normal; except now, he's angry.)

That's not fair!

GILDA

Definitely a prayer — a desperate prayer.

HENRY

Put a sock in it, Gilda.

GILDA

I don't own socks — I own pantyhose!

RAY

And I was the answer to that prayer.

HENRY

You haven't helped me a bit! I asked specific questions.

GILDA

(Quoting the questions — impersonating a crying Henry.)

What do I do? How do I go on? And — what was the other one?

RAY

Tell me what to do.

GILDA

Yeah — so, tell him what to do.

HENRY

(Frustrated.)

Tell me what to do.

RAY

I cannot. I have already helped him.

HENRY

You haven't done a damn thing!

RAY

You've stopped thinking about Gerald.

GILDA

(Henry tenses at the mention of Gerald's name. Warning Ray, in a whisper — Pig Latin.)

Ix-nay on the Eraled-Jay.

HENRY

Why are you constantly bringing up Gerald?

RAY

I'm helping you to go on. To go on — without Gerald.

HENRY

By constantly bringing him up in the conversation? Thank you! That helped so much!

GILDA

We're all just trying to help, Henry. Let me buy you a drink.

(She fixes Henry a drink.)

HENRY

Gerald's gone. I'm alone. End of story.

RAY

You're not alone.

HENRY

Sorry. Gerald's gone for good and I get stuck with a lousy personal angel, a drag queen and a new toothbrush.

GILDA

(Setting drink in front of Henry.)

I am not a drag queen! I'm just a compassionate bartender who's feminine enough to pull off wearing make-up during the day. It gives me that "what the fuck is that?" mystique!

RAY

And there's so much more to your story, Henry. Perhaps love isn't gone for good.

GILDA

Gerald didn't die — he just left. He's a coke-addict.

(To Henry.)

Which you knew when you picked him up. Gerald cleared out Henry's bank account and moved to Biloxi with a nose full of adventure.

HENRY

(Explaining to Ray.)

Never confide in a nelly bartender. Your secrets will be announced to the masses as if from a stage.

(To Gilda.)

Thank you, Miss Gilda Lilly. Thank you for telling him what a failure I am at love. You're a true friend.

RAY

You're not a failure, Henry.

GILDA

You're a "chicken hawk!"

RAY

A 'failure' is not someone who fails — a 'failure' is someone who — after he fails — stays down.

HENRY

Don't you have a house to haunt?

RAY

(He finds this extremely funny.)

I'm not a ghost, Henry, I'm an angel. When human beings die, they don't become ghosts.

GILDA

They become angels!

RAY

(Laughing heartily at this concept.)

No, they do not! You people amaze me with your outrageous explanations of reality.

GILDA

So, there are no such things as ghosts, Ray?

RAY

I'm sorry, Gilda, I can't answer your questions. I'm Henry's angel.

GILDA

Henry, you ask him. You ask the "winged-wonder," are there really ghosts?

HENRY

Ray, is there such a thing as a ghost?

RAY

Yes, but not in the sense you humans imagine. The creator allowed man to have the capacity to think — to reason — and man fears everything that he cannot fully understand. Ergo ghosts.

GILDA

Ergo ghosts? I'm sorry, Your High-and-Mightiness, I don't "fully understand" what the fuck "Ergo ghosts" means!

RAY

Gilda, I've told you, I am not your...

GILDA

Don't give me that "I'm not your angel" business or I'm gonna make a feather boa out of your wings. You can't answer a direct question like, "are there ghosts," with some kind of cryptic mumbo-jumbo-ergo-crap! Answer the damn question.

RAY

(Thinks a moment.)

It's hard to explain and not — tell you more than you're supposed to know — before you're supposed to know it. Science will explain it much better — in the future.

GILDA

Well, try! This make-up won't last until the future.

RAY

There are no ghosts; but there are — "spirits." Your scientists have discovered that energy can be created but not destroyed; right?

GILDA & HENRY

If you say so. Sure..

RAY

Well, a living breathing human being is creating energy just by being alive. That energy is there — for all time — energy can be created but not destroyed — it's his — "spirit," if you will. But in all honesty that is not what it truly is either. It's not a "spirit." It's pure energy, energy created by the act of living.

HENRY

So, you're telling me that even after I die — I'll still be around for people to take advantage of me.

GILDA

Yeah, I'm planning on burying you with your ass sticking up out of the ground, so I'll have a place to park my bike.

RAY

When the body ceases to exist, that energy is still out there — a part of the cosmos. Man, in his effort to use the brain the creator endowed him with, calls it “ghosts,” or “reincarnation” — channeling a past-life — and that is so wrong.

GILDA

Reincarnation isn't real either?

RAY

(He finds this extremely funny, too.)

Absolutely not. That shows you the outrageousness humans are capable of. Oh, let me tell you, the archangels still get a big laugh out of that one.

GILDA

Well, what the hell is reincarnation then? I had an aunt who was hypnotized and she remembered being a handmaiden to Cleopatra, she even knew Cleopatra's cat's name and they looked it up in a history book! How do you explain that?

RAY

In your Aunt Sophie's particular case, that was merely Jehosiphath, being capricious. She has always been a little puckish — but she is only ten. The young ones do it the most. She is the worst, jumping in and out of people's dreams. That is where humans get the phrase, “Jumpin' Jehosiphath!”

GILDA

Are you making this shit up as you go along?

RAY

No. When a human being is — hypnotized, his sub-consciousness is in — well, I cannot really describe it — this has not been discovered yet and I am not allowed to disclose what humans do not already know — but let's just say his sub-consciousness is “open.” Like leaving the gate open to a corral — only this time nothing leaves the corral, something else comes in.

HENRY

Oh, please!

GILDA

Hush, Henry, this is fascinating! My “corral” is so wide open.

RAY

In your aunt's case, Jehosiphath came into her...

GILDA

“Corral”

RAY

...while her sub-consciousness was left open. Human beings think they have lived another life because suddenly they remember another full life — a life from another time. But it is not a past life he or she remembers; it is just one of those

foolish energies playing a little prank on man. They do it all the time. Like when you experience déjà vu. Just a little harmless, impish prank.

GILDA

Get along little doggie!

HENRY

So, now that you're here, am I stuck with — some guardian angel — for all eternity — or just until the New Year?

RAY

Not a "guardian angel," Henry, a personal angel.

HENRY

What's the difference?

RAY

A guardian angel — protects the individual — sometimes from himself. And a personal angel is just there to listen and — sometimes — advise. All humans desire someone who will listen. Most find it in another human —

GILDA

Or a bartender! You wouldn't believe the shit I hear!

RAY

When Gerald left, you weren't ready to make yourself vulnerable to another human, so I was sent to listen — your personal angel.

HENRY

Whatever! Thanks for listening. You can leave now. Merry Christmas. Gilda, can I have another rum and cranberry?

GILDA

(Performing his bartender tasks with experience, he prepares Henry's drink.)

Certainly and remember, Henry, I'm always here to listen if you need me.

HENRY

No, Gilda, why would I need you to listen to me? I believe — I have my very own personal angel for that.

RAY

Remember, Henry, what you believe will depend very much on what you are.

GILDA

(Setting a drink in front of Henry.)

It's getting deep again.

HENRY

(To Ray.)

Aren't you ever going to leave?

RAY

That is entirely up to you. Are you ever going to be happy?

HENRY

When you leave I shall be ecstatic!

RAY

Yes, but will you be happy? I am afraid you will just keep committing the same mistakes.

GILDA

Oh, that is so true! Henry always picks the young, cute ones — and they tend to abuse his trust. “Truss?” No, I was right, trust — with a “T” But, they’re hell on that old truss, too, ain’t they, Henry?

HENRY

Thank you, Gilda for making this whole thing my fault. I was mistakenly under the impression that I was the victim.

GILDA

So, you’re a “chicken hawk,” there’s nothing wrong with that! If you pick someone young — you can’t complain when you’re screwed but good!

RAY

“Chicken hawk...?” Ah, yes! Youth. There is the attraction! Youth! But dear, Gilda, youth does not necessarily mean of bad character. Wisdom and goodness do not automatically come with age. Nothing does - except wrinkles.

HENRY

I thought you were here to make me feel better.

GILDA

Only wine improves with age, Henry.

RAY

It’s true, some wines improve with age; but only if the grapes were good in the first place.

GILDA

Everything gets better with age, except a banana.

HENRY

All I need is to learn how to be a good judge of character.

GILDA

You can pick ‘em, Henry!

(Confidentially to Ray.)

Henry never was a good judge of character.

RAY

Good judgment — right or wrong — comes from experience, and great judgment — right or wrong — comes from bad experience.

GILDA

Are you starting that same crap again? I only understand about half of what you say.

RAY

I’m not here for your understanding; I’m here for Henry’s.

GILDA

So what do you understand, Henry?

HENRY

I understand that I've never learned! I always pick the ones who know how to hurt me the most!

GILDA

You're a fool for love, Henry! There's nothing wrong with that, is there, Angel?

HENRY

I've been a fool all my life.

RAY

The surprising thing about young fools — is how many survive to become old fools.

GILDA

Oh, Miss Thing, that was a dish! That's one for God's team!

RAY

What is so appealing to you, Henry? What is it about these young men that you find so captivating?

GILDA

(Holding her forefingers about six inches apart.)

Their big blue eyes.

HENRY

(To Ray.)

I don't know.

RAY

Shall I help you discover it?

HENRY

Can you?

RAY

Certainly, but only if you want me to.

GILDA

Will it play like bad porno on the TV?

RAY

No.

GILDA

Then I say, "What fun will that be?"

HENRY

Is it going to hurt more than I'm hurting already?

RAY

Self-discovery is never painful when you are willing to see the truth.

GILDA

That sounded deep; but I don't get it.

HENRY

(To Ray.)

Show me.

RAY

Close your eyes and picture Gerald.

HENRY

I thought you said this wouldn't hurt.

RAY

Don't picture him gone. Picture him the first time you saw him. Where was he?

GILDA

Right on that bar stool over there. No shirt and his bronze young body just exuded sex. He was surrounded by a whole gaggle of lecherous old fools.

RAY

But Henry was not one of those old fools.

GILDA

No, Henry was clear over here; but I could tell he liked what he saw — by the way he was drooling.

RAY

Close your eyes, Henry. Imagine Gerald, that first day. Was it his sexuality that first attracted you?

HENRY

(With eyes closed. The spark of recognition crosses his face, and a smile lights his features, he looks younger somehow as he remembers.)

No, not his sexuality.

GILDA

Yeah, right, Daddy, and I'm a virgin.

RAY

(Warning.)

Gilda...

(Soothing as a hypnotist speaks soothingly to his patient.)

What do you see, Henry? Take us back to that day. Tell us about Gerald. Why were you so interested in him?

HENRY

He interested me because he was so quiet — except when he laughed; which was often — but he didn't say much — and even surrounded by all those admirers, he was — solitary — and yet, so happy. I remember he laughed easily — he was a well of good humor and contentment, which overflowed at his eyes. He was like... like cool water and I was thirsty.

GILDA

He was young and you were horny!

RAY

(A second warning.)

Gilda...

HENRY

Okay, I admit it — it was his youth that I found so appealing! What's wrong with that?

RAY

Youth is a confident life that has not experienced its share of tragedy. It was not the lack of years which you admired; it was his innocence. To capture that innocence, you think perhaps it might brighten your life and it does...

HENRY

But only for a moment!

RAY

Ah, but what a moment!

GILDA

Thrilling! Right up until he cleared out the bank account and went back to drugs!

RAY

(Another warning. Stern.)

Gilda, I mean it...

HENRY

I don't know why I keep trying. I'm better off alone.

RAY

So is Gerald. He's alone, too.

GILDA

Look on the bright side, Henry; you've got a new toothbrush.

RAY

(A stern look from Ray forces Gilda to clap a hand over her mouth.)

And Gerald has lost his integrity. Gerald's wounds will never heal — until he asks for forgiveness.

HENRY

From God.

RAY

From those who he has wronged.

HENRY

(Hiding his own pain; but not very well.)

I just wish — I wish he hadn't left me — I hate being alone.

RAY

So does Gerald. But it's harder for him to face those he loves, than it is for him to be alone with his guilt. A human being can acquire everything he needs in solitude - except character. Don't cease your pursuits, Henry, just so you won't experience the pain of loss.

GILDA

Again.

(Another stern look from Ray.)

Sorry, it slipped out.

RAY

Perhaps the next love you find will be the one that stays forever — and that is the most joyful, character-building event of a lifetime! It is part of the plan — His master plan for all of humanity.

HENRY

Can you see that? Is that in my future?

RAY

It is everyone's destiny — but not everyone's future. You must stop crying over this loss, if you wish to see the road ahead clearly — but only those who try, succeed.

GILDA

If at first you don't succeed; cry, cry again.

RAY

Gilda, please — we're making progress here. Henry is beginning to understand.

HENRY

I think the hardest part of all — is — going home to that empty bed.

RAY

You have no choice, Henry. Change is inevitable.

GILDA

Except from a vending machine.

(Ray snaps his head to sternly look at Gilda.)

Look, I'm sorry; but that's just the way I am — witty and beautiful. "Change may be inevitable," but not my personality — just my hair color.

RAY

Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse.

HENRY

That's me... I always worry that it'll be worse.

RAY

To the hopeful, change is encouraging because things may get better.

GILDA

That's Gerald, in some Biloxi gay bar with Henry's bankroll.

RAY

But, Henry, to the confident — to the confident change can be inspiring — because the challenge exists to make things better.

HENRY

Better? How can it get any better?

GILDA

This is the third time some young hunk has ripped Henry off.

RAY

Just because one person has “done you wrong” does not mean everyone will — only a cynic believes that.

HENRY

It’s difficult to be confident — to not be cynical — when history keeps repeating itself.

RAY

A cynic is not only a human being who reads bitter lessons from the past, but he is also a human being who is — prematurely — disappointed in the future.

GILDA

You should needlepoint that and hang it on the wall, Henry!

RAY

(To Gilda calmly; but sincerely.)

This is your final warning, Gilda.

(Gilda “mouths” a silent, “Sorry” and looks angelically sheepish. Ray speaks, soothingly to Henry.)

Henry, you are always looking outside yourself for strength and confidence, but strength and confidence come from within. It is there all the time, Henry. It’s inside all human beings; waiting there to be tapped.

GILDA

That’s why you’ve got a beer belly!

RAY

(A commandment.)

Sleep!

(Gilda quickly drops stiffly to the floor behind the bar.)

HENRY

(Looking over the bar at Gilda.)

You’ve got to teach me how to do that.

RAY

(Being scolded by an unheard voice from above.)

I know. I warned her. Well, she was getting on my nerves.

(To Henry.)

Human beings always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself. And to do that, it just takes faith.

HENRY

Faith in God?

RAY

Don’t be silly, Henry. The creator does not care if you believe in Him. He created man so that He himself would not be alone — and in His wisdom — He realized man must have a companion other than God.

HENRY

A woman. Eve.

RAY

For some. For others a companion more like themselves.

HENRY

Do you mean — gay people?

RAY

Sexuality and the desire to share life's wonders with another are two entirely different things.

HENRY

Same sex couples don't bother God?

RAY

(Laughing at the notion.)

On the contrary! When the creator was lonely, He made Himself a man; not a woman.

HENRY

(Musing.)

Well, it's nice to know — after all this time — that God approves of us.

RAY

He loves all living things. Plants, animals, humans — but His favorite is the human. Do you know what the creator really wants from humanity? To develop an interest in life — to see it with a childlike wonderment — to be interested in everything — in people — all people. He made you all different because it is your diversity that is the most appealing. He's given you so many examples — snowflakes, fingerprints, your retina — they're all unique — He hoped that you would see their individuality — the singular, crystalline, swirling beauty of each one. He wants you to use your senses to discover everything! Literature, music, art, food, nature - the world is so rich — simply throbbing with rich treasures, beautiful souls and interesting people of all colors, shapes, sizes and unique talents. Forget yourselves — celebrate each another.

HENRY

Can I do that — alone?

RAY

You start out alone — but that is not necessarily where you will end — unless you yourself end it. It is also helpful to realize that this very body that He has given you — the one that is sitting right here right now... with its aches and its pleasures... is exactly what you need to be fully human, fully awake, fully alive.

HENRY

Do you think I can do that?

RAY

The question is do YOU think you can? The creator made it possible; but he gave you the opportunity to choose — He thought it would make life more interesting that way.

(As if he heard something from above — an unheard voice chastising him.)

Okay. Sorry, I got carried away.

(He hears a question from above. He addresses the idea to Henry.)
He thinks it is time for me to go to my next human being. What do you think?

HENRY

I think I'll make it.

(He looks over the bar at Gilda.)

Will she be okay?

RAY

She won't remember a thing.

(The nagging voice of God chastises him)

Okay. Okay. "He" won't remember a thing. You people and your misuse of pronouns. You've got me doing it. You won't remember anything either, Henry. Well, you will remember those human beings who have touched your life. But you will not remember Raguel.

HENRY

Why not?

RAY

Because I wasn't here to change your life — that is reserved for mortals — I was just here to give you an opportunity to hear what you really already know. Do you know what that is?

HENRY

(He thinks a moment before answering.)

Something will always happen if you really believe in it.

RAY

(Smiling. Proud.)

Exactly. Think of all the beauty still left around you and be happy. Enjoy life — and allow love to discover you on its own.

HENRY

I will. Can I — can I have a hug?

RAY

If you hurry. I have to go — He gets impatient.

(An unheard voice scolds him.)

Well, you do.

(Henry hugs Ray.)

HENRY

I wish I could find someone like you.

RAY

Maybe you will; but first you need to find forgiveness.

HENRY

For Gerald?

RAY

Why do you keep bringing his name up in the conversation?

(The lights change and magically, Ray is gone. Gilda rises from the dead behind the bar.)

GILDA

Remind me to stop wearing flats.

HENRY

What?

GILDA

I fell, you insensitive prick.

HENRY

(With genuine concern.)

Oh, my God, Sweetie. Are you okay? I didn't even see it happen.

GILDA

Yeah, I'm fine. My dignity's a little "fa-klumped;" but I'm fine. How's my hair and makeup?

HENRY

Flawless. You've never looked better! Let me have a drink, Miss Lilly! And let me buy you one, too! Let's drink to this beautiful new Christmas day!

GILDA

(Fixing a drink for them both.)

You're in a good mood!

HENRY

(Surprised.)

Yeah, I am. And — it sure feels — not different, exactly. It just feels — good.

GILDA

(Handing Henry his drink and toasting with her own.)

Well, Merry Christmas! To this beautiful new...! Oh, my God in heaven! It's a miracle!

(Before they drink, Calvin, a young man who looks surprisingly like Ray enters. Though he is in jeans, it is still Ray — without a shirt, which shows his chiseled physique.)

Well, will wonders never cease? Calvin Logan! Where's my eight hundred dollars, you little shit?

CALVIN

(Taking the money out of his jeans pocket.)

Right here, Gilda. Merry Christmas.

(Handing Gilda the cash.)

I'm sorry for taking so long to pay it back. Really. It's — bothered me.

HENRY

(To Calvin.)

Have we met?

GILDA

Henry, that line is as old as you are. Calvin, this is Henry, a recent divorcee; Henry, this is Calvin, the young man whose name I've been cursing for the past year —

(As Calvin begins again to apologize, Gilda silences him with a flat-palm.)
— But it seems I was wrong about this young man, Henry. It seems Calvin-here has a conscience and is honest — not very punctual, but honest, just the same.

HENRY

I know you from somewhere.

CALVIN

(To Henry)

I met you once, with — uh — Gerald. He used to be a friend of mine.

HENRY

He used to be a — friend of mine, too.

GILDA

Till he ripped him off.

HENRY

We're not together anymore.

CALVIN

Gerald ripped me off, too. That's why I wasn't able to pay you back. I guess he must-a needed it pretty bad — I mean to hurt — his friends.

HENRY

He's a — drug user. I feel — sorry for him.

CALVIN

I know. I pray he gets some help.

HENRY

Me, too.

(Henry sees an inner beauty in Calvin that sparks a smile deep inside. Henry and Calvin smile at each other and we know that this play will end well.)

Gilda, let me buy this young man a drink! It's so rare you find one with integrity!

GILDA

And youth, too. What'll you have, you little angel?

CALVIN

I'm no angel — just a — good friend. Can I have a shot of Hot Damn?

GILDA

A shot of Hot Damn for the good friend.

HENRY

Good friends are rare.

GILDA

(As she prepares the drink)

So are virgins; but I wouldn't turn one down!

CALVIN

I don't know. I think I'm pretty lucky to have as many friends as I do.

HENRY

Maybe, they're the lucky ones.

GILDA

(Set's the drink in front of Calvin. Lifts her glass to toast. To Henry.)

Good things come to those who wait.

CALVIN

Here's to being patient.

HENRY

(Toasting.)

Here's to this beautiful new day!

GILDA

(To Calvin, with a wink to Henry.)

I don't suppose you're in need of a new toothbrush?

(Lights fade to blackout.)