

# **THE BITCH OF BAILEY'S BEACH**

A Comedy in Two Acts

by

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## The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

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(THE BITCH OF BAILEY'S BEACH)

**THE BITCH OF BAILEY'S BEACH**

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David W. Christner

CAST OF CHARACTERS (4 women, 3 men)

"FAST" EDDIE SULLIVAN.....52, a Renaissance man, retired

CLAIRE VANDERBILK.....60, an heiress

GLORIA EASTON.....60, an heiress & matron of the arts

ELLIOTT VANDERBILK.....40, Claire's son

VICTORIA JEFFERSON .....40, African-American, Eddie's girl

SALLY JEFFERSON.....17, Victoria's daughter

BAC HOI TRAN.....54, Eddie's Vietnamese "brother"

The Setting

Area or modular set using various locations in and around Newport, RI, including Bailey's Beach, the patio of a mansion, a shack on the beach, a simple living room, an office, a table in a dining room, and a barroom.

The Time

The present.

**THE BITCH OF BAILEY'S BEACH**

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ACT I, SCENE I

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on CLAIRE VANDERBILK, 60, an heiress, lounging under the shade of an umbrella on Bailey's Beach in Newport, RI. A white silk robe pretty much covers her head to foot. Designer sunglasses protect her eyes from the glare of the afternoon sun as she nurses a gin and tonic and thumbs through the latest issue of *Vanity Fair*. CLAIRE is slim, very attractive, articulate, and refined. Her character and her physical appearance have been cultivated and nurtured by wealth beyond most peoples' comprehension. Everything associated with Bailey's Beach is white-- walls, furniture, umbrella, and most of all the people. Next to CLAIRE is her friend GLORIA EASTON, 60, also an heiress and a matron of the arts. She too is wearing a white silk robe and sipping a gin and tonic.

GLORIA

So tell me Claire, will you be attending the fund raiser at the gallery this evening?

CLAIRE

I think not.

GLORIA

God, how do you manage to get out of these things?

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

It's very simple really. I give them the choice of having the pleasure of my company . . . or that of my money.

GLORIA

You clever girl.

CLAIRE

They invariably take the money.

GLORIA

And run . . . no doubt.

CLAIRE

To the bank one would hope; but I'm afraid that's not always the case. You heard about Stanley Morgan . . .

GLORIA

No, I didn't. What is Stanley up to?

CLAIRE

His old tricks. He took the money for the Food Bank and ran straight to the casino at Foxwoods . . . with a hundred thousand, no less.

GLORIA

Oh my god! And lost every cent of it, I suppose?

CLAIRE

Oh no, the gods were smiling on Stanley Morgan. He won a bundle. Brought back \$125,000 for the Food Bank and kept \$75,000--to contribute to the charity of his choice, so I'm told. The Board was so happy to get the extra 25K they didn't even file a complaint.

GLORIA

How did you find out?

CLAIRE

Elliott.

GLORIA

Stanley *told* him?

CLAIRE

Stan and Elliott are like brothers. They tell each other *everything*--just like a couple of old--

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Careful now.

GLORIA

War veterans.

CLAIRE

Which of course they aren't

GLORIA

Unless you include minor financial skirmishes on Wall Street.

CLAIRE

I don't think they count--all you can lose is your shirt.

GLORIA

Or your ass! In any case . . . the Board has enacted measures to prevent a recurrence of Stanley's misadventure into the wilds of Connecticut.

CLAIRE

Why for god's sake? They got a 25% return on their money. He should get a medal for that kind of return in this market.

GLORIA

I think there was some concern over Stanley running out of money or luck or both. I don't know. Somehow, it just didn't seem right--to come by the money from *gambling*.

CLAIRE

Just speculation by another name. (A beat.) How did he win it?

GLORIA

Stanley?

CLAIRE

Yes, that's who we're talking about.

GLORIA

Gambling. I just told you!

CLAIRE

Blackjack? Poker? The horses? The slots--*how* did he win the money?

GLORIA

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

I haven't the vaguest idea. (A beat.) Does it matter?

GLORIA

I suppose not. I was just curious.

(CLAIRE turns back to magazine.)

GLORIA (after a moment)

So . . . who's humping whom in the Hamptons this season?

CLAIRE

Just curious, or afraid you're missing something?

GLORIA

A little of both I suppose. I do have such fond memories our summers there. Oh how we worshipped the sun and chain-smoked cigarettes and chased the boys and swilled gin and did whatever we wanted. Nobody even cared.

CLAIRE

That was eons ago.

GLORIA

Eons? I don't think we're *that* old.

(Claire smiles and then turns back to her magazine. Something catches Gloria's eye when "FAST" EDDIE SULLIVAN, 52, ENTERS downstage left, working a mental detector just below the high water line. He is slim, tanned, and rather handsome. However, he is dressed outrageously in striped Bermuda shorts and a checked shirt, black socks, dilapidated sandals and dark sunglasses that completely hide his eyes. EDDIE begins working his way across the stage from left to right.)

GLORIA

Oh my god, will you take a look at this?

(CLAIRE looks up, watches him for a moment and shakes her head.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

GLORIA

"Those" people. They just won't let us alone. (A beat.) Don't just sit there  
CLAIRE, for god's sake--*do* something!

CLAIRE

You! You there!

(EDDIE moves on, not looking up. He has on earphones and either doesn't hear her or doesn't want to. CLAIRE throws a piece of ice at him.)

CLAIRE (louder)

I say, you! You there!

EDDIE (stopping, looks around)

Me? Me here?

CLAIRE

Of course you. There's no one else there.

EDDIE (removing headset)

Please? (Playwright's Note: Please is a RI expression used to indicate that you don't understand and you want something repeated.)

GLORIA

Yes, *you*. You're the you we're referring to.

CLAIRE (to Gloria)

"We"?

GLORIA (to CLAIRE)

In the sense of having a common purpose.

CLAIRE

Of course. (Then to Eddie.) Step up here will you?

EDDIE

Can't do that ma'am.

CLAIRE

Why not?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

GLORIA

We're perfectly harmless.

EDDIE

I wouldn't know about that. You look like a couple of white widows to me.

(CLAIRE and GLORIA exchange a glance.)

GLORIA

Do you mean *black* widows--which eat their partners after they mate.

EDDIE

No ma'am, I mean *white* widows--which eat their partners *before* they mate.

GLORIA

Well, you needn't concern yourself with mating in this instance.

CLAIRE

I'd like to have a word with you.

EDDIE

Then you'll have to come down here--in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

CLAIRE

I beg your pardon.

EDDIE (draws a line in the sand)

Wouldn't want to invade your private space.

GLORIA

You already have.

CLAIRE

We won't tell a soul, will we Gloria?

EDDIE

I appreciate that ma'am, but I'd prefer to keep my distance. But you can join me on this public land here below the high water mark if you so desire.

CLAIRE

Why would we want to do that?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Good question.

EDDIE

Do you have any idea of who I am?

CLAIRE (thinks, then)

Do you?

EDDIE

Why . . . I'm . . .

CLAIRE (taken aback)

GLORIA

She is Claire *Vanderbilk*. (A beat.) Does the name Vanderbilk mean anything to you?

EDDIE (thinks, then)

Greed. Exploitation. Conspicuous consumption. Monopoly. Power. Corruption. Union Pacific Railroad. Representation without taxation. Want me to keep going? There's probably more.

CLAIRE

I think you've gone far enough.

GLORIA

And I think you've gone *too* far. We don't have to tolerate such ill manners. I think I'll freshen up my drink. (Gets up.) Coming Claire?

CLAIRE

I'll be along shortly. First, I think I'd like to finish my chat with Mr. . .

EDDIE

Sullivan. "Fast" Eddie Sullivan. Friends call me "Sully."

GLORIA (exiting)

Fast Eddie indeed! I'll see you in the clubhouse, Claire.

(CLAIRE gets up and moves downstage to EDDIE on the "beach.")

CLAIRE

Mr. Sullivan, I must admit I'm quite--intrigued, never having had the pleasure of meeting a "Fast" Eddie before.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

With a little bit of luck, maybe I won't be your last.

(CLAIRE stares at him before continuing.)

CLAIRE

What are you doing here?

EDDIE

Ah, that's the question we're all trying to answer.

CLAIRE

I didn't mean in a philosophical sense. I mean *here*--on Bailey's Beach?

EDDIE (points to line in the sand)

*This* is not Bailey's Beach.

CLAIRE

So it isn't.

EDDIE

"So it isn't." I like that. I take it you have a literary bent, Ms . . .

CLAIRE

*Miss* Vanderbilk. I've buried one husband and divorced a few others but I've always kept my family name, and I prefer to be called "Miss." But that's not your affair.

EDDIE

I fully understand why you'd be reluctant to sacrifice the good Vanderbilk name for one of lesser stature.

CLAIRE

You needn't be sarcastic. None of us can select our heritage. (A beat.) So, tell me--Mr. Sullivan, do you not care what people think or don't you know any better than to dress like that?

EDDIE

Like what?

CLAIRE (looks him over)

Like--that!

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

What offends you--the checks or the stripes? The colors? The dark socks or is it something altogether different?

CLAIRE

It isn't any single article of clothing; it's the fact that you don't seem to care what people think of you.

EDDIE

Oh I care all right. I'm only human after all.

CLAIRE

After all what?

EDDIE

After all--is said and done.

CLAIRE

Yes, well. (A beat.) Are you familiar with the saying that: "Clothes make the man," Mr. Sullivan?

EDDIE

I've heard it, yes. Don't put much stock in it though. (A beat.) So . . . what kind of man am I, Miss Vanderbilt?

CLAIRE

Certainly one with a highly limited sense of aesthetics.

EDDIE

Perverted?

CLAIRE

I didn't say *that*!

EDDIE

Perverted sense of aesthetics?

CLAIRE

Well . . . yes . . . to my way of thinking. Very much so.

EDDIE

To your way of thinking?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

Not only mine. I'm sure my friend Gloria shares my view, and I'd be willing to wager most of the people in this club would find your ensemble highly offensive.

EDDIE

How much?

CLAIRE

I don't really want to place a bet. It's just an expression.

EDDIE

Of your discontent?

CLAIRE

Yes!

EDDIE

So, you're forming an impression of my character based on what I'm wearing?

CLAIRE

The way you dress is a reflection of who you are.

EDDIE

Is that a fact?

CLAIRE

A rather well documented one I believe.

EDDIE

Well, I'd like to review the empirical research that would support such a conclusion, in the meantime; however, I'll try a little experiment of my own.

(EDDIE removes shirt. His shoulder is scared by shrapnel.)

CLAIRE (trying not to look, but looking)

That really isn't necessary.

EDDIE (shirt off)

What can you tell about me now--more or less?

CLAIRE (staring at him)

Only that your sense of propriety is as lacking as your sense of aesthetics.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(EDDIE begins removing his shorts, socks and sandals. He is wearing a Speedo under his shorts.)

CLAIRE

Mr. Sullivan!

EDDIE (in his Speedo)

Call me Sully. (A beat.) Now, I'm dressed or *undressed* about like everyone else on the beach. (A beat.) What kind of man am I?

CLAIRE (can't keep from looking at him)

Outrageous!

EDDIE (gripping the Speedo)

Shall I keep going?

CLAIRE (grabbing his hands)

Certainly not! I see your point!

EDDIE

Not yet you haven't.

CLAIRE

If you remove another stitch, I shall scream!

EDDIE

Then I'll stop. I certainly wouldn't want to cause a scream or a scene on Bailey's Beach.

CLAIRE

Thank you.

EDDIE (after a moment)

Okay, your turn.

CLAIRE

I beg you pardon.

EDDIE

Take off that robe.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

I shall do nothing of the kind!

EDDIE

If all I see is a Ralph Lauren beach robe, I might get the wrong impression.

CLAIRE

Or the *right* one!

EDDIE

Come on, Miss Vanderbilk, do yourself a favor: take it off.

CLAIRE

Never!

EDDIE

Okay, but the impression I have right now from the robe and your self-righteous behavior is that you're none other than--the bitch of Bailey's Beach.

CLAIRE (highly offended)

"The bitch of Bailey's Beach"--I should say!

EDDIE

Am I very far off the mark?

(CLAIRE stares at him fuming inside, unable to speak. Finally she turns and walks upstage away from him to the clubhouse. EDDIE dresses slowly, picks up his metal detector, puts on the headset and continues combing the beach being careful to stay below the high water mark. LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY to END THE SCENE.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT I, SCENE II

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP the next afternoon on CLAIRE and her son, ELLIOTT, 40, on Bailey's Beach. ELLIOTT is wearing white linen suit and a Panama hat. He is every bit his mother's son, but is in no way a mama's boy. He is highly independent, intelligent, and in spite of his wealth, he is a liberal with a keen social conscience. He has amassed a fortune independent of his mother's money. He is twice divorced and most comfortable as a carefree bachelor, but always on the lookout for the "right" woman. Both CLAIRE and ELLIOTT are nursing drinks in shade of a beach umbrella.

CLAIRE

He probably won't show up, not since you're here. They never do, you know. They prey only on the weak and disenfranchised.

ELLIOTT

Mother, since when did you consider yourself either weak or disenfranchised?

CLAIRE

Since . . . yesterday.

ELLIOTT

Okay, since yesterday. And what is it exactly that you want me to do with this-- Fast Eddie Sullivan? Beat him up?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

Yes, exactly. I want you to beat him up. Give him a sound thrashing. Nail him with the old one--two.

ELLIOTT

I've got the idea. (A beat.) But didn't you say he had some kind of a weapon?

CLAIRE

It's a metal detector, for god's sake, *not* a weapon.

ELLIOTT

Don't get bitchy Mother.

CLAIRE

Don't call me that!

ELLIOTT

Mother?

CLAIRE

No, *bitchy*. That's what *he* said--called me the "bitch of Bailey's Beach." *That's* why I want you to give him a thrashing!

ELLIOTT

Mother, I'm sorry, but--

CLAIRE

No buts, Elliott. No if or ands either. I want you to nail the bastard!

ELLIOTT

Mother, the truth is: I'm not going to assault a man to salvage your honor.

CLAIRE

He called your mother a *bitch*, Elliott!

ELLIOTT

He wasn't venturing into any virgin territory now was he?

CLAIRE

That is beside the point.

ELLIOTT

What is the point, Mother?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

The point is . . . he offended my sense of aesthetics.

ELLIOTT

For this I should assault him?

CLAIRE

Will you should at the very least *insult* him.

ELLIOTT

Very well. If in my judgement he deserves it, I will.

CLAIRE

Very well then.

ELLIOTT

How big is this--Fast Eddie?

CLAIRE

Not big--tall and lean--has the look of Cassius about him.

ELLIOTT

How old?

CLAIRE

Hard to tell really. Younger than me; older than you. Rather handsome in a disconcerting sort of way, but has no sense of style whatsoever.

ELLIOTT

Handsome?

CLAIRE

Did I say that?

ELLIOTT

Yes, you did. Just now--"Rather handsome in a disconcerting sort of way." Your exact words.

CLAIRE

I don't know what I was thinking.

ELLIOTT

I do.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

You most certainly do not!

ELLIOTT

I am your son, Mother, and I inherited the . . . sensual gene shall we call it. I know how you are.

CLAIRE

I haven't the slightest notion of what you're talking about, Elliott. Sensual gene! I should say.

ELLIOTT

So this Fast Eddie Sullivan is *not* handsome--in some disconcerting sort of way?

CLAIRE

Or any other way!

ELLIOTT

Well, handsome or not, he certainly has you on edge.

CLAIRE

He called me--ME--a bitch, Elliott.

ELLIOTT

Yes, that fact has already been established.

CLAIRE

Now keep an eye out for him.

ELLIOTT

How will I know him?

CLAIRE

Oh, you'll know him all right. He'll either be dressed outrageously or wearing next to nothing and working a metal detector just below the high water mark. He knows better than to set one foot on this bitch--*beach*.

ELLIOTT

Boy, you are in quite a state.

CLAIRE

Just keep an eye out.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(CLAIRE begins scanning an issue of  
*Vanity Fair*.)

ELLIOTT  
So who's humping who in the Hamptons?

CLAIRE  
Whom.

ELLIOTT  
Whom is humping who?

CLAIRE  
No, *who* is humping *whom*?

ELLIOTT  
That's what I want to know. You've got the scandal sheet.

CLAIRE  
Scandal sheet is it?

ELLIOTT  
It's no different from the *Enquirer*, just a different group of players and even fewer scruples in the editorial department.

CLAIRE  
Weren't you--seeing an editor over there?

ELLIOTT  
No, I was seeing the *wife* of an editor. And it was over here, not over there.

CLAIRE  
Where did you learn such behavior?

ELLIOTT  
You don't want to know.

CLAIRE  
I'll take your word for that. But I do want you to deal with this new nemesis of mine--this Quick Eddie Sullivan.

ELLIOTT  
*Fast* Eddie.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

Fast? Quick? Nimble? I don't care. I just want you to take care of Mr. Sullivan.

ELLIOTT

Take care of him?

CLAIRE

Oh, you know, Elliott--put him in his place, like I told you.

ELLIOTT

I will--if and when he shows his handsome face.

CLAIRE

Oh, he's likely to show a lot more than that.

(CLAIRE turns back to her magazine. ELLIOTT begins scanning the beach. After a moment EDDIE enters stage left. He's wearing a classic black tux; his pant legs are rolled up, his shoes tied together and thrown over his shoulder. He also has on an eye patch and is working the metal detector along the "beach" left to right.)

ELLIOTT

I don't suppose this could be your man?

CLAIRE

He isn't *my* man!

ELLIOTT

Yet! (A beat.) Have a look.

CLAIRE (looks)

For god's sake, will you just look at that?

ELLIOTT

Can't take my eyes off of him. (A beat.) Looks pretty damned dapper to me—reminiscent of the Hathaway man.

CLAIRE

For god's sake!

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ELLIOTT

I don't think I can assault *or* insult a man in a tux.

CLAIRE

For god's sake! What do you suppose he's up to?

ELLIOTT

I'll find out. (To Eddie.) You . . . lose something.

EDDIE (stops, looks up)

Please?

ELLIOTT

Did you lose something?

EDDIE

Yeah—my innocence, but that was a long time ago—and in the backseat of a Chevy.

ELLIOTT

Me too, but it was in a Beemer.

EDDIE

Good for you.

ELLIOTT

It was great! For both of us.

EDDIE

But not the Beemer?

ELLIOTT

It cleaned up all right.

CLAIRE

Elliott? (A beat.) Is *that* what that was?

ELLIOTT (moving down to Eddie)

Doesn't matter now.

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Who was she?

EDDIE (To CLAIRE)

Doesn't matter now.

CLAIRE

You stay out of this. (A beat.) Elliott, I want to know.

ELLIOTT

Doesn't matter.

CLAIRE

Well if it doesn't matter you can tell me—I'm just curious.

(ELLIOTT looks at EDDIE.)

EDDIE

Tell her.

ELLIOTT (To CLAIRE)

My math tutor.

CLAIRE

Miss Pickens?

ELLIOTT

*Charlotte.* We were on a first name basis.

CLAIRE

You were evidently *on* a great deal more than that. I suppose I shouldn't be all that surprised, but . . . well, I would have guessed your French tutor, Miss Dubois.

ELLIOTT

Monique--was second.

EDDIE (slapping Elliott a high five)

All right. My man!

CLAIRE

You were only a boy!

ELLIOTT

Mom, I was 16 . . . not quite a man, but a lot more than a boy when they got through with me.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

They took advantage of you.

ELLIOTT (loving it)

They sure did. (A beat.) And now I take advantage of them—women in general—so I'm told.

EDDIE

By whom?

ELLIOTT

By the women I take advantage of. (A beat.) It's a hell of a thing.

EDDIE

I guess it is. Don't have that problem myself—got a lot of other ones.

CLAIRE

Don't we all!

ELLIOTT (extending his hand)

Elliott Vanderbilt.

EDDIE

Eddie Sullivan. My pleasure Mr. Vanderbilt.

ELLIOTT

Call me Elliott.

CLAIRE

Elliott!

ELLIOTT

She does. (To CLAIRE) Yes, Mother. (To Eddie.) She likes it when I say that.

CLAIRE

This is decidedly *not* what I had in mind when I told you to *take care* of Mr. Sullivan.

ELLIOTT

Mom, come down and say hello to Mr. Sullivan. You might find him to be quite a pleasant chap.

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Mr. Sullivan and I have already met. Thank you.

ELLIOTT

This can't be the man you spoke of. This man has style and class, and from his speech I can tell much more than an elementary education.

CLAIRE

I didn't say he had only an elementary education.

ELLIOTT

Why don't you join us up here for a drink?

CLAIRE

Elliott! Mr. Sullivan prefers not to cross the high water mark.

EDDIE (crossing the line)

A drink! I'd like that.

ELLIOTT

I'll fetch the drinks. Eddie . . . ?

EDDIE

Dewar's with a splash of water.

ELLIOTT

Scotch? Hmm, had you figured for a rum man--Captain Morgan's.

EDDIE

The patch?

ELLIOTT

It makes quite a statement.

EDDIE

I see . . . or actually I don't, at least not out of that eye. (A beat.) A little souvenir from Vietnam.

ELLIOTT

Jesus--I'm sorry.

EDDIE

Everybody is . . . *now*.

ELLIOTT

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

I'll get the drinks. Mom?

CLAIRE

Another one of the same for me.

(ELLIOTT exits.)

CLAIRE

I apologize, Mr. Sullivan. Obviously Elliott had . . . no idea . . . that--

EDDIE

No harm. No foul.

CLAIRE

What?

EDDIE

Elliott would understand.

CLAIRE (after a moment)

So . . .

EDDIE

So what?

CLAIRE

Well, Mr. Sullivan, I hate to keep focusing on your attire, but just why in the world are you wearing a tuxedo?

EDDIE

I just came from an affair at the Pell estate--black tie.

CLAIRE

I can see that. (A beat.) You and the Senator go back a long way do you?

EDDIE

Further than you probably think.

CLAIRE

And do mind my asking--what your relationship with the Senator involves?

EDDIE

I served the Senator in an advisory capacity for a number of years--housing, veteran's affairs, education.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

Education. Well, I don't suppose I should be surprised to hear that the Pell Grants were *your* idea.

EDDIE

I never claimed that.

CLAIRE

I was invited to the Senator's affair, of course.

EDDIE

Of course. I rather expected to see you there, but was disappointed. But this-- drinks at Bailey's Beach with Newport's finest more than makes up for it.

CLAIRE (after a moment)

I couldn't attend. I had . . . another obligation I'm afraid.

EDDIE

You don't have to explain.

CLAIRE

No, of course, I don't. I was just . . . well, what is it *exactly* that you're looking for out here, Mr. Sullivan?

EDDIE

Can't say, really.

CLAIRE

Can't say or you don't know?

EDDIE

Take your pick.

CLAIRE

Don't know.

EDDIE

Works for me. You?

CLAIRE

Can't say. (A beat.) If you don't know what you're looking for, how will you know when and if you find it?

EDDIE

Oh, I'll know all right.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

How? CLAIRE

I just will. EDDIE

It's very--*Zen* in that respect, is it not? CLAIRE

I suppose it is--in that respect . . . very *Zen*. You don't know you have it until you've got it, and as soon as you realize that you do, you lose it. EDDIE

Yes, it's quite the paradox. (A beat.) Why do you have to look for it--*here*? CLAIRE

This is as good a place as any. EDDIE

Is it? CLAIRE

Where would you look? EDDIE

I suppose that depends on what I was looking for. CLAIRE

But that's what I don't know. Do you? EDDIE

Know what you're looking for? Certainly not! CLAIRE

Know what *you're* looking for? EDDIE

What makes you think I'm looking for anything? CLAIRE

Everybody's looking for something. EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(ELLIOTT returns with a tray of drinks.)

ELLIOTT

Here you go, Eddie.

EDDIE (taking the drink)

Much obliged.

ELLIOTT (hands a drink to CLAIRE)

Mom.

CLAIRE

Much . . . thank you, Elliott.

EDDIE (raises his glass)

To--better times . . . assuming, of course, they can any get better . . . than this.

CLAIRE

Yes . . . well. Better times.

(They drink.)

ELLIOTT

Mother tells me you're known as "Fast" Eddie.

EDDIE

That's right. In some circles I'm called that. In others: Sully.

CLAIRE

Exactly how fast are you, Mr. Sullivan?

EDDIE

Not nearly as fast as I used to be.

ELLIOTT

None of us are.

EDDIE

But with a little luck, we compensate for our loss of speed with something else.

CLAIRE

Like . . . wisdom?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ELLIOTT

I don't think there's much evidence to support that.

EDDIE

Caution I think.

CLAIRE

I see.

EDDIE

The thing is--if you live through your mistakes, you sometimes learn to avoid making them a second time.

CLAIRE

And keep history from repeating itself?

EDDIE

I'm afraid I agree with Mr. Wilde in his assessment of history: It's not history that repeats itself, but historians.

ELLIOT

Oscar Wilde said that?

EDDIE

That and a lot more.

ELLIOTT

Oscar Wilde . . . so fast Eddie Sullivan knows his Oscar Wilde.

EDDIE

I am a fellow Irishman, even if not one of God's scalawags.

ELLIOTT

Robert Service!

EDDIE

You're very good, Elliott.

CLAIRE

Mr. Sullivan, would you mind if I asked you a personal question?

EDDIE

Yes, I am *seeing* someone.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(ELLIOTT chokes on his drink.)

CLAIRE

That's not it.

EDDIE

You?

CLAIRE

Me what?

EDDIE

Are you seeing someone?

CLAIRE

Certainly not! I'm . . . through with all that nonsense.

EDDIE

"Tis a pity . . . "

ELLIOTT (spontaneously)

. . . she's a whore."

CLAIRE

Elliott!

ELLIOTT

Sorry, Mom. (To Eddie) John Ford, 16<sup>th</sup> Century English playwright.

EDDIE

Wilde, Ford, Service: you know them all. Elliott, you're evidently as well read as you are well bred.

CLAIRE

He certainly is. And he has the *manners* to go along with his breeding.

EDDIE

Don't know much about my bloodline, actually. Certainly not pedigree, but I've tried to make up for my lack of breeding with what is probably an excessive amount of reading.

CLAIRE

Elliott has a private school education--Moses Brown, St. George's, and then . . .

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Harvard? EDDIE

No. CLAIRE

Yale? EDDIE

Not quite. CLAIRE

Princeton? Had to be Princeton. EDDIE

No. CLAIRE

Then what? EDDIE

*Then--the shit--hit the fan!* ELLIOTT

We needn't go into that. CLAIRE

ELLIOTT  
I chose to attend a state university--UMASS Amherst, radical economics, etc. (A beat.) Caused quite a row on the home front.

EDDIE  
I'm a product of a public school education myself.

CLAIRE  
I never doubted it for a moment.

ELLIOTT  
Mother! (To Eddie.) She can be quite the--

EDDIE  
I know, but then I'm sure there's a side to her that she prefers not to reveal.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

Mr. Sullivan, I am exactly what you see standing before you. Nothing more . . . perhaps less.

EDDIE

You're sitting.

CLAIRE (rising)

Elliott, I've had enough of Mr. Sullivan's nonsense. You may excuse him.

ELLIOTT

Eddie . . . what do you do?

CLAIRE

Mr. Sullivan, you may go.

EDDIE (To Elliott.)

I do a good bit of beach combing.

CLAIRE (interested)

He means for a living.

EDDIE

Ah . . . for a living! Well, I think of myself as a Renaissance Man.

ELLIOTT

A Renaissance Man?

EDDIE

That's right.

ELLIOTT

Interesting. I wouldn't have thought there was much of a demand for that kind of thing these days.

EDDIE

On the contrary. There's a distinct shortage. Only a few of us left.

CLAIRE

And what exactly does being a Renaissance Man involve in modernity?

EDDIE

Reading, thinking, advising and like I said, I good bit of beach combing.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ELLIOTT  
Beach combing?

CLAIRE  
Elliott, you needn't repeat everything Mr. Sullivan says.

ELLIOTT  
I'm just trying to get a handle on this beach-combing thing, Mother.

CLAIRE  
Go on then if you must.

ELLIOTT  
You don't . . . do this . . . for a living?

EDDIE  
Oh, god no, I'm . . . retired.

ELLIOTT  
Retired?

CLAIRE  
Elliott!

ELLIOTT  
Sorry, Mother. (To Eddie.) From what?

EDDIE  
Many things.

ELLIOTT  
I suppose you receive . . . some kind of compensation for . . .

EDDIE  
My loss?

ELLIOTT  
Yes.

EDDIE  
A small sum.

ELLIOTT

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

But you have a tux and what looks to be a state-of-the-art metal detector and a taste for good scotch and a certain disarming kind of charm, if you don't mind my saying so.

EDDIE

Not at all. I'm flattered. Keep going.

ELLIOTT

Tell you what. I have an engagement this evening, but I'd like to continue this conversation. Would you like to join us for dinner . . .

CLAIRE

Elliott!

ELLIOTT

Say Thursday at 7:00?

EDDIE

I'd be delighted.

ELLIOTT

You know the Vanderbilt Estate?

EDDIE

On Bellevue?

ELLIOTT

Is there another one?

EDDIE

I assume so--in the Hamptons, Monterey, the south of France.

ELLIOTT

I mean the one on Bellevue.

EDDIE

I can find it. (A beat.) Would you mind awfully if I brought along a friend or two?

CLAIRE

Oh no, by all means, bring anybody you want. Bring the entire lot from Easton's Beach if you like.

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Two or three people at the most. I think you'll find them interesting.

(EDDIE starts off and then turns back to ELLIOTT when he calls.)

ELLIOTT

Thursday then.

EDDIE (exiting)

Okay, Thursday. Thanks again for the drink.

ELLIOTT

Fasinating.

CLAIRE

Just what the hell do you think you're doing? How could you invite him into our home? You know *nothing* about this man!

ELLIOTT

Which is exactly why I invited him for dinner. Don't you find him in the least bit interesting?

CLAIRE

Not in the least.

ELLIOTT

But you have to admit, he's unique. A Renaissance Man . . . in the flesh. How often do you see that these days?

CLAIRE

If he's a Renaissance Man then I'm the Queen of England! And you told him to come on Thursday--that's the servants day off. I hope you don't expect me to--cook!

ELLIOTT

No, but I do expect you to tell Cook to call a caterer for Thursday.

CLAIRE

I suppose I could put together a salad or something of that nature.

ELLIOTT

Mother, you've never cooked a meal in your life.

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Chopping up vegetables is not cooking, Elliott. I am certainly capable of chopping up a few vegetables. And I certainly don't want . . . those people to think I'm helpless.

ELLIOT

Fine. Just . . . be careful. Okay?

CLAIRE

Of course I'll be careful. Now be a good boy and get your mother another drink. (ELLIOTT starts off.) Elliott . . . you didn't exactly let him have it did you?

ELLIOTT (exiting)

No, Mom, that's for you to do.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN TO END THE SCENE.)

ACT I, SCENE III

SCENE: Thursday night. LIGHTS COME UP CLAIRES on the patio of her mansion. She is just putting the finishing touches on a simple buffet. Using a silver teapot as a mirror, she checks her make-up and then straightens the beige slacks she is wearing along with a white silk blouse, and to add a bit of color, a purple scarf. A white bandage completely covers her left thumb. She will wear the bandage until the final scene of the play. After a moment, ELLIOTT enters with VICTORIA JEFFERSON, 40, her daughter SALLY, 17, and BAC HOI TRAN, 54. TRAN is Vietnamese and a comrade in arms of Eddie. VICTORIA and SALLY are African-American and dressed stylishly, if not expensively. Both are street-wise, quite attractive and exceedingly bright in an academic sense.

Please--come in. Right this way.

ELLIOTT

Servants day off?

SALLY (to Elliott)

Sally--mind your manners.

VICTORIA

CLAIRE (hiding her thumb)  
As a matter of fact . . . my staff does have Thursday's off. But I think you'll find that I can manage quite well without them. Please . . . make yourselves comfortable.

Eddie is running a little late.

ELLIOTT

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

He'll be right along. VICTORIA

He had to go to the police station. SALLY

Oh my! CLAIRE

One of his kids is . . . having a little problem. TRAN

Mr. Sullivan has children? CLAIRE

Not *his* children. VICTORIA

Eddie is a mentor--it's probably just a misunderstanding. SALLY

Fast Eddie Sullivan is a mentor to one of our city's youth. I shouldn't think that's a very good idea. CLAIRE

You don't know Eddie do you? VICTORIA

Actually, I don't . . . CLAIRE

I invited Eddie here for that very reason; so we could get to know him. (A beat.) This is my mother, CLAIRE Vanderbilt. ELLIOTT

You're not one of *the* Vanderbilks? SALLY

I'm afraid we are. ELLIOTT

You needn't be ashamed of it Elliott. CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

VICTORIA

I am Victoria Jefferson, and this is my daughter Sally.

CLAIRE

Sally? You're not one of the *Hemming* Jeffersons, are you?

VICTORIA

As a matter of fact, we are--direct descendents of Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemming.

CLAIRE (to Tran)

And you are?

TRAN

Bac Hoi Tran.

CLAIRE

Do you have any blue blood running in your veins, Mr. Tran?

TRAN

No, only red, but I am distant cousin of Ho Chi Minh.

CLAIRE

Well . . . I suppose that explains the Red blood.

ELLIOTT

Not entirely, Mother. Mr. Tran is a red-blooded capitalist not a communist.

CLAIRE

Well, this has all the marking of one *fascinating*, even if not, enchanted evening. (A beat.) Elliott why don't you serve some refreshments?

ELLIOTT (To Victoria and SALLY)

Who says it can't be an enchanted one as well? Ladies, may I serve you a drink?

VICTORIA

We're fine. Thank you.

ELLIOTT

Mr. Tran?

TRAN

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

You have Tiger beer?

No. But I have Sam Adams. ELLIOTT

Sapporo? TRAN

Molson! ELLIOTT

Kirin? TRAN

Heineken! ELLIOTT

Asahi? TRAN

Would you settle for some gin? ELLIOTT

Yes, gin would be fine. TRAN

Gin it is. And tonic? ELLIOTT

No. Just gin. No tonic. No ice. Just gin. TRAN

(He pours a drink and hands it to TRAN.)

Much obliged. TRAN

Where have we heard that before? CLAIRE

From Eddie. Most of my English I learn from him. TRAN

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ELLIOTT (to Victoria)  
You're sure I can't get you something.

VICTORIA  
I'm fine really.

SALLY  
I'd like a gin and tonic.

VICTORIA  
She'll have a Diet Pepsi!

(ELLIOTT pours a Pepsi and hands it to Sally.)

CLAIRE  
So, Mr. Tran--you and Eddie--Mr. Sullivan were in Vietnam together.

TRAN  
Yes, near my home in Nha Trang on the South China Sea. Eddie was NILO, and I was his Vietnamese counterpart.

CLAIRE  
NILO?

TRAN  
Naval Intelligence Liaison Officer.

CLAIRE  
Mr. Sullivan was a Naval Officer?

TRAN  
Lieutenant, J.G.

ELLIOTT  
An officer and a gentleman. I knew it!

CLAIRE (To Tran)  
So you knew him when he lost his eye.

TRAN  
He lost much more than that, Miss Vanderbilt.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Oh . . . my goodness!

CLAIRE

No, it's not like . . . *that*.

VICTORIA

Like what?

SALLY

He didn't suffer a terrible wound . . . in the Hemingway sense?

ELLIOTT

Like Jake Barnes?

SALLY

By god, still in school and has not only read her Hemingway but remembers it! I'm impressed with you and your daughter . . .

ELLIOTT

Miss Jefferson.

VICTORIA

Eddie's wound was nothing like that.

TRAN

So, Mr. Tran, you've known Eddie . . . for a long time.

CLAIRE

Yes. After the fall of Saigon in '75, I came to States. Nowhere else to go. Eddie made me his project--found me nice Vietnamese girl, became my family.

TRAN

And you--are you and your daughter another one of Eddie's projects?

CLAIRE (to Victoria)

Is that what we are, Mom?

SALLY

We originally came *from* the projects, but I don't know that we *are* projects--Eddie's or anybody else's for that matter.

VICTORIA

I didn't mean--

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

VICTORIA

I know what you meant. And, no, we're not a project.

CLAIRE

Of course not, Miss--is it . . .

VICTORIA

Yes, *Miss* Jefferson. I kept my family name when I married, and now that--I haven't seen . . . him for quite some time, I prefer to be addressed as Miss even though I am still legally married.

CLAIRE

I'm sorry . . . for your trouble.

SALLY

She' not.

VICTORIA

Sally's father was not an ideal husband.

CLAIRE

I've had three that qualify for just such a description.

SALLY

Three?

CLAIRE

Three or four? You lose track.

SALLY

You go girl!

CLAIRE

I beg you pardon?

ELLIOTT

It's just an expression, Mom. (To Sally.) Mom doesn't watch Oprah.

CLAIRE

"You go girl." Charming--really.

ELLIOTT (To Victoria)

So you've raised Sally by yourself.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(VICTORIA slips her arm around SALLY.)

VICTORIA

For the most part.

CLAIRE

Then I take it you're a--professional woman.

VICTORIA

I'm working on it.

SALLY

Mom's a Department Manager at Wal-Mart and is only a semester away from a degree in accounting at Salve.

VICTORIA

Congratulations.

ELLIOTT

That's quite an accomplishment. Not only beautiful but has brains as well.

CLAIRE

Elliott! For God's sake!

TRAN

Sally has worked as waitress in my Newport restaurant for three years now. They would never tell you, but Sally is honor student at Rogers.

CLAIRE

You don't seem to fit the stereotype of many American young people, Sally.

VICTORIA

Don't kid yourself.

SALLY

I'm no angel.

CLAIRE

Neither was I. And, believe it or not, I was an Honor Student myself at one time. Years ago of course, but I never had to . . .

VICTORIA

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

I'm sure you had to study just as hard as Sally.

SALLY

I doubt that they ever gave As away.

ELLIOTT

Hell they didn't even give C's away when I went to school.

EDDIE (OFF)

Hello! Anybody here?

ELLIOTT

Out back, Eddie. Come on back.

(EDDIE enters. He's wearing tan Dockers, sneakers, and a Hawaiian shirt with the shirttail out. He has on the eye patch.)

EDDIE

My apologies Miss Vanderbilk--duty called.

TRAN

Hello Brother.

EDDIE

Yo Bro! Victoria, Sally.

VICTORIA and SALLY

Hello Eddie.

EDDIE

Hope you didn't wait on me.

ELLIOTT

We're just getting started. How would you like . . . a Sam Adams?

EDDIE

Little too radical for me. How 'bout a Bush?

ELLIOTT

You gotta love this guy. You're getting a Sam Adams.

VICTORIA

Did you get things straightened out downtown?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

I tell you Victoria. Those damn exit scanners don't work for squat. Benjamin got nailed for having a DVD he just paid good money for? Second time this month.

VICTORIA

It's probably not the scanner, but I think I know what it is. I'll take care of it.

CLAIRE

Just like that. You sound so . . . competent.

SALLY

She is--*way* too much so.

(Elliott hands Eddie a Sam Adams.)

Thank you.

CLAIRE

Not "much obliged"?

EDDIE

Very much so.

CLAIRE

I'm afraid we're on our own tonight. I'm serving a buffet.

SALLY (To Eddie)

Servants night off.

EDDIE

What happened to your hand?

ELLIOTT

Mother made the salad herself--damn near cut her thumb off in the process.

CLAIRE (hiding her hand)

It's nothing, really.

ELLIOTT

Fourteen stitches.

SALLY

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Fourteen!

CLAIRE

I got all teary from the onions and couldn't see what I was doing. Damn knife was like a razor.

EDDIE

Your efforts are appreciated Miss Vanderbilk, but your sweat and tears would have been sufficient.

ELLIOTT

Mom gives blood regularly, Eddie.

VICTORIA

Well you needn't offer it to us. Your hospitality is more than enough.

ELLIOTT

Mother lives to give. Isn't that so, Mother?

CLAIRE

If the truth be known, there isn't much else I know how to do.

EDDIE

Well . . . Elliott I see you met my brother Tran.

CLAIRE

Your *brother*?

ELLIOTT

Yes, and suddenly it dawned on me--he's the owner of the Bun Bo Xao on Broadway. And I believe you own some draggers, a dock in Point Judith and couple of more restaurants. I thought you looked familiar.

TRAN

We all look alike.

SALLY

I thought *we* all looked alike?

VICTORIA (To Elliott and CLAIRE)

And you all--*thought* alike.

CLAIRE

Unfortunately, we don't.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

No? EDDIE

No. That is not the case in the house of Vanderbilt. ELLIOTT

My son is a . . . I can't say it. CLAIRE

A Democrat. ELLIOTT

I can't bring myself to say it--even after all these years. CLAIRE

Mother is--somewhat more conservative in her thinking. ELLIOTT

Than? EDDIE

*Those* people. ELLIOTT

Which people? TRAN

The other half. ELLIOTT

I believe it's actually a little less than half. VICTORIA

And I thought *you* were *those* people. SALLY

Oh no, my dear. We're not those people. CLAIRE

You mean—*we're* those people? SALLY

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

I think it depends on who's doing the looking.

CLAIRE

Yes, I suppose it does. Perspective is everything.

EDDIE

Isn't it though! (A beat.) So . . . as a fellow liberal, Elliott, what is it that you do?

ELLIOTT

To better the human condition?

EDDIE

What else?

CLAIRE

Elliott likes to think he builds bridges instead of fences . . . as those of us with more conservative leanings are inclined to do.

ELLIOTT

I generate capital, Eddie--capital that is used to generate jobs that generates capital that is used to purchase goods and services than in turn generates more capital. Generating capital is the cornerstone of our economic system.

EDDIE

And this is good?

ELLIOTT

I don't know if it's fundamentally good or not. But it *is*, and it a way of life I'd be willing to fight for it.

VICTORIA

Have you?

ELLIOTT

I haven't had to.

CLAIRE

Elliott is a *between* wars baby.

TRAN

You're a very lucky man.

ELLIOTT

## The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

I know that. (A beat.) But in many ways, I'm no different than you Mr. Tran. Many years ago you came here with--very little I presume, and started a small restaurant. Then you invested in a boat to provide your restaurant with fresh fish. Then you bought a boat. Now you have--what two or three boats, a fleet of trucks, a retail market, a wholesale business, and restaurants not only here but in Providence and Boston as well? All of this is generating capital that creates jobs, products and more capital. What's wrong with that kind of system? You tell me?

VICTORIA

You ever live in the projects Mr. Vanderbilt?

ELLIOTT

No, and whether you believe me or not, I think housing projects are a symptom of, not an answer to, our economic system's inequities. Our system isn't flawless, and I know that projects and prisons are not the answer to our social dilemma. We can do much better.

VICTORIA

That fact is there isn't all that much difference between the two--projects and prisons. All too often the bridges that well-meaning people build lead directly from one to the other.

ELLIOTT

You're a very intelligent woman, Miss Jefferson.

VICTORIA

Does that surprise you?

ELLIOTT

Not at all.

EDDIE

But it wasn't easy for her to accomplish what she has. Nor was it for Tran.

CLAIRE

Nor was it for Elliot. It *could* have been, of course, but he chose to take--the *high* road.

ELLIOTT

Before you always called it the *low* road, Mother.

CLAIRE (To Elliott)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

The morally high road. (To the others.) Elliott didn't make his fortune using my money--

VICTORIA

Only your name.

ELLIOTT

That did . . . open a lot of doors. I won't deny it, but we're talking initiative here. People *can* succeed if they have the will.

VICTORIA

And the opportunity.

ELLIOTT

People have to recognize opportunity when it presents itself.

VICTORIA

*If*—it presents itself.

ELLIOTT

Of course. And that is something I hope that I offer in my work.

CLAIRE

I find all this talk of politics extremely tiresome.

SALLY

I thought I was the only one that noticed.

CLAIRE

Elliott, serve some more drinks, and for god's sake change the subject.

(He begins to serve more drinks.)

ELLIOTT

Do you sail Miss Jefferson?

VICTORIA

Sail? As in--yachts?

ELLIOTT

This *is* Newport.

VICTORIA

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

No, Mr. Vanderbilk, I don't. I haven't had the opportunity to cultivate those interests with . . . all my other activities--tennis and polo and squash and golf, you know. I just don't have time to do it *all*.

ELLIOTT

Perhaps you'd like to learn.

VICTORIA (looks at Eddie)

Perhaps?

CLAIRE

For god's sake, Elliott. If you want to invite her to go sailing with you just invite her!

ELLIOTT

Mother!

VICTORIA

I'm afraid I wouldn't make much of a sailor.

SALLY

*I'd* like to go sailing.

VICTORIA

Sally!

ELLIOTT

Think about it.

VICTORIA

Thank you. I will.

ELLIOTT

Mother, perhaps Mr. Sullivan, would be willing to show you--parts of this island you've been missing all these years? He seems to know his way around the local environs.

EDDIE (looks at Victoria)

Perhaps.

CLAIRE

And perhaps I could show Mr. Sullivan parts of Newport he's unacquainted with.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

I don't doubt it.

VICTORIA

Well, I think we've overstayed or welcome. And I have an early day tomorrow.

EDDIE

Right.

(They all get up to leave.)

VICTORIA

Thank you, Miss Vanderbilt for a . . . lovely evening.

SALLY

Yes, thank you. I hope your cut heals up all right.

CLAIRE

Thank you, Dear.

ELLIOTT (shaking hands)

Good night, Eddie. Mr. Tran it was my pleasure. I'll make it a point to stop in.

TRAN

Yes, you do that. I'm looking for investors to build a take-out facility in Point Judith. We should talk business.

(EDDIE, VICTORIA, SALLY and TRAN all move stage left away from the "house.")

VICTORIA

What the hell was *that* all about?

(ELLIOTT moves back to where CLAIRE is seated.)

CLAIRE

What the hell was *that* all about?

(BLACKOUT.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT I, SCENE IV:

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP stage right on EDDIE in his one room beach shack and stage left on VICTORIA in her office. CLAIRE and ELLIOTT ENTER and simultaneously knock. The dialogue is almost identical in both scenes, but is only spoken by the character/s whose name and/or line appears in **bold** type.

**EDDIE**  
**Come in!**  
  
(CLAIRE enters.)  
  
EDDIE  
Well, this is a surprise.  
  
**CLAIRE**  
**I hope not an unpleasant one.**  
  
EDDIE  
I didn't mean to imply that. (A beat.)  
How did you find me?  
  
**CLAIRE**  
**I have my ways.** I've brought you something.  
  
(She hands him a package from a bag that she sets on the floor.)

**VICTORIA**  
**Come in!**  
  
(Elliott enters.)  
  
**VICTORIA**  
**Well, this is a surprise.**  
  
ELLIOTT  
I hope not an unpleasant one.  
  
**VICTORIA**  
**I didn't mean to imply that. (A beat.) How did you find me?**  
  
ELLIOTT  
I have my ways. **I've brought you something.**  
  
(He hands her a package from a bag that he sets on the floor.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

**EDDIE**  
**But . . . why?**

**CLAIRE**  
**It's just what I do.** Open it.

(Eddie removes a white knit polo shirt from the box.)

**EDDIE**  
**What are you trying to do . . . make me respectable**—or just acceptable?

**CLAIRE**  
Nothing like that. I'm just—

**EDDIE**  
Redistributing the wealth?

**CLAIRE**  
**To tell you the truth . . .** I don't know what I'm doing.

**EDDIE**  
**I don't believe that for a second, but**—thank you anyway.

**CLAIRE**  
**Try it on.**

(Eddie takes off the shirt he's wearing and slips on the polo; Victoria puts the jacket on over her blouse.)

**EDDIE**  
Right size.

**VICTORIA**  
But . . . why?

**ELLIOTT**  
It's just what I do. **Open it.**

(Victoria removes a white sailing jacket from the box.)

**VICTORIA**  
What are you trying to do . . . make me respectable—**or just acceptable?**

**ELLIOTT**  
**Nothing like that. I'm just—**

**VICTORIA**  
**Redistributing the wealth?**

**ELLIOTT**  
To tell you the truth . . . **I don't know what I'm doing.**

**VICTORIA**  
I don't believe that for a second, but—**thank you anyway.**

**ELLIOTT**  
**Try it on.**

(Eddie takes off the shirt he's wearing and slips on the polo; Victoria puts the jacket on over her blouse.)

**VICTORIA**  
**Right size.**

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

**CLAIRE**

Very becoming. (A beat.) **Now that's not so bad is it?**

**EDDIE**

**To *look* respectable?**

**CLAIRE**

**Yes.**

**EDDIE**

I think my preference would be to *be* respectable.

**CLAIRE**

**You can be both**—it's not unheard of, you know?

**EDDIE**

**I'll take your word for it.** (A beat.)  
Now, what's this all about? Really?

**CLAIRE**

Let's just say that I find you . . .  
somewhat . . . intriguing.

**EDDIE**

**Intriguing?**

**CLAIRE**

**Somewhat. And—interesting, unique**—perhaps even--attractive.

**EDDIE**

Oh.

**CLAIRE**

So, that being the case, I think I'd like to get to know you better.

**EDDIE**

**Really?**

**ELLIOTT**

**Very becoming.** (A beat.) Now that's not so bad is it?

**VICTORIA**

To *look* respectable?

**ELLIOTT**

Yes.

**VICTORIA**

**I think my preference would be to *be* respectable.**

**ELLIOTT**

You can be both—**it's not unheard of, you know?**

**VICTORIA**

I'll take your word for it. (A beat.)  
**Now, what's this all about? Really?**

**ELLIOTT**

**Let's just say that I find you . . . somewhat . . . intriguing.**

**VICTORIA**

**Intriguing?**

**ELLIOTT**

Somewhat. And—interesting, unique—**perhaps even--attractive.**

**VICTORIA**

Oh.

**ELLIOTT**

**So, that being the case, I think I'd like to get to know you better.**

**VICTORIA**

**Really?**

**CLAIRE**  
**You're not making this particularly easy.**

EDDIE  
That's because I feel a little uneasy.

**CLAIRE**  
**And a little—intrigued?**

EDDIE  
Yes, I suppose I am.

CLAIRE  
By how the other half lives?

**EDDIE**  
**I thought we decided it was a bit less than half?**

CLAIRE  
Yes, significantly less so, but I was actually hoping you find me rather than my lifestyle intriguing.

EDDIE  
Oh, I do, I do. It's just that--I don't know what to do with . . . *this*.

**CLAIRE**  
**You don't have to do anything but be yourself.**

**EDDIE** (refers to his shirt)  
**When I put this on, I'm not sure I am.**

**CLAIRE**  
**Clothes don't make the man, so I'm told.**

ELLIOTT  
You're not making this particularly easy.

**VICTORIA**  
**That's because I feel a little uneasy.**

ELLIOTT  
And a little—intrigued?

**VICTORIA**  
**Yes, I suppose I am.**

**ELLIOTT**  
**By how the other half lives?**

VICTORIA  
I thought we decided it was a bit less than half?

**ELLIOTT**  
**Yes, significantly less so, but I was actually hoping you find me rather than my lifestyle intriguing.**

**VICTORIA**  
**Oh, I do, I do. It's just that--I don't know what to do with . . . *this*.**

ELLIOTT  
You don't have to do anything but be yourself.

**VICTORIA** (refers to jacket)  
**When I put this on, I'm not sure I am.**

**ELLIOTT**  
**Clothes don't make the woman, so I'm told.**

**EDDIE**

**It's the *woman* that makes the man, so I'm told.**

**CLAIRE**

**What would you say to dinner tonight?**

**EDDIE**

**I don't want to be--put on display, Miss Vanderbilk.**

**CLAIRE**

**Just--the two of us.**

(She crosses and kisses him a little tentatively, but seductively.)

**CLAIRE**

**I'm sorry--I couldn't help myself.**

**EDDIE**

**On the contrary--I think that's exactly what you did.**

**CLAIRE**

**I want to get to . . . know you.**

**EDDIE**

And I suppose you ordinarily get what you want.

**CLAIRE**

**Yes, I do-- ordinarily.**

**EDDIE**

I ordinarily don't, but I do ordinarily get a number of things I don't.

**VICTORIA**

**It's the *man* that makes the woman, so I'm told.**

**ELLIOTT**

What would you say to dinner tonight?

**VICTORIA**

**I don't want to be put--on display, Mr. Vanderbilk.**

**ELLIOTT**

**Just--the two of us.**

(She crosses and kisses him a little tentatively, but seductively.)

**ELLIOTT**

**I'm sorry--I couldn't help myself.**

**VICTORIA**

**On the contrary--I think that's exactly what you did.**

**ELLIOTT**

I want to get to . . . know you.

**VICTORIA**

**And I suppose you ordinarily get what you want.**

**ELLIOTT**

Yes, I do-- ordinarily.

**VICTORIA**

**I ordinarily don't, but I do ordinarily get a number of things I don't.**

**CLAIRE**  
**I suppose that the difference between you and me.**

EDDIE  
But not the only one?

**CLAIRE**  
**No, but one that is not difficult to address.**

EDDIE  
Is that so?

**CLAIRE**  
**I think so.**

**EDDIE**  
**I *want*--world peace, social justice, to live happily ever after.**

**CLAIRE**  
**Life is not a fairy tale.**

**EDDIE**  
I'm very well aware of that, Miss Vanderbilk.

**CLAIRE**  
**So I'm referring to wants of a smaller magnitude.**

EDDIE  
And a more personal nature?

CLAIRE  
That's right.

**EDDIE**  
**For example?**

ELLIOTT  
I suppose that the difference between you and me.

**VICTORIA**  
**But not the only one?**

ELLIOTT  
No, but one that is not difficult to address.

**VICTORIA**  
**Is that so?**

ELLIOTT  
I think so.

VICTORIA  
I *want*--world peace, social justice, **to live happily ever after.**

ELLIOTT  
Life is not a fairy tale.

**VICTORIA**  
**I'm very well aware of that, Mr. Vanderbilk.**

ELLIOTT  
So I'm referring to wants of a smaller magnitude.

**VICTORIA**  
**And a more personal nature?**

**ELLIOTT**  
**That's right.**

VICTORIA  
For example?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

**CLAIRE**  
**Perhaps . . . more luxurious living quarters.**

Go on.  
**EDDIE**

**CLAIRE**  
Have you ever driven a really fine automobile?

**EDDIE**  
**I've never even ridden in one.**

**CLAIRE**  
**Dined in Rome?**

New York?  
**EDDIE**

**CLAIRE**  
**Italy.**

**EDDIE**  
I'd have to leave Aquidneck Island.

**CLAIRE**  
**I could give you all those things . . . all the things—**

**EDDIE**  
**that money can buy?**

Yes.  
**CLAIRE**

**EDDIE**  
**In exchange for what?**

Companionship.  
**CLAIRE** (carefully)

**ELLIOTT**  
Perhaps . . . more luxurious living quarters.

Go on.  
**VICTORIA**

**ELLIOTT**  
**Have you ever driven a really fine automobile?**

**VICTORIA**  
I've never even ridden in one.

**ELLIOTT**  
Dined in Rome?

New York?  
**VICTORIA**

**ELLIOTT**  
Italy.

**VICTORIA**  
**I'd have to leave Aquidneck Island.**

**ELLIOTT**  
I could give you all those things . . . **all the things—**

**VICTORIA**  
that money can buy?

**ELLIOTT**  
**Yes.**

**VICTORIA**  
In exchange for what?

Companionship.  
**ELLIOTT** (carefully)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

**EDDIE**  
**I have a companion.**

CLAIRE  
Who gives you what?

**EDDIE**  
**Companionship.**

CLAIRE  
I could give you everything.

**EDDIE**  
**And then what would there be left to want?**

**CLAIRE**  
**You're missing the point.** (A beat.)  
Here's take these.

(She hands him a shoebox from the bag.)

EDDIE  
What's this?

**CLAIRE**  
**Boat shoes?**

EDDIE  
I don't have a boat.

**CLAIRE**  
**You have feet . . . and you *could* have a boat. Just--put them on.**

(Puts on the shoes.)

CLAIRE  
Fit?

VICTORIA  
I have a companion.

**ELLIOTT**  
**Who gives you what?**

VICTORIA  
Companionship.

**ELLIOTT**  
**I could give you everything.**

VICTORIA  
And then what would there be left to want?

**ELLIOTT**  
You're missing the point. (A beat.)  
**Here's take these.**

(He hands her a shoebox from the bag.)

**VICTORIA**  
**What's this?**

ELLIOTT  
Boat shoes?

**VICTORIA**  
**I don't have a boat.**

ELLIOTT  
You have feet . . . and you *could* have a boat. Just--put them on.

(Puts on the shoes.)

**ELLIOTT**  
**Fit?**

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

**EDDIE** (shrugs)

**Too soon to tell.** (A beat.) I should give you something in return.

**VICTORIA** (shrugs)

Too soon to tell. (A beat.) **I should give you something in return.**

**CLAIRE**

**Just have dinner with me tonight.**

**ELLIOTT**

**Just have dinner with me tonight.**

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT I, SCENE V

SCENE: The next day. SALLY is seated on the edge of a bed in her "room." Boxes and bags from The Gap, Banana Republic and stores of that ilk are stacked all around her. There is a freestanding full-length mirror close by. SALLY begins unpacking the bags and trying on or holding up the new clothes while looking at herself in the mirror. There are blouses, polo shirts, shorts, a sailing jacket, boat shoes, etc. At first she is very excited, then she begins to slow down and finally stands back just staring at herself in one of the new ensembles. VICTORIA enters wearing her new sailing jacket.

VICTORIA

What is all this?

SALLY

Clothes. They were here when I got home.

VICTORIA

They're from--those people we had dinner with--the Vanderbilks.

VICTORIA

You can't keep them.

SALLY

Why?

VICTORIA

You just can't.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Mom!

SALLY

I want you to send them back.

VICTORIA

I can't afford clothes like this.

SALLY

I know that. That's the point.

VICTORIA

What *point*? I don't understand.

SALLY

You will.

VICTORIA

When I'm more mature--and *wise*--like you?

SALLY (angrily)

Just send them back.

VICTORIA

(SALLY starts to repack the boxes.)

I'm sorry Honey.

VICTORIA

(She tries to touch SALLY, but SALLY turns away so VICTORIA turns to go.)

Mom?

SALLY

What Sweetheart?

VICTORIA

New jacket?

SALLY

(They stare at each other as the LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY TO END THE SCENE.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT I, SCENE VI

SCENE: Evening of the same day.  
LIGHTS COME UP on CLAIRE seated at a table for two. The table is set with white linen, silver, china and candles. CLAIRE is dressed informally but stylishly in a long beige skirt and a pastel satin blouse. She sips a glass of wine a little nervously and looks at her watch. After a few moments, EDDIE enters. He is dressed in chinos, a polo shirt CLAIRE gave him and a Navy blazer (also from CLAIRE). He has the boat shoes on and is wearing his eye patch. CLAIRE starts to rise.

Please, don't get up.

EDDIE

I--didn't know if you'd come or not.

CLAIRE (sitting back)

I didn't either.

EDDIE (sitting opposite her)

And yet--here you are.

CLAIRE

Here I am.

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE  
Would you like to share a glass of wine with me?

EDDIE  
Only if I can't have my own.

CLAIRE  
Is there ever a dull moment with you Mr. Sullivan?

EDDIE  
I certainly hope not.

(She pours EDDIE a glass of wine and raises her glass.)

EDDIE  
Here's looking at you!

CLAIRE  
Right back at cha!

EDDIE  
You go girl!

(They both laugh easily.)

CLAIRE  
I sent her--Sally--some things.

EDDIE  
What kind of things?

CLAIRE  
Clothes and whatnot. I hope that was okay.

EDDIE  
I'm sure she'll love them.

CLAIRE  
I meant--okay with her mother.

EDDIE  
Well, I can't speak for Victoria, but I don't suppose it can hurt anything.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

I don't want her--to get the wrong idea. She's a lovely young woman, and Victoria is--justifiably very proud.

EDDIE

I'm sure it's fine.

CLAIRE

Elliott may have sent her something as well.

EDDIE

The old one-two.

CLAIRE

Maybe I shouldn't have?

EDDIE

What's done is done. Now don't spoil your dinner over an act of kindness.

CLAIRE

Of course. (A few beats.) May I ask you a personal question Mr. Sullivan?

EDDIE

Sure.

CLAIRE

You told me when we first met that--you were seeing someone. Is that true?

EDDIE

I'm seeing you right now.

CLAIRE

Anyone else?

EDDIE

Yes. I have a companion.

CLAIRE

Of course, I remember--who provides you with companionship.

EDDIE

That's right.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Local girl? CLAIRE

Yes. You met her. EDDIE

Not . . . CLAIRE

The woman who came to dinner? EDDIE

Miss Jefferson? CLAIRE

Yes. Victoria. EDDIE

Oh . . . CLAIRE

She is an extraordinary woman. EDDIE

That's self-evident. But she's-- CLAIRE

Younger than I am? EDDIE

CLAIRE  
I live in a very insular world Mr. Sullivan. Always have. Sometimes I'm--taken  
aback by things that are really of no concern to me whatsoever.

I didn't mean to shock you. EDDIE

I'll survive. (A beat.) Is it serious? CLAIRE

My relationship with Victoria? EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Yes. CLAIRE

It's . . . very congenial. EDDIE

But not permanent? CLAIRE

Victoria is still married. EDDIE

Yes, she told me. And you are-- CLAIRE

I don't know if I am or not. Depends on what you're referring to. EDDIE

Satisfied with the way things are? CLAIRE

I didn't say that. EDDIE

There's a great deal that you don't say, Mr. Sullivan. CLAIRE

I think that can be said of both of us. EDDIE

Another personal question? CLAIRE

Why not? EDDIE

You and Mr. Tran refer to each other as "brother." Why is that? CLAIRE

Tran is my brother. EDDIE

How can that be? CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Brother-in-law. EDDIE

Mr. Tran is--married to your sister? CLAIRE

No, I am--was--married to his. A long time ago. EDDIE (after a moment)

During the war? (EDDIE nods.) Well . . . that explains that. CLAIRE

Nothing can explain it. EDDIE (lost)

Mr. Tran said you lost more than your sight in Vietnam. CLAIRE (carefully)

I lost my life. EDDIE

Your *wife*? CLAIRE

Thuy was my life. EDDIE

I'm terribly sorry. I shouldn't have pried. CLAIRE

She was nineteen--petite, ebony hair flowing all the way down her back. A slight, shy smile. Quiet laugh. Dark, hypnotic eyes that you could lose yourself in. Nineteen. (A beat.) I'm sorry. EDDIE

You can talk if you want. CLAIRE

Napalm. ARVN called in an air strike on the wrong coordinates--happened all the time. Ashes--that's all that was left of my beautiful wife. I got hit shortly after that--took on a squad of NVA regulars by myself. Didn't want to--keep fighting. Tired. Tired of it all. Didn't care if I came home in a box. EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

How old were you, Eddie.

EDDIE

Twenty-two. Just made JG. Wanted to save the world. Grew up fast--too fast. Didn't know anything from anything. Lost--everything . . .

CLAIRE (after a moment)

I think you've done--remarkably well, considering.

EDDIE (hard)

Look, CLAIRE. I've *been* there. I've done it all--drugs, booze, night sweats, women, depression. Don't mistake me for a saint.

CLAIRE

You called me "CLAIRE."

EDDIE

I'm sorry.

CLAIRE

No, it's fine. I rather liked it. And I know you're not a saint. Saints don't--look at women the way you look at me.

EDDIE

I thought you were all through with that nonsense.

CLAIRE

I did too.

EDDIE

I'm not a catch, CLAIRE. I'm not a find; I'm probably not even a good date. And I sure as hell don't know what I'm doing here!

(She gets up, walks away, stands for a moment then goes to EDDIE and holds out her arms.)

CLAIRE

Sometimes we just need to be held or maybe just to hold on to someone. Would you let me hold you Eddie?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

For how long?  
EDDIE

I don't know. Maybe--for as long as it takes.  
CLAIRE

Just don't--  
EDDIE (rising)

I know better than to expect anything.  
CLAIRE

(They embrace, softly at first, then with more passion. EDDIE finally lift CLAIRE'S face and kisses her. As they kiss, LIGHTS COME UP OPPOSITE THEM ON ELLIOTT AND VICTORIA. They too are kissing softly. After the kiss both couples look at each other.)

I think you'd better have a talk with Elliott.  
CLAIRE (to Eddie)

I think I'd better have a talk with Eddie.  
ELLIOTT (to Victoria)

Yes, I think that would be the right thing to do.  
EDDIE AND VICTORIA

(BLACKOUT. END ACT I.)

**THE BITCH OF BAILEY'S BEACH**

by

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ACT II, SCENE I

SCENE: LIGHTS COME UP on ELLIOTT under an umbrella at Bailey's Beach. He's wearing white tennis togs and dark glasses; he has a white towel slung over his shoulder. He uses the towel to wipe the sweat from his brow as he waits and takes a pull from a bottle of Sam Adams. The rest of a six pack is on the table next to him. He checks the time, looks back at the clubhouse and finally scans the beach. EDDIE enters downstage left; he is wearing khaki shorts, a white polo shirt and is carrying his boat shoes.

ELLIOTT (motioning to Eddie)

Eddie! Eddie! Come on up.

(EDDIE crosses the line onto Bailey's Beach.)

ELLIOTT

You don't have to come in this way. As my guest you can come in the front door?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

I'd prefer not to embarrass us both Elliott.

EDDIE

Beer?

ELLIOTT

No--thanks.

EDDIE

You don't mind if I . . .

ELLIOTT

Of course not. Go ahead.

EDDIE

(ELLIOTT takes another long pull of beer from the bottle. Both men are a little nervous.)

You okay?

ELLIOTT

Never better. You?

EDDIE

Great! You?

ELLIOTT

Not so good. (A beat.) I think I'll have that beer after all.

EDDIE

Here ya go my man.

ELLIOTT (handing him a beer)

Much obliged.

EDDIE

(Silence.)

That's one hell of a blue ocean out there.

ELLIOTT (looking out to sea)



The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

That's the last thing we want. (A beat.) Do I have to say anything?

ELLIOTT

Feel free to say anything you want. Or just to listen if that's what you're more comfortable with.

EDDIE (takes a pull from the bottle)

I know the drill, and I'm one hell of a listener.

ELLIOTT (after a moment)

Look, Eddie, I know this is personal, and maybe it's none of my business, but in this situation, I think it's important that nobody gets hurt.

EDDIE

Or pissed off.

ELLIOTT

Exactly.

EDDIE

I understand that perfectly.

ELLIOTT

Or for anyone to be taken advantage of. (A beat.) Are you with me on that?

EDDIE

Yeah, I got it. No pain and no gain.

ELLIOTT

Exactly! The three of us are involved in this, and I recognize that she's--very fond of you.

EDDIE

It's probably the eye patch.

ELLIOTT (takes a drink)

Whatever. Anyway, I want you to know up front that *nothing* has ever happened between us.

EDDIE (confused)

What?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ELLIOTT

You know--any kind of . . . intimacy.

EDDIE

Well, yeah, Elliott, I just assumed that to be the case.

ELLIOTT

But I'd be lying to you if I told you . . . I haven't thought about it.

(EDDIE looks around. He's getting really uncomfortable. He takes another drink of beer.)

EDDIE (lowering his voice)

Look, Elliott, maybe you should talk to someone else.

ELLIOTT

It's the three of us who are involved in this Eddie.

EDDIE

Still--something this personal . . .

ELLIOTT

She's a damned attractive woman, Eddie.

EDDIE

I don't deny that, but--Elliott . . . after all—

ELLIOTT

Don't tell me you haven't thought about it!

EDDIE

That's different!

ELLIOTT

I don't see how it's all that different.

EDDIE

Read your Freud, Elliott.

ELLIOTT

I don't give a damn about Freud, and I know what I want.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

Damn! Scott Fitzgerald was right: you rich people really *are* different.

ELLIOTT

Money's got nothing do to with it Eddie. It's a perfectly natural desire.

EDDIE

Not where I come from!

ELLIOTT

Eddie, we're coming from the same place. We *both* want her.

EDDIE

You're a sick man, Elliott.

ELLIOTT

Eddie, we talked it over and agreed that I should talk to you before--we take things any further.

EDDIE

You mean--she *knows* about this?

ELLIOTT

She asked me to talk to you. I think she wants it too, but may not know it yet. (A beat.) And if you can have her, why can't I?

EDDIE (stunned)

I don't know what to say.

ELLIOTT

Just say it's okay.

ELLIOTT

It's *not* okay! I'm deeply committed to a liberal, almost radical in some cases, worldview, but *this*--is *too* much.

ELLIOTT (irritated)

I guess you're not the liberal you think you are.

EDDIE

This is not liberal! It's--*unnatural!*

ELLIOTT

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

There is nothing unnatural about love, Eddie. And I would have no qualms whatsoever about marrying her if that's what it comes too.

EDDIE

There are laws against that kind of union, Elliott.

ELLIOTT

Yeah--in Alabama!

EDDIE (confused)

Alabama?

ELLIOTT

And Mississippi and Louisiana.

EDDIE

You can't marry your mother in any of those states!

ELLIOTT

*My mother?*

EDDIE (start to go)

And you can tell her for me to find herself another boy!

ELLIOTT

*Jesus, Eddie, I'm not talking about my mother!*

EDDIE

Well, who the hell are you talking about?

ELLIOTT

Vicki!

(EDDIE is stunned.)

EDDIE (thinks, then irritated)

Oh, *Vicki*, now is it?

ELLIOTT

Yeah! You got a problem with that? (A beat.) Because unless I'm mistaken, you were planning on doing to my mother, what you thought I wanted to do with her.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(EDDIE finishes his beer.)

EDDIE (irritated)

No, I don't have a problem with that.

ELLIOTT (slams his bottle down)

Well neither do I.

EDDIE

So why are we yelling at each other?

ELLIOTT

It's a guy thing you son-of-bitch!

EDDIE

Yeah, like *you'd* know.

ELLIOTT

My mother. Christ!

EDDIE

Gimme another beer!

(ELLIOTT hands him the last beer and they both take a long pull from the bottle.)

ELLIOTT

Eddie—let's keep the fact that we had this little chat just between the two of us.

EDDIE

You think I'd want somebody else to know?

ELLIOTT

Swear it!

EDDIE

Okay. I swear it.

ELLIOTT

On your pecker!

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

May my pecker shrivel up and fall off if I ever mention this conversation to another soul—living or dead.

Okay, shake on it.

ELLIOTT (extends his hand)

I'm shaking enough already.

EDDIE

(They both take a drink of beer with unsteady hands as the LIGHTS COME DOWN TO END THE SCENE.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT II, SCENE II

SCENE: A week or so later. LIGHTS COME UP on VICTORIA in her office. She is dressed in designer jeans, a silk blouse and wearing a ladies Rolex. After a moment, EDDIE enters, looking like a Newport native in white tennis shorts, a polo shirt and boat shoes with no socks. He too is wearing what appears to be a sparkling new Rolex.

Got a minute?

EDDIE

Eddie--of course. What a surprise.

VICTORIA

I hope not an unpleasant one.

EDDIE

Of course not. You know that.

VICTORIA

Wasn't sure.

EDDIE

Please--sit.

VICTORIA

Haven't seen much of you lately.

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Likewise. VICTORIA

That's my point. EDDIE

I see. VICTORIA

My point? EDDIE

Yes. I see your point. And it's true. We haven't seen much of each other since--  
lately. VICTORIA

Thought I'd stop in to . . . see how you're doing. EDDIE (after a moment)

That's very thoughtful of you. VICTORIA

How are you--doing? EDDIE

Fine. You? VICTORIA

Fine. EDDIE

Well, we're both fine. VICTORIA

Sally? EDDIE

She's fine too. VICTORIA

All three of us then. It's a fine thing when things are all so fine. EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

VICTORIA

Yes, it is. (A beat.) Of course I've been very busy. It really never stops.

EDDIE

I take it you've been seeing something of--Elliott.

VICTORIA

That's right. And unless I'm mistaken, you've been spending some time with Miss Vanderbilk.

EDDIE

That's right. (A beat.) I guess that's why I'm here.

VICTORIA (She looks at her watch.)

I have a meeting in 10 minutes.

EDDIE

Is that a--Rolex?

VICTORIA (spots his)

Is that? (A beat.) Since when did a Renaissance man need to know the time of day?

EDDIE

It was a gift.

VICTORIA

So was this. There's no present like the time.

(They're both uncomfortable and a little embarrassed.)

EDDIE

I had a little chat with Elliott last week.

VICTORIA

About?

EDDIE

Us.

VICTORIA

You and Elliott?

EDDIE

No. Elliott and I *had* the chat, but it was about you and me us.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

And you and Miss Vanderbilk? VICTORIA

That's right. EDDIE

And me and Elliott? VICTORIA

Yes, all of us--all the happy people. EDDIE

How did it go? VICTORIA

Well, I think that in order to clear up a *major* misunderstanding, we glossed over the salient points of what we should have been talking about. EDDIE

Since I wasn't there, and since Elliott won't say a word about it, other than that everything is "*fine*", you'll have to clue me in about the more salient points of what was or wasn't said. VICTORIA

Looking back on it, I think there was some misunderstanding about--relationships. EDDIE (thinks, then)

Whose? VICTORIA

Ours. (A beat.) Meaning--yours and mine. EDDIE

I have five minutes Eddie. VICTORIA (checks the time)

What--is or *was* our relationship? EDDIE

VICTORIA

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

What can I say? We've been together for--how many years now? Five? (He nods.) But we've never really talked about anything--permanent.

EDDIE

You're married.

VICTORIA

Which is very convenient for you.

EDDIE

*And you.*

VICTORIA

And in all those years, you've never once said--you know what you haven't said.

EDDIE

I didn't have to say it. I tried to show it--in what I did--for you and for Sally.

VICTORIA

Eddie, it's your nature to do things for people. You do things for everyone, and that's a very admirable trait, but I need more than generosity from a man I--I'm involved with.

EDDIE

And Elliott is both generous--obviously--and willing to--communicate more openly?

VICTORIA

He's willing to--takes things further.

EDDIE

I don't know what you mean.

VICTORIA

Yes you do. (A beat.) And I'm selfish in that way. I want *it all*--100 percent.

EDDIE

We never talked about that kind of commitment.

VICTORIA

No, of course you're right, we never did. (A beat.) So, I guess that means we're both free to--pursue other interests.

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Yeah, I guess so, if that's what you want.

VICTORIA

Is that what I said?

EDDIE

I don't know what you said.

VICTORIA

Well, I'll say this: Elliott certainly has a great deal to offer a girl.

EDDIE

You're a woman.

VICTORIA

He has even more to offer a woman.

EDDIE

CLAIRE has her good points too.

VICTORIA

And she's very generous as well.

EDDIE

Yes, she is. And charming and attractive and intelligent.

VICTORIA

So, maybe we should just--go with the flow--I think is the expression they use these days.

EDDIE

Or go for the gold.

VICTORIA

That's even better. "Go for the Gold." That's what we're all about right?

EDDIE (woodenly)

Maybe it is. Maybe that's what we're *all* all about.

VICTORIA (breaking)

Oh, god, Eddie, I hope not.

(BLACKOUT.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT II, SCENE III:

SCENE: A few days later. LIGHTS COME UP GLORIA sitting on a chase lounge at Bailey's Beach. She is under a white hot SPOT LIGHT and rubbing on tanning lotion and sipping intermittently from a cocktail. After a moment CLAIRE ENTERS. She is wearing a white beach robe over her swimsuit.

GLORIA

CLAIRE, Darling! Please sit. I haven't seen you for ages.

CLAIRE

Hello Gloria.

(CLAIRE takes off the robe. She's wearing an expensive one-piece pastel designer suit. She takes a seat on the chase next to GLORIA.)

GLORIA

Where have you been keeping yourself? Or has someone else been keeping you?

CLAIRE

I haven't actually left the Island.

GLORIA

You don't say?

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

No, I do as a matter of fact.

GLORIA

Rumor has it you've been seen in the company of a mysterious man--something of a pirate I understand.

CLAIRE

A pirate?

GLORIA

A regular Long John Silver or maybe Captain Hook--the one with the eye patch.

CLAIRE

Of course, the eye patch.

GLORIA

It's all--very mysterious.

CLAIRE

Not really. He's not a pirate at all. Quite the opposite in fact.

GLORIA

Then why the patch?

CLAIRE

He lost an eye in Vietnam.

GLORIA

Oh, well . . . that's . . . a terrible thing.

CLAIRE

Yes, I think we'd all agree on that--*now*, as he would say.

GLORIA

I had no idea. I just thought . . .

CLAIRE

He gets along rather well.

GLORIA

Bully for him. (A beat.) Is he . . . a *younger* man?

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

The sad fact is, Gloria, they're *all* younger than we are.

GLORIA

Oh, you bitch, you don't have to remind me.

CLAIRE

Don't worry. You look great, old girl.

GLORIA (horrified)

Old girl! CLAIRE for god's sake, what's come over you.

CLAIRE

You know, Gloria, I really don't know.

GLORIA

Oh my god, you're not--in love? Are you? Again?

CLAIRE

Of course not. I'm just . . . having the time of my life.

GLORIA

Tell me more. Who is this mystery man?

CLAIRE

You've actually met him.

GLORIA

When?

CLAIRE

A couple of weeks ago.

GLORIA

I don't recall.

CLAIRE

It was right here--the man with the metal detector.

GLORIA (thinks, then)

Not . . .

CLAIRE

Yes. Fast Eddie Sullivan.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

GLORIA

I don't believe it. Besides that man didn't wear an eye patch.

CLAIRE

He had on dark glasses.

GLORIA

I believe you're serious.

CLAIRE

I've never been more so.

GLORIA

I don't know what to say.

GLORIA

He's really quite charming--a Renaissance Man.

GLORIA

A Renaissance Man? (A beat.) I didn't know there was just a thing. I thought Thomas Jefferson was the end of the line.

CLAIRE

Apparently not.

GLORIA

Even so, he's not . . .

CLAIRE

One of us?

GLORIA

I didn't want to put it *that* way. But--yes.

CLAIRE

No, he's not, but I'm working on it.

GLORIA

Are you sure you know what you're doing, CLAIRE?

CLAIRE

I don't have the vaguest notion really; that's what makes the whole thing so exciting. And Eddie is--quite resourceful and very bright.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

GLORIA

There's nothing to keep--those people--from being bright, but--there's the money or in this case, a lack thereof.

CLAIRE

Eddie has money.

GLORIA

Darling, I mean--*money*! He isn't--wealthy.

CLAIRE

No, but he could be.

GLORIA

If he married you.

CLAIRE

No. On his own.

GLORIA

How can that be?

CLAIRE

Elliott had him thoroughly vetted. Turns out he sold a patent for a software program he developed for the fishing industry to Micronix for a rather large sum of money to be paid over time. The program is an industry standard now, and he continues to get a piece of the action.

GLORIA

So where's the money?

CLAIRE

He gives it away.

GLORIA

Gives it away? All of it?

CLAIRE

Every penny. He lives on a modest pension from the Navy and from what he makes doing a great variety of very odd jobs around town, including but not limited to, advising our congressional representatives.

GLORIA (thinks, then)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

It's very admirable of him to be so generous, but that's still no excuse for him to--dress so outrageously.

CLAIRE

He doesn't--anymore.

GLORIA

Even so, I don't think you should trust him. You have no idea of his true character.

CLAIRE

All I know is that he truly *is* a character--one that I'm growing rather fond of. And by the way, he's not aware that Elliott--did this research.

GLORIA

So he doesn't know that you know that he's--more that he seems to be.

CLAIRE

And I'd like to keep it that way for the time being. I'll tell him--when the time is right.

GLORIA

You know I can't keep a secret.

CLAIRE

I just don't want it to show up in Vanity Fair.

GLORIA

You have my word--for what it's worth.

CLAIRE

Which is significantly less than your stock portfolio.

GLORIA

Thank god for that. (A beat.) Well, I must be off. And I'm sure you have your--diversions as well.

(GLORIA gets up, puts on her robe and starts to exit.)

GLORIA

Darling, be careful out there amongst the people.

CLAIRE

## The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Thank you for the advice, Dear, but being careful has kept me from *living* life for much too long. I think I'd prefer to be--carefree now.

(BLACKOUT.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT II, SCENE IV

SCENE: A few days later. LIGHTS COME UP on EDDIE and CLAIRE on her patio. Eddie is dressed casually and CLAIRE is wearing a white silk kimono tied loosely at the waist. She's making no attempt at modestly as she serves coffee from a sterling pot; it is clear that they have spent the night together.

Sleep well?

EDDIE

Wonderfully. Magnificently! (A beat.) You?

CLAIRE (runs her hand across his neck)

Average.

EDDIE

Which for you is not so good.

CLAIRE

No, which for me *is* pretty good.

EDDIE

I shouldn't have gotten you up so early. I apologize.

CLAIRE

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

You don't have to. I have a big day and need to get an early start. How 'bout you?

CLAIRE

I haven't any definite plans. (A beat.) Why don't you spend the day with me?

EDDIE

I'd love to do that, but I really do have a full day. I'm sorry.

CLAIRE

I could make it worth your while.

EDDIE

I know you could. Still--

CLAIRE

What am I supposed to do?

EDDIE

You can do anything you want--fly to Paris for lunch; have Jacob drive you to Boston or the Hamptons. Buy off a Congressman. Initiate a ripple in the stock market.

CLAIRE

I want to do something *different*.

EDDIE

Just--go shopping.

CLAIRE

*Really.*

EDDIE

Meditate.

CLAIRE

You obviously don't understand Eddie. I've already done practically *everything*.

EDDIE

Then come with me.

CLAIRE

Where are you going?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE

The Martin Luther King Center.

CLAIRE

Oh my.

EDDIE

It gets better--or worse, depending on your perspective.

CLAIRE

What do you do there?

EDDIE

Teach a class in conflict resolution.

CLAIRE

To children?

EDDIE

And adults. Depends on who shows up.

CLAIRE

I don't think I'd be of any use to you there.

EDDIE

Fine. Why don't you just stay in all day then and--count your money.

CLAIRE

Why don't you?

EDDIE

I don't have any.

CLAIRE (thinks, then)

That's not what I heard.

EDDIE

Do you believe everything you hear?

CLAIRE

Heavens no. Like most of us, I only hear what I believe.

EDDIE

And just what is it that you believe you heard?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

That you--have a source of income.

EDDIE

That's right. I do. My country is still trying to pay me back for its lack of vision in Vietnam.

CLAIRE

I wasn't referring to that. (A few beats.) Oh Eddie, don't you know that Elliott had you--checked out as soon as I--showed some interest in you. He does that to protect me from--

EDDIE

People like me.

CLAIRE

No! People *not* like you.

EDDIE

Had me checked out?

CLAIRE

I didn't ask him to do it. A few days ago he just dropped this manila envelope on my desk. Now I know--pretty much everything--

EDDIE

There is to know.

CLAIRE

Only about your past.

EDDIE

Well I suppose I should be somewhat relieved to know that you people can't determine futures as well as look into the past.

CLAIRE

I wasn't supposed to tell you.

EDDIE

Then why did you?

CLAIRE

Because--I don't want there to be any secrets between us.

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Okay. So tell me a secret about you.

EDDIE (thinks, then)

I have no secrets.

CLAIRE

I have to go.

EDDIE (rises quickly)

No, wait!

CLAIRE

For what?

EDDIE

There is something--but--you probably won't believe me.

CLAIRE

I'll keep an open mind.

EDDIE

It's just that--I--I'm not at all what I seem.

CLAIRE

Go on.

EDDIE

It's an illusion, all smoke and mirrors. I'm simply an image of some obscure being created by circumstances beyond my control. In reality I am nothing; I have no personal value; I am worthless.

EDDIE (looks around the grounds)

You certainly don't *look* worthless.

CLAIRE

That's exactly what I mean. Look at me, Eddie. *Look at me!*

(He crosses touches her shoulders and looks into her face.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE (continuing)

Take this all away and what's left?

EDDIE

A great deal.

CLAIRE

Nonsense. Just a woman in the shell of a 60-year-old body. A name. Claire Vankderbilk. A history. What good is she to anyone independent of all this (making a sweeping gesture with her hands). Because of this wealth which I had very little to do with acquiring, I've lived a privileged life. Dined with Presidents and Kings. Because of *this*, I'm held in high esteem by politicians and pirates; looked up to by people I don't even know. (A few beats.) But in my heart, I don't have a shred of self-worth. I was born with a silver flask in my mouth and I have lived my life in a stupor of elegance and self-deception.

EDDIE

Claire, you've done more good than you know.

CLAIRE

Until you brought Victoria and Sally here, no person of color had ever set foot in my house except as a servant or entertainer. Your friend Tran--I didn't even realize there were any Vietnamese in Newport. I was raised to look down on the *Irish* for god's sake. I know nothing of the world beyond that door, have done nothing personally to make it any better.

EDDIE

Claire, the money you give--

CLAIRE

Saves me millions in taxes so I can make even more money and give away even less of it. Do you know what I fear more than anything Eddie?

EDDIE

No.

CLAIRE

I'm terrified that when the final reckoning comes, God will be much more concerned with how much I kept for myself than with how much I gave away.

EDDIE

You're being too hard on yourself. If you gave it all away--it would be gone, utterly, completely in a very short time. The government would spend it on god

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE (continuing)

only knows what, and most charities have no idea of how to manage their funds over the long haul. They just spend it and beg for more and then spend that too. Then it's *all* gone. Your gifts provide stability over time.

CLAIRE

But you give so much more--you have nothing! And you give it all away.

EDDIE

I have everything!

CLAIRE

Like what?

EDDIE

My health. My friends. My work. A purpose. Time to reflect. I have the things that count rather than things that need counting. And I have the attention of a beautiful woman.

CLAIRE

You have much more than her attention.

EDDIE

And I probably deserve a lot less.

CLAIRE

No, I do. (A beat.) Maybe I should give even more?

EDDIE

Not more money.

CLAIRE

What then?

EDDIE

Come with me?

CLAIRE (frightened)

To the projects?

EDDIE

Why not?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

I have nothing to offer. CLAIRE

Of course you do. EDDIE

What? CLAIRE

Same as me--just this. EDDIE (gestures to himself)

They wouldn't want me. CLAIRE

EDDIE  
They didn't want me either--in the beginning. Certainly they didn't trust me, but eventually we discovered we had something of value to offer each other.

CLAIRE  
But I have no skills; I don't know how to *do* anything!

EDDIE  
You know how to get things done. You know how to open doors.

CLAIRE  
Yes, and on those that won't open I can usually bribe the doorman.

EDDIE  
Put some clothes on. We'll go.

I don't know, Eddie. CLAIRE (frightened)

I do. EDDIE

You won't leave me will you? CLAIRE

No. Now get dressed. EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(She kisses him and then turns to go. She stops and looks back before exiting.)

Eddie?

CLAIRE

I won't go without you.

EDDIE

You--know I love you, don't you?

CLAIRE

(He is stunned. She exits.)

No, I didn't know.

EDDIE (to himself)

(BLACKOUT.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT II, SCENE V

SCENE: The next day. LIGHTS COME UP ON TRAN seated at a table in a barroom. There are two bottles of beer on the table; Tran is drinking from one. EDDIE enters wearing white tennis shorts, a polo shirt, boat shoes, a Greek fisherman's cap and a light yachting windbreaker. He crosses to the table, and sits.

Eddie, my man!

TRAN

Hello, Bro!

EDDIE

I barely recognized you. If it weren't for the patch, I'd taken you for that poor bastard that married Jane Fonda.

TRAN

Ted Turner.

EDDIE

He's the one.

TRAN

He ain't poor!

EDDIE

What the hell is going on?

TRAN

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

EDDIE  
I sure as hell wish I knew. I feel like I've been hit by a train.

TRAN  
Amtrak?

EDDIE  
Union Pacific.

TRAN  
Want to talk about it?

EDDIE  
Not really.

TRAN  
We'll just drink then.

(TRAN hands EDDIE the extra beer and they both drink from the bottle.)

EDDIE  
I think I've screwed up big time, Bro. Don't know which way to go.

TRAN  
Go with the flow.

EDDIE  
That's what I'm doing . . . doesn't feel right.

TRAN  
How's it feel?

EDDIE  
Wrong.

TRAN  
Is that right?

EDDIE  
No words games, Bro. I'm in the deep serious here.

TRAN

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

You taught me the word games.

EDDIE

I know. Big mistake.

TRAN

Talk to me.

EDDIE

She loves me, or thinks she does.

TRAN

It's probably just the eye patch.

EDDIE

Come on man!

TRAN

Sorry. (A beat.) She told you that.

EDDIE

Yeah.

TRAN

But you already knew it?

EDDIE

Had no idea.

TRAN

Then you're blind.

EDDIE

Only half.

TRAN

So what did you do?

EDDIE

Took her to the projects.

TRAN

To the projects? (A beat.) What did you *say* to her?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Nothing. I didn't know what to say.

EDDIE

You know what the problem is, Eddie.

TRAN (thinks, then)

What?

EDDIE

That wasn't a question.

TRAN

Yeah, I know. Thuy.

EDDIE (nods)

It's always been Thuy.

TRAN

Just for the last 30 years.

EDDIE

I loved her too, Eddie. We were of the same flesh; the same blood ran in our veins. I ran with her on the beach. I laughed with her, cried, protected her, tormented her, bathed with her, shared her childhood secrets, lived with her in the same house for 19 years. I did everything but die with her.

TRAN

That was for me to do.

EDDIE

She wouldn't have wanted that.

TRAN

I swore to myself--and to her--that there would never be anyone else.

EDDIE

And there won't be until you let her go. (A few beats.) You've done enough, Bro. Let her go. Let yourself live again.

TRAN

I don't know if I can.

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

You're afraid. TRAN

Afraid? EDDIE

Of losing someone else you love. TRAN

That's getting to the point. EDDIE

I still don't know enough of the language to--how you say-- TRAN

Beat around the bush. EDDIE

Yeah, beat around the bush. TRAN

So you think I should--what? EDDIE

Just let yourself feel what you feel. It will be good for both of you. TRAN

What about Thuy? EDDIE

She won't mind. TRAN

(A few beats while they drink and think.)

Okay. EDDIE

Okay! TRAN (holds up his bottle)

Just one more thing--how do I know she's the one? EDDIE (after tapping bottles)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

TRAN

I'll tell you the same thing you told me many years ago. (A beat.) You'll know, Bro. You'll just know.

EDDIE

Okay.

(TRAN'S cell phone rings. He answers it and talks for a moment and then turns to EDDIE.)

TRAN

Miss Saigon just landed in Port Judith. I have to meet Elliott there to talk about the expansion of the take-out facility. Come with me.

EDDIE

Sorry, Bro--all booked up.

TRAN

You okay?

EDDIE

I think so.

TRAN

Okay. I'll see you tomorrow at the Vanderbilk's. Elliott evidently has an important announcement to make.

EDDIE

Okay. I'll see you there.

TRAN (exiting)

And, Eddie, don't wait too long to tell her how you feel. Elliott is hot on her trail, and he's not a bad guy.

EDDIE (to himself)

Elliott!

(BLACKOUT.)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT II, SCENE VI

SCENE: Evening of the same day.  
LIGHTS COME UP in the front room of Victoria's home. EDDIE enters, runs to the "front door" and starts knocking.

Vicki. Vicki! You there?

EDDIE

(SALLY enters the room; she is dressed in cut-off jeans and T-shirt. She's carrying a plunger that she uses as a pointer and a prod throughout the scene.)

Eddie . . .

SALLY (opening the door)

Where's your mother?

EDDIE (entering)

Where do you think?

SALLY

I don't know. She wasn't at work.

EDDIE

She's in Reno.

SALLY

Nevada?

EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

You know of another one? SALLY

What's she doing therrere? EDDIE

Don't ask and I won't tell. SALLY

Christ! EDDIE

Do you care? SALLY

Of course I care. I . . . EDDIE

You what? SALLY

I don't know. EDDIE

You haven't seen her for two weeks, Eddie. What did you think she was going to do? SALLY

I don't know. I--I thought . . . we were a--couple. EDDIE

You were. Note the verb tense. SALLY

I really screwed this up, huh? EDDIE

Yeah, and you're behaving like a couple--of idiots. And look at you. I don't even know who you are. SALLY

That makes two of us. EDDIE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Three!

SALLY

She's not the same either.

EDDIE

SALLY

Yes she is--under the designer jeans and the Talbots blouse, she's the same woman that fell for you.

EDDIE

Past tense again.

SALLY

A month ago--she would have married you in a second. Now . . .

EDDIE

She's already married.

SALLY

Don't you know *anything* Mr. Renaissance Man? She didn't file for divorce because she was afraid you wouldn't stay with us if she was--available. Married she was safe for you because you wouldn't have to commit to her--something you couldn't do. And she knew why.

EDDIE

Jesus! Things have changed now.

SALLY

For her too. (A beat.) She's in Reno to file for a divorce, a quickie; Elliott arranged a flight out in some big shot's corporate jet. La-de-da.

EDDIE

Well that is just great! What the hell else could go wrong?

SALLY (offers him the plunger)

The plumbing. And since you're here, you can give me a hand.

EDDIE (grabs the plunger)

I know nothing of women, but when it comes to plumbing, this is one Renaissance Man that really knows his shit. Gimme that thing!

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(He starts off.)

What are you going to do?

SALLY

Start in the toilet bowl.

EDDIE

About Mom?

SALLY

When does she get back?

EDDIE

Tomorrow. I'm going to meet her at the Vanderbilk estate.

SALLY

Okay. I'll see you there.

EDDIE

But what are you going to *do*, Eddie?

SALLY

I have to come up with a battle plan.

EDDIE

Better be a good one.

SALLY

Tell me something I don't already know.

EDDIE

Okay--I think Elliott's going to ask Mom to marry him.

SALLY

(Eddie thinks for moment then looks at the plunger and shakes his head.)

I've got one hell of a mess to clean up, don't I?

EDDIE (raises the plunger like a sword)

(BLACKOUT.)

## The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ACT II, SCENE VII

SCENE: The following afternoon. LIGHTS COME UP on the patio of the Vanderbilk estate. Everyone is there but CLAIRE. ELLIOTT, VICTORIA, EDDIE, TRAN and SALLY are all milling about. Eddie is dressed somewhere between his eccentric beach bum look and a tourist in khaki shorts and a Hawaiian shirt. He and ELLIOTT are fiddling with a new metal detector stage left. After a moment, CLAIRE ENTERS dressed conservatively in a beige pantsuit with a purple scarf and loose gold jewelry around her neck. She is quite striking and beautiful. EDDIE crosses to greet her.

Ah, Mother's here. We can begin.

ELLIOTT

What's this all about, Elliott?

CLAIRE

Be patient. I have an important--announcement to make. At least, I hope I do. Victoria, come up here would you?

ELLIOTT

Of course.

VICTORIA (looks around nervously)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

ELLIOTT (wraps his arm around her)  
My friends, let me thank you again for coming, in spite of whatever personal reservations you may have, to the house that Vanderbilt built. It is, let me assure you, much more now than it ever was before for having you in it. I'm sure Mother agrees with me on that point.

CLAIRE  
I would agree that we are *all* better for it.

SALLY  
Better what?

ELLIOTT  
Better--prepared . . .

CLAIRE  
Don't stop there, Elliott.

ELLIOTT  
Better prepared to--

EDDIE  
-- recognize not only our differences but more importantly the ways in which we are alike.

ELLIOTT  
I couldn't have said it better myself--although I would have like to have tried.

EDDIE  
My apologies.

ELLIOTT  
You have nothing to be sorry for.

SALLY  
That's what you think. Eddie's 'bout the sorriest Renaissance Man I've seen in a *long* time.

VICTORIA  
Sally!

EDDIE  
It's true Vicki. I'm one sorry son-of—

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

That's enough!

CLAIRE

Sorry.

EDDIE

What'd I tell you?

SALLY

ELLIOTT

In any case, I think it is important to note that--events have transpired recently that have a direct and significant effect on a number of people gathered here on this beautiful Newport afternoon.

CLAIRE

Elliott, I believe the area around the bush has received more than an adequate beating, why don't you get to the point?

ELLIOTT

Of course, the point. (A beat.) First off, I would like to announce that Mr. Tran and I have entered into a limited partnership to build a new state-of-the-art take out facility and processing plant in Point Judith, and that I look forward to a long and prosperous relationship with my Vietnamese brother.

EDDIE (overly enthusiastic)

Excellent! Why don't we just stop right there? I don't think I can stand anymore good news.

SALLY (to Eddie)

That's your battle plan?

EDDIE (to Sally)

First you create a diversion.

SALLY (doubtfully)

Oh.

ELLIOTT

Now for something more--personal. (He removes a jewelry box from his pocket and opens it to reveal a huge diamond.) Victoria, do you know what this is?

VICTORIA (weakly)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

A token of your friendship?

ELLIOTT

No, Darling. It's a diamond engagement ring.

SALLY

What a friggin' rock!

VICTORIA

I didn't know they got so big.

CLAIRE

Size matters to Elliott.

ELLIOTT

Mother, this is serious. I'm asking this woman to marry me.

VICTORIA

Your are?

CLAIRE

You're what?

ELLIOTT

Do you think she's not good enough?

VICTORIA

You're the one I have doubts about.

ELLIOTT

Well you need doubt me no more. I am a changed man because of Victoria--I have turned over a new leaf. My most ardent desire is to take this woman as my wife. (He kneels.) Victoria-- (She looks to Eddie.)

SALLY (to Eddie)

The plan!

EDDIE (looking at CLAIRE)

Elliott, can we talk about this?

ELLIOTT (still on his knees)

I'm asking Victoria!

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

But--I'm afraid, I'm involved.

EDDIE

With Victoria?

ELLIOTT

Yes.

EDDIE

Is that true?

ELLIOTT (to Victoria)

(VICTORIA can only shrug.)

I thought you were involved with my mother.

ELLIOTT (getting up)

What you were unplugging yesterday in the toilet is about to hit the fan.

SALLY (to Eddie)

I think I should go.

TRAN

No!

EDDIE

Well?

ELLIOTT

I can't deny that I--*was* involved with your mother.

EDDIE

Eddie . . . was?

CLAIRE (surprised)

This is a very delicate and highly complex matter, and I'm afraid some people are going to be hurt--some very decent people, but at the same time I think that we--or some of us--can avoid making what could be a huge mistake and causing even more hurt in the future if we act now.

EDDIE (thinks, then)

I think I'd like a scotch Elliott.

CLAIRE (a little coolly)

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

(He pours her a full glass of scotch, she immediately takes a healthy gulp.)

CLAIRE (takes a slug)

So, tell us more about these--mistakes Eddie.

EDDIE

Before--all of this--happened, and I don't regret a moment of it, Vicki and I had been together--for a very long time, longer than either of us admitted to either of you. We made our relationship sound casual because neither of us ever spoke about a commitment. But, beneath a fear on Vicki's part and a memory on mine, I think there was and still is a deep and abiding love.

ELLIOTT

Then why did she stay married?

(EDDIE looks at VICTORIA.)

VICTORIA

Because I was scared--scared that Eddie would leave if I wasn't married.

EDDIE

And I couldn't commit then. I couldn't allow myself to admit that--I loved her.

VICTORIA

You have to tell them why, Eddie.

EDDIE

For the same reason I couldn't admit to myself that I could love you, CLAIRE. (A beat.) Thirty years ago I promised my nineteen-year-old Vietnamese bride that I would never love another woman, and I didn't allow myself too until now. Now, I love the two of you, but Vicki was first. (To CLAIRE.) I'm sorry.

CLAIRE (smiles sadly and nods)

Well, I suppose I'll just have to live with that. (A beat.) It was nice to be loved--even if just a little.

EDDIE

It was more than that.

CLAIRE

But not more than Victoria?

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

No. EDDIE (looks at Vicki)

Is it over Eddie? Is it *really* over? VICTORIA

It's over. EDDIE

Is it? VICTORIA (turning to Tran)

Yes. All over. Thuy looking down smiling on Eddie. Happy for him—happy for you. TRAN

I'm sorry, Elliott. VICTORIA

Wait just a minute. Eddie--he can't--Vicky, I can give you everything! ELLIOTT

I know. But Eddie gives me everything else. CLAIRE

I won't take this sitting down! ELLIOTT

(CLAIRE crosses to ELLIOTT and pushes him down in a chair.)

Yes you will. And you've never had trouble finding a woman to marry. CLAIRE

I have a good one! ELLIOTT

Give me the ring. CLAIRE

What? ELLIOTT

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE (takes rings and goes to Eddie)  
I should be very angry with you, you know?

EDDIE  
I know.

CLAIRE  
And you have no idea of what I'm capable of when I'm angry.

EDDIE  
No, but I have a good idea of what you're *not* capable of.

CLAIRE  
You've ruined me; I'll probably never get my way again.

SALLY  
Join the club.

CLAIRE  
I think I already have. (She hands the ring to Eddie.) This is for you.

EDDIE  
Claire, I told you. I can't--

CLAIRE  
To give to Victoria!

ELLIOTT  
Mother!

CLAIRE  
You got it for her!

ELLIOTT  
Because *I* wanted to marry her.

EDDIE  
She wouldn't want a ring that--

VICTORIA  
Eddie!

CLAIRE

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

The ring was meant for Victoria.

Much obliged.

EDDIE (takes the ring, then to Elliott)

What the hell? What are friends for?

ELLIOTT (giving in)

(EDDIE looks at the ring and then offers it to VICTORIA.)

Vicky, you want to make this thing legal?

EDDIE

You call that a proposal?

ELLIOTT

Victoria Jefferson--my love for you knows no bounds. You are my life, and if you'd consent to becoming my wife as well, I'd consider myself to be the most fortunate man in the world.

EDDIE

Not bad.

ELLIOTT

I can't live in a beach shack Eddie.

VICTORIA

That means somebody else will have to.

EDDIE

That's the way the world works. Maybe it's not right--but it *is*. And my first priority will be Sally's education.

VICTORIA

That will be my second--after you.

EDDIE

You have exquisite taste.

VICTORIA (to Elliott)

And exceptionally bad luck.

ELLIOTT

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

I think this calls for a drink. And I know just the place to celebrate. Come with me.

(BLACKOUT.)

ACT II, SCENE VIII

SCENE: A few minutes later. LIGHTS COME UP on Bailey's Beach. GLORIA is seated on a chase lounge sunning herself and sipping a drink. EDDIE, VICTORIA, SALLY, TRAN, CLAIRE and ELLIOTT enter and start moving across the "beach" toward GLORIA. ELLIOTT is working the metal detector. Everyone is dressed as before except CLAIRE, who has changed into a multi-colored silk caftan. She also has a scarf of many colors tied around her head. GLORIA looks up, shakes her head disgustedly and watches them approach. She is wearing gold jewelry with her white suite.

Hello, Old Girl.

CLAIRE

Claire? Claire is that--you?

GLORIA

None other.

CLAIRE

I didn't recognize you.

GLORIA

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

CLAIRE

I hardly recognize myself anymore. I've brought my friends for drinks.

ELLIOTT

Hello, Old Girl.

GLORIA

Elliott?

(ELLIOTT lifts the metal detector and waves it over GLORIA'S body.)

GLORIA

What are you doing?

ELLIOTT

I'm getting something--good strong signal. Could be the mother lode.

(GLORIA jumps up and pushes him away. Elliott grabs her wrist.)

ELLIOTT

Gold! What'd I tell you?

GLORIA

Claire, what are you doing?

CLAIRE

Catching some rays, beach combing, contemplating the deep, and, most importantly--celebrating.

GLORIA

Just--*who*--are these people?

CLAIRE

Don't worry about that, Dear. To paraphrase Mr. Lerner, their blood is bluer than the Atlantic is or ever was. Sally and Victoria *Jefferson* are direct descendents of our second President--Thomas, but we needn't go into that. And Mr. Tran is a distant cousin of Ho Chi Minh himself. And of course you remember Fast Eddie Sullivan. His roots go all the way back to the Irish potato famine. (A beat.) Now that the formalities are over, why don't you join us inside for a drink?

GLORIA

The Bitch of Bailey's Beach

Claire . . . you can't take . . . *those* people in there.

CLAIRE

You know Gloria, I just discovered the most remarkable thing--

GLORIA

And just what is that, Dear?

CLAIRE

We are *all*--those people. Please--join us won't you?

GLORIA (blocking their path)

I most certainly will not! Just who the hell do you think you are?

CLAIRE (proudly)

Why haven't you heard, Old Girl? (A beat.) I'm the bitch of Bailey's Beach.

(LIGHTS COME DOWN SLOWLY as  
CLAIRE pushes GLORIA aside and leads  
her friends into the clubhouse. END OF  
PLAY.)

CURTAIN