

**WHO AM I  
THIS TIME?**

**(& OTHER CONUNDRUMS OF LOVE)**

**BY AARON POSNER**

**ADAPTED FROM STORIES BY  
KURT VONNEGUT**



**DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.**

WHO AM I THIS TIME? (& OTHER CONUNDRUMS OF LOVE)  
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(& Other Conundrums of Love)  
by Aaron Posner  
adapted from stories by Kurt Vonnegut

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*Well, this play is all about Love, so ...*  
*First, for my tiny daughter, Maisie,*  
*and my wonderful wife, Erin.*  
*Secondly, for Erin's family, the Weavers,*  
*from whom I have learned a great deal.*  
*Thirdly, for my mother, father, brother, and sister-in-law,*  
*for immeasurable love and support.*  
*And finally, for my extended theatre family —*  
*you know who you are —*  
*from whom I just learn and learn and learn ...*  
*For all of you.*

## SPECIAL THANKS

To Kurt Vonnegut, for his genius. To Donald Farber, for his help. To Beth Bickers, for being both totally awesome and wonderfully helpful. To Dwight Conquergood, for something he said that has always stayed with me, and which I stole and turned to my own purposes in this script. To James Sugg, for the music — once again. To Francis DeSales Brookes, just because his energy from once upon a time at the Arden is somehow knit up with the energy of this particular world for me. To Leslie Hinshaw, for my first indelible experience with *A Streetcar Named Desire*. To Terry Nolen and Amy Murphy and everyone who was part of WHO AM I THIS TIME? at the Arden Theatre Company back in 1988 (especially Babs Pinto, a one-of-a-kind community theatre wonder at the time), everyone involved in all of the various readings over the years (especially Marge Betley, BJ Jones, and Mark Cuddy, and the folks in the reading at GEVA in 2011), and everyone involved in the premiere at Artists Repertory Theatre in Portland in the fall of 2012, who came up with some wonderful ideas and great lines that are in the script and always will be. Thank you all very, very much for your many contributions.

## A NOTE ON THE PLAYING

These are simple love stories of a simpler time. And yet — just below the surface — is Vonnegut's keen, loving, but critical insight into the soft underbelly of human beings. The stories are full of love and heart, and that means that sentimentality is always a danger. In this instance, it could sink the production. The love in question must be real, deep, sincere, but never overly sweet or overly sentimental. These are real people going out on a limb for love, and the stakes must be high and truthful at all times. While it should certainly be playful and funny, the humor must come from the humanity.

While this play is set in rural Connecticut, and Vonnegut's original stories are set in rural New Hampshire, these can really be small towns at this time in America almost anywhere. If folks are doing this in other parts of the country and want to localize the play to their area by changing the place names and the Fort from which Newt hitchhikes and all ... feel free. If that helps connect it more directly to the actual audience in the theatre, that would be great.

WHO AM I THIS TIME? (& OTHER CONUNDRUMS OF LOVE) received its world premiere production under the title *And So It Goes...* in 2012 at Artists Repertory Theatre in Portland, Oregon. It was directed by Aaron Posner; the set design was by Jeff Seats; the lighting design was by Kristeen Crosser; the costume design was by Nancy Hills; the sound design was by Rodolfo Ortega; the props design was by Rusty Tennant; the assistant director was Louanne Mouldevan; and the stage manager was Stephanie Mulligan. The cast was as follows:

TOM NEWTON ..... Tim True  
NEWT, JOEY “DOODLES” BROOKES,  
JOHN MURRA ..... Andy Lee-Hillstrom  
CATHARINE, HELENE, PAULA NEWTON ..... Kayla Lian  
KATE NEWTON..... Valerie Stevens  
DORIS SAWYER, GLORIA HILTON ..... Sarah Lucht  
HARRY NASH, ROY CROCKER ..... Alex Hurt  
VERNE MILLER, GEORGE MURRA..... Leif Norby

## **CHARACTERS**

### **PROLOGUE**

TOM, our friend, narrator, and guide

### **LONG WALK TO FOREVER**

TOM

NEWT, a young soldier, 20ish

CATHARINE, a young woman, 20ish

### **WHO AM I THIS TIME?**

TOM

KATE NEWTON, Tom's wife, a homemaker and  
community theatre actress

DORIS SAWYER, a feisty librarian and community  
theatre director

HARRY NASH, a hardware clerk

HELENE SHAW, a telephone girl

VERNE MILLER, a hardware store owner

JOEY "DOODLES" BROOKES, the young stage manager

### **GO BACK TO YOUR PRECIOUS WIFE AND SON**

TOM

KATE

ROY CROCKER, JR., a plumber

GEORGE MURRA, a writer

GLORIA HILTON, a glamorous movie star

JOHN MURRA, Murra's son

PAULA NEWTON, Tom and Kate's daughter

## **TIME & PLACE**

On stage of the North Crawford Mask and Wig Club,  
North Crawford, Connecticut, spring of '62.

Old set pieces, furniture, ladders, and props  
strewn about here and there.

## **DOUBLING**

Actor 1 (40s):	TOM NEWTON
Actor 2 (40s):	KATE NEWTON
Actor 3 (20s):	NEWT JOEY "DOODLES" BROOKES JOHN MURRA
Actor 4 (20s):	CATHARINE HELENE SHAW PAULA NEWTON
Actor 5 (30s):	HARRY NASH ROY CROCKER, JR.
Actor 6 (30s or 40s):	VERNE MILLER GEORGE MURRA
Actor 7 (40s or 50s):	DORIS SAWYER GLORIA HILTON



# WHO AM I THIS TIME?

## (& OTHER CONUNDRUMS OF LOVE)

### ACT ONE

*The stage of the North Crawford Mask and Wig Club, a community theatre in North Crawford, Connecticut. Tom and the rest of the cast come onto stage. It is very helpful if someone has a guitar they can play. Other instruments could be a plus, too. Tom is a friendly, unassuming man with a big heart, curious mind, and engaging spirit . . . He should strive for an easy, informal, playful relationship with the audience. If they answer back, that's okay . . . a bit. If they sneeze (at a convenient time) he may just want to say "God bless you," that kind of thing . . .*

TOM. Good evening. Good evening, and welcome to the North Crawford Mask and Wig Club, the finest community theatre in Central Connecticut. Trust me, the Weaverville Footlighters and the Playcrafters of Pawcatuck can't hold a candle to the Mask and Wig. In plays or softball. So, welcome. We're glad you're here. (*Beat. He looks at the audience a moment. Where to start...?*) So, just a few months back, an encyclopedia salesman stopped by at the North Crawford Public Library. He pointed out to our feisty librarian, Doris Sawyer, that the most recent general reference work was a 1928 *Britannica*, backstopped by a 1910 *Americana*. He informed her that it was newly 1962, by God, and that many important things had happened since 1928, naming, among others, the Great Depression, penicillin, and Hitler's invasion of Poland. And *Ben-Hur* . . . But Doris informed him that folks here were just fine with what they had, thank you very much, and they would catch up with history when they were good and ready. She explained to him that the winds of change he alluded to were more like mild breezes in this part of Connecticut, and

consequently things here change just about as quickly as the rules of chess. (*Considers this a moment ...*) Of course, things *do* change 'round here ... There's a new fire engine down at the firehouse, for instance, that's new. And some big changes right here at the Mask and Wig lately, too. Our former treasurer, Mrs. Randall, resigned last year. About once a month for thirty years she'd refused to say what our balance was for fear we'd spend it foolishly. The new treasurer announced a balance of more than six hundred dollars (!) ... and we blew it all on our new curtain. Some have suggested — somewhat unkindly, if you ask me — that it bears a striking resemblance to the color of spoiled salmon ... But someone's always gotta say *something*, don't they? The "Ptomaine Curtain," (as some have taken to calling it), made its debut last year during the lead-off production of the 1960/61 season, *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, starring our own Harry Nash as Captain Queeg. Although, in this production, Captain Queeg did not nervously rattle steel balls in his hand. The balls were eliminated, I understand, on the theory that they were too suggestive. And so it goes ... But, as our time together is brief, we should cut right to the chase. Our subject tonight ... is *love*. That's right, Love. Now, I imagine most of you know a fair amount about the subject. Love is bandied about a lot these days. You can't hardly pick up copy of *Life* or *Look*, or switch on your radio or your television set without hearing something about love. Not that I mind. I'm interested! I suppose I've been thinking about love a reasonable portion of every day since I was about 12 years old. Haven't you? Haven't you? Though, truth be told, the more I learn about love, the less I think I truly understand it. If you don't believe me, ask my wife. (*He looks to his wife.*) No one knows better than she does how little I understand about love. But I'm not giving up! I'm still fascinated ... And I don't think I'm alone. I talk to a lot of people in my line of work, and I've found that the number one topic of conversation in North Crawford — in the living rooms and cars and bars and book clubs and baseball diamonds and sewing circles, is *love*. Pure and complicated. I mean, who isn't fascinated by love? (*To a lady in the audience ...*) You, ma'am? Are you interested in love? (*Gets an answer, hopefully positive. To a man ...*) And you, sir? (*To a couple that hopefully looks particularly in love ...*) Well, I can see you're both pretty darn interested in love. And why not? Why not? You can't say the word "love" without about a thousand pictures coming to mind, can you? Try it sometime. Close your eyes, say the word "love" out loud

a few times, and just sit back and watch your own personal slideshow in your head. It's ... humbling ... (*Pointing someone out.*) Umm, not just now, sir, I'm talking up here right now, but try it when you get on home. I had a teacher once in school, must have been 20-some-odd years ago, but I've always remembered it. He said that we were not *Homo erectus* or *Homo sapiens* or whatever "homo" scientists were telling us we were at the time. No, he said, that wasn't it at all. Nope, we are *Homo eros*, he said. *What makes us human is our ability to love.* (*Calling backstage.*) All right, folks, let's get this show on the road ... (*To us.*) Now, I know, we're on a theatre stage here, so anything we do is automatically suspect — fishy, even. You're no fools. Well, most of you aren't, anyway (*Pointing out a fella in the front.*) I'm not so sure about this fella here ... But the rest of you, you know what a little colored stage light can do. (*Lights get prettier.*) You know we can tip the scales with a well-timed sound effect (*A bell chimes in the distance.*) and a little romantic underscoring ... (*Guitar music begins ... the vamp for the song "And So It Goes" ...*) You know that stage plays never show you the whole story, only the parts that they want you to see ... Well, maybe that's enough for now. I think you get the picture ... The stories you're going to hear tonight are *true*. Now, whether any of them ever happened or not, I'll leave entirely up to you ... (*They sing, get things set for the first story, get into costumes, etc. ...*)

SOMEONE.

*Love's a tricky thing, fall, summer, winter, spring,  
The path is never simple, heaven knows ...  
It kicks us to the ground, lifts us up then drops us down  
And so it's always been, and so it goes ...*

ALL.

*And so it goes, and so it goes ...  
And I suppose that's just the way it goes, and always will ...  
And so it goes, and so it goes ...  
And so it's always gone, and going still ...*

TOM. Now once upon a time, in a town ... somewhere in Central Connecticut, say ... there was once a boy ... (*Newt enters.*) and there was once a girl ... (*Katie enters or moves to call attention to her ...*) They'd grown up next door to each other, near fields and woods and orchards, within sight of a lovely bell tower that belonged to a school for the blind, but they had not seen each other for over a year. There had always been a playful, comfortable warmth between

them ... *But never any talk of love ... (Newt knocks tentatively on a door.)* His name was ... well, let's just say ... Newt. And her name was ... Catharine. *(Newt knocks again. He is in an Army uniform. He looks more than a little worn and travel weary. He needs a shave. He is dusty. He is awkward and smart and ironic. Catharine answers the door clutching her magazine. She is sharp, clean, pretty and bursting with youth, vitality, and great good health.)*

NEWT. Hi.

CATH. *(Answering the door.)* Newt!

NEWT. Hello, Catharine.

CATH. What are you doing here?

NEWT. Could you come for a walk?

CATH. A walk?

NEWT. One foot in front of the other, through leaves, over bridges ...

CATH. I had no idea you were in town.

NEWT. Just this minute got in.

CATH. Oh.

TOM. He tended to speak casually ...

CATH. Still in the Army, I see.

NEWT. Seven more months to go.

TOM. ... as though what really concerned him were far away —

NEWT. Let's see the pretty book.

CATH. Sure ... *(She hands it to him ... )*

TOM. This manner of speaking had always been his style.

NEWT. "Blushing Bride," huh? That you?

CATH. Yes. I'm ... Well, I'm getting married, Newt.

NEWT. I know.

CATH. You do?

TOM. Even in matters that concerned him deeply.

NEWT. Let's go for a walk.

CATH. I'm awfully busy. The wedding is only a week away.

NEWT. If we go for a walk it will make you rosy. It will make you a rosy bride. *(Showing her in the magazine ... )* Like her.

TOM. Especially in matters that concerned him deeply ...

NEWT. *(Pointing out rosy brides ... )* Like her. Like her. Like her ...

TOM. Catharine turned rosy, thinking about rosy brides ...

NEWT. That will be my wedding present to Henry Stewart Chasens.

CATH. You know his name?

NEWT. By taking you for a walk, I'll be giving him a rosy bride.

CATH. How do you know his name?  
NEWT. Mother wrote. From Pittsburgh?  
CATH. Yes. You'd like him.  
NEWT. Maybe ...  
CATH. Ummmm ... Can — can you come to the wedding?  
NEWT. That I doubt.  
CATH. Your furlough isn't long enough?  
NEWT. I'm not on furlough ...  
CATH. Oh? Then what are you on?  
NEWT. I'm what they call (*Saying each letter.*) A.W.O.L.  
CATH. Oh Newt, you're not!  
NEWT. Sure I am.  
CATH. Why?  
NEWT. I had to find out what your silver pattern is.  
CATH. (*Amused despite herself.*) Newt ...  
NEWT. Albermarle? Heather? Rambler Rose?  
CATH. (*Confused, laughing, concerned ...*) What are you —  
NEWT. I plan to give you and your husband a spoon.  
CATH. Okay, Newt, c'mon, tell me really ...  
NEWT. I want to go for a walk.  
CATH. You're fooling me about being (*Saying it as a single word.*)  
AWOL right?  
NEWT. Nope.  
CATH. Where from? Where from?  
NEWT. Fort Bragg.  
CATH. North Carolina?  
NEWT. That's right. Near Fayetteville. Where Scarlett O'Hara  
went to school.  
CATH. How did you get here?  
NEWT. Hitched. (*He makes the hitchhiking symbol.*) Couple of  
days.  
CATH. Does your mother know?  
NEWT. I didn't come to see my mother.  
CATH. Who did you come to see?  
NEWT. You.  
CATH. Me? Why me?  
NEWT. Because I love you. Now, can we take a walk?  
NEWT and TOM. One foot in front of the other — through  
leaves, over bridges ... (*Music. Lights shift. They are outside in the  
late afternoon. They walk ... She is riled and confused and flattered*)

# WHO AM I THIS TIME? (& OTHER CONUNDRUMS OF LOVE)

by Aaron Posner

adapted from stories by Kurt Vonnegut

4M, 3W (doubling)

The subject of this play — as we are told at the outset — is love, pure and complicated. Set on the stage of the North Crawford Mask and Wig Club (“the finest community theatre in central Connecticut!”), three early comic masterpieces by Kurt Vonnegut (*Long Walk to Forever*, *Who am I This Time?* and *Go Back to Your Precious Wife and Son*) are sewn together into a seamless evening of hilarity and humanity. With a single set, wonderful roles for seven versatile actors, and Vonnegut’s singular wit and insight into human foibles, this is a smart, delightful comedy for the whole family.

*“It takes love as its subject and handles it with the utmost skill ... The overwhelming message, though, is one of hope, delivered with humor and heart ... delightful.”* —**Willamette Week**

*“This delightful, lyrical piece of love and simpler times ... delivers just the right amount of fun ... more than a few belly laughs of a more home-spun Vonnegut quality. Audiences will find themselves enchanted and often laughing out loud.”* —**PortlandStageReviews.com**

*“The play might be light, but it’s also serious, because its subject is the mysterious powers and vagaries of love. And it might be new, but its verities are traditional: tight script ... approachable characters, recognizable tension, satisfying resolution.”* —**Oregon Arts Watch**

*“Rather than giving voice to the wryly satiric Vonnegut ... the show illuminates the author’s quirky and quaint views of love ... Bring your valentine to this sweet meditation on love. You’ll hold hands all night, steal a kiss at intermission, and leave thankful for all the kinds of love in your life.”* —**Nuvo.net**

*“WHO AM I THIS TIME is a confectionery delight ... Posner’s beguiling adaption [is] an entertaining, comedic treat.”* —**Examiner.com**

## Also by Aaron Posner

THE CHOSEN

MY NAME IS ASHER LEV

A MURDER, A MYSTERY &

A MARRIAGE (James Sugg)

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

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