

Who Am I This Time?(1961)

Interpreted by Hunter Holthaus

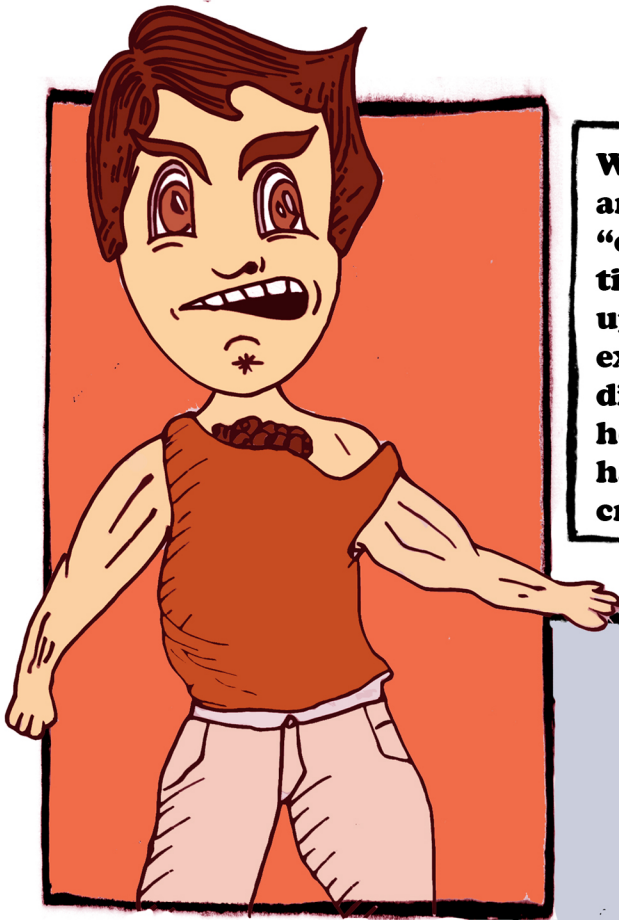


Harry was too shy. He didn't have any friends and could never think of anything to say without a script. One day, I went down to the store where Harry was the clerk to ask if he'd take the lead part in the play, *A*

Streetcar Named Desire.

After securing Harry's role, I walked to the phone company to dispute a bill. A beautiful girl behind the counter piqued my interest for the role of Stella even though she seemed kind of numb, almost like a machine. I told her where tryouts were to be held and she said her name was Helene Shaw.

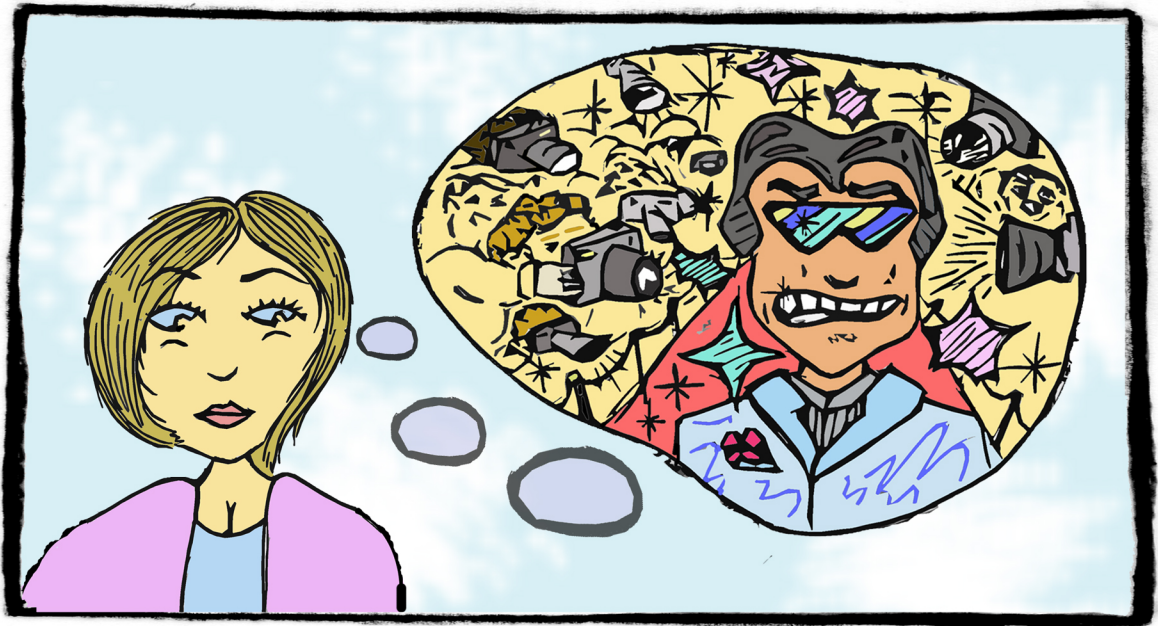




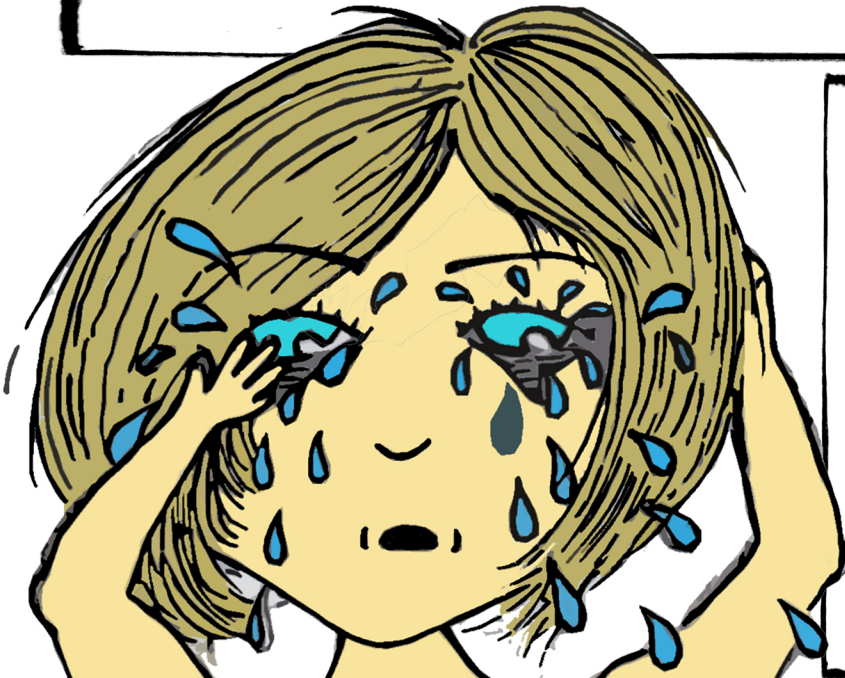
When the play try-out date arrived, Harry Nash came “even though it was a waste of time.” When the curtain went up, Harry, body and soul, was exactly what the script and director told him to be. When he faced us, he was huge and handsome and conceited and cruel.

It turned out that Helene Shaw had come for tryouts too, but she couldn’t act for sour apples. The part of Stella required a very passionate girl who loved a gorilla because she needed a gorilla. But I don’t think a volcano could have stirred Helene up enough to say, “Oo.”



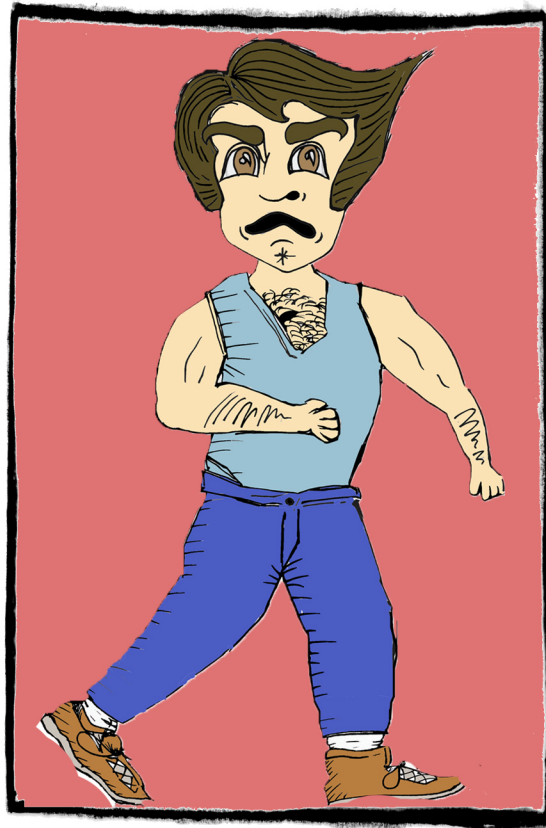
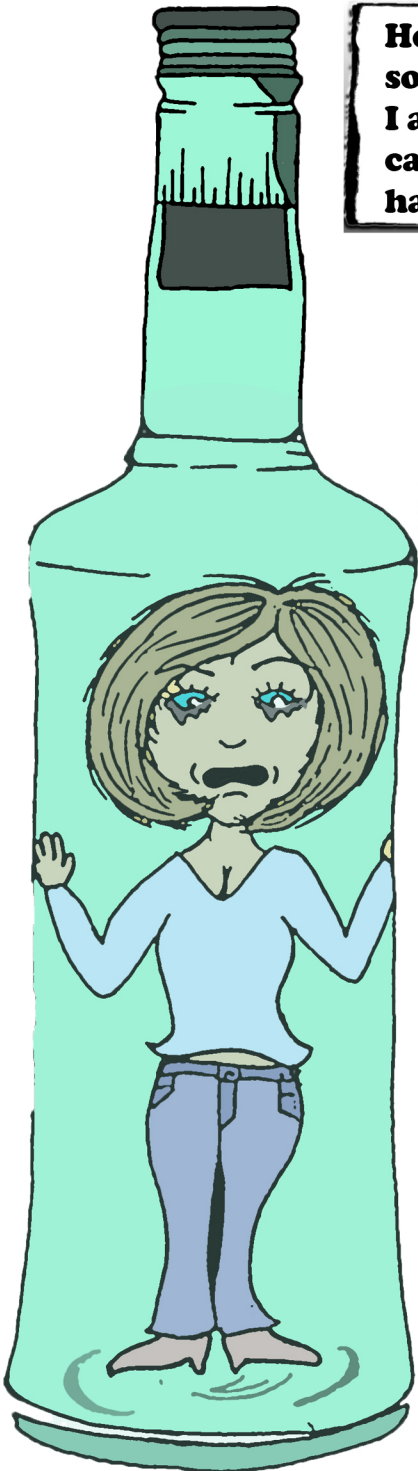


To get Helene into character, I asked her, “Have you ever been in love? Remembering some old love may help you put some warmth in your acting.” “Would movie stars count? I used to sit through movies over and over again and pretend I was married to whoever the male movie star was!” Helene said.



As it turns out, Helene Shaw doesn't know what love is. “I'm a walking icebox and I know it. I don't want to be the way I am,” Helene said.

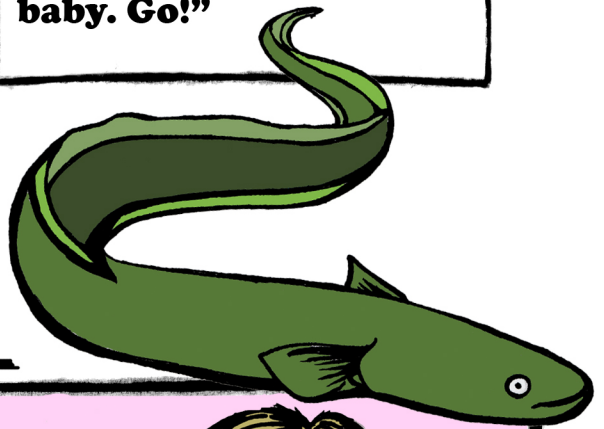
Helene continued, "When I meet someone nice in real life, I feel as though I am in some kind of big bottle, where I can't touch that person, no matter how hard I try."



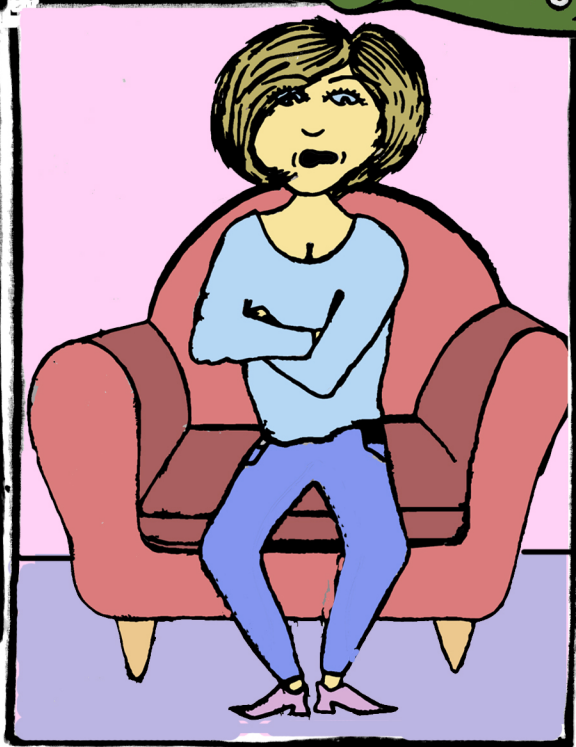
Suddenly, there was a heavy clumping up the stairs of the playhouse. It sounded like a deep sea diver wearing lead shoes. It was Harry Nash turning himself into Marlon Brando. He was so much in character that the sight of the weeping woman made him sneer.

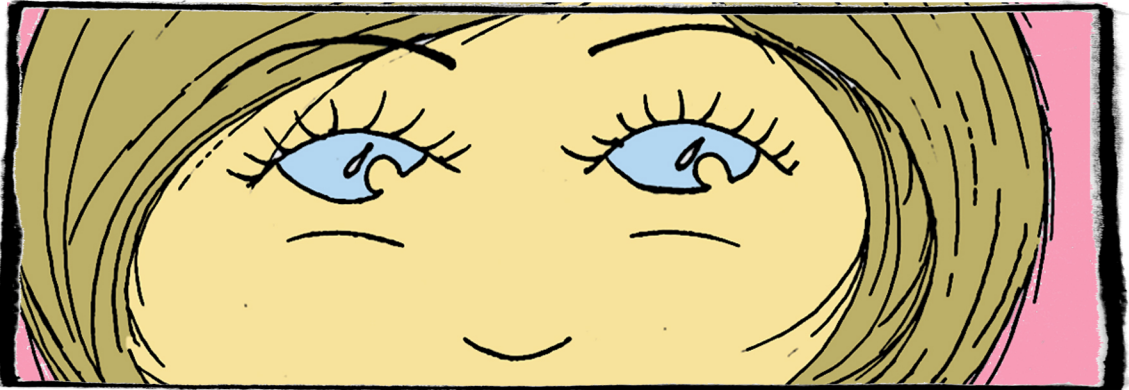


As director, I said, "I wonder if you two would play the fight scene and then the reunion scene right after it." "Sure, if Stell's game. On your mark," said Harry. "Get ready, baby. Go!"

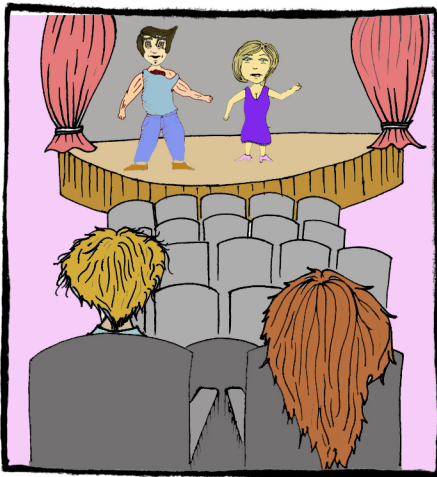


When the scene was over, Helene Shaw was as limp as an eel. The bottle was gone. The part of Stella was hers. "I had no idea you had that much fire in you," I said with shock. "Mf," said Helene. She looked as though she would sit there with her mouth open forever.





After try-outs, we started having rehearsals four times a week, and Harry and Helene were working so well together that during one love scene I had to tell them to hold something back for the actual performance.



Lydia, a women in the play, and I sat next to each other in the audience during rehearsals one day. "Do you know that girl is in love with Harry?" said Lydia. "In the play," I said.



“There isn’t any play going on here.” Lydia gave a sad crackle. “You aren’t directing anything.” “If I’m not derecting anything, who is?” I said.

“Mother nature at her worst. And think what it’s going to do to that girl when she discovers what Harry really is, or what Harry really isn’t,” said Lydia.



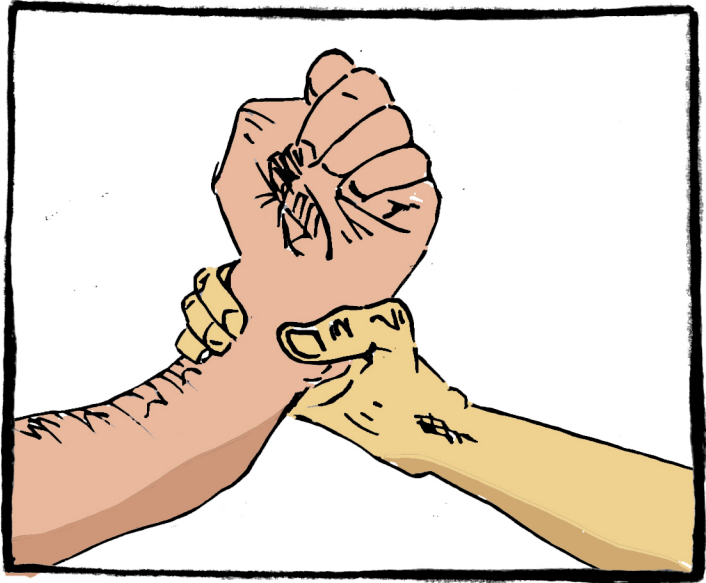


We ran the play for three nights and we murdered those audiences. When Harry and Helene were taking a bow, a bouquet of roses were tossed onto stage. Helene turned to give a rose to Harry, but he was already gone.

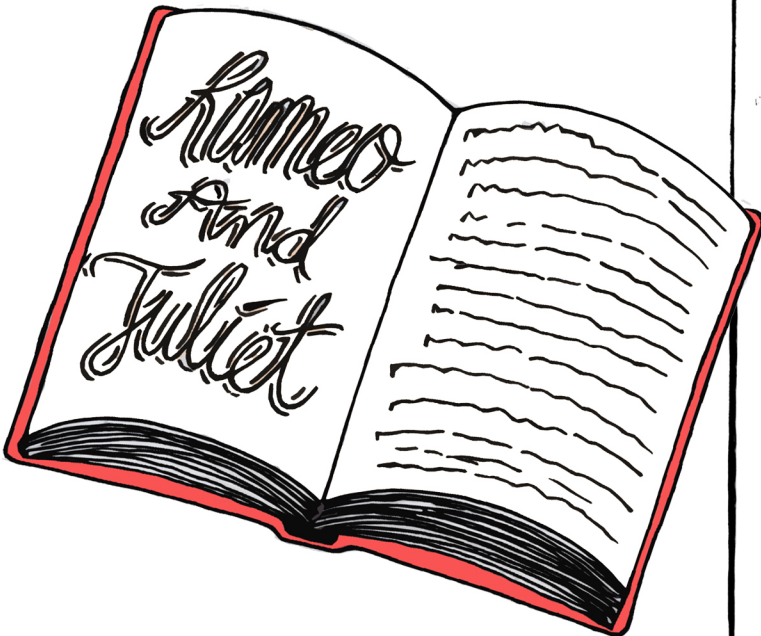
“What did I do wrong? Did I offend him in some kind of way,” cried Helene. “No,” I said. “He always does that after a performance. The minute it’s over he clears out as soon as possible. When the curtain comes down on Sunday that’s the last anybody will see of him.” “How sad,” said Helene.



When the curtain came down on the final night, Harry tried to get away but Helene wouldn't let go of his hand. All of the Marlon Brando in him was gone. He was everything Harry was famous for being between plays scared, shy, and tongue tied.



Helene handed a Shakespeare play book to Harry as a gift. Helene got very close to Harry and said, "The marker marks my favorite scene." It was *Romeo and Juliet*. Harry became very embarrassed as Helene began to read Juliet's lines. "The orchard walls are high and hard to climb, and the place of death . . ."





Helene pointed to the next line. He didn't want to read the line but he had to. "With love's light wings did I o'perch these walls," he read out loud in his everyday voice. But then a change came over him.

"For Stony Limits cannot hold love out," he read, and eight years dropped from him, and he was brave and gay. "And what love can do, that dares love attempt," he read.



Helene led Harry toward the backstage exit and they were gone. Two weeks later, they were married. And they seemed to be in love depending on which play they were in at the time.