

# Beach Scene

Don Webb

Scanned & Proofed By MadMaxAU

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## Characters:

*BILL: A sunburned, windburned man in his later sixties wearing shorts, shirt, and 'gimme' cap.*

*BOB: A crony of Bill's.*

## Scene:

*Bright September day at Crystal Beach, Texas. Sounds of gull cries, crashing surf, etc should be played throughout. 'Fishing' is done in pantomime, but the creels are real. Bob should stand closer to the audience than Bill.*

BILL: Pretty cold today. Cold wind off the land.

BOB: Yeah. If nothing bites I'm heading back to the cabin get a little fire going. Maybe rent a movie.

BILL: If you put a whole shrimp on your hook you'd get bites.

BOB: No. It just gets nibbled off. Besides I don't see you gettin' any bites.

BILL: It's the weather.

BOB: Yesterday it was the shrimp boats.

BILL: Well it just goes to prove it's always something.

BOB: That's profound. What is that, zen?

BILL: I'm too cold to be profound.

BOB: Shouldn'ta worn shorts. Shorts aren't for old men like us.

BILL: Speak for yourself.

BOB: You're the one who's cold. Aren't your kids coming this weekend?

BILL: *(Slowly)* Well.

BOB: Well?

BILL: Well I don't think so. Sharon's going on about how busy she is at work and what's-his-name - Ralph's got the flu. He always gets something when they're supposed to come down and that puts a stop to it.

BOB: He don't like small towns.

BILL: Well he can always take the ferry across to Galveston. He don't have to stay the whole weekend. He could run around in Houston.

BOB: Sharon always does the driving. I think something's not right with him.

BILL: Well he's better than the first one.

BOB: I never met the first one.

*(Pause)*

BILL: Damn gulls don't seem to have any trouble catching fish.

BOB: They spent millions of years evolving into a perfect fish-catching shape.

BILL: Don't tell me you buy that evolution con.

BOB: Yep. The world's been around for billions of years aiming for just this moment. You and me retired and fishing.

*(Pause)*

BILL: Did you see the meteor last night?

BOB: No.

BILL: Big and green. I think it struck the ocean. There was thunder afterward.

*(Short pause)*

BOB: Maybe that's why the fishing's off.

BILL: No. It think it's oil prices.

BOB: Oil?

BILL: Yeah. Since oil is down they're not working the rigs. When the rigs went in fishing got better.

BOB: That's because the rigs are platforms for barnacles and so forth. The barnacles aren't out of work.

*(Pause)*

BILL: The wind's really got an edge to it.

BOB: Go home and put some pants on.

BILL: Well.

BOB: Bill, are you and Mildred having trouble?

BILL: *(Slowly, painfully)* No. Well. No.

BOB: Well? You can tell me.

BILL: I had a dream last night.

BOB: Yeah you dreamed up a meteor.

BILL: No. This was after the meteor. I dreamt that I *(with sick fascination)* killed Mildred. With an axe, the big red fire axe I keep in the garage. I

snuck up on her in the kitchen and swung and swung and opened up her head. And she fell and tried to gamer the brain bits - they were sponges - back into her skull. And I pushed them behind the refrigerator. And she couldn't get to them. And she twitched and twitched like a bug. Then she died.

BOB: You've been renting too many movies.

BILL: This was real, man. It was so real that when I woke up I didn't know if it was a dream. So I got dressed and came down here.

BOB: Did you pinch yourself to see if you were dreaming?

BILL: Jesus Christ. *(Sotto voice)* Did you pinch yourself to see if you were dreaming? *(Normal voice)* That's what Mildred always says. Even if she's awake. Last week I suggested we - suggested we get frisky and she pinches her arm and says, "Well I guess I ain't dreaming." That killed it for me right then.

BOB: Well you must've known it was a dream when you saw Mildred.

BILL: Well, Bob, I don't sleep with Mildred anymore.

*(Long pause)*

BILL: I sleep downstairs in the guest bedroom.

BOB: It still don't matter. It was just a dream.

BILL: But I liked it. I enjoyed the heft of the axe, the red strokes, her pain and cries.

BOB: We all have dreams like that.

BILL: No.

*(Short pause)*

Not like this.

*(Short pause)*

I really found myself.

BOB: You really need to go home and have lunch with Mildred.

BILL: I won't. I'm too old for the pretense. Maybe later.

BOB: (*Confused*) What pretense?

BILL: I've become someone else. I'll have to keep pretending to be me. Pretending to fish with you, pretending to buy milk from that Bengali girl at Thorn's General, pretending to be a volunteer fireman.

BOB: You're guilty because of a dream?

BILL: No. It's tiring because of the pretense.

BOB: What will you really be doing?

BILL: Hiding. That's what a murderer does, hides. I've read a lot of those used mysteries Mildred buys at the flea market.

BOB: But you're sure you didn't kill her?

BILL: Pretty sure. I mean someone can't die like that loosing their brain and trying to stuff it back in. Biology's not like that.

BOB: You've got to go back sometime. At least to take your heart medicine.

BILL: When I'm stronger. Better at pretending. I'm practicing with you, Bob. You don't think I'm a killer do you, Bob?

BOB: No.

(*Pause*)

BOB: I still think you should go back. *I'm* going back in a little while.

BILL: I'm gonna reel it in, check my bait.

BOB: Ovid said that love is the perpetual source of fears and anxieties.

BILL: You're a fountain of information, Bob, a fountain of information. See the bastard's skunked me.

BOB: Have a shrimp. You don't think you will kill her?

BILL: I might find myself killing her. Walk up to her like a scene in a dream. Not plan to do it. Just walk into it.

BOB: You hate her?

BILL: This shrimp'll catch something just you watch. No I don't hate her. I've known her too long to have any feelings at all toward her.

*(Bob nods. Short pause.)*

BOB: Somebody took the fence down.

BILL: Beg pardon?

BOB: When we was growing up in Lubbock we used to say that the only thing between Amarillo and the North Pole was a barbed wire fence. Then when a blue norther blew in we'd say: somebody took the fence down.

BILL: Ferry just came in. See the cars.

BOB: Of course if you ever needed an alibi you could say we was fishin'.

BILL: Damn white of you, Bob.

BOB: You should take her to that Italian place in Gilchrist.

BILL: They got some new *Longarms* in the AARP library I may go read this afternoon.

BOB: Library's only open on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

BILL: What difference would a barb wire fence make?

*(Short pause)*

BILL: I got a bite.

BOB: Steady boy play it awhile.

BILL: You don't need to tell me how to fish.

BOB: Just being friendly.

BILL: It's a redfish. Just look at that color. Like catching dawn.

BOB: It's a fighter.

*(Bill struggles with the fish.)*

BOB: Hope no gull gets it.

BILL: Shut your damn mouth. Here it comes. It's a redfish alright. Help me with the net.

BOB: It's a pretty one. Remember to get some lemons at Thorn's.

BILL: If my damn daughter would drive down I'd save it for the weekend.

BOB: Think you could pretend with them?

BILL: I *already* pretend with them. I pretend I like Ralph.

BOB: There she goes. Have another shrimp.

BILL: Told ya that last one was the trick

BOB: What'll you think'll happen now?

BILL: Well, Bob, you may think I'm crazy but I got a strong feeling that I'll walk that sandy road and then up the stairs to the kitchen and there'll be a different woman there. Not Mildred. Maybe a Mary or a Mabel. And she'll be fussin' around the kitchen and actin' like *she's* been married to me for years. *She'll* be in all the pictures in all the dusty albums and I'll never know for sure.

BOB: You *have* been renting too many movies.

*(Pause)*

BILL: It's getting cloudy.

BOB: Thirty per cent chance of rain.

BILL: *(Slowly)* You have dreams like that?

BOB: Sometimes.

BILL: We're all murderers.

BOB: Bill, you need to drive into Houston and get laid if you can still get it up.

BILL: Don't talk like that.

BOB: Or go to a porno movie. It'll ground you quicker than anything.

BILL: Won't change the pretending.

*(Short pause)*

BOB: You really see a meteor?

BILL: Damn sure did. Passed between us and the lights on the rig out there.

BOB: Maybe you should call somebody. Maybe there's a reward for something like that.

BILL: Who the hell should I call, the Department of Meteors?

BOB: There's a reward for weather balloons.

BILL: Somebody sends up weather balloons.

BOB: Maybe it was a satellite.

BILL: I'm going to drive to see my son in Colorado.

BOB: *(Surprised)* When?

BILL: Today. I'll go and get the car real quiet like so Mabel -

BOB: *(Quickly, forcefully)* Mildred

BILL: - whoever, so *she* won't know and I'll drive to Boulder and tell him I'm pretending. Man's supposed to let his son in on the great truths.

BOB: You're too old for a drive like that. Besides you haven't had your heart medicine today.

BILL: *(As though realizing it for the first time)* Maybe the medicine's a pretense too. Maybe the doctor's trying to kill me little by little with tiny doses of poison.

BOB: All the tourists are gone. Sure is quiet.

BILL: Wind makes a special sound in the empty streets.

*(Pause)*

BOB: Old age sound.

BILL: I got a bite, it's a strong one.

BOB: Hold it boy. Give it some play.

BILL: It's pulling me into the water. The line'll never hold.

BOB: Hold it boy. It'll be a record. Your pole's almost bent double.

BILL: Bob, I can't let go!

BOB: *(Uninterested)* Hold it boy.

BILL: Bob. Help! I can't let go I can't let go. Bob. It's pulling me in. Help!

*(An invisible force pulls Bill into the water. Mildred removes her Bob mask. She begins packing her creel. She pinches her forearm then speaks in her normal voice.)*

MILDRED: Well, I guess I ain't dreaming.?