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*Great Western Wanderlust*  
First Printing, 2009  
Cover image by Darcy Hogan  
Printed in U.S.A.  
ISBN 978-1-934962-43-5

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**Big Baby**

**by Joe Keyes**

1 Male, 2 Females

No Intermission

**Synopsis:** BIG BABY unfurls in a cramped Midwestern apartment shared by Kile and his diminutive, gray-haired mother, June . This is a couple with colossal issues, and they wear them like comfortable old shoes. Mom is a staunch, churchgoing Catholic who endured an abusive marriage, and constantly fawns over and coddles her grown son. Kile is a scary bundle of pent-up energy and frustration who paces like a caged animal, stays medicated on a bevy of drugs, and frequently gets physical or argues vociferously over the merest trifle. When Nancy, a recovering heroin addict turned dominatrix, moves in next door, Kile avails himself of her services and finds them ironically therapeutic. But Kile's blossoming friendship with Nancy rankles June, who soon pushes Kile to the outermost limits of endurance.

**You May Go Now**

**by Bekah Brunstetter**

2 Males, 2 Females

**Synopsis:** Dottie has trained young Betty to be the perfect 1950s housewife; to cook the perfect pot roast, to bake a gorgeous seven-layer cake, to remove any stain. And tonight, Betty's 18th birthday, it is time for Betty to go out into the world. Only Dottie has failed to mention that the year is 2007, that the world is a vast and complex place, and that there is a reason she cannot abide being called 'Mother'. Ghosts from the past haunt the women and shatter their idyllic, if odd, existence. When a mysterious traveler is stranded at their home, he brings a revelation that forces Betty to choose between the love of her 'mother' and her freedom and sanity. *YOU MAY GO NOW* is an adult fairy tale about a 'mother' and 'daughter' whose love is as real as it is destructive.

**Great Western Wanderlust**

a play by Eric Eberwein

## CHARACTERS

(7-9 actors play 9 roles)

**KRISTI**, early 30s

**GREG**, mid-30s

A married couple from suburban St. Louis.

**AJO JOE**, 40+

A denizen of the American desert.

**MILES**, 30-45

A car attendant on an American passenger train.

Raised somewhere between Arizona and Alabama.

**JENNIFER**, mid-30s

**WHIT**, about 40

A biker couple from Indio, California.

**PATRICIA**, about 40

**KENDYL**, about 20

Aunt and niece. African-American. From the Central West End of St. Louis.

**BRYCE**, 19

A bisexual youth from Morgan Hill, California, a wealthy suburb of San Jose.

(There is also **MR. MATRIMONY**, a voice who never physically appears.)

**MILES** and **WHIT** may be played by the same actor.

**JENNIFER** and **KENDYL** may be played by the same actor.

*GREAT WESTERN WANDERLUST* had its world premiere at Las Vegas Little Theatre, Las Vegas, NV, May 8-17, 2009 as the winner of LVLTL's New Works Competition. The world premiere production was directed by Shawn Hackler. The cast was as follows:

Greg	Thom Chrastka
Kristi	Stephani Wyatt
Ajo Joe	Vincent Ragazzo
Patricia	Martha Watson
Miles/Whit	Gabriel Gentile
Jennifer/Kendyl	Cathy Ostertag
Bryce	Eric Carlson

An earlier version of *GREAT WESTERN WANDERLUST* received a staged reading at the Empire Theater, Santa Ana, CA on January 24, 2005, presented by the Orange County Playwrights Alliance and hosted by Rude Guerrilla Theater Company. The reading was directed by Tira Palmquist. The cast was as follows:

Greg	Greg Ungar
Kristi	Sasha Harris
Ajo Joe	Andrew Tonkovich
Miles	Mike Caban
Patricia	Vivian Vanderwerd
Kendyl	Michelle Martin
Jennifer	Jacquie Axton
Whit	Martin E. Williams
Bryce	Louie Carazo

## Great Western Wanderlust

### Act One

#### SCENE 1

*(Lights reveal Greg and Kristi, a young couple in love. They listen to Mr. Matrimony, whose voice has a touch of game show host.)*

MATRIMONY: Hello, Greg and Kristi.

GREG & KRISTI: Hello. Hello.

MATRIMONY: I see you're ready – ready to go on the journey of life.

GREG & KRISTI: Every step. Yeah. Our parents paid for it. The honeymoon, anyway.

MATRIMONY: Are you ready to make each day an epic adventure?

GREG & KRISTI: Sure. Yeah. I think so. Sounds doable.

MATRIMONY: Are you thrilled to be young, invincible, and beautiful?

GREG & KRISTI: Oh – yes! My God, we could be on a magazine. Could we? I think we could.

MATRIMONY: Are you guided by the compass of your own self-involvement?

GREG & KRISTI: I would say so. Most of the time. Self-involvement is underrated.

MATRIMONY: Will you love and live fearlessly, and take chances?

GREG & KRISTI: Some chances. Calculated risks. We have insurance. Sure, yeah. Of course.

MATRIMONY: But ... do you feel a little bit insecure about doing anything that would really challenge you, anything remotely outside the norm, anything your parents or community would call daring or unusual?

GREG & KRISTI: Well ... I don't know. Maybe.

*(A drum roll.)*

MATRIMONY: Congratulations, Greg and Kristi! I pronounce you ... Midwestern! Enjoy your Illinois! Go bald! Get fat! Eat pie, and die!

GREG & KRISTI: Wha – hey!

*(Stagehands rush in, draw a scrim across the stage, and shove and drag the protesting couple behind it.)*

*(Lights.)*

## SCENE 2

*(Loopy or innocuous music plays as a series of headlines flash across the scrim, possibly with accompanying images.)*

- St. Louis: America's Dullest City?
- Chrysler, Ford, Chevy: Vanilla Cars Compared
- Kohl's, Target, Hometown Buffet Transform St. Clair Square
- Ten Tons of Salt Spread on Illinois Asphalt
- Macy's Welcomes Jessica Alba!
- California: Closer and Cheaper than Ever

*(The headlines on the scrim fade and we see a representation of America, and a route stretching from St. Louis through San Antonio to Los Angeles.)*

## SCENE 3

*(Greg and Kristi at home: dull and suburban. Kristi is throwing stuff out into a trash bag. Greg is reading the sports page.)*

GREG: What are you throwing away?

KRISTI: Ancient magazines.

GREG: Which ones?

KRISTI: Yours. These idiotic girlie –

GREG: – Oh, wait a minute –

KRISTI: – No –

GREG: – Well, let me look at them –

KRISTI: – Greg, we went over this. So did Pastor Ziegenbein. Okay?

GREG: It's just pictures.

KRISTI: He said we should do this, and I'm doing it.

GREG: They're not just magazines. They're collectibles.

KRISTI: Goodbye, and good riddance.

GREG: Goodbye to who?

KRISTI: Oh, let's see. Jessica Biel. Jessica Alba. Jessica Simpson.

GREG: All my Jessicas.

KRISTI: Yes, Greg – all your Jessicas are gone. Your adolescence – is over. Don't cry.

*(She tightens the trash bag and takes it offstage.)*

GREG: I wasn't gonna cry about it, I just ... *(under his breath)* ... A man's gotta dream, you know? Escape his everyday ...

KRISTI: *(offstage)* Did you say something?

GREG: I was just thinking about what I wanted to eat.

*(Kristi returns with a brochure.)*

KRISTI: So – you know how we were talking about getting away?

GREG: A Thickburger. Extra onions.

KRISTI: The vacation, Greg.

GREG: We just talked about the vacation.

KRISTI: Well – I have an idea. Why don't we go west?

GREG: West.

KRISTI: Yes! Out west. You know? Wild West? West of St. Louis?

GREG: *(ambivalent)* Sure, whatever you want.

*(Kristi gently introduces the brochure.)*

KRISTI: And ... why don't we take the train?

GREG: The train?

KRISTI: Yeah – it'd be different.

GREG: It'd be dumb.

KRISTI: Oh – wait – you don't do different. Thickburger, extra onions.

GREG: I do different things.

KRISTI: Like what?

GREG: Today – I played the back nine. It was crowded; I said “fuck it – put us on the back nine.”

KRISTI: You did not say “fuck it.”

GREG: I – I wanted to. I said “please.”

KRISTI: Okay – I'm saying “please.” Please. Do something – I don't know – interesting? Physical? Adventurous?

GREG: So, what – I'm not sexy, or exciting?

KRISTI: You drive a Saturn.

GREG: You wanted me to buy it!

KRISTI: Look ... I don't know, maybe I've been part of this ... I – I want mint chip. Okay? Currently, I have vanilla. A gallon of – runny vanilla that's been in the freezer too long.

GREG: Okay. I will transform myself into mint chip. Cherry Garcia, even.

KRISTI: When?

GREG: When I have time. When I'm not working –

KRISTI: – Or golfing, or loafing –

GREG: – I was fertilizing!

KRISTI: Alright. Alright. Just – here. Here. Okay? Look at this.

*(Greg looks at the brochure.)*

GREG: It's dumb.

KRISTI: Automatically. It's dumb.

GREG: Yeah – dumb. Dumb, and ... slow. Look at the old people. Old people go on these things. You know: you got a few years left, you want to see Oregon ... you're ... weird ... you book one of these things.

KRISTI: Will you just do something different? For once?

GREG: I don't want to ride on a choo-choo train.

KRISTI: Well maybe it's just me, but I think it would be romantic.

GREG: Exactly. It's a woman's vacation. Okay? Just – passive ... like a trip to the mall. You look at scenery all day.

KRISTI: Will you do it for me?

GREG: I'll think about it.

KRISTI: When was the last time we made love? Really made love?

GREG: It was snowing.

KRISTI: It was April. Early April.

GREG: Lots of people don't make love for ... a month or two ...

KRISTI: Mm-hm. Yes. You know what they call those people? Depressed.

GREG: Well, isn't it just sort of the natural course of life?

KRISTI: What?

GREG: You know, people get older, familiar ... fatter ... I don't know, they just ... stop ... having ... they ... they eat ... do their own things ... it's more of a friendship thing.

KRISTI: So marriage becomes a ... a kind of ... buddy-buddy thing.

GREG: Yeah, look at our parents. That's how life is. You grow up here, you date, marry, buy a home ... you have neighbors that have the same kind of lives ...

KRISTI: And you never, ever see the ocean.

GREG: I just think. Going across country on a train. Would be really dull. And really slow.

*(Kristi approaches him.)*

KRISTI: I think. You need to use. Your imagination.

*(She seductively kisses him, and as she disengages from his lips, light and sound cues suggest the wild, warm West.)*

Picture. The Wild West.

*(The cry of an eagle.)*

Gently unfolding. Mythic. Roughhewn, robust – even savage.

*(A wolf howls.)*

Wind and dirt and grit ... and wild, hot miles of untamed, undressed, unashamed passion. Existential drift. You and some curvy woman, sequestered in some rolling, tiny space, restless and sweaty, primal, soulful, breathless, fearless –

GREG: – Yes –

KRISTI: – Wanting –

GREG: – Yes –

KRISTI: – Love –

GREG: – Yes –

KRISTI: – Some taste of it –

GREG: – Lust –

KRISTI: – Yes –

GREG: – Lust –

KRISTI: – Wilderness –

GREG: – Yes –

KRISTI: – Wilderness! –

GREG: – Yes! –

KRISTI: – I want some wilderness!

*(Some hot, dirty lust.)*

GREG: Yes – yes!

KRISTI: – West –

GREG: – West –

KRISTI: – West –

GREG: – West –

KRISTI: – Wilderness!

*(Lights.)*

#### SCENE 4

*(Ajo Joe appears – wild-haired and weathered, Manson/Twain look.)*

AJO JOE: Tract home, hanging moon,  
A hint of surprise:  
A dull suburban couple  
Seeks some Wild West.

Look at ‘em.  
Married strangers wearin’ sweatpants to bed.  
Breakin’ out of some brother-sister boredom  
Guaranteed to make you middle-aged.

In a fit of antiquarian madness,  
They decide to take a train.  
A lubricant for their hot, dirty lust?  
Or just  
A detour from tangible disgust?  
We shall see.

*(Lights.)*

#### SCENE 5

*(Kristi reads promotional literature to Greg: an erotic experience.)*

KRISTI: Explore this land of brave pioneers.  
See the West they knew.  
Come aboard, and enjoy ...  
Comfortable, reclining seats.  
Gourmet meals.  
Cozy private compartments with picture windows –  
And a mint on the pillow.  
Majestic peaks.  
Painted deserts.  
Warm, naked plains.  
Hot summer special ... 30% off.

*(Lights.)*

## SCENE 6

*(Ajo Joe appears.)*

AJO JOE: None of that shit was true.  
It was all made up.  
You want the truth, here it is:  
Travel by train?  
Greyhound with food.  
That's all it is.  
I fell for it too.  
And now I'm driftin'.  
Hungry and dirty in a tin can  
Hitched 'cross the west.  
Me and the rest.  
The losers, drifters, 'n'  
Casualties of cheap travel  
Who choose the train.

*(Lights.)*

## SCENE 7

*(Greg and Kristi, ready to travel.)*

KRISTI: St. Louis, Los Angeles.

GREG: Let's do it.

KRISTI: The fun we'll have.

GREG: The way she'll look at me.

KRISTI: I'll bring my black lace teddy.

GREG: I'll bring that lotion.

KRISTI: He'll regain his youth.

GREG: She won't criticize me.

KRISTI: He won't have any intestinal problems.

GREG: She won't bring up babies.

KRISTI: He won't just unbutton the top button on his shirt.

GREG: I will convince her to play golf.

KRISTI: He'll unbutton – the second button.

GREG: “Sure, honey – we can buy a Hummer.”

KRISTI: He'll pack that courage he left behind when he married me.

GREG: She'll stop crying in the bathroom at night.

KRISTI: We need this.

GREG: A vacation.

KRISTI: A break.

GREG: A change.

KRISTI: An escape.

GREG: An adventure.

KRISTI: Adventure.

*(Lights.)*

### **SCENE 8**

*(The train station. Greg and Kristi with bags.)*

GREG: Damn it!

KRISTI: *What?*

GREG: I forgot to call my mother.

KRISTI: *(cheerily)* I forgot about your mother.

GREG: Is this really a train station? It looks like Skid Row.

KRISTI: Yes. And even Skid Row has a certain romance to it, don't you think? A certain – desperation?

GREG: You know, maybe we should go to Chicago. Or just stay home.

KRISTI: Stay home? Greg, you are so unadventurous. I have to provoke you into adventure.

GREG: I'm not unadventurous. I'm cautious. Coffee: Starbucks.  
Pants: Dockers. I like quality.

KRISTI: Well – come on, let's take a seat, and look at –

GREG: – What – graffiti? Poverty?

KRISTI: The urban milieu. It's different: it's bracing. It's neither mocha nor latte. It's like a tall drip with no Sweet 'n' Low.

GREG: I wish they had a Starbucks here. They have Starbucks in airports.

KRISTI: It'll be here any minute.

GREG: The cops will be here any minute.

KRISTI: Be patient. Okay?

GREG: Well, this has got to be the low point – this ghetto shithole. It's gotta get better from here.

KRISTI: Honey, it will.

*(An announcement: the Western Wind is an hour late.)*

GREG: Ah-hah – you see? It's not even on time. You know why it's not on time? It's subsidized. It's paid to be late. *(slyly)* It's managed by civil service employees.

KRISTI: Greg.

GREG: You know, ever since I started listening to Rush Limbaugh – I have learned so much.

KRISTI: Will you shut up?

GREG: He ought to manage these trains.

KRISTI: Customer service is a priority.

GREG: Right.

KRISTI: It said so in the brochure.

*(Lights.)*

## SCENE 9

*(Miles stands in his hospitality uniform, his "Customer Service Handbook" torn to pieces at his feet. He seems haunted, ashen. Under his speech, we may hear ambient signals of fear and dread.)*

MILES: Customer service.  
Living hell, can't win.  
Eighty virgin passengers.  
Let the nightmare begin.

I get up in darkness.  
Ready for your abuse.  
I forfeit my dignity.  
To be your bitch.  
Anger is my assistant.  
Pain is a good friend.

Page 18:  
"Customer service starts with you."  
It's a feeling.  
A good, good feeling.  
I'm a people person.  
I love my job.  
I love what I do.

*(Lights.)*

## SCENE 10

*(The train station. A garbled announcement of a train. Kristi and Greg in a panic.)*

KRISTI: I don't believe this!

GREG: I can't find them!

KRISTI: Did you leave them at home?

GREG: No!

KRISTI: Do we actually need physical tickets?

GREG: Yes. It said so.

KRISTI: Well, go see someone! Him – tell him we need tickets!

*(Lights swing to a customer service counter. Miles is on the phone, browsing sex ads.)*

MILES: Well let me tell you somethin', Rico, I was disappointed. You got this good-mornin'-little schoolgirl photo, this girl named "Alba," you know I got a thing about Jessica Alba 'n' that Mexican meat, I called up and she w – well listen, I didn't pay two hundred b – well, yeah, you oughta be out of business! Fucker. Let me tell you something: any decent pimp –

*(Someone is banging on the window.)*

– I gotta go, I want your customer service to improve and I want a refund, that girl was trash –

*(He turns to the window and sees Greg.)*

GREG: I lost my tickets.

MILES: Closed.

GREG: No: I need tickets. I need tickets, I lost tickets, I need replacement tickets now, I need tickets!

MILES: Heh.

GREG: Tickets!!

MILES: Okay. Okay. Let me open up the customer service manual and see how to process a ticket order. Excuse these sex ads, I was tryin' to line up a hooker ...

GREG: Just do it. Please?

MILES: See, I don't take ticket orders. My job description –

GREG: – I don't care about your job description. I don't care who you are. I need tickets. I will explode if I don't get tickets.

MILES: You listen here Jimmy, you don't faze me. I been beaten, spit on – I was assaulted by children –

GREG: – Just print some tickets. "Print" – on the computer? Hit "print". Can you do that?

MILES: ... Bein' awfully uncooperative.

GREG: I want some service!

MILES: You calm down, you might get some.

GREG: Okay – look. My wife – she read one of your brochures. Okay? She had some kind of sexual awakening. We made love, okay, first time in three months, you understand? We have to get on the train!

MILES: I need your photo I.D. and your confirmation number.

GREG: Yes. Here. Number. I.D. Simple. Easy. Tickets.

MILES: You're damn lucky I opened that window. I was makin' personal calls to women. Or at least their voice mail.

GREG: You have been really rude, you know that? Rude, sarcastic, unpleasant – who are you?

MILES: Johnson. Miles Johnson. USMC. I fought for your freedom and Dick Cheney. I learned respect and discipline. Combat skills and customer service.

GREG: Tickets?

MILES: These two replacement tickets entitle you to ride shotgun with me in this tubular hell. Enjoy your trip. No need to complain or report any hatred.

GREG: I will complain. Loudly. Customer service should not take a back seat to some – sex rag – (*beat*) – Is that Jessica Alba?

MILES: No.

GREG: It looks just like her.

MILES: It's not Jessica Alba.

GREG: You ever see her up close? I saw her, at the mall. Macy's, I swear it was her. She had some kind of ... suede thing on ...

MILES: What, did you stalk her?

GREG: No – I'm married! I didn't even ... think to ... do anything. I think it was her. Maybe I just imagined it was her.

MILES: Gotta be an instruction booklet ...

GREG: There's something ... young, and supple about her ...

MILES: How do you turn this thing on?

GREG: Cute, but ... kinda spicy.

MILES: Can't turn this mother on ...

GREG: The sex just drips off of her.

MILES: You said you had a wife.

GREG: My wife doesn't even look like her.

*(Kristi runs over. Gregg hides the sex rag.)*

KRISTI: Tell me you got tickets.

GREG: Oh! Yeah – tickets. Two tickets.

KRISTI: W – coach tickets?

GREG: That's what it says.

*(Miles turns on the P.A.)*

MILES: Now boarding: The Western Wind.

KRISTI: I thought there was something wrong with coach tickets.

GREG: What do you mean?

KRISTI: I thought we didn't want them.

GREG: Of course we want them.

*(Miles closes the window.)*

KRISTI: Well, they're cheap.

GREG: I thought that was what you wanted.

KRISTI: ... What was cheap?

GREG: Affordable.

KRISTI: Well ... honey ...

GREG: I made the right decision.

KRISTI: ... I don't know ... what was so special about coach? ...

GREG: I don't know. Closeness?

KRISTI: Closeness?

GREG: Hey – if we don't like it, we can upgrade. We can always upgrade.

KRISTI: Of course. Of course, yes. We can deal with it. *(pause)* It's probably a minor inconvenience.

*(Lights.)*