

THE BELLEVUE OF THE WEST SIDE by Leonard Melfi

Twenty-five people caught up in the bustle of Port Authority Bus Terminal all reach for rather than take from one another.

JESUS HAVANA, mid-twenties, Cuban American but could be almost any heritage. **Handsome, charming, and full of energy, he practicality lives at the Port Authority, where he sells fresh fruit from his vending cart. He also tends bar in one of the terminal's five bars.**

SCENE: Port Authority Bus Terminal, New York City.

JESUS: I've been in love once ... I mean really in love ... the kind of love that happens only once in a lifetime, only once in a blue moon... there's always one out there for all of us ... we don't realize that ... but it's true ... and this woman—she was a girl then—was the one and only one for me, yours truly here: Jesus Havana ... her name was Dorothy Jean, and Dorothy Jean was like a pink candle that you knew would never go out ... and this pink candle that was my Dorothy Jean not only burned beautifully all of the time, but she also gave off the smell of sweet perfume ... it came from her flame, which never flickered, by the way: it was always a steady reaffirming sort of warm, lovely flame ... no flickering ever!... no going out ever! ... it was bright and constant, and she, Dorothy Jean, the pink candle, well, she gave off the scent of pink roses, the odor of pink carnations, the aroma of some mysterious pink flower that nobody knows the name of ... my Dorothy Jean loved to live on the beach in the beautiful sunshine, but she also loved to stay inside on dark cold nights where she would sit in her room and where she would read all of the great love stories that were written over a hundred years ago

... and we went dancing and swimming together... and we went to plays, and the opera, and to concerts, and to the ballet... and the first time we made love was in a high, high, high all-glassed-in-enclosed penthouse while down below us—as we watched from the bed—we witnessed the glittering array of breathtaking Manhattan during the pink heart of a cool breezy springtime with pinkish flowers and breathing bursting buds swaying and singing and softly sighing everywhere, no matter what, amid all those lights and all those buildings: nothing could stop God and Nature, so she thought, and so I thought... but then one day, one unforgettable, one unforgivable day something happened in the life of my Dorothy Jean: the house that she lived in, with her mother and her father and her younger brother and her younger sister and their dog Bark and their cat Meow, their house caught on fire because of electrical wiring, because everything was turned on at the same time, everything like three television sets, a computer, a microwave oven, the dishwasher, the food freezers in the cellar—I'm leaving some things out because I can't remember too much about it anymore—all these on all at the same time in their house, while Dorothy Jean sat upstairs in her lovely ivory tower bedroom reading or maybe even rereading one of the great love stories written over a hundred years ago: reading it by candlelight, no less ... and I would like to think that she was thinking about me, too, upstairs in her candle-lit bedroom ... *(A pause, a long one)* ... the house burned down to the ground ... and there were no survivors: only ... Dorothy Jean ... and when she knew that she was the only member left of the family, she took off all of her clothes, and then she walked down the flagstone stairs that led to the sandy beach and wild roaring ocean ... and then, very softly, very steadily: she slowly walked into the beckoning waves of the pounding blue sea... and then, just like that, before anyone knew it: she was gone! ... swallowed up by the hypnotic sea... my Dorothy Jean!... snuffing out her own pink candle forever from this earth. *(Finally.)* I have been insane ever since.

