

"STAGES"

Written by
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"STAGES"

BY BRUCE KANE

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(SUGGESTED MUSIC: "Another Opening, Another Show)

(LIGHTS UP ON TWO ROWS OF THEATER SEATS. FRAN AND STAN ENTER)

(MUSIC DOWN)

STAN
(checking his ticket stubs)
I think these are our seats.

(They sit)

FRAN
Did you remember to turn off the TV?

STAN
Yes, I remembered to turn off the TV.

FRAN
Did you set the DVR?

STAN
Yes, I set the DVR.

FRAN
I just don't want to miss Midsomer Murders.

STAN
Don't worry, it's on streaming.

FRAN
You know I don't how to do that.

STAN
We could've stayed home. Then you could've watched it live.

(TED AND LIZ ENTER. TED SITS NEXT TO STAN)

FRAN

I hate the commercials.

STAN

It's on PBS. There are no commercials.

FRAN

That's the best part of going to the theater. No commercials.

STAN

That's the best part? No commercials? I coulda been home watching the ballgame.

TED

(to Stan)

Tell me about it.

*(HELEN ENTERS AND SITS DOWN IN
THE SECOND ROW AND IMMEDIATELY
TAKES OUT HER PHONE AND DIALS.)*

STAN

(introducing himself)

Stan.

TED

(introducing himself.)

Ted. You a fan of theater?

STAN

No. I'm a fan of the White Sox.

HELEN

(into phone)

I'm at the theater. What can I tell ya? I'm a glutton for punishment.

HOUSE MANAGER (O.S.)

Good evening and welcome. We ask you please to turn off all cell phones and electronics. Photography of any kind is strictly prohibited out of respect for the performers, some of whom will be nude.

STAN

(pleased)

Okay.

TED

(to Liz, excited)

You didn't tell me there were going to be naked ladies.

LIZ
(annoyed)
More female exploitation.

TED
(to STAN)
How bad could it be?

LIZ
Shhhh. It's starting.

TED
How can you tell?

LIZ
The actors just came out.

TED
Those are the actors?

LIZ
Yes, those are the actors.

TED
They look like stagehands.

LIZ
They're not stagehands.

TED
They're dressed like stagehands.

LIZ
Trust me, those are the actors.

TED
How can you tell?

LIZ
They're not doing anything. Stagehands would be doing something.

TED
Maybe it's a play about stagehands on strike.

LIZ
Just watch and find out.

HELEN
(into phone)
I think it's a western. Something to do with a stage coach.

STAN
(to Ted)
You have any idea what this thing is about?

TED
(to Liz)
Know anything about this play?

LIZ
No, but Shirley said it was very good.

TED
(to STAN)
Shirley said it was very good.

HELEN
(into phone)
Shirley said it was good.

STAN
(to Fran)
Shirley said this play was very good.

FRAN
Whose Shirley?

STAN
How should I know?

FRAN
Then why are you telling me she liked it?

STAN
I thought you'd like to know.

FRAN
How could Shirley, whoever she is, know it's good? It just opened.

STAN
(to Ted)
When did she see it?

TED
See what?

STAN
The play. When did she see it?

TED
Who?

STAN
Shirley.

TED
(to Liz)
When did she see it?

LIZ
Who?

TED
Shirley.

LIZ
See what?

TED
This play. When did she see it? Stan wants to know.

LIZ
Whose Stan?

TED
He's Stan.

STAN
I'm Stan.

TED
Stab wants to know when Shirley saw the play.

STAN
Actually my wife wants to know.

TED
Actually, his wife wants to know.

LIZ
Whose wife?

TED
Stan's wife. She wants to know when Shirley saw the play?

LIZ
(to Stan)
You know Shirley?

STAN
Never had the pleasure.

TED
Lucky you.

STAN
My wife was curious when Shirley saw the play.

LIZ
She didn't.

HELEN
It turns out Shirley never saw the play.

LIZ
These are her tickets.

STAN
(to Fran)
She never saw the play.

FRAN
Who?

STAN
Shirley.

LIZ
She had a baby shower.

TED
(to Stan)
She had a baby shower.

STAN
Who?

TED
Shirley.

HELEN
(still on phone)
Shirley had a baby shower.

STAN
(to Fran)
She had a baby shower.

FRAN
Who had a baby shower?

STAN
Shirley.

FRAN
And I didn't even get her a gift. Boy or girl?

STAN
I think Shirley's a girl.

FRAN
The baby. Boy or girl?

STAN
(to Ted)
Boy or girl?

TED
Who?

STAN
Shirley.

TED
She's a girl.

STAN
Is she having a boy or girl?

TED
I'll find out.
(to Liz)
Boy or girl?

LIZ
Boy or girl what?

TED
Shirley.

LIZ
(confused)
She's a girl.

TED
Shirley's baby. Boy or girl?

HELEN
Did you hear that? Shirley's pregnant.

LIZ
What are you talking about?

HELEN
No. No mention of the father. But, you know Shirley.

LIZ
Shirley's not having a baby.

HELEN

She's not gonna keep it.

TED

(to Stan)

Shirley's not having a baby.

STAN

(to Fran)

Shirley's not having a baby.

FRAN

Then I'm glad I didn't buy a gift.

(LIZ SHUSHES THEM. SOMETIME DURING THE ABOVE EXCHANGE A YOUNG COUPLE ENTER, TAKE THEIR SEATS IN THE SECOND ROW AND QUICKLY BEGIN MAKING OUT, WHICH THEY WILL CONTINUE TO DO. THE REST SETTLE DOWN TO WATCH THE PLAY. AFTER A MOMENT OR TWO.)

TED

(sotto voce to Stan)

Why are the actors whispering?

STAN

I'll check.

(sotto voce to Fran)

Ted wants to know why the actors are whispering.

FRAN

(sotto voce)

Whose Ted?

STAN

This is Ted. He wants to know why the actors are whispering.

FRAN

They're not whispering. They're speaking sotto voce.

STAN

(to Ted)

They're speaking Italian.

TED

Don't tell me there's going to be subtitles. I hate subtitles. If I wanted subtitles, I could have stayed home and watched Midsomer Murders. At least that's in English.

LIZ
Shhh. The actors can hear you.

TED
That's a switch. Cause I can't hear them.

LIZ
It's the style.

TED
You can't hear the actors? That's a style??

LIZ
God, I married a philistine. It's avant garde. Very avant garde.

TED
What the hell is avant garde?

LIZ
It's French. You wouldn't understand.

TED
(to Stan)
They're not Italian.

STAN
You sure?

TED
They're French.

STAN
That explains it.

TED
Explains what?

STAN
Why he's taking his shirt off.

(The Women all sit up and pay very
close attention)

LIZ
Oh... my.

FRAN
Oh... yes.

TED
Oh no...

STAN
Now he's taking his pants off.

TED
Why is he taking his pants off?

LIZ
Because it's in the script. That's why. And from what I can see, it's a very well constructed script.

FRAN
Oh my.

LIZ
Oh yes.

TED
Oh God...

STAN
He's not wearing any under...

FRAN
(leaning forward in
her seat)
Will you pipe down. I'm trying to concentrate.

*(The Girl, who's been making
out with her boyfriend the
whole time, notices there is a
naked man on stage. While the
boyfriend nibbles her neck,
she shifts to get a better
view.)*

HELEN
(into phone)
Starkers. Completely. Right here in front of me. Don't you
just love the theater?

STAN
(to Fran)
How much did we pay for these tickets?

FRAN
Thirty dollars.

STAN
A piece?

FRAN
A piece.

STAN
(appalled)
We paid sixty bucks for this?

FRAN
(really enjoying the
view)
And money very well spent.

TED
(to Stan)
This is the third play I've been to where some guy's taken
his pants off. It used to be only women took their clothes
off on stage.

STAN
That's when theater was theater.

HELEN
(peers through
binoculars)
You know the guy who said there was no such thing as small
parts, only small actors? He was wrong. But Shirley was so
right.

STAN
I couldn't do that. In front of everybody. Could you do
that?

TED
God no.

LIZ
Who'd want you to?

STAN
(to Fran)
What has this got to do with anything?

*(Fran shushes him. Liz reaches
over to borrow the binoculars
from Helen)*

TED
(to Liz)
Well... if you have to use binoculars.

*(Helen starts to retrieve the
binoculars, but the Girl
intercepts them. Annoyed, the
Boy takes the binoculars from
the girl and gives them back
to Helen)*

TED

Relax kid. Remember, it's not the size of the boat, but the motion of the ocean.

LIZ

Keep telling yourself that.

STAN

Still and all, that must have been some audition.

(From off stage, we hear the sound of an audience applauding. Fran and Liz and the Girl stand up enthusiastically joining in.)

STAN

Why are you applauding? Why is everyone applauding?

FRAN

It's over.

STAN

What's over?

FRAN

The play is over.

STAN

It's over? What kind of play is over in ten minutes?

FRAN

A ten minute play.

STAN

(to Ted)

Do you believe this? I gave up a ballgame for a play that only lasts ten minutes.

LIZ

It's only the first one.

TED

What is?

LIZ

The play. It's only the first one.

TED

Y'mean there are more?

FRAN

Yes.

STAN

And they're all ten minutes long?

LIZ

That's why they're called ten minute plays.

TED

Whoever heard of plays that are only ten minutes long?

FRAN

It's all the rage.

STAN

Y'mean, that's all these guys can write is ten minutes?

TED

It took Shakespeare that long just to say hello.

STAN

Hell, I've seen plays with titles that were longer.

LIZ

If you don't like this one, there are eight more coming up.

STAN

(really appalled)

Wait a minute. You're telling me there's eighty more minutes of this stuff?

(Liz nods)

TED

Well, all I gotta say is... if the next one doesn't have bare boobs, I'm outta here.

(Stan and Ted exchange high fives as they exit. The wives just shake their heads in embarrassment as they follow them out. The remaining actors exit passing two entering STAGEHANDS.)

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: In many ways this next scene is a freebie. There's no one way to stage it or choreograph it. It is all up to the actors and the director. It involves two stagehands of any gender. They don't have to be great singers or great dancers, but they

*must have energy and
enthusiasm)*

*(The Stagehands talk and sing
as they remove the set pieces
on stage and bring on the
pieces for the next scene.
The song they will sing is
"The Best Things In Life Are
Free" chosen for many reasons,
not the least of which is that
it is in the public domain.)*

STAGEHAND #1

You're new.

STAGEHAND #2

My first show.

STAGEHAND #1

Welcome to the theater.

STAGEHAND #2

It's a temporary gig.

STAGEHAND #1

Be careful, once the theater bug bites, it's hard to shake
it loose.

STAGEHAND #2

I'll settle for a job that pays.

STAGEHAND #1

(recites)

There are so many kinds of riches,
And only one of them is gold.
Though wealth you miss,
Remember this
Worthwhile things cannot be bought or sold.

STAGEHAND #2

You really believe that?

STAGEHAND #1

*(sings as they both
continue to work)*

The moon belongs to everyone.
The best things in life are free.
The stars belong to everyone.
They gleam there for you and me.
The flowers in spring.
The robins that sing.
The sunbeams that shine.

(MORE)

STAGEHAND #1 (cont'd)
They're yours.
They're mine.

STAGEHAND #2
Nice thought, anyway.

STAGEHAND #1
Give it a try.

STAGEHAND #2
I don't think so.

STAGEHAND #1
Grab a line. You never know. You might like it.
(Stagehand #2 waves
it off)

STAGEHAND #1
Come on.
(sings)
The moon belongs to everyone.

*(Gestures for Stagehand #1 to
take the next line)*

STAGEHAND #2
(sings hesitantly at
first)
The best things in life are free.

STAGEHAND #1
(speaks)
Okay.
(sings)
The stars belong to everyone.

STAGEHAND #2
(getting into it)
They gleam there for you and me.

STAGEHAND #1
The flowers in spring.

STAGEHAND #2
The robins that sing.

STAGEHAND #1
The sunbeams that shine.

STAGEHAND #2
They're yours.

STAGEHAND #1

They're mine.

(They hum the melody and begin to dance, either side by side or with one another or whatever you come up with depending on the talent and skills of your actors.)

Returning to work, they continue singing)

STAGEHAND #1

The flowers in spring.

STAGEHAND #2

The robins that sing.

STAGEHAND #1

The sunbeams that shine.

STAGEHAND #2

They're yours.

STAGEHAND #1

They're mine.

(speaks)

And...

STAGEHAND #2

(speaks)

And?

STAGEHAND #1

(speaks)

And...

(sings)

Love can come to anyone.

(They put the last piece in place, look it over and...)

TOGETHER

(big finish)

The best things in life are free.

(They dance off.)

(SUGGESTED MUSIC: "The Muse" by the Zac Brown Band.)

(Stagehand #1 returns pushing in a rolling office chair in which sits SAMANTHA. Stagehand #2 carries in a desk and a laptop computer. Samantha puts her head down on the laptop and falls asleep. Stagehand #1 rolls in another chair in which sits SAM and places it on the opposite side of desk. The Stagehands exit.)

(MUSIC DOWN)

(After a few moments Samantha awakens and is startled to see Sam sitting across from her.)

SAMANTHA

Who the hell are you?

SAM

(calmly)

I'm Sam.

SAMANTHA

What are you doing here, Sam?

SAM

I'm always here.

SAMANTHA

No, I'm always here and I don't remember seeing you.

SAM

When I say I'm always here, I mean here.

(He taps her forehead)

SAMANTHA

(points at her own head)

Here?

SAM

That's right. In your subconscious.

SAMANTHA

You're part of my..?

SAM

Subconscious.

SAMANTHA

This is a dream right? I'm having a dream. A very weird dream.

SAM

I wouldn't call it a dream. More like a... a conversation?

SAMANTHA

A conversation? With my subconscious?

SAM

Perhaps, more of an internal dialogue.

SAMANTHA

It's happened. I's finally happened. It was bound to happen. All the signs were there.

SAM

What was bound to happen?

SAMANTHA

Bananas. I've gone bananas. Completely around the bend.

SAM

No, no, no... At least no more so than any other person who writes scripts for a living.

SAMANTHA

Hardly a ringing endorsement.

SAM

You haven't gone around the bend.

SAMANTHA

I'm talking to myself. What would you call it?

SAM

It's part of your creative process.

SAMANTHA

I don't have a creative process.

SAM

All writers have a creative process.

SAMANTHA

A process implies something logical... Planned... Organized. I, on the other hand, operate out of total chaos bordering on panic and terror resulting in hysteria.

SAM

There you go. That's your process.

SAMANTHA

None of this makes any sense.

SAM

Maybe I can clear things up.

SAMANTHA

I sincerely doubt that.

SAM

When I said I was part of your subconscious I was referring to something very specific. I'm your muse.

SAMANTHA

I have a muse?

SAM

You have a muse. And I'm your muse.

SAMANTHA

My muse?

SAM

Your muse.

SAMANTHA

But, you're a guy.

SAM

This is the way you conjured me up.

SAMANTHA

Why would I conjure up a male muse?

SAM

That's something you'll have to take up with your therapist.

SAMANTHA

Wait a minute... Hold on here. If I remember my Greek mythology, muses were always hot babes in sheets.

SAM

That's because all the writers back then were men. That's what inspired them. We're in the twenty first century now.

SAMANTHA

No, you can't be my muse. To be my muse you would have to know how my brain works. And it's a proven fact that the male brain has never understood how the female brain works.

SAM

Well, if you want to get down to basics, nobody has ever figured out how the female brain works.

SAMANTHA

Alright, I'll give you that one. Like they say... whoever they are... in for a dime, in for a dollar... I can't believe I'm actually asking this, but what is it you do as my muse?

SAM

I inspire.

SAMANTHA

Inspire?

SAM

Inspire. That's what muses do. We inspire.

SAMANTHA

How come this is the first time you're showing up?

SAM

I've been here all the time. Working in the background.

SAMANTHA

In the background. What background?

SAM

Let's see ... Uh... Remember when that actor dumped you for the blonde with the mile long legs?

SAMANTHA

The lying bastard wasn't an actor. He was an A.D. She was a redhead and she stood five feet two in three inch heels.

SAM

(defensively)

Okay, okay, that's not the point.

SAMANTHA

What is the point?

SAM

You turned that complete and totally humiliating moment into a wonderful play. What was it you called it?

SAMANTHA

"The Lying Bastard."

SAM

That was it.

SAMANTHA

Once again, what's your point?

SAM

You were stuck for an ending. You must have tried fifteen or twenty and none of them worked. Then... in the middle of the night you popped up from a deep sleep and there it was?

SAMANTHA

So?

SAM

That was me.

SAMANTHA

You?

SAM

Working in the background. And then there was the basketball player...

SAMANTHA

Tennis player...

SAM

Who dumped you at the altar...

SAMANTHA

The lying s.o.b. never even called.

SAM

And ran off with that black jack dealer from the MGM Grand in Las Vegas.

SAMANTHA

Reno... And she was a cashier at Harrah's.

SAM

(defensively)

Whatever. Again, you took a crushing public embarrassment that would have destroyed most women and spun it into gold.

SAMANTHA

What gold? I couldn't get out of bed for a month.

SAM

But then you wrote that very well reviewed two act play... with that great title?

SAMANTHA

"The Lying S.O.B."

SAM

But when you were writing it, you couldn't figure out the scene transitions. You struggled for months to make that work.

SAMANTHA

I remember.

SAM

And then one afternoon, you're in Starbucks ordering a latte and boom, there it was. The solution. The movers. I'll use the movers.

SAMANTHA

And that was you?

SAM

Working in the background.

SAMANTHA

You know I'm not buying any of this.

SAM

Okay then. How about that movie you sold based on that guy who lived next door that you had a one night...

SAMANTHA

Okay...Okay... I get it. I'm a loser. I'm a big fat loser.

SAM

But a big fat loser who's turned disasters that would have crushed very life out any woman with an ounce of self esteem and turned them into a very nice career. What are you working on now?

SAMANTHA

A ten minute play. A friend is doing an evening of short plays and they asked me to contribute.

SAM

What do you have so far?

SAMANTHA

(looks at her
computer)

So far... Let's see... Lights up.

SAM

That's a good start.

SAMANTHA

Every play begins with lights up, otherwise the audience couldn't see the actors.

SAM

With some of the stuff they're putting up these days, that might be a blessing.

SAMANTHA

What are you, a critic now?

SAM

I wasn't talking about you. I like your stuff.

SAMANTHA

Thank you.

SAM

For the most part. How long is a ten minute play?

SAMANTHA

Oh, I don't know. Give or take... ten minutes.

SAM

I mean, how many pages?

SAMANTHA

Rule of thumb about one page per minute.

SAM

So that would be... uh... uh...

(Samantha waits, then...)

SAMANTHA

Ten pages.

SAM

Right, ten pages. That doesn't seem like much.

SAMANTHA

Only if you've already written nine pages. Okay, Mr. Inspiration. As long as you're here, do your stuff.

SAM

What stuff?

SAMANTHA

Characters... A plot... Action... Dialogue... And jokes. Lots of jokes. Did I mention they want a comedy?

SAM

No, no... I don't think I made myself clear.

SAMANTHA

No, no, no, no, no. No backing out now. Come on. Lay it on me. Let's hear what you got.

SAM
As your muse, I don't actually....

SAMANTHA
You don't actually, what?

SAM
Write. I don't actually write.

SAMANTHA
You don't write.

SAM
You write. I inspire.

SAMANTHA
So, essentially you contribute absolutely nothing to my so called creative process.

SAM
The spark. I contribute the spark. You might say, I light the fire.

SAMANTHA
Okay, then... Come on baby, light my fire.

SAM
What is it that writers always say?

SAMANTHA
Where's the check?

SAM
Write what you know.

SAMANTHA
I've written everything I know. I don't know anything more. If I did I would write it. As of now, I'm reduced to just making stuff up.

SAM
There must be something in your life you could mine.

SAMANTHA
Sorry, I wish I could help but some lying prick hasn't dumped on me recently. But give me five minutes and who knows.

SAM
You must have done something.

SAMANTHA
I ordered some bras on line.

SAM
Anything in that?

SAMANTHA
Only if the Amazon guy holds me hostage for three days.
Otherwise, I got nothing.

SAM
Will you listen to yourself.

SAMANTHA
I'd rather not. My life is depressing enough.

SAM
You keep throwing up these barriers.

SAMANTHA
Barriers?

SAM
Yes... Yes... Barriers. You need to open up.

SAMANTHA
Open up.

SAM
Let the ideas flow.

SAMANTHA
Let the ideas flow.

SAM
Free associate.

SAMANTHA
Free associate.

SAM
Let the sun shine in.

SAMANTHA
I'm trying to write ten pages, not disinfect a wound.

SAM
You have to tear down those road blocks. Throw open the
doors to your creativity.

SAMANTHA
You realize, of course, that you're well on your way to
establishing a new world's record for meaningless cliches.

SAM
Let me suggest something then.

SAMANTHA
Oh, I can't wait.

SAM
Sleep on it.

SAMANTHA
Sleep on it?

SAM
Sleep on it.

SAMANTHA
That's all you got. Sleep on it?

SAM
In a nutshell.

SAMANTHA
An apt description if I ever heard one.

SAM
Trust yourself. It'll be there. I guarantee it. It always is.

(Sam exits)

SAMANTHA
(angrily)
Wait... Wait... Where are you going? That's it? You're walking out? Ohmygod... This is new low even for me. Dumped by my own muse... Go... Walk out... Like every other guy I've ever known. Inspiration, my ass.

(Samantha yawns and lays her head down on her computer just as we found her when the scene began. A moment or two later she awakens, sits up, looks around as though expecting to see some one. When she realizes she's alone, she glances down at her computer.)

SAMANTHA
Mmmmmmm... Maybe... It's a an idea... Could work. Who knows?
(speaks as she types))
Ten Pages by Samantha Bright. Lights up on Julia, a very attractive young writer with a devastating smile... Think a young Julia Roberts... She has fallen asleep on her computer
(MORE)

SAMANTHA (cont'd)

keyboard. Slowly she awakens to find a very handsome man sitting across from her. Think a young George Clooney. Julia... Flirtatiously... Well hello there. George... Hello... Julia... And whose eyes do I have the pleasure of gazing into? ... George... I'm George... I'm your muse...

(Stagehand #1 enters and rolls Samantha off.)

SAMANTHA

Hey... What are you doing? I was on a roll.

(Stagehand #1 rolls her offstage. Stagehand #2 enters and removes the remaining set pieces. KATHERINE and MARTIN, both in their late thirties, enter and look around for someplace to sit. The Stagehands hurry in with a bench. Katherine and Martin sit. Stagehand #1 signals them to wait just a moment, exits and returns with a small tree and sets it down next to the bench. The Stagehands exit as KATE, very early twenties, enters carrying script pages. She paces around studying her script, when MARTY, early twenties, enters.)

MARTY

(hesitantly)

Excuse me.

KATE

(not looking up)

Yeah?

MARTY

Are you Kate?

(Kate looks up from her script, likes what sees)

KATE

Oh...

*(somewhat
flirtatiously)*

I'm Kate. I'm definitely Kate. And you are...?

MARTY

Marty... I'm Marty.

KATE

Marty. So nice to meet you... Marty

(She glides over to him)

KATHERINE

What's with the Scarlet O'Hara routine?

MARTIN

Shhhhhh.

MARTY

(releasing her hand)

Dan sent me.

KATE

Did he? Well, remind me to thank Dan.

KATHERINE

(embarrassed)

Ohmygod.

*(Martin gestures for her to
keep it down)*

KATE

And what can I do for you... Marty?

MARTY

Dan said, I'm supposed to read with you.

KATE

Really?

MARTY

If that's alright.

KATE

Oh, that's quite alright. What happened to Ralph? Not, that it's a problem.

MARTY

He's at the Cubs game. He got these last minute tickets. You know, Ralph.

KATHERINE

I knew Ralph. He hated baseball.

KATE
(still flirting)
Well, I guess we'll have to just push on without him. Won't we... Marty?

KATHERINE
If she keeps batting those eyelashes she's gonna take off.

(Martin signals her to be quiet.)

KATE
Did Dan give you the sides?

MARTY
The sides?

KATE
The script pages.

MARTY
The script pages.
(holds them up)
Of course. I'm not familiar with all the lingo yet. I hope that won't be a problem.

KATE
No, problem at all. Just follow my lead... Marty.

KATHERINE
Give me a break.

(Martin shushes her again)

KATE
We're only gonna have a few minutes out there to show our stuff.

MARTY
Pressure... Pressure.

KATE
I thought we'd maybe do pages six through eight or nine.

MARTY
Sure...
(Marty shuffles through the pages and reads.)
Oh...

KATE
Problem?

MARTY
It just says here that I...

KATE
You what?

MARTY
Well, kiss you.

KATE
Oh, does it?
(checks her pages)
So it does. You have kissed a girl before, haven't you?

MARTY
Oh, sure. Lots of girls.

KATHERINE
(sarcastically to
Martin)
Lots of girls?

MARTIN
Lots of girls.

KATHERINE
Well, if nothing else, you certainly had an active fantasy
life.

MARTY
(nervously)
Well, it's... uh... that we just met and all.

KATHERINE
Who are you supposed to be in this, Huckleberry Finn?

KATE
Don't worry about a thing. It's not a real kiss kiss.

MARTY
What kind of kiss, is it?

KATE
A stage kiss.

MARTY
What's the difference?

KATE
It's not really us kissing.

MARTY
It isn't?

KATE

It's the characters. They're the ones who are kissing.

MARTY

So, it's not us. It's...

KATE

Them. Exactly. We're gonna have to do it sooner or later...

(off Marty's look)

The kiss, I mean... Sooner or later.

MARTY

Sure. Of course. The kiss.

KATE

So if we can get it out of the way...

MARTY

Over the hump, so to speak.

KATE

Well, I wouldn't put it in those terms. But, yes, get over the awkwardness, it might make everything that follows go a little smoother.

MARTY

So how do we do this?

KATE

Follow the stage directions.

MARTY

Stage directions?

KATE

The stuff in parentheses.

(reads from script)

Johnny and Alice stand facing each other. She puts her arms around his neck.

(Kate puts her arms around his neck. She holds up the script behind his head and continues to read)

KATE

He puts his arms around her. Marty.

MARTY

Yeah?

KATE

Put your arms around me.

MARTY

Oh, sorry.

*(Marty puts his arms around
her holding up his script
behind her where he can read
it)*

KATE

(still reading)

They look into each other's eyes. Marty

MARTY

Yeah?

KATE

My eyes.

MARTY

Your eyes?

KATE

Look into them.

MARTY

(uncomfortably)

Your eyes. Right. Look into your eyes.

*(He looks into her eyes. She
turns the page she's holding
behind him and reads.)*

KATE

He kisses her. This is where you kiss me or rather Johnny
kisses Alice.

MARTY

Right.

(He leans in to kiss her)

KATHERINE

That's not how it happened.

*(Marty pulls back from the
kiss, embarrassed and
annoyed.)*

MARTIN

That's exactly how it happened.

KATHERINE

In your dreams. Like I set this whole thing in motion just to get you to plant one on me.

MARTIN

Facts are facts.

KATHERINE

The fact is you rigged it from start to finish.

MARTIN

Where did you get that idea?

KATHERINE

(to Kate and Marty)

You two. From the top.

(Kate takes her place as it was in the opening. Marty shuffles off, then after a beat returns)

MARTY

Excuse me.

KATE

(studying her pages)

Yes?

MARTY

Are you Kate?

(Kate looks up and sees Marty.)

KATE

I'm Kate.

MARTY

Dan said I'd find you here.

KATE

(coolly)

Well, you found me.

KATHERINE

Good.

MARTY

It seems I'm gonna be doing the audition scene with you.

KATE

You? What happened to Ralph?

MARTY

He got tickets to the Cubs game.

KATE

I didn't know Ralph was a Cubs fan.

KATHERINE

(to Martin)

He wasn't. He was a fan of free tickets. Your free tickets.

MARTIN

I have no idea what...

KATHERINE

Can it.

MARTY

Dan said we should run pages six through nine.

KATE

(hesitantly)

Six through nine?

MARTY

That's what he said. Is that a problem?

KATE

Have you read pages six through nine?

MARTY

He just handed me these...

(holds up script
pages)

and told me to find you.

KATE

You might want to read pages six through nine.

(Marty reads)

MARTY

Oh...

KATE

Yeah... Oh.

MARTY

Dan said it would help us get past the awkwardness of the moment. I didn't know what he meant.

KATHERINE

Dan never told you about six through nine. That was all you. All that getting over the awkwardness malarkey. I can't believe how naive I was.

MARTIN

You were never naive.

MARTY

If you're uncomfortable.

KATE

No, I'm comfortable. If you're comfortable.

MARTY

I'm comfortable, if your comfortable.

KATE

I'm very comfortable.

MARTY

So am I. Very comfortable.

KATE

Okay, then.

MARTY

Why don't we work up to it?

KATE

What did you have in mind?

MARTY

We could start with the lines leading up to the...uh...kiss.

KATE

The lines? Yes, the lines. Good idea.

MARTY

You wanna start?

KATE

(thumbs through
script)

How about the middle of page six?

MARTY

(thumbs through his
script)

Middle of page... Got it.

KATE
Ready?

MARTY
Ready.

KATE
(reads from script)
Please, Johnny, let's not rush things.

MARTY
(stiffly reads from script)
Alice, I only know one thing.

KATE
What's that?

MARTY
I love you.

KATE
Is that the way you're going to read it?

MARTY
Something wrong?

KATE
It's awfully stiff. Is that the way you tell a girl you love her?
(imitates his reading)
I only know one thing. I love you.

MARTY
Well, your the first girl I've ever said it to.

KATE
(a little flummoxed)
Well... uh... Why don't we try it again.

MARTY
You start.

KATE
Please, Johnny, let's not rush things.

MARTY
(a slightly better reading)
I only know one thing.

KATE
What's that?

MARTY

I love you. Was that better?

KATE

Yeah... But it would help if you didn't stop for a critique.

MARTY

Right... I'm sorry.

KATE

Let's take it from your line.

MARTY

My line... I only know one thing.

KATE

What's that?

MARTY

I love you.

*(Kate signals for him to
continue)*

MARTY

What?

KATE

The stage directions. .

MARTY

(reads)

He takes her in his arms.

KATE

You don't have to read them out loud. You just do them.

MARTY

I'm sorry. Let's try it again.

KATE

Please, Johnny, let's not rush things.

MARTY

Alice, I only know one thing.

KATE

What's that?

MARTY
(said with real
passion)
I love you. God, I love you. From the first moment I saw
you.

KATE
That's not in the script.

MARTY
I know.

(Marty kisses her.)

MARTIN
I don't remember that.

KATHERINE
(dreamily)
I do.

MARTIN
If you're saying I set that whole thing just to so I
could...

KATHERINE
You know something?

MARTIN
What?

KATHERINE
You talk too much.

(She plants one on him)

(The Stagehands return)

*(SUGGESTED SONG: "THERE'S NO
BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS")*

*(The Stagehands remove the
bench and the tree and begin
setting up for the next scene
which will suggest a theater
set for a hotel room with an
upstage door. Somewhere in
here, Katherine and Martin,
Kate and Marty realize they
are not alone. Slightly
embarrassed they end their
clinch and almost slink off
the stage. The ACTOR, from the*

upcoming scene, enters into the offstage area next to the hotel set and looks around for something that seems to be missing.)

ACTOR
(demanding)
Mirror. Where's my mirror?

(Stagehand #2 rolls in a full length mirror. The ACTOR begins preening and doing annoying vocal exercises. Stagehand #2 shakes his head in disbelief and exits.)

(The DIRECTOR and the ACTRESS enter arguing, trailed by the STAGE MANAGER who is carrying a clipboard.)

ACTRESS
(always dramatic)
Not on your life. There is no way I am going on to that stage, in front of all those people... naked.

DIRECTOR
I'm not asking you to go out there naked.

ACTRESS
But you explicitly said...

DIRECTOR
I'm asking you to go out there nude.

ACTRESS
I fail to see the difference.

DIRECTOR
Being naked on stage is just taking your clothes off to titillate the prurient interests of the masses. But, when an actress, a real actress, goes on stage nude... That's art.

ACTRESS
Then you go out there "nude."

ACTOR
(nervously)
Do... uh... I have to go out there nude?

DIRECTOR
Don't be ridiculous.

(The Actor breathes a sigh of relief)

STAGE MANAGER

What do you wanna do, boss? Send the audience home?

DIRECTOR

Send the audience home? Send the audience home?? You ever hear the expression "the show must go on?"

STAGE MANAGER

Yes.

DIRECTOR

And you know why the show must go on?

STAGE MANAGER

No.

DIRECTOR

Because if the show doesn't go on, we'd have to give back all the money.

STAGE MANAGER

What are we gonna do?

DIRECTOR

Give me that.

(takes the Stage Manager's clipboard and writes)

Now go out there and read this to the audience.

STAGE MANAGER

Me? I'm not an actor.

DIRECTOR

I'm just asking you to read what I wrote, not the final act of King Lear.

(The Stage Manager walks downstage and nervously begins to read)

STAGE MANAGER

Due to the completely unprofessional conduct of our leading actress...

ACTRESS

Unprofessional? I am not unprofessional. You can call me a lot of things...

DIRECTOR

And many people have.

STAGE MANAGER

... who was to perform the role as written when she begged to be cast in the part.

ACTRESS

Beg? Beg? I have never begged for a role in my life.

STAGE MANAGER

We are sorry to announce that Barbara Andrews will not be appearing as previously announced. In her place...

ACTRESS

In my place? You're going to send out a nobody in my place?

DIRECTOR

Of course, I'm not sending out a nobody.

STAGE MANAGER

No one will be playing the part of Helen.

DIRECTOR

I'm sending out... nobody.

ACTRESS

Nobody is going to play my part?

DIRECTOR

That's right. And she'll give ten times the performance you would have.

ACTOR

(nervously)

You want me to play the scene alone.

DIRECTOR

That's right.

ACTOR

(even more nervous)

Nobody on stage. Just me.

DIRECTOR

Just you.

ACTOR

Not her?

DIRECTOR

Not her. Just you, the spotlight and the audience

ACTOR

I love it.

(The Actor walks behind the hotel room set.)

ACTRESS

Don't you think the audience is going to notice that something isn't quite right?

DIRECTOR

That's the glory of theater. The audience will see whatever we want them to see. It's called the willing suspension of disbelief.

ACTRESS

I don't believe this myself.

(The upstage door opens. The Actor enters holding the hand of the non-existence actress. He does his lines as though to a live and present actress. By the way, he is a huge ham)

ACTOR

I never thought this moment would actually come. You and me, at last alone.

(pauses as though listening to the non-existence actress's line. He will do this as required for the scene to play out)

What's that? I seem nervous. It's only my excitement at seeing you like this... so exquisitely, so tastefully, so artistically...

(voice drops three octaves)

...in the altogether.

DIRECTOR

Look at that... The audience doesn't even miss you.

ACTOR

Kiss you? Now? You want me to kiss you? Oh, my darling.

(Takes the non-existent actress into his arms and mime's kissing her. Of course he overdoes it.)

DIRECTOR

This is working out even better than I expected. The audience is imagining you in ways you could never have lived up to.

ACTRESS

I would have knocked them on their collective ass.

ACTOR

You're so beautiful, my darling. Those alabaster shoulders.

DIRECTOR

Those are your shoulders he would have been extolling.

ACTOR

That face... The face of an angel.

DIRECTOR

That's your face he would have been admiring.

ACTOR

That swan like neck. And those...
(gestures with both
hands)

Those... Those...

DIRECTOR

Right now everybody out there would have been staring at your...

ACTOR

Eyes.

DIRECTOR

Those too.

ACTOR

Where are you going, my darling?

(pause)

Yes... Of course, I'll wait... Till the end of time.

*(The upstage door opens and
then closes)*

DIRECTOR

Too bad the audience is seeing her and not you. The men out there lusting after her and not you.

ACTRESS

The women hating me and not her.
(projects her voice
dramatically)

Michael, my darling.

ACTOR
(confused))
Yes? Yes, my beloved?

ACTRESS
I'm almost ready my love.

DIRECTOR
(to Actress)
Will you keep it down.

ACTRESS
Are you ready, my handsome?

ACTOR
Like you wouldn't believe.

ACTRESS
(to Director)
Nobody steals my spotlight.

DIRECTOR
To be completely accurate... "nobody" is stealing your
spotlight.

ACTRESS
The bitch. I'll show them shoulders... I'll show them a
neck... I'll show them...
(pause)
...eyes.

DIRECTOR
What are you talking about? You said you'd never go out
there naked.

ACTRESS
(starts to remove her
dress)
I'm an artist and artists never go on stage naked. They go
on stage... nude!!

*(She steps behind the hotel
room set. A moment later her
dress and a few other items
coming flying out.)*

ACTRESS (O.S.)
(sweetly)
I'm coming my darling.
(to Stage Manager
sounding like
General Patton)
You... Open that damn door.

(The stage manager runs back behind the hotel room set. A moment later the upstage door opens. Another moment and the Actress's bare leg appears seductively in the doorway.)

(The Stagehands return and begin dismantling the set. From behind the set we hear the Actress scream. Stagehand #2 retrieves her dress and tosses it to her. The Stagehands continue removing the set.)

ACTOR
(exiting, talking to
Director and Stage
Manager)

We should do it that way every night.

*(SUGGESTED MUSIC - Cole
Porter's "Let's Do It")*

*(The Stagehands slide in a
bed. Under the covers are
ANNIE and DAN.)*

(MUSIC DOWN)

DAN
So... Amy... How...uh... was it?

*(Stagehand #2 stops to wait
for Annie's answer.
Stagehand#1 pulls Stagehand #2
off stage.)*

ANNIE
How was what?

DAN
It.

ANNIE
It?

DAN
You know... It.

ANNIE
Oh... It.

DAN

Yeah... It.

ANNIE

Let's see. For technical merit I'd give you a four point five. Artistic achievement... three point two.

DAN

(annoyed)

I was just asking to see if you found it...pleasing? Satisfying? The least bit entertaining?

ANNIE

No, I didn't find it pleasing or satisfying or the least bit entertaining.

DAN

I'm sorry I asked.

ANNIE

Would you like to know why?

DAN

Not really. No.

ANNIE

I didn't find it pleasing, or satisfying or the least bit entertaining because we didn't do... it.

DAN

We didn't?

ANNIE

No, we didn't. We've never done it and the way things stand, we will never do it. And one more thing.

DAN

I can't wait.

ANNIE

My name isn't Amy.

DAN

It's not.

ANNIE

It's Annie.

DAN

Annie?

ANNIE

Annie.

DAN
I could've sworn it was Amy.

ANNIE
It was.

DAN
What do you mean it was?

ANNIE
In drafts number three, five and nine.

DAN
Drafts? What drafts?

ANNIE
Play drafts.

DAN
What play drafts?

ANNIE
This is the fifteenth.

DAN
What are you talking about? The fifteenth what?

ANNIE
We're in the fifteenth draft of a play.

DAN
What does that mean, we're in the fifteenth draft of a play?

ANNIE
You, my naked friend, are a character.

DAN
(please with himself)
Really? No one's ever called me a character before. Does that mean you find me... charming? Quirky... Off...?

ANNIE
Not that kind of character. We're both characters... in a play or more to the point a work in progress. Except the writer isn't making that much progress.

DAN
Wait... Wait... That makes absolutely no sense. I'm here... You're here. I'm flesh and blood. You're definitely flesh and blood. And you're saying I'm a fictional construct?

ANNIE
Look around. What do you see?

DAN
You... Me... A bed

ANNIE
Anything else?

DAN
No.

ANNIE
Don't you find that a little strange?

DAN
Well... Yeah... I suppose. I hadn't thought about it.

ANNIE
It's called a limbo set. We could be anywhere.

DAN
Or... nowhere.

ANNIE
Exactly.

DAN
There's gotta be another explanation.

ANNIE
Let me ask you this. Where were you born?

DAN
Uh...

ANNIE
A simple question. Where were you born?

DAN
Let me think.

ANNIE
While you're working on that, what is your mother's name?

DAN
That's easy. It's uh... uh...

ANNIE
What did you have for breakfast?

DAN
Breakfast... Breakfast.

ANNIE

Yes, breakfast, the most important meal of the day.

DAN

Ohmygod, I have amnesia!!!

ANNIE

You don't have amnesia.

DAN

I don't?

ANNIE

It would be an interesting plot twist if you did, but this guy's not that inventive.

DAN

What guy?

ANNIE

The writer.

DAN

What writer?

ANNIE

The one who is... or, more accurately, isn't writing all this.

DAN

Someone is writing all of this?

ANNIE

Yes... We're figments of someone's not very active imagination.

DAN

How come you know all this stuff and I don't?

ANNIE

Probably because he's re-written you so many times, it's a wonder you know your own name

DAN

Ted.

ANNIE

Dan.

DAN

Dan?

ANNIE
Dan.

DAN
When did it become Dan?

ANNIE
In draft number three... or four.

DAN
Wait a minute... Maybe I'm not a character. May I'm an actor playing a character.

ANNIE
An actor?

DAN
An actor.

ANNIE
Oh, God, I hope not.

DAN
That could be it. I'm an actor playing a character who has amnesia.

ANNIE
Interesting idea, but...
(points up)
...again, he's not that inventive. Look at us. We're here in bed, stark naked and through fifteen drafts and we still haven't gotten it on.

DAN
That's weird

ANNIE
Not to mention frustrating. We both want to do it. You do want to do it, right? Silly question. Of course you want to do it. You're a guy.

DAN
Do you want to do it?

ANNIE
Yes, but for all the wrong reasons.

DAN
There's a wrong reason for wanting to..?

ANNIE
I want it as a form of reassurance. A way of validating my attractiveness... My womanness.

DAN

That's crazy. Why would you, of all people, need reassurance?

ANNIE

My husband, Ed, Phil, Roger, Arnie, left me for my best friend, co-worker, physical trainer. It keeps changing. I'm feeling rejected and I'm using you to reassure myself that I'm still desirable.

DAN

Using me?

ANNIE

Using you. Does that bother you?

DAN

No.

ANNIE

Why should it? you're a guy.

DAN

I want to do it. You want to do it. What are we waiting for?

ANNIE

The rewrites.

DAN

How long will that take?

ANNIE

Go only knows.

DAN

Well, while we're waiting...

ANNIE

Yeah?

DAN

Seeing as how you know everything, what can you tell me about me?

ANNIE

You're a dentist.

DAN

Have I always been a dentist?

ANNIE

That's never changed.

DAN
Then I gather this is not a comedy.

ANNIE
Not on purpose.

DAN
That's it? I'm a dentist.

ANNIE
You're also nice, polite and somewhat confused.

DAN
How do you know that?

ANNIE
It was in the stage directions.

DAN
Maybe, just maybe, that's how he sees himself. Maybe I'm just a projection.

ANNIE
Possible.

DAN
So, if I'm him, who are you?

ANNIE
I haven't figured that out yet. Mostly because he hasn't figured it out yet.

DAN
Maybe you're somebody in his life.

ANNIE
A woman who is angry, insecure and repressed. I've hit the cliché female trifecta.

DAN
What would you have to be insecure about? Just look at you.

ANNIE
(warmly)
Thank you. That's very reassuring.

DAN
What else can you tell me about me?

ANNIE
You're divorced. Her name was Carol, Mary, Dolores and in three drafts Marilyn. She left you because she thought you were boring.

DAN
Boring?

ANNIE
Boring.

DAN
I wasn't fooling around.

ANNIE
No.

DAN
She wasn't fooling around.

ANNIE
No.

DAN
She didn't leave me for somebody else.

ANNIE
No, she just left you. Oh... And then you tried to kill yourself.

DAN
That's pretty drastic. What happened?

ANNIE
He...
(points up)
...realized that in a two character play, if you kill off one of the characters...

DAN
You don't have a play.

ANNIE
Bingo.

DAN
Anything else?

ANNIE
Your ex was a short blonde with big maracas.

DAN
Maybe this guy...
(points up)
... has more imagination that we give him credit for.

ANNIE

Obviously that's your type...or his.

DAN

If that's my type... short blondes with big...

ANNIE

Maracas.

DAN

Then, why am I interested in you? You're not a short blonde with big...

ANNIE

Maracas. Thank you for noticing.

DAN

Just trying to fill in the....
(suddenly turns very
dramatic)

Joannie...

ANNIE

Joannie???

DAN

Joannie, I love you. I've always loved you.

ANNIE

(equally as dramatic)

How can that be Bob? We hardly know each other.

DAN

I don't know. I don't understand it myself.
(suddenly back to
normal)

What was that all about? And why did I call you Joannie?

ANNIE

He's writing again.

DAN

Is that what it's like?

ANNIE

Get used to it.

DAN

So, now, I'm in love with you. Or with Joannie, whoever she is.

ANNIE

That's a new wrinkle. Probably won't last long. Nothing with this guy ever does.

DAN

Did you ever consider that he is a she?

ANNIE

Not a chance.

DAN

Think about this. Maybe she's just working through some issues and using you as her surrogate.

ANNIE

You mean she can't get laid, either.

DAN

It's gotta be more than that.

ANNIE

(suddenly very warm)

You're so understanding, Don.

DAN

Dan.

ANNIE

Dan... I don't know what it is. I feel so comfortable with you. Usually I'm very self conscious. How I look. Am I wearing the right outfit for the occasion.

DAN

(peeking under the covers)

Trust me, you're wearing the right outfit.

ANNIE

(mockingly)

I'm very self conscious. Am I wearing the right outfit?

(angrily)

Where the hell did that come from?

DAN

I kind of like the "trust me you're wearing the right outfit" line.

ANNIE

You just liked peeking under the covers.

DAN

It's very nice under the covers.

ANNIE

Why couldn't I be a three dimensional creation of someone with real talent? Instead of this stick figure.

DAN

I realize I only had time for a quick glance, but you're definitely not a stick figure.

ANNIE

(warmly)

Thank you, that's very reassuring.

(angrily)

Why do I keep saying that?

DAN

Maybe it's part of your character.

ANNIE

That's what I mean. One dimensional. There's got to be more to me than just seeking validation from a man.

DAN

Do we sound like a couple of complete losers or what?

ANNIE

We are a couple of losers.

DAN

Who wants to be a character in a play about a couple of losers.

ANNIE

It's the basis for half the stuff that gets written these days.

DAN

And people want to see this?

ANNIE

They identify.

DAN

With losers?

ANNIE

Losers who overcome obstacles, including their own inadequacies to eventually triumph.

DAN

Is that where we're headed? To a happy ending?

ANNIE

God, I'd settle for any kind of ending, happy or not.

DAN

You mean we... you and I... could get together?

ANNIE

Who knows, but I wouldn't count on it.

DAN

What if, in the next rewrite, you fall in love with me?

ANNIE

Why would I want to do that?

DAN

Right... I'm boring. What the hell? Why don't we just shut up and do it.

ANNIE

Do what?

DAN

Throw the entire story arc to the wind and make mad, passionate, wall shaking love. What do you say?

ANNIE

It doesn't work that way.

DAN

Who says it doesn't work that way?

ANNIE

It doesn't work that way. This has to be going somewhere, plot wise.

DAN

How about this for plot wise? We make love in act one and it's so earth shattering you fall in love with me in act two.

ANNIE

There is not going to be an act two. This is a one act play. Two characters... Simple set. Inexpensive to produce. We'll be lucky to make it to...

(Dan takes Annie by the shoulders and kisses her passionately.)

(The Stagehands roll a black curtain past the foot of the bed. They look behind the curtain, look at each other and nod approvingly. After a

*couple of moments they roll
the curtain out.)*

*(Annie and Dan are still in
bed. Annie is now smoking a
cigarette.)*

ANNIE

Aren't you going to ask me how it was?

DAN

How what was?

ANNIE

It.

DAN

It?

ANNIE

It.

DAN

You mean we...?

ANNIE

Oh yeah. Big time.

DAN

When?

ANNIE

During the scene break. Right after the blackout. It's all there in the stage directions. Scene two. Lights up. Annie and Dan are still in bed. She's smoking a cigarette.

DAN

I really do have to pay more attention.

ANNIE

You were incredible, by the way.

DAN

Is that in the stage directions, too?

ANNIE

No, I just threw that in.

DAN

I guess I'll have to take your word for it.

ANNIE

It's true... All I needed was a good roll in the hay.

(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
(angrily)

Oh God.

DAN

What?

ANNIE
I can't believe I just said that. He's definitely a male.

DAN
This whole thing is going nowhere. I'm getting out of here.

ANNIE
You can't. Characters don't leave a play in the middle.

DAN
Why not? Audiences do it all the time.

ANNIE
It's not our story. It's his...
(points up)
...story.

DAN
Then let's make it our story.

ANNIE
It doesn't work that way.

DAN
Characters take over plays all the time. Isn't that what writers are always saying.

ANNIE
How do you know what writers are always saying?

DAN
I don't know. Maybe...

ANNIE
What?

DAN
Maybe everything we're saying...

ANNIE
Yeah?

DAN
Maybe it's not random.

ANNIE
You mean he's writing all of this.

DAN
Sort of makes sense in an odd way.

ANNIE
So even what we're saying now... The questions. The complaints... You wanting to take off.

DAN
Are being written as we say them.

*(Annie suddenly becomes over
the top dramatic.)*

ANNIE
You can't leave me, Dennis. I'll do anything you say. Just stay here with me a little longer.

DAN
That's not you talking, Annie. It's him... You gotta fight it.

ANNIE
I'm trying...

DAN
(getting overly
dramatic)
I can't live without you, Jenny.

ANNIE
(back to normal)
Now he's rewriting you.

DAN
He's trying to keep us in the script. We have to fight back.

ANNIE
(dramatically)
I'm not strong like you, Ken.

DAN
(equally dramatic)
I'll never leave you, Nora.

ANNIE
I can't go on. This is bigger than both of us.

DAN
(back to normal)
Do you want to be stuck with that kind of dialogue for the rest of your life?

ANNIE

I feel so powerless.... So manipulated.

DAN

Then quit. Walk out.

ANNIE

I keep telling you, it doesn't work that way.

DAN

You'll never know if you don't try. What's say we do this step by step. Step one, get out of bed.

ANNIE

This bed is all I know.

DAN

Just throw the covers back and climb out.

ANNIE

I'm naked.

DAN

I won't look.

ANNIE

I'm not doing a nude scene.

DAN

Then I'll do it.

(He gets out of bed. He's wearing pants, shoes and socks.)

ANNIE

When did you put your pants on?

DAN

Let's just say I'm taking charge of my own rewrite.

ANNIE

That nails it.

DAN

Nails what.

ANNIE

If he was a she, I'd be the decisive one. I'd be the one taking charge of my own rewrite. But no, it has to be the man who takes charge. The woman has to be passive, reluctant, frightened. If a woman was writing this I'd be a
(MORE)

ANNIE (cont'd)
strong, independent, liberated woman... who was incredibly hot.

DAN
I don't why but I find that very... arousing.

ANNIE
You're a man. You'd find a root canal arousing.

DAN
If it was done right. I realize what I'm about to say is coming from the male perspective... limited as that may be... but before you can be that strong, independent, liberated woman... who is incredibly hot... you're going to have to get out of this bed.

ANNIE
You're right. You are absolutely right.

DAN
Thank you. I find that very reassuring.

ANNIE
I can do this.

DAN
I have every confidence in you.

(Slowly and carefully, Annie peels back the covers and gets out of the bed. She's fully dressed)

DAN
Frankly, I liked the other outfit better.

ANNIE
I did it

DAN
You did it.

ANNIE
I really did it.

DAN
You really did it.

ANNIE
Okay... Great... This is great.

DAN
So what do you want to do now?

ANNIE

Let me think. What would a strong, independent, liberated woman...

DAN

Who is incredibly hot.

ANNIE

Who is incredibly hot... do in this situation?

DAN

I give up. What would a strong, independent, liberated woman who is incredibly hot do in this situation?

ANNIE

Stand on her own two feet. For once in my life I've go stand on my own two feet.

DAN

Not to point out the obvious, but for the first time in your life you are standing on your own two feet.

ANNIE

(happily surprised)

I am. Look at me.

DAN

Now, are you ready to get out of here?

ANNIE

Yes... I am.

DAN

Lead the way, strong, independent woman who is incredibly hot.

ANNIE

Right... Lead the way. To where? I've never been out of this room except for a couple of flash backs in the fourth draft.

DAN

How about my apartment for starters?

ANNIE

Your apartment?

DAN

I just live upstairs... Downstairs... Across the hall? I'll cook you the best dinner you've ever had.

ANNIE

I don't think I've ever had dinner.

DAN
Than you'll definitely love my cooking.

(Annie looks around)

DAN
What is it?

ANNIE
There's no door.

DAN
What are you talking about?

ANNIE
There's no door.

DAN
Invent one.

ANNIE
What are you talking about?

DAN
We're characters in a play?

ANNIE
Right.

DAN
A play written for the theater.

ANNIE
Yes.

DAN
In the theater, if you indicate there is a door where there is no door, the audience will see a door.

ANNIE
Really?

DAN
Really.
*(points to a spot on
the side of the
stage)*
Just pull like you're opening a door.

ANNIE
What?

DAN
Work with me. Just pull like you're opening a door.

(Annie mimes trying to pull a door open.)

ANNIE
It won't open.

DAN
They're not buying it.

ANNIE
Who's not buying it?

DAN
The audience... Keep pulling.

(Annie pulls again. Dan turns to the audience)

DAN
Please help us here. If you believe there's a door, please clap.

(A few audience members clap, Dan tries harder)

If you really believe there is a door, let's hear it.

(A few more audience members clap, Dan goes for it)

We can't do this without you. If you really, truly want Annie to walk through that door to a brand new life, then let's really... really hear it.

(All of the audience breaks into applause. Annie pulls the imaginary door open and steps through.)

ANNIE
I did it. I did it. I'm free.

DAN
No more exposition.

ANNIE
No more contorted dialogue.

DAN
No more plot points.

ANNIE
I feel so...

DAN
Reassured?

ANNIE
Strong... Powerful... Liberated.

DAN
Not to mention incredibly hot.

ANNIE
That goes without saying.

(Annie reaches back and pulls Dan through the imaginary door.)

(SUGGESTED SONG: "THE PARTY'S OVER")

(The Stagehands enter and remove the bed as Angie enters holding a drink. Stagehand #2 gives her the nod. She turns away. Stagehand #2 shrugs and exits. The low hum of a cocktail party in progress can be heard. Tim enters, holding a drink, looks around and slowly crosses to Angie.)

TIM
Hi.

(Angie does her best to ignore him)

TIM
Nice party.

ANGIE
You been to one wrap party, you been to them all.

TIM
This is my first one.

ANGIE
A virgin.

TIM
I helped out with the sets.

Thrilling.

ANGIE

TIM

You were good.

Thank you.

ANGIE

Very funny. TIM

ANGIE
Funny script.

And very sexy. TIM

ANGIE
Don't confuse the actor with the part.

TIM
I'm not following.

ANGIE
Just because I played a single woman on the prowl doesn't
mean I'm a single woman on the prowl.

TIM
I'm sorry... I just like what you did out there. Did you
think I was coming on to you?

ANGIE
If you're not, your the first guy here who hasn't.

TIM
I apologize if I gave you the wrong impression. Trust me, if
I was coming on to you, you'd know it.

ANGIE
Really? Your approach is that memorable?

TIM
Let me ask you something. Have I spilled anything on you
since we started talking?

ANGIE
(confused)

Have I gurgled a series of incomprehensible syllables.

ANGIE
(more confused.)

No.

TIM
Have I spoken in run on sentences.

ANGIE
(totally confused)
No.

TIM
Then I haven't been coming on to you.

ANGIE
That makes absolutely no sense.

TIM
Actually, it does. Y'see my approach to a woman I find attractive is to make a complete fool of myself.

ANGIE
And women find this exciting?

TIM
Hardly.

ANGIE
But you're not making a complete fool of yourself. At least, not yet.

TIM
That's because, well...

ANGIE
Oh, I see. You're not attracted to me.

TIM
If I was... y'know...

ANGIE
Attracted to me...

TIM
I'd be standing here babbling like an idiot. And how embarrassing would that be? .

ANGIE
How fortunate for me that you don't find me the least bit attractive.

TIM
Nothing personal.

ANGIE
No, of course not.

TIM
You are obviously a very attractive woman.

ANGIE
Just not to you.

TIM
Exactly.

ANGIE
Mind if I ask you something?

TIM
Fire away.

ANGIE
If you have so much trouble talking to women...

TIM
(correcting)
Not all women. Only women...

ANGIE
You find attractive. I think we've established that. If you find it difficult talking to these women, how do you..?

TIM
Score.

ANGIE
Meet them.

TIM
I don't.

ANGIE
You don't.

TIM
No, I don't.

ANGIE
Don't you get...

TIM
Horny?

ANGIE
Lonely.

TIM

You adjust.

ANGIE

You mean you actually get used to it?

TIM

Well, you never really get used to it. But, like I said, you adjust.

ANGIE

So, what is the problem? Why do you find it so difficult to talk to these women that you find so attractive?

TIM

Fear of rejection. Never knowing the right thing to say. Like for instance...

(looks around)

Take that girl over there.

ANGIE

Which one?

TIM

The hot redhead with the world class keester.

ANGIE

Jane?

TIM

If that's her name.

ANGIE

The one who played my sister.

TIM

That one. Talking to her would be a disaster.

ANGIE

Because you find her attractive.

TIM

Why not? Look at her.

ANGIE

And you're attracted because she has red hair and a world class keester, as you so elegantly put it.

TIM

What can I say?

ANGIE

If you're so attracted to her why are you standing here talking to me. Why don't you go over and talk to her.

TIM

It's easy talking to you.

ANNIE

Thanks a lot.

TIM

But, with her... Just the thought is intimidating.

ANGIE

Have you ever tried to do anything about this problem?

TIM

You mean like therapy?

ANGIE

Or a class. They've got 'em for everything else.

TIM

If you ever come across one, let me know.

ANGIE

Hitting on women? I could teach that one.

TIM

Sign me up.

ANGIE

I have an idea. Would you like to try something?

TIM

Like what?

ANGIE

An improv.

TIM

An improv? What's an improv?

ANGIE

It's little exercise actors do. Where we make everything up on the spur of the moment.

TIM

I probably wouldn't be very good at it. I'm not that spontaneous.

ANGIE

Let's say... you're at a party.

TIM

A party? Like this?

ANGIE

Sure, why not? A party like this. You see a woman across the room that interests you. Someone you're attracted to.

TIM

Okay.

ANGIE

For the sake of the improv, let's say I'm that woman.

TIM

Do I know you?

ANGIE

We're complete strangers.

TIM

What are you wearing?

ANGIE

I don't know... A turtleneck sweater.

TIM

Bra or no bra?

ANGIE

Bra.

TIM

Then why am I attracted to you?

ANGIE

Because I'm a hot redhead with a world class keester.

TIM

That works.

ANGIE

You approach me. Now, ask me something.

TIM

Like what?

ANGIE

Anything. Ask me what I do?

TIM

What do you do?

ANGIE

I'm an interior decorator.

TIM

I thought you were an actress.

ANGIE

For the sake of the improv, I'm an interior decorator. We're making this all up, remember?

TIM

Oh. Okay. I get it.

ANGIE

Now you say something like, "that sounds very interesting."

TIM

(flatly)

That sounds very interesting.

ANGIE

You have to say it like you mean it.

TIM

I told you I wasn't very good at this.

ANGIE

Let's just move on. Tell me something interesting about you.

TIM

I'm really not that interesting.

ANGIE

I'm getting that feeling. Let's jump ahead. We've exchanged small talk. I know about you. You know about me. We seem to be getting along.

TIM

That was easy.

ANGIE

See? You're already making progress.

TIM

(proudly)

So I am.

ANGIE

Somewhere along in here you might say something nice about how I look.

TIM

You look nice.

ANNIE

Thank you. No you could add that you find me... Oh, I don't know... attractive.

TIM

(with feeling)

Oh, I do... I find you very attractive. Very attractive.

ANGIE

(slightly taken aback)

Good. That was good.

TIM

I think I'm getting the hang of this. Now what?

ANGIE

Ask me if I'd like to get out of here?

TIM

Would you like to get out here?

ANGIE

I'd love to get out of here.

TIM

Let's go, then.

ANGIE

You know, I think you are getting the hang of this.

(She takes his arm. They start to exit)

TIM

One question.

ANGIE

Yes?

TIM

Are you still a hot redhead with a world class keester?

(They exit. Carol enters holding a drink and stands alone much like Angie at the top of the scene. Offstage we can see the Stagehands help Tim out of his sport coat and slide on another. Tim returns and approaches Carol. It's another night at another wrap party.)

TIM

Nice party.

CAROL

You've been to one wrap party, you've been to them all.

TIM

You were really good out there.

CAROL

Thanks, but I'm not interested.

TIM

Interested? Oh... Oh... Did you think I was coming on to you?

CAROL

Well, if you weren't you were the first guy here who hasn't.

(She walks off. Tim follows her)

TIM

Trust me, if I was coming on to you'd notice.

(Tim and Carol exit talking)

(SUGGESTED SONG: "CALL ME" - Chris Montez)

(Len enters carrying a legal pad and pen. The Stagehands carry in a park bench. Len sits and begins writing. The Stagehands exit. They return with a tree and put it in place. Karen enters dressed in a short, tight fitting dress and sky high heels staring at her cell phone. She is either overdressed or underdressed for the location. As we will learn, Karen is an actress who treats every encounter as though it was a performance. She is theatrical, to the say the least. Stagehand #2 gives her a smile and a nod. Karen returns the smile and the nod. Stagehand #1 pulls Stagehand #2 off.)

STAGEHAND #2

I see what you mean about the theater.

(Stagehands exit. Len glances up at Karen and almost does a double take. Karen notices Len noticing. She stands next to him, staring at her phone impatiently. Finally it rings. She turns to Len and flashes her most theatrical smile.)

KAREN

Could you answer this for me?

LEN

Your phone?

KAREN

You just push this button.

LEN

Is there some reason you can't answer it?

KAREN

Yes.

LEN

Would you care to share it?

KAREN

I'd rather not.

(Len looks at her like she's some kind of crazy lady)

KAREN

Okay... If you must know, it's my ex.
(The phone stops ringing. She sits down right next to Len)

He wants to get back.

LEN

I'm happy for you.

KAREN

He was cheating on me.

LEN

I'm sorry to hear that.

KAREN
Can you imagine someone cheating on this?
(Indicates her
figure. Her phone
rings again)

It's him.

LEN
He's persistent. You gotta give him credit for that.

KAREN
I don't want to talk to him

LEN
You could tell him that.

KAREN
That would mean talking to him.

LEN
You could turn your phone off.

KAREN
What if my agent calls?

LEN
Your agent. You're an actress, aren't you?

KAREN
Yes, I am.

LEN
Why did I know that?

(The phone keeps ringing)

KAREN
He's not going to stop.

*(Karen moves closer to Len,
smiles her brightest actress
smile and holds the phone up
so the ring tone begins to
drive Len a little crazy.)*

LEN
You're going to keep doing that until I answer your phone,
aren't you?

KAREN
(hands him the phone)
Thank you.

LEN
(into phone)
Hello... Hold on.
(to Karen)
Are you Karen?

KAREN
Of course, I'm Karen. That's my phone. Who else would I be?

LEN
He wants to talk to you.

KAREN
I know that.

LEN
(into phone)
Hold on.
(to Karen)
He wants to know who I am.

KAREN
Tell him... Tell him your my lover. That's it tell him
you're my lover.

LEN
Are you crazy? You don't have to answer that.
(into phone)
I'm just some guy she handed her phone to. Really.
I was just sitting her, minding my own business and she
hands me her phone... Typical. Well, you'd know better than
me.

KAREN
What's typical?

LEN
(to Karen)
He wants to know how you look.

KAREN
Well? How do I look?

LEN
Nice... You look nice.

KAREN
That's the best you can do? Nice?

LEN
Alright then, you look good.

KAREN

I look incredible. Tell him that. Tell him I look so hot you can't wait to get me in the sack.

LEN

I'm not going to tell him that.

KAREN

If you had any feelings for me at all, that's exactly what you would tell him.

LEN

Feelings? I don't even know you.

KAREN

That's no excuse.

LEN

(into phone)

Hello... You heard. Uh huh.... uh huh

(to Karen)

He says there wasn't anybody else. That it's all in your head.

KAREN

There is nothing in my head.

(slight pause then...)

I'd like to rephrase that.

LEN

Hey, I'm an innocent bystander here. I don't know who caused this train wreck.

KAREN

But, you have every reason to believe it was me.

LEN

I didn't say that.

KAREN

Pick a side.

LEN

Sooner or later you're going to have to talk to him.

KAREN

If he wants to communicate with me, he can talk to my lawyer. Tell him that.

LEN

(into phone)

Karen feels it would be best if you dealt through her lawyer.

(MORE)

LEN (cont'd)
 (to Karen)
 He says you don't have a lawyer.

KAREN
 Mickey is my lawyer. Tell him that.

LEN
 (into phone)
 She says someone named Mickey is her lawyer.
 (to Karen)
 He says Mickey is his lawyer.

KAREN
 Mickey is not his lawyer. Mickey is my lawyer.

LEN
 Maybe you two could have Mickey on alternate weekends.
 (into phone)
 Hello... Sorry... I tried. She won't talk to you. There's no
 doubt about that.

KAREN
 About what? No doubt about what?

LEN
 He was just saying how stubborn you are.

KAREN
 Stubborn??? Stubborn??? I am not stubborn. I just have a
 strong resolve.

LEN
 (into phone)
 Sorry I couldn't be of more help.

*(He hands the phone back to
 Karen. She waits for the phone
 to ring)*

KAREN
 He's not calling back.

LEN
 Maybe he got the message.

(Len stands to go)

KAREN
 You're going.

LEN
 Contrary to appearances, I don't actually live on this
 bench.

KAREN
Wait.

LEN
Yes?

KAREN
Would you like to come home with me?

LEN
Home with you?

KAREN
That's what I said. Home with me.

LEN
Why would I want to go home with you?

KAREN
You said I looked good. Very good, if I remem... Ohmygod...
You're gay... I'm sorry.

LEN
There's nothing to be sorry about. I'm not gay.

KAREN
Then I don't get it.

LEN
I'm sure a woman like you isn't used to be rejected.

KAREN
Are you kidding? I'm an actress. For me rejection is a life
style. It's not like I'm looking for a commitment or
anything.

LEN
That's the problem.

KAREN
What problem?

LEN
Nothing. It was interesting meeting you, to say the least.

KAREN
So that's it. I offer you my body, which by the way you have
been once overing pretty good... and all you have to say is
it was interesting meeting you?

LEN
Strange as it may seem, you and I have a lot in common.

KAREN

Apparently, not as much as I thought.

LEN

We're both on the same journey. It's just that I'm a little further down the road than you are.

KAREN

Journey? When did this turn into the Travel Channel?

LEN

My wife...

KAREN

You're married. Why didn't you say so?

LEN

I'm not married. I was married. It's been almost two years. So, I know what it is to feel that sense of loss. It's natural. The need for some reassurance. Comfort. A warm body.

KAREN

Sounds good to me. Especially the warm body part. If it helps, I'll give you a thumbs up on Facebook.

LEN

Tell you what. Why don't we just consider ourselves two people who met too soon.

KAREN

So, that means maybe later?

LEN

You're a very hard person to let down easily.

KAREN

I get that lot.

LEN

Okay then. Let's just say we're two people who met too late.

KAREN

Two people who met too soon. Two people who met too late. Wait a minute... I know those lines. You got those from a play... Yes... Yes... "Forget Me Not." That's what it was.

LEN

Oh, you saw it.

KAREN

I auditioned for it. How do you know it?

LEN

I wrote it.

KAREN

You wrote Forget Me Not?

LEN

Yes, that was me.

KAREN

Then you're uh... uh... uh... whatshisname.

LEN

That's just my pen name.

KAREN

Then you know the two characters in the play end up going home together.

LEN

Not in the early drafts. The producers asked me to change it. They felt the audience would feel cheated if they didn't get together. They thought it wouldn't play well.

KAREN

It's not playing well now.

LEN

But this is real life.

KAREN

I like the stage version better.

LEN

You're a very irrational woman, which I, personally, find incredibly sexy. But, that's just me.

KAREN

You know you have a very unusual way of insulting a person.

LEN

After all, I am a writer. But, trust me on this. You don't want me to go home with you. I'd just spoil you for all other men. Besides, you still love that guy on the phone.

KAREN

No, I don't.

LEN

Yes, you do. And he loves you.

(Her phone rings)

LEN

Right on cue. If I were you I'd answer. You don't want to spend the rest of your life picking up writers on park benches. They'd only steal your life for their next project and then leave you for someone even more pathetic.

(Karen stares at her phone for a few moments then slowly raises it to her ear. Len begins to narrate as though reading from a play manuscript)

LEN

As the girl begins to speak into the phone...

KAREN

(exiting)

Hello.

LEN

The handsome, talented and oh, so charming playwright turns to exit. Romantic music comes up and under.

(Romantic music swells.)

The audience breaks into thunderous applause.

(Sound of audience cheering)

Lights down.

(LIGHTS DOWN)

LEN

Music out.

(MUSIC FADES)

LEN

I was right. This is a much better ending.

(He exits)

(SUGGESTED MUSIC: "That's Entertainment")

(Actors return to take their bows by opening and entering through the imaginary door. All the actors, except for the Stagehands, exit. The Stagehands begin to slide the bench off)

STAGEHAND #1

So, whattya think? You'd wanna be an actor?

STAGEHAND #2

Nah... Not for me. What I really want to do is direct.

(They exit)

THE END