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/SINGLE MEN -- DOUBLE LIVES

OR

BRIDE'S BED REVISITED/

A romantic comedy in two acts.

By

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SINGLE MEN -- DOUBLE LIVES
or
BRIDE'S BED REVISITED
(A Romantic Comedy in Two Acts)

Scott K. Razak

July, 1982

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Critical Apparatus for
SINGLE MEN -- DOUBLE LIVES
or
BRIDE'S BED REVISITED

a romantic comedy in two acts
submitted as a Master's Report in Creative Writing

by

Scott K. Razak

July 1982

CRITICAL APPARATUS

Introduction

As a graduate student experimenting in the art and craft of creative writing, I have explored the three major forms: poetry, prose fiction, and drama -- in that order. Unfortunately, I did not seem able to produce good poetry (a rather universal judgment in the class I took), so I decided to pursue fiction, something I found more challenging and interesting.

My first efforts at writing fiction were somewhat experimental and obscure, more poetic than prosaic, and were sometimes not readily accessible to more than a few readers. I discussed the issue of accessibility with Professor Ben Nyberg, and he told me that there are two main reasons for writing creatively: (1) for personal expression, or (2) for public communication. I realized that, up to this point, I had almost always chosen to write solely for personal expression. For me, writing creatively was a means of tapping my subconscious, learning about hidden needs and feelings, and even of examining personal problems in a therapeutic way. I had made a strong distinction between "creative" writing and "critical" writing: Creative writing was for me, and critical writing was for an audience. While I still write creatively first and foremost for myself, I am by degrees accepting the proposition that my creative writing can also be crafted for an audience, though I would have to say that my personal, private aims are still paramount.

Finally, continuing the progression, I came to write drama. Almost undeniably, drama is a form clearly intended for a public. After all, it is performed by actors upon a stage before an audience. Nonetheless, I still felt that my first allegiance was to myself. This is not to suggest that I do not find critical comment on my creative work helpful. I do. And I will often make changes in my work based upon audience reaction. Nonetheless, I remain independent about my creative work and do not change anything that, subjectively, "feels right" to me, no matter how illogical or wrong it might seem to a majority of intelligent readers.

The key in all of this is my intuition. I work almost solely from intuition. I rarely work from an outline, although I did write down a couple of pages of preliminary thoughts concerning the direction I thought my play might take before I actually began composing lines. Even so, as the play developed, I found myself straying from my initially stated purposes -- and this troubles me not at all. As Walter Kerr said, in How Not To Write A Play, American playwrights have got the hang of writing relevant "thesis" drama (drama with a message), and it is a hang they cannot seem to let go of:

The first time a playwright used his characters to illustrate the immediate issues of the day a thrill ran through the theater. Here was no idle fiction, but a pertinent and responsible coming-to-grips with things that really mattered. From a sleepy dalliance with conventional romance the drama

had plunged wholeheartedly into the thick of the modern battle. The stage became a forum in which the most progressive arguments could be acted out, a storm center in which honest and angry men could call a corrupt society to task, a laboratory in which environments could be examined and measured. . . . On a somewhat quieter, less engaged, level, it [contemporary theater] pursues the dispassionate study of milieu.¹

Kerr goes on to say that precisely because authors had a socially conscious purpose in mind, precisely because they wished too much to instruct, most modern playwrights have written very competent drama that is passionless and uninteresting. Propaganda doesn't move the heart. Instead, Kerr maintains, a drama must simply present interesting, idiosyncratic characters who exist for their own sake. "The next accent is likely to be less mechanistic, more humanistic, less concerned with evolving a sociological slide rule and more concerned with seeking some understanding of the complex, cantankerous personal soul" (p. 26). For Kerr, it is a good idea to forget the sociology and play to the lowest common denominator in an audience:

A "great" theater comes into existence by first attending to the most primitive passions of its most primitive patrons. By satisfying the race's admittedly childlike -- though not necessarily childish -- yearning for violence, spectacle, and the broadest of broad

comedy strokes, roots are sunk deep into the universal consciousness. . . . It would seem that on this broad, firm, democratic base nearly anything can be built. So long as the foundation is secure, all sorts of towering structures can be erected upon it. Drama is by its nature a mass art; the presence of the mass in the amphitheater is necessary not only to the financial stability of so complex an undertaking, but also, apparently, to its artistic validity.

(pp. 44-5)

Kerr, of course, goes on to reinforce his statement that these elements of action, spectacle, and broad comedy are only a foundation, and only an artist can elevate them to something memorable and valid. As Kerr asks rhetorically, "Can an art form flirt with the vulgar mind without sharing the mind's vulgarity?" (p. 40) He answers with a resounding "Yes," and notes that Sophocles and Shakespeare wrote drama filled with spectacle of every sort, drama that managed to have a strong appeal for the uneducated masses. Kerr treats this subject at great length in his book and offers a complete history of theater, from the ancient Greeks to the present, providing a great mass of evidence that "No great play has ever come from what might be called a minority theater. All of the work we prize most highly was born of the commercial or at least competitive hurly-burly, and in the presence of a mass audience" (p. 41). Unfortunately, Kerr does not tell us how an artist can build a work of art from

those elements appealing to the "vulgar" masses; he only assures us that it can be (and has long been) done.

I came across Kerr's book long after I had begun writing; in fact, Act I was completed and Act II planned before I read Kerr's warnings that "thesis" drama holds the dangerous possibility of seeming intellectualized, preachy, and stilted. Accordingly, I revised Act I extensively -- so extensively that the second draft barely resembled the first. The first draft had been strongly influenced by three particular theses, three aims (described below) that I had wanted to "prove." In the second draft, I attempted a compromise; I still considered my aims valid, but I did want to avoid the extreme didacticism of the first draft. Accordingly, I tried to soft-pedal the "lessons." I find that I enjoy the play more, reading and writing it, when I can simply let the characters be themselves. I have, in fact, decided that I'm not exclusively concerned that the play succeed in "instructing" the audience, though it may do that. I am equally concerned that readers and viewers simply enjoy it. My characters may still sound didactic to some -- they do tend to analyze one another and quote statistics an awfully lot. But I like people who do that. I wrote a play I would like to see.

As for entertainment versus message, I detail below at some length the kinds of elements I included in my play simply to please and delight the audience (costumes, vocal variations, broad physical comedy, bright banter); my thought was to balance the messages with

simple entertainment. Although my messages are somewhat diluted by the relatively mindless shenanigans which appear in the final draft of my play, they can be found at least residually. The three main points I originally intended to make were these: (1) to show that one partner in a gay relationship is restricted to a stereotypical gay role and the other partner is restricted to a conventional "straight" male role; they will both learn that such restriction is unhealthy, and will change accordingly; (2) to verify traditional assumptions that gay males are often incapable of forming permanent love relationships, and to suggest several reasons for this reality; and (3) to affirm the idea that working marriages require commitment, generosity of spirit, and work. Ultimately, of course, only an audience can decide if the play is too preachy on the one hand, or too burlesque on the other. Ideally, perhaps readers and viewers will find an appealing balance of the two.

Genesis of the Play

It is perhaps comical that after all of my righteous rhetoric about writing for myself, I divulge the fact that this play had its beginnings as the one, single piece of creative writing intended to be 100 percent public in nature. This play was originally a seven-page short story entitled "Scene from a Marriage." Its one and only purpose was to create an utterly mundane set piece depicting an ordinary marriage in every respect. The characters were named Robert and Syl. Through a careful avoidance of pronouns, I led the reader

to assume all through the story that Syl was short for Sylvia. Near the very end of the story, it is revealed that Syl is Sylvester. The whole story was written to bring about that single moment of shock in the reader: "My God, it's a gay marriage." My purpose was purely political. I wanted to legitimate homosexual marriage by saying that it is as ordinary as straight marriage. (See Appendix G.)

I realized, reading the draft of my story over one day, that the fiction was almost all dialogue. Hmm, I said to myself, reads like a play. I found that I was interested enough in these characters to want to know them better. So I decided to change the story into a play, changing Sylvester's name to David (obviously, the purpose of the short story was necessarily abandoned; any theater-goer would see immediately that both partners are male).

I came to recognize that the two characters represented the two distinct sides of my own personality -- one a traditional male, one a traditional homosexual. I have lived large segments of my life in both roles. I feel that I have successfully blended the two personas into my daily experience. I also feel that I didn't really become happy and fully myself until I had achieved this blending. It occurred to me that I could actualize this dichotomy, and its equalization, by turning the separate parts of myself into separate characters. The conflicts experienced between Robert and David are simply externalized representations of conflicts once borne in myself. As with everything I write, I am writing about myself, for myself.

As I began to write, rather than trying to consider what would seem "appropriate" to a hypothetical audience, I simply tried to capture the personas of myself and my (gay) friends. In a recent survey of contemporary gay drama in Time magazine, Richard Schickel quotes Lawrence O'Toole's characterization of the gay aesthetic: "it includes a taste for grand romantic gestures, excesses of 'spirit, personality and desire' and 'a refusal to apologize for outlandish behavior.'"² Many of my flamboyant gay friends are so flagrantly outlandish, so aggressively deviant, that it would be impossible to capture them on paper in ways that would avoid offending almost everyone. It is this very rebel spirit, represented by Reggie in my play, that I refuse to co-opt for an audience. I understand perfectly why gays feel no need to apologize. They choose to satirize and mock a restrictive culture. It is a form of justified anger.

Having said that, I must also acknowledge that unlike many outlandish gays I know, I have a rather conventional personal morality. I don't believe in casual sex, I do believe in long term marriages for gays, and I don't believe in alienating people unless provoked. Robert represents these features, which I see as admirable. I resent gay subcultures in which I've lived where these values of mine are seen as provincial, unliveable, and stupid. I resent the fact that many stereotypical gays will not accept me even when I choose not to portray the stereotype. Forever in search of a simplistic golden mean, I believe that we can all live together on planet earth quite happily with a mutual respect for and sensitivity to others' realities. The people I most love and admire are like that. I mainly want Robert

and David to grow in this direction so that gay members of the audience will see themselves and, ideally, act accordingly.

Composition Decisions

Writing any play requires special composition decisions, and this play was no exception. The problem with any play is presenting the necessary exposition in a way that does not call extreme attention to itself and provides some dramatic interest. Because the central conflict in this play centers around Robert's and David's clashing interpretations of what it means to be gay, of necessity there must be some overt discussion of this issue. I decided early that the conflict should be as magnified as possible. Hence, Robert displays extreme anger in Scene I, after it is established (through his conversation with Phillip) that he is basically a low-key individual. Not coincidentally, Reggie's entrance follows Robert's angry explosion. It is my hope that all of this action will heighten tension and awareness in the viewer, allowing him to sustain some interest in the following interchange (which is somewhat "talky") between Phillip, Courtney, and David (see pp. 66-76). While the conversation here is analytical, I have tried to inject enough catchy lines and vivid details to sustain interest.

Immediately following this long conversation is yet another -- this time between Robert and David. I hoped that by changing the setting I would be able to "hook" the audience through the three pages

of rather ordinary conversation; just when this conversation gets boring, I interrupt it with a phone call from Reggie and some ensuing broad humor. At this point (p. 86) I feel the overt exposition has come to an end. The characters' personalities, pasts, and conflicts have been sufficiently presented. For the rest of Act I, I rely on "showing" instead of "telling" to actualize the central conflict -- the difference in style between Robert and David.

In my naivete, I composed speeches in the first draft of Act I that sometimes ran for 400-500 words. Professor Climenhaga explained to me that such monologues pose fundamental problems for actors and directors, and recommended the conventional wisdom that no speech exceed three lines. Grateful for the advice, I tried hard in my revision not to exceed this quota of lines by too much, and only where justified. As a result, I think the pace of the first act is improved immeasurably.

I also tried hard to emphasize the visual element in Act I. While the first thirty minutes of the play don't particularly capitalize upon those devices unique to the theater, this is due to the fact that the first thirty minutes are largely exposition and introduction (to p. 86). From that point on in Act I, I tried to use visual and auditory elements to heighten the interest of the play. For example, I decided to bring in the operator on a raised, illuminated platform; I used the snake on the stairs as a piece of comic "business"; I included all the visual paraphernalia of Reggie's and David's drag scene; I used music and lighting in an arresting way in Scene III of Act I; I gave Reggie and David a variety of characters and voices to

play. In short, I tried to keep things colorful and interesting. I suspect that I would be able to use these elements (sight and sound) more effectively were I to see this play through production and note for myself where the dead spots are and how the visual and auditory elements might strengthen audience interest.

I decided early that the first act should end with a cliff-hanger. Because I decided on a sixty-minute first act and a thirty-minute second act, I felt it was appropriate to have the climax occur at the end of Act I. While Act II contains a good deal of conflict, its instances derive from the central conflict which was brought to a climax by Act I. The rationale was simple: make the audience want to see more, make them anxious for a resolution. It was deliberate that Act I picks up pace and "business" with each successive scene, until finally Scene III is played out in all its boisterousness.

Act II presented several problems. First, I wanted the play to end with a gay marriage -- this would allow some discussion about that subject, and would offer some insight into the problems of attempting such a union. The problem? How to get from the outrage expressed by Robert's parents at the end of Act I to their ultimate acceptance of Robert's marriage by the end of Act II. My solution was to present a somewhat wacky, but perhaps plausible, rationale for the marriage in the first place: as Phillip tells Robert, taking his cue from David, "Now's the time to decide what you really want in your life. If you don't do that now, tonight, you'll never be able to stand your ground tomorrow." (see p. 163) Robert impulsively

accepts the idea -- he wants to get married anyway -- but the next problem is getting Robert's mother to accept the marriage. My solution was to create a series of events and characters so favorable to this marriage that Gladys would simply be swept along, almost against her will. Specifically, I hope that Kay's low-key acceptance of her son David will appear to put sufficient "peer pressure" upon Gladys that she allows the wedding plans to go forward.

A second problem in this act was getting Robert and David reconciled in a hurry -- before Robert's parents came back. I hit upon the idea of David's fake suicide; it reveals that David is somewhat amoral and manipulative, immature around the edges, and it also allows us to see what a cupcake Robert is, how sheltered and naive he has been. Of course, it also gives David the chance to be an adorable drunk. This plotting also provides ample opportunity for humor in Scene I of Act II. Finally, the audience needs to be hooked as the second act begins -- I hoped Robert's hysteria would do this.

The confrontation in Scene II of the second act, between Robert and his parents, was difficult to write. I wanted to expand a bit on Gladys' stereotyped character and make her more human, without making her too sympathetic or changing her too radically from Act I to Act II. I also wanted to show that Robert has changed -- he has strengthened, he has made a commitment to his gay persona that he is willing to fight for. His transformation may seem a bit sudden; I can only hope that the previous scene serves as adequate preparation for Robert's new resolve.

My main concern in the final scene of the play was to bring off a happy ending that made both the audience and the players happy. The speeches in the last few pages of the play are very, very long. It is my hope that the audience cares enough about these people that these speeches are interesting rather than boring. I tried hard to keep the recitation of "vows" human and emotional, rather than political. Thus, I chose to have Robert and David speak in conversational monologues, rather than in formal, ceremonial terms. As is consistent with the characters, Robert's speech is the more stolid and formal while David's is the more relaxed and conversational. I hope both speeches can be rendered in a way that genuinely touches the audience. The play ends with the main comic business of this scene -- Gertrude's birthday cake. In addition to simply providing humor, I felt that singing "Happy Birthday" and making a wish was a good way to communicate the definitive tone I was working for: upbeat, human, hopeful.

My decision about the tone of the play was deliberate. I was quite impressed with Neil Simon's play, The Goodbye Girl, because it managed to illustrate a poignant and believable love story within the context of giddy comedy. The combination of seriousness and humor (to relieve that seriousness) was what I was after. Thus, while I did some preaching in my play, mostly I tried to make people laugh. Trying to write a serio-comic play has given me an even deeper and more profound respect for Neil Simon's work. His ear for one-liners is extraordinary. Since this play is a comedy, with over-

tones of farce, I elected to write in the outrageous coincidence of the telephone operator also turning out to be Robert's mother. Such bizarre coincidences are not uncommon in comedy, where a very special and almost traditionally unrealistic world is usually created. Comedies thrive on characters who are more exaggerated, more intense, more eccentric than one is likely to encounter in real life, and unbelievable coincidences of plotting contribute to this tone of exaggeration. This is also why Robert's parents are sketched in such broad and stereotypical terms. Neil Simon's play, Come Blow Your Horn, contains the definitive characterization of the cliché Jewish Mother. It is much too broad, far too stereotypical for anyone to take seriously. Yet this character ends up being an enormous favorite with the audience, often getting the biggest laughs. The audience loves to hate her and her shenanigans, precisely because she represents what can be worst in the Jewish Mother. I hope that audiences will have a similar love-hate relationship with Robert's mother.

Finally, with reference to the issue of exaggeration, I must comment upon the camp mentality and behavior which occurs throughout the play. In portraying this, I found it desirable to use a good deal of profanity and some shocking statements and situations. I have only tried to be true to my own past experiences with this approach. Camp behavior is outrageous, in fact, and I did not shrink from such a presentation of it. Because the play is intended for a gay audience, I doubt that viewers will be unduly offended. It must also be noted that the profanity, of language and attitude, is quite mild here in comparison to a gay play like, for example, T-Shirts, by Robert Patrick. (The play is discussed at length in

a later section of this paper.)

Interestingly, many straight readers of this play have expressed to me their sense of curiosity and genuine interest in the camp behavior as well as other facets of gay life revealed by the play. Perhaps the play could be presented to a straight audience.

One last note: On page 170 Courtney delivers a line quoting a statistic from Psychology Today. Professor Agosta felt the line was too didactic and recommended that it be excised, a recommendation I am inclined to agree with. Nevertheless, Professor Climenhaga recommended that the line be left in, explaining that such an action would allow the director of the play to make the final decision. I trust this solution is an acceptable one for all concerned.

Placing This Play Within the Context of Contemporary Gay Drama

While an exhaustive review of the history of gay drama is beyond the scope of this critical apparatus, a substantial body of information drawn from a complete historical review in the "Introduction" to Gay Plays (an anthology), by William M. Hoffman, may prove to be helpful in placing my play within the context of contemporary gay drama.

First Hoffman distinguishes between gay theater and gay plays, a distinction I find valid and useful. He contends that gay theater refers primarily to production values, which can lend a tone or attitude to any production. He cites, for example, a production

of a Shakespeare tragedy in which all male actors wear female garb, to support his assertion that "Absolutely any play can be performed gay." Gay theater is thus "a manner and not a subject."³ Gay plays, on the other hand, while they can hypothetically be performed as gay theater, are plays which explicitly concern themselves with the issue of homosexuality.

Surprisingly, no extant Greek plays are overtly concerned with homosexuality. In fact, not until Christopher Marlowe's Edward II, in 1591, was a major homosexual figure to appear in dramatic literature. Astonishingly, the next play to portray homosexuals overtly was Mae West's The Drag, in 1927 (p. xvi). According to Hoffman, "it seems to be the first modern gay play" (p. xvi).

Although the play was billed as "a homosexual comedy in three acts," it is in fact an extremely serious melodrama that borders on a plea for tolerance of homosexuals. The Drag contains long, intense intellectual discussions based on the most advanced contemporary scientific opinion (Ulrichs, Krafft-Ebing, and a smattering of Freud).

Sometimes the serious sections are unintentionally funny to a modern ear, but usually the characters ring true, especially when the gay people are talking among themselves. Gay slang seems to have changed little over the years and we come across such words as "rough trade," "gorgeous," "she" instead of "he,"

and other forms of gay banter. (pp. xvi-xvii)

Not surprisingly, New York City officials refused to allow The Drag to play in New York. Not to be restrained, Mae West wrote another play, The Pleasure Man, wherein many characters were gay. Hoffman reports that some of the dialogue in The Pleasure Man was simply drawn from The Drag, as if Miss West were determined to make her point. After an extremely short run in New York, the play was closed by the police. Hoffman quotes an unintentionally humorous review of the play, written by Robert Littell of the New York Evening Post. Littell's reactions to the sexual content of the play were extremely negative. Hoffman notes that such views are still common today, but are often disguised as "pseudo-pious religiosity" or "quasi-scientific sociological and psychological jargon" (p. xvii). It is interesting to speculate on how far we as a society have come (or have not come) since the days of Littell's puritanical review:

To the three tiresome and unspeakably slimy acts of The Pleasure Man the police, by arresting the entire cast, contributed a fourth, and even the most rabid opponent of official interference would find it hard to protest on this occasion. The bulk of Mae West's latest is feeble backstage melodrama. . . . If this were all, The Pleasure Man would die unnoticed in a few weeks. But it is smeared from beginning

to end with such filth as cannot possibly be described in print, such filth as turns one's stomach even to remember. . . . Pretty nearly the most nauseating feature of the evening was the laughter of the audience, or at least that part of it which howled and snickered and let out degenerate shrieks from the balcony. If a first-night audience doesn't whistle or throw vegetables or leave the theatre . . . but laughs and laps it up there is no sense in taking the performers to the police station. The real culprits are on the other side of the footlights.
(pp. xvii-xviii)

I have chosen to quote Littell's review simply because it helps to explain the startling fact that not another single gay play was written or presented in the American theater until the 1960's. Hoffman explains this awful silence.

The repressions of homosexuality in the theater till the 1970's took the following forms, and is still operative to a lesser degree:

Silence. (Not having gay characters at all; not mentioning homosexuality.)

False accusation. (A character who is not homosexual is accused of it. The author can avoid handling the issue while seeming to deal with it.)

Stereotyping. (Gay characters, if male, are effeminate; if female, are masculine. Or gays are portrayed as "sensitive" or "special." Or gays are mentally disturbed. In all these cases it is the context that shows if repression is at work.)

Exploitation. (Using gays sensationally as local color.) (p. xix)

Although occasional gay characters surfaced in the theater in the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's, they were routinely pigeon-holed in one of the four manners noted above. But in 1960, the stage was suddenly peopled with a smattering of gay characters. "It was the year of Edward Albee's Zoo Story, Gore Vidal's The Best Man, Shelagh Delaney's A Taste of Honey, and Brendan Behan's The Hostage" (pp. xxiv-xxv). Hoffman mentions twenty-three gay plays that played in New York during the 1960's, beyond those mentioned above. The only one I have ever heard of (and seen as a film) is The Boys in the Band, and Hoffman concedes that almost all of the other productions were off-off-Broadway and for a small and select audience. The Boys in the Band was a skillful depiction of a group of gay, male friends examining their plight -- and for Mart Crowley, the play's author, being gay was decidedly a plight. Hoffman quotes some dialogue from the play, and then offers his evaluation (one with which I agree).

In Harold's words to Michael:

You are a sad and pathetic man. You're a homosexual

and you don't want to be. But there is nothing you can do to change it. Not all the prayers to your God, not all the analysis you can buy in all the years you've got left to live. You may very well one day be able to know a heterosexual life if you want it desperately enough . . . but you will always be homosexual as well. Always, Michael. Always. Until the day you die. (p. xxvii)

In Hoffman's words:

Yes, the play pleased gay-haters, and certainly the press treated it sensationally, but Mart Crowley cannot be faulted for expressing his vision of the homosexual underworld as he saw it. It is a depressing work, but the characters aren't stereotypes and the language is powerful and accurate. And whatever one thinks of it, The Boys in the Band, more than any other single play, publicized homosexuals as a minority group. (p. xxvii)

While the 1970's saw continued interest in depicting gays in plays, still only a few plays went mainstream and communicated to a large audience, e.g., "James Kirkwood's and Nicholas Dante's A Chorus Line (1976) and Michael Christofer's The Shadow Box (1977)" (p. xxxii). Because I have not seen or read these plays, I cannot of course comment on them. But I have seen another play that

appeared on Broadway in 1977, Gemini, by Albert Innaurato. The play is delightful in the way it captures the loony, ethnic character of the inner-city (Philadelphia) Italian-American players. Specifically, the play follows the development of young Francis Geminiani from adolescence to adulthood. His rite of passage is experimenting with homosexuality with a college roommate, but ultimately opting for heterosexuality with his roommate's sister. I agree strongly with Hoffman that there is absolutely no preparation for Francis' sudden conversion, which occurs in the last minutes of the play. "The ending seems to hark back to the traditional boy-gets-girl formula and is a false note in what is otherwise a splendid evening" (p. xxxiii). I would not go so far as to call the play "splendid" -- it is loose, talky and full of dead space -- but except for the ending, the play has its charm.

Finally, I will report on three of the five male homosexual plays Hoffman includes in his anthology. The reader should then be armed with enough background to understand how and where I place my own play in the context of all gay plays.

T-Shirts, A Play In One Act, by Robert Patrick, is a stunning, biting, polished comedy (written in 1978). The play manages to capture all that is most cynical, witty and dazzling in the repartee of educated, metropolitan gays (New York). I deliberately held off reading this play until I had completed my own, and a good thing that was. Patrick possesses rare comic genius, and the inevitable comparisons I would have made between his skills and my own would have been most daunting, to say the least. Fortunately, I have

constructed my own defense, which shall appear in due time.

T-Shirts, while overpoweringly funny, conceals a serious, even tragic theme. The two older characters, Marvin (40) and Kink (30) have lived together, platonically, for an extended period, and are best friends. Marvin is an internationally successful playwright and Kink owns a garment and upholstery business. Both are momentarily reformed alcoholics and degenerates; they have spent much of their adult lives in gay bars, gay bathhouses, and in gay theater. Marvin, the most dazzling with language, is also the most desperate. He despairs at the values (or lack thereof) held by the gay subculture, and increasingly the straight culture at large, which encourage anonymous sex and the empty worship of youth and cosmetic beauty. The irony is, of course, that as gays participating in the gay subculture, they have lived in terms of these very values.

To bring this theme subtly into awareness, Marvin and Kink receive a visit from Tom, a friend of a friend, who is temporarily escaping the discomforts of a sudden rainstorm. Tom is about 20, is a street hustler, is staggeringly attractive, and has already become a rather adept and sophisticated survivor, despite his occasional lapses into his native rural naivete. After endless and outrageous remarks by Marvin and Kink concerning Tom's obvious physical charms, Marvin impulsively begins to drink again, and lapses into an excoriating and depressing monologue about the vapidness of gay culture. His complaint is precipitated by a chance remark of Tom's that reminds Marvin, stinging, of his own physical unattractiveness. Because he is (in his own view) ugly, no one has ever fallen in love with Marvin.

And at 40 he has concluded that no one ever will.

For a play so hysterically funny, the pain is very, very real.

Another play in Hoffman's anthology is Boy Meets Boy, written by Bill Solly and Donald Ward. Hoffman's synopsis is concise and accurate:

One of the premises of Boy Meets Boy, the only musical in Gay Plays, is that homosexuality was totally accepted and presumed normal in the 1930's. Of course this was not true. But in the musical comedy fairyland of London and Paris in which the piece is set, it ought to have been true, and so, is. Gay as an issue is rightfully dismissed so that we can deal with the real issue of the musical: which man will end up with which man? Boy Meets Boy is utterly gay in all its connotations and presents no situation that cannot be solved by true love. (p. xxxvi)

This play attempts manfully to capture the ambience of a giddy MGM musical -- something like a hybrid of High Society and Singing in the Rain. The plot is very thin, indeed confectionary, and the script isn't very helpful in predicting whether or not this would be an enjoyable play. Staging and musical production would be of utmost importance. Assuming that these elements were entertainingly handled, Boy Meets Boy would be a classic Hollywood musical romance/fantasy. The major characters are all millionaires, famous news-

paper correspondents, royalty, or of otherwise upper class and independent means. It would be, I suspect, great fun to see a slick production of this musical -- but little more than that.

A third play appearing in Hoffman's collection is The Madness of Lady Bright by Lanford Wilson, published in 1967. Again, in Hoffman's words:

This one-act play is set in the mind of Leslie Bright. Leslie is a disintegrating middle-aged queen. He conforms in many ways to a gay stereotype: he is effeminate, promiscuous, haughty, affected, sad, mad, and lonely. He is representative of one kind of male homosexual. But Wilson's queen transcends the stereotype and all of the rest of the cliches by being so individually effeminate. He stands for any aging person who cannot come to terms with the facts of death. And therein lies this play's popularity and great beauty. We wish Leslie could get a grip on himself, and in our minds we beg him to, because we too know "that this way madness lies." (p. xxxvii)

Wilson has a genius for probing the innards of his eccentric and sometimes rather wacky characters. In this play Leslie sits in his tenement apartment on a hot, muggy New York evening trying half-heartedly to think of what to do. After Dial-A-Prayer reminds him of his obsession with sex ("The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."), he abstractedly

carries on an interior monologue with himself as he paints his nails, smokes cigarettes, and dresses for an imaginary ball (p. 180). Two characters, a BOY and a GIRL, serve as physical representations of past selves, friends, and lovers with whom Leslie confers throughout the play. The final scene is awash with pathos (which works only because Leslie's delusion is so complete that it transcends conventional self-pity). Leslie is closely akin in spirit to the pathetic Blanche DuBois, Tennessee Williams' definitive portrait of the soul that is too sensitive and too mad for this world. The sense of tragedy at this play's conclusion is overwhelming.

Tragedy. The word comes to my mind over and again as I consider the gay plays that I know (with the exception of Boy Meets Boy). The Zoo Story's protagonist proceeds with the desperation we usually associate with Albee's characters; the harsh realities honed by The Boys in the Band express the profound pain most homosexuals confront, at least at some point in their lives, at being gay in a straight culture; T-Shirts, savagely funny, is painfully accurate in its criticisms of the degenerate and superficial values often found in the gay subculture; and The Madness of Lady Bright is at once a specifically homosexual, yet also transcendently human, exploration of the tragic loneliness of one aging and dying alone, never having been touched by sustaining love.

To which I say, as Zero Mostel so winningly said in Sondheim's A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, "Tragedy tomorrow, comedy tonight!" But I do not say it glibly. Marvin, in T-Shirts, explains himself to young Tom:

MARVIN: . . . It's only when I'm a little plotzed up that I start dreaming, and disciplining myself out of the dreams, and hurting from the discipline, and lashing out at anyone and everyone around me as if they were causing the pain. I was never attractive and I'm never going to be and I can't let hope interfere with my work anymore. It's too hard trying to type with my fingers crossed!

TOM: Do you write all the time?

MARVIN: I have trudgingly, drudgingly started to write again.

TOM: Something else for Broadway?

MARVIN: I write from what I know. What I know isn't likely to make Broadway.

TOM: Why?

MARVIN: Because if anybody cared about the things I'm writing about, it wouldn't be necessary to write about them.

TOM: What are you writing about?

MARVIN: (with a hoarse laugh) Gay life!

TOM: You don't have a lot of good things to say about it, do you?

MARVIN: Gay life is okay if you're very pretty or if you're rich and inhuman.

TOM: I'm very pretty.

MARVIN: And I'm rich. It stops there. (pp. 33-4)

Marvin is a survivor, and he retains his integrity, but he has given up hope at 40. It is sinfully easy, if you are gay in America, to give up hope. I do so from time to time. My play is simply a rather crude, and all things considered a rather conventional, expression of hope.

In nothing that I have read (including Boy Meets Boy) is there a remotely plausible happy ending. Indeed, of the hundreds of gay men I have known over the years, only a few have found happiness as couples. People I know -- ordinary, plain-looking, hard working, moral individuals -- routinely despair at finding this literary and movietime convention called romantic love. It is a despair more commonly borne by gays than straights, though the disease is rampant in all quarters. I have found it psychologically necessary to nurture the vain belief that, like Robert in my play, I will find what I most want: a mate. While the odds are not good, even for many heterosexuals, they are drastically reduced for the homosexual. The gay subculture does nurture a superficial and anonymous value system; a gay man has a hell of a time simply locating other gays, unless he goes to the bars (and it is not surprising that, given the types who normally frequent them, research reveals that few lasting relationships are formed at gay bars). Furthermore, gay men are so routinely savaged psychologically by the ordeal of growing up gay in a restrictive straight culture, that even presented with the opportunity

of forming a relationship, they are often too psychologically handicapped to succeed at it.

No, the odds are not good. But here and there things are changing. To be sure, my play is a fantasy. People like Robert's parents, who cannot accept a son's homosexuality, are not likely to change their minds in a day, let alone a decade. A person like Robert, who is basically a square, will most likely live and die without a loving mate. And not many gays who have fallen irretrievably into the gay, camp persona (like Reggie, and to a lesser extent David) will likely ever salvage values conventional enough to include a conventional American marriage with one partner. But I do know a very few gay men who have managed to connect, and stay together. I envy them. And I know that there are others like me, "out there," who feel substantially as I do, although the odds of my meeting them are slim. But it is becoming acceptable, in a few enlightened gay consciousness-raising groups, to begin to talk, if haltingly, about wanting the American Dream without inflecting cynical connotations into the discussion. My play is, however imperfectly and banally, an attempt to encourage that discussion, an attempt to offer an alternative to the tragedy that almost every gay person has grappled with in his private hours.

My play, as I see it, is in the tradition of my favorite Shakespearean romance, As You Like It. I will never forget the bright spring afternoon when my dear and irreplaceable friend Helen Williams and I read that play aloud, on a grassy span of ground adjacent to a blue and sparkling lake. Her eyes as Rosalind, mine as Orlando,

sparkled with a hope neither of us had any right to feel. The play ended with an improbable, but wonderfully pleasing, marriage -- several of them in fact. Time remains to tell if I, like Marvin and Shakespeare, am writing tragedy at 40. But I am writing comedy, tonight.

Notes

¹ Walter Kerr, How Not To Write A Play (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1955), p. 21. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

² T.E. Kalem, "Gays to the Fore, Cautiously," Time, 22 March, 1982, p. 79.

³ William M. Hoffman, "Introduction," Gay Plays: The First Collection, ed. William M. Hoffman (New York: Avon Books, 1979), p. x. Subsequent references appear parenthetically in the text.

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SINGLE MEN -- DOUBLE LIVES

or

BRIDE'S BED REVISITED

a romantic comedy in two acts

by

Scott K. Razak

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ROBERT McGLAUGHLINcivil engineer, David's lover

DAVID COOPER.....recent college graduate, Robert's
lover

PHILLIP HESSTON.....lawyer, married to Courtney;
Robert's best friend

COURTNEY HESSTON.....feminist therapist; David's
best friend

REGGIE RICHARDSON.....rich young camp queen; close
friend to David

GLADYS McGLAUGHLIN.....Robert's mother

HERBERT McGLAUGHLIN.....Robert's father

KAY COOPER.....David's mother

LESLIE COOPER.....David's father

BERT.....gay man in bar

LOU.....gay man in bar, Bert's current
steady

STEVE.....bartender

YOUNG MAN.....dancer in bar

2nd YOUNG MAN.....dancer in bar

YOUNG WOMAN.....dancer in bar

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS

ROBERT is a 28 year old construction engineer, a traditional male with traditional marriage as an important life goal. He is straight-looking, with black hair, kind of macho. He looks civilized but not slick -- no GQ model. He has been living with DAVID, his first real lover, for several months. They have been deeply in love so far, but as the play opens the tint is starting to fade from the rose-colored glasses.

DAVID is 23 and a preschool instructor at a private, "alternative" children's school. He has an identifiable hint of mint, yet there is a basic kind of all-American boyishness to him too. The slightly feminine tinge of his character and his youth will make him seem somewhat immature around the edges, though he must be a winsome and likable character. He is a bubbling, somewhat excitable sort of person, full of ass-wiggling enthusiasm; he is outgoing yet vulnerable, extroverted but insecure and somewhat frightened of straight society -- he tends to isolate himself in the gay world. Though feeling hemmed in by his relationship with ROBERT, he is genuinely in love and wants to continue the relationship.

PHILLIP is COURTNEY's husband. He is 29, very young-businessman looking, khaki slacks and all. He is a liberal young lawyer, although he seems more traditional, less committed to deviancy than COURTNEY; nonetheless, he likes to "make the scene," whatever it may be, with COURTNEY. He went to college with

ROBERT, and they have remained good friends.

COURTNEY is 29. She has a degree in psychology with an emphasis on transactional analysis and other fad areas of pop psychology. She and David are very close friends. She is very good looking, very contemporary and attractive. She is quite successful professionally (a feminist therapist), aggressively so. She and PHILLIP are well into the 1980's, and want to be perceived as young, bright, successful, attractive, hip, sophisticated -- at the cutting edge of every area.

REGGIE is DAVID's closest gay friend. He is the ultimate camp queen. He is a brilliant pianist, but tends to squander his mother's money on drugs and travel between his hometown in Tampa, Florida (the setting of the play), and San Francisco. REGGIE is utterly theatrical; all of his friends are gay; he has positive contempt for almost everyone who is straight; he tends to alternate between melodramatic self-pity and manic euphoria; he is somewhat brazen -- but very funny; he is somewhat shallow and superficial, a latter day Sally Bowles.

GLADYS is ROBERT's mother and a telephone operator, about 60 years old. She talks in a nasal, stereotypical telephone operator's voice -- dour, wry, cynical. Beneath her imperious and dominating exterior lies a somewhat insecure and vulnerable woman who has always felt secretly cheated by life, at the mercy of a world she sees as hostile.

HERBERT, ROBERT's father, is about 60, but looks older. He has a

good heart, but tends to be somewhat passive and ineffectual as a family member.

KAY is DAVID's mother, and is a real "firecracker." She has a wonderfully sunny disposition, is a classically stereotypical beautician, and is a very fine wife and mother. She is small, trim, youthful, full of enthusiasm, a lifelong Southerner.

LESLIE is about 45. He's thickening at the middle, but is still somewhat youthful. He's hearty, kind, enthusiastic -- but is more interested in football and business (he's a liquor wholesaler) than family.

BERT and LOU are very pretty gay young men. They are in their early twenties, are rich and fashionable, and have recently become steady bed partners. They are somewhat snobbish and class conscious as the play opens, but mellow by the end of ACT II.

STEVE is the bartender and manager of a neighborhood gay bar. He is about 33, attractive and masculine, and is a genuinely kind person. He is somewhat reserved and an air of sadness is discernible in his manner. He has seen every kind of life form in his bar, and it has saddened his romantic heart. He writes love songs on the guitar.

The YOUNG MEN and the YOUNG WOMAN are exuberant and friendly-looking, young and attractive. They seem to know everyone at the bar. One of the young men is black.

SCENES

The action of the play takes place in the present in Tampa, Florida.

ACT I

Scene I

5:45 p.m. in a neighborhood gay bar in Tampa (Friday evening)

Scene II

Robert and David's house in Tampa, three hours later, that same evening

Scene III

Robert and David's house, the next day (Saturday), shortly before noon

ACT II

Scene I

4:00 p.m., that same Saturday, Robert and David's house

Scene II

11:45 a.m., the next day (Sunday), Robert and David's house

Scene III

5 p.m., that same afternoon, at Steve's bar

ACT I, Scene I

THE TIME: Spring 1982, 5:45 p.m.

THE PLACE: Neighborhood gay bar in Tampa, Florida

THE SETTING: The bar is comfortable, ordinary, essentially masculine in character -- dark, weathered wood, wooden tables -- but has a few emblems of gay society (the potted palms, the exposed duct-work, the red tablecloths, the Tiffany lamps, the chrome-framed Toulouse Latrec's, etc. -- any few of these). A prominent clock reads 5:45. Refer to Appendix A for scene design, furniture placement. (A jukebox stands in the corner.)

THE COSTUMES: LOU and BERT are wearing very short shorts and colorful shirts and sandals. PHILLIP is wearing gray slacks and a tasteful, crisp dress shirt. COURTNEY is a fashion plate and can be dressed in the manner of any number of Vogue models. ROBERT wears dusty khaki slacks, Levi's leather shoes, a short-sleeve shirt; his clothes look a bit dusty,

wrinkled. DAVID wears designer jeans, a vivid Hawaiian shirt, and any appropriate fashionable shoes. STEVE is dressed casually, but well. He wears nice slacks, an Izod shirt, nice casual shoes. The three young dancers are wearing jeans, or painter pants with equally casual shirts -- the shirts must be somewhat colorful. They must wear shoes easy to dance in, naturally.

THE SOUND-EFFECTS: A good stereo system is necessary. Prior to the opening of the curtain, the song "I Shall Be Released," written by Bob Dylan and performed by Bette Midler, will be started at full volume. Exactly two minutes and eight seconds into the song, the curtain opens to reveal the three young dancers (dancing together) to the conclusion of the song (which runs a total of four minutes and fifty-five seconds).

AT RISE: Two minutes and thirty seconds before rise, auditorium lights will

dim. Twenty-two seconds later Bette Midler's recording of "I Shall Be Released" will begin to play. Two minutes and eight seconds later the curtain will open. Three young people, in their early twenties, are dancing with each other. Their dancing is energetic, modern, dynamic -- matches the intensity of the song.

LOU and BERT sit in a booth against the wall, miming conversation and occasionally watching the dancers. Now and then they look at and touch one another across the table in a way that suggests they are in love. They are quiet and look like ordinary, young, upper-class men. STEVE stands at the bar looking marginally busy. He washes glasses, watches the dancers, wipes the counter, idly passes time.

At the conclusion of the song, the three dancers are hot, happy, exhilarated. They hug each other (a three-way

hug), and return laughing, talking about how fun the dance was, etc., to Table #3 (see Appendix A). As they reach their table, BERT begins to speak, calling out to STEVE at the bar.

BERT

(brightly)

Hey, Steve, how about a bottle of champagne over here -- Lou and I are celebrating our anniversary.

STEVE

Your anniversary? What anniversary?

LOU

Why, Bert and I have been fucking each other for one straight week.

Realizes what he's said and laughs.

Oh my God, no -- not straight --

STEVE

(laughing)

I know, I know . . . so, what kind of champagne you want, expensive or cheap?

BERT

(melodramatically)

Why, Steve, I'm shocked -- shocked at such a question -- you ought to know expensive champagne would never do for this cheap whore.

STEVE

Cheap it is.

LOU and BERT go back to mimed conversation. STEVE is getting champagne into bucket at bar as bar door opens; enter COURTNEY and PHILLIP. COURTNEY looks around, at watch, then speaks to PHILLIP.

COURTNEY

Oh good -- he's not here yet. You know how irritated Robert gets when he has to wait on anybody. Oh, hi, Steve.

PHILLIP

Say, Robert's not here yet is he?

STEVE

Nope, not yet. He's been working late every night on that stretch of highway they're building just outside of town. He usually doesn't show up till about six.

STEVE takes champagne from counter to booth. Speaks to COURTNEY and PHILLIP.

I'll be with you guys in a minute.

COURTNEY and PHILLIP sit at Table #1 -- settle in, relax.

COURTNEY

(to Phillip)

David called me this morning at work. He sounded kind of depressed -- he didn't go in to teach at the preschool today -- he and Reggie were going to the beach again. Ever since Reggie got back from San Francisco last week he and David have been inseparable.

PHILLIP

Well, God knows he can't stay depressed long if he's out with Reggie.
You know how he gets when he spends time with Reggie.

PHILLIP does an amateurish mimic
of someone out of control, pulling
hair, screaming, etc.

COURTNEY

Phillip, why do you have to be so hard on him? He's just having fun.
You're so damn straight it scares me sometimes.

PHILLIP

That's why you married me, remember.

COURTNEY

(smiling)

Well, you do have a point. But I mean it; you shouldn't be so intimidated
or judgmental or whatever it is you are when those two camp it up.
Just laugh at them -- that's all they want.

PHILLIP

I know. But it's always the same joke. And it's uh, not exactly
my brand of humor, you know?

STEVE stops by their table.

STEVE

O.K., so what'll it be for you guys tonight?

COURTNEY

(brightly)

How about a margarita, with lots of ice!

PHILLIP

I'll have a scotch and water.

STEVE

Coming up.

STEVE goes back to bar.

PHILLIP

As far as David's routines go, I think Robert is starting to get a little tired of the joke, too. His benevolent smile seems to be a little forced these days when Reggie's around, don't you think?

COURTNEY

Think! I know. That's why David called me this morning. They had another fight last night. David wanted Reggie to go out with all of us tonight, but Robert said no way.

Bar door opens. ROBERT enters.

Looks tired, weary, depleted.

PHILLIP

Button it -- here's Robert now.

LOU and BERT (in booth) start miming talking secretively to each other. LOU puts hand to side of mouth, discreetly points to ROBERT as he enters. BERT looks at ROBERT. They both examine him somewhat critically, gossip on their minds. While watching ROBERT, they mime a conversation that goes something like this:

LOU

(in mime)

(That's Robert, David's lover for the last four months.)

BERT

(in mime)

(So that's what David's been doing with himself I never see him anymore.)

LOU

(in mime)

(I hear he'll hardly let David out of the house.)

COURTNEY

(brightly)

Robert! Hello, darling, how are you?

PHILLIP

Hi, Bob!

ROBERT

(smiles at seeing them)

Hi, guys.

PHILLIP

You look like you've had a day.

ROBERT

Boy, you can say that again. All the cushy jobs in this world and I have to pick construction engineer. I'll bet I walked 30 miles today shooting bluetop.

COURTNEY

Shooting who?

ROBERT

(correcting her)

Shooting what; we checked the elevations on all these funny little wooden stakes pounded into the ground with blue tops painted on them -- it's loads of fun.

COURTNEY

(blithely)

I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about, but it sounds perfectly awful. Sit down and have a drink, Robert.

STEVE brings drinks for COURTNEY and
PHILLIP.

STEVE

What can I get you, Robert? The usual?

ROBERT

Make it a double, and a glass of ice water on the side. I'm hot and thirsty.

STEVE

You got it.

STEVE returns to bar.

COURTNEY

(vivacious; trying to make witty conversation)

So, Robert, I got reservations for the four of us tonight at the new Club Dead.

PHILLIP

Club Dead?

(wryly)

Catchy name.

COURTNEY

Yes -- it rhymes with Club Med, but it's a nightclub, not a resort. I hear it's the late-night place to be -- lots of flash, lots of glitter. They have a cabaret singer, a Greek chef, a Ricky-Ricardo-type floor show -- the whole Copa Cabana routine.

ROBERT is drifting off. Looks tired,
preoccupied.

(ironically)

Robert, you look like you just can't wait!

ROBERT

(sheepishly)

What? Oh, I'm sorry. I guess I'm just tired. I didn't get much sleep last night. David and I had one hell of a fight.

COURTNEY

(pauses)

I know. David called me this morning. You two have certainly been having your problems since Reggie got back from San Francisco.

(pauses -- sudden realization)

Robert, you do know that David and Reggie are just best friends, don't you? I mean, there has never been anything romantic between them.

ROBERT

Of, of course -- I know that. It's just that David has been acting pretty flaky lately -- not like himself -- and I've had about all of it I can take.

COURTNEY

(concerned; the problem is more serious than she'd thought)

Is there anything I can do? Anything at all?

ROBERT

(doesn't want to talk about it)

Naw -- we'll work it out.

ROBERT looks dejected. Yawns big.

COURTNEY

(brightly; trying to sell him)

Robert, wake up -- it's Friday night! Capitalism releases you from its evil clutches for a joyous weekend of American recreation -- drugs, sex, Club Dead, dancing, drinking, frivolity of every imaginable sort.

Where is your enthusiasm?

PHILLIP

(playfully -- to Robert)

I don't know this woman. Is she with you?

COURTNEY

(with humor, gives Phillip withering look)

Oh, you two! Just eat your valium and shut up. There's a dark corner over there if you two want to go over and start snoring.

(beat)

I gotta pee. I'll be right back.

COURTNEY stands, exits left.

ROBERT

(to Phillip)

So, how's the practice going?

PHILLIP

Pretty good. We finished that big rape trial last week. Courtney gave me quite a lot of help with that; the girl who got raped was one of her patients.

ROBERT

Did they sentence the guy yet?

PHILLIP

Not yet -- the sentencing is set for next week. That reminds me, though, next month I've got this civil suit brought against the state, and I'm going to need an expert witness. Are you interested?

ROBERT

(quizzical look)

Well, sure -- if it's something I know anything about.

PHILLIP

It should be right up your alley -- so to speak. This insurance executive was driving to Miami for a corporate meeting last month on Interstate-95, and as you know that's still under construction. Anyhow, this guy was driving over this temporary detour at night and he ran smack into a road grader that was parked right next to the road. He flew through the windshield and broke his neck, and now he's permanently paralyzed.

ROBERT

So you're gonna sue the state for damages.

PHILLIP

Right -- but what I need to know is, do we really have a case?

ROBERT

Well, the first question is, was the grader marked with a reflective decal, because they're required by law.

PHILLIP

No, it wasn't, and it was parked on the shoulder. We'd need you to testify as to what is standard procedure for parking equipment overnight on a construction site.

ROBERT

I'm pretty sure OSHA says they should be something like 30 feet from any road surface, but you can check on that. I know we always make a point of getting our equipment as far from the road as possible.

PHILLIP

I'll check into the OSHA regulations, and if we have a case I'll probably be calling you to testify as an expert witness -- I think the going rate is around \$300 a day. Anyway, I know money's not going to be any problem, because this son of a bitch is rich, and we stand to clean up if we win this case.

COURTNEY reappears from left, walks toward table.

ROBERT

Sounds good to me -- just let me know when you need me.

DAVID enters at bar door with great enthusiasm, noise, melodrama.

COURTNEY

(delighted)

Oh look -- David's here!!

DAVID

(stretches out arms; screams theatrically)

Oh my God -- Courtney!!!

DAVID runs to COURTNEY, embraces her dramatically. He's laughing continuously. It seems as though a band of drunken sailors have just entered.

LOU

(calling from booth)

David!!!

DAVID

(turning to Lou)

Agnes!!!!

BERT

Miss Thing!!!

DAVID rushes toward their booth, arms outstretched, for embraces.

DAVID

Estelle!! Darlings, how are you? Where have you two been hiding yourselves?

LOU

In bed, of course -- where else?

BERT

It's our anniversary! One full week of true anal love! I can't wait to write Mother. She always did want me to meet a nice Jewish girl and settle down.

DAVID

Oh, can I sing at your wedding?

BERT

Only if you do a Donna Summers drag and moan like a big negress in heat!

The three dancers at Table #3 are watching, and laugh jubilantly.

DAVID and BERT laugh. DAVID returns to Table #1, comes up behind ROBERT, puts hands on ROBERT's shoulders, plants kiss on ROBERT's head. ROBERT rolls eyes upward, gives dubious look. As DAVID is sitting down, he begins next interchange with STEVE.

DAVID

(sing-song)

Oh STEEEEE-ven.

STEVE

(sing-song)

Oh WHAAAAA-at.

DAVID

(sing-song)

I'd-like-an-Amaretto-SOUUUUUU-ur.

STEVE

(sing-song)

O-KAAAAAAAAA-ay.

DAVID

(sing-song)

Oh THAAAAAAAAAANK-youuuuuuuuu.

STEVE

(sing-song)

You're-so-very-WELLLLLL-coomme.

ROBERT

(sing-song)

Would-you-two-shut-UUUUUHHHHHH-uup.

DAVID and STEVE

(in unison; sing-song)

O-KAAAAAAA-aay.

All laugh.

COURTNEY

(brightly)

Well! How was the beach today?

DAVID

(animated; melodramatic)

Oh, God -- I have never seen so much crotch in all my life! Never in all my life! Miles. Miles of crotch. Everywhere I looked. It was all I could do to keep my hands to myself.

COURTNEY

(laughs; she and David enjoy their repartee)

What did you do with Reggie? Tie him down with steel cable?

DAVID

(mock outrage)

That sick queen!! The things he'll do amaze me. Today he asked about ten people if they were gay. I mean it! He'd go up to real cute guys, people you just knew weren't gay, and he'd bat his false eyelashes and just say, "Excuse me, I hate to bother you, but I was wondering if you might happen to be, well, queer?" I was scared to death somebody was going to punch him out, but almost everybody just stared at him open-mouthed like they couldn't believe what they'd been asked, at which point Reggie would arch his eyebrows and say,

(fast, precocious, animated voice)

"Better take a picture; it won't last long!" and then he'd come flying back to the blanket. I just knew some guy was gonna come over and kill us, but it never happened.

There are several beats of silence.

ROBERT

(slowly, darkly)

That is disgusting!

DAVID

(flippant)

Oh it is not! It's outrageous maybe, but it's not disgusting. Those guys will go home tonight and tell their mothers or their girlfriends all about it, just giving them yet another chance to affirm their precious masculinity.

ROBERT

(angry, lecturing)

Oh, David, when will you see that these things Reggie does out in public are not funny. They're rude.

DAVID

(opens mouth to speak; is interrupted)

Now wait just a min-----

ROBERT

(with intensity)

No--I know what you're going to say. It doesn't really hurt anybody, it's good for straights to know they're not the only ones in town, it's their problem if they're threatened, blah, blah, blah. I've heard all that before. But what you don't grasp is how plain uncivilized it is to treat another human being with such flagrant disregard.

DAVID

(angry, flippant, cocky)

My ass! Maybe he does go too far sometimes, but how do you suppose people treat Reggie? I mean, it's common knowledge that certain groups of he-men now consider it great sport to ride around in San Francisco shooting at queers from their car windows!

ROBERT

(beat)

And I suppose you expect me to say that that's perfectly all right. Well of course it's not, David, but what the hell does Reggie expect from people when he literally assaults them with his gayness. He wears earrings and makeup, for Christ's sake! That's hardly a constructive way of communicating with the straight world.

DAVID

(standing his ground firmly)

Well maybe it is! Reggie is different, and so what if he makes fun of people who can't accept that? My God, if it were up to you we'd all be living in Leave-It-To-Beaver-Land.

ROBERT

(with intensity)

Don't twist what I'm saying! I'm as angry as you are at the Anita Bryant's and the queer-killers, but Reggie's behavior is the last thing in the world that's going to ease the homophobia in this country, or this city for that matter. It's no wonder people don't accept gays when they get treated to one of Reggie's performances.

DAVID

(cocky)

So what's Reggie supposed to do? Wear a suit and tie and watch football on Sundays like you do, so he'll be one of the guys?

(beat)

If it were up to you, everybody in the whole world would be like you and Phillip.

(in comedic aside to Phillip)

Sorry, Phil.

PHILLIP nods politely, dubiously,
humorously.

ROBERT

(a bit put off at David)

Obviously I don't think that. But I've gotta say I don't understand why gay men can't seem to accept the fact that they are men. I'm gay, and I think I'm basically an ordinary guy -- and until lately I thought you were, too. I resent Reggie swishing around on the beach ruining my reputation just because I happen to be gay!

DAVID

(pouncing)

Oh, there it is, I knew it was in there somewhere. You don't want people knowing you're gay. That's why you didn't want Reggie going out with us tonight!

ROBERT

(firmly)

It's not that, and that's not what I said!

DAVID

(with certainty)

Oh yes it is! You can't stand it that Reggie is your basic screaming faggot, because you have this golden image of yourself as Mr. Macho America. Nobody's gonna think you're queer, by God!

ROBERT

(he's pissed)

It's nobody's fucking business if I'm a queer! I don't understand why Reggie has to plan his whole life around being a faggot -- it just guarantees that society is going to reject him -- which is what he really wants. I, for one, don't want to divorce myself from 90 percent

ROBERT (continued)

of society. Most of my friends are straights, my co-workers, my parents -- I don't feel this need to walk around with a big sign that says, "I'm Gay, Fuck You."

DAVID

(slowly, smiling)

But - wouldn't - it - be - fun!

ROBERT

(snorts)

Fun! Reggie's god! Well, Reggie can afford to have fun with his mother's money. I have to work for a living.

COURTNEY

(interjects)

Robert, that's what David's saying --

(not quite certain)

I think -- this society insists on conformity, and gets it. Let's face it, you'd be fired if you acted like Reggie on your road crews.

DAVID

And you go right along with their program, Wally Cleaving your way right down the pike.

ROBERT

(can't believe they don't understand)

You guys -- I'm just me! I don't act any certain way because of economic pressure or anything else!

DAVID

(smugly)

Then why don't you want Reggie to go out with us tonight?

ROBERT

(immediate, direct answer)

Because I think he's offensive and rude.

DAVID

And because he does everything in his power to express his gayness, his differentness.

ROBERT

That's just it!! Why does being gay mean being different?

PHILLIP

(defending Robert)

Yeah! All Robert's saying is you can be gay without being a faggot!

ROBERT

(glad to have the support)

Right!

COURTNEY

(loaded with irony)

Gosh this is fun -- we really ought to do this more often.

Silence all around for a moment.

ROBERT

(decides to conciliate)

Courtney's right. Why do we have to fight about this? Let's just leave it alone and have a good time tonight.

DAVID makes a face to indicate he
has something to say that he dreads.

DAVID

Well I don't know if that's going to be exactly
possible.

ROBERT

(slowly, quizzically)

What do you mean?

DAVID

You're gonna kill me.

REGGIE enters at door. Screams in
upper registers, Jo Ann Worley style.

REGGIE

(utterly campy, theatrical, outlandish)

Hello, everyone! Father Reggie has come to hear your confessions!

I know that you all have sinned so very much.

(extends hand)

Kiss My Ring, and we'll just forgive and forget.

DAVID

(almost to himself)

Uh-Oh!

REGGIE

(swoops into room)

Are we all glad to see me? Are we all ready to go to Club Dead and
scream and carry on?

REGGIE turns around, sees LOU and BERT.

REGGIE (continued)

Oh look, it's Fred and Ethel Mertz!

REGGIE walks over to booth, speaks
to LOU.

Well, how is your asshole holding up, girl? This one can be awfully
brutal in that area,

(like Mae West)

don't I know!!! Are you wearing Pampers yet?

REGGIE continues to mime conversation
with LOU and BERT, standing at booth.

ROBERT

(intense repressed anger)

What's he doing here?

DAVID

(looks somewhat sickened)

That's what I've been trying to tell you; Robert, he's been looking
forward to this all week; I just couldn't tell him no.

(almost pleading)

And I thought if you could have a good time with him, just once, you'd
stop resenting him so much.

ROBERT

(quietly furious)

But I thought we decided last night that Reggie was not coming along
with us tonight -- just the four of us, remember?

DAVID

(trying to conciliate)

Robert, I know if you will just relax and keep an open mind, you'll see how much fun Reggie can be. And we will be at Club Dead -- that's the kinkiest place in Florida; Reggie's hardly going to stand out in the crowd at Club Dead.

(beat)

I still can't believe you agreed to go there in the first place.

ROBERT

(quite angry)

That's not the goddamned point. We made a mutual agreement, and you turned right around and broke it.

DAVID

I only agreed because of your pressure -- that's no agreement, that's coercion!

ROBERT

Bullshit! That's bullshit and you know it! We talked it out, and I did not coerce you.

DAVID

(sneeringly)

So what do you want me to do now? Tell him he can't come along after all -- that Robert refuses to have him along?

ROBERT

(stands up; angry, focused, doesn't care if Reggie hears)

I don't give a good goddamn what you tell him, because I'm going home. I have to be at work tomorrow at seven a.m. -- yes, Saturday, which you

ROBERT (continued)

wouldn't understand, seeing as how you work a half day here and there at your precious preschool.

(beat)

You probably skipped work again today, didn't you?

DAVID glares.

Well, didn't you??

DAVID

(defensive)

It's none of your fucking business if I did.

ROBERT

(righteous anger)

It is too my fucking business. This is a marriage, a partnership we supposedly have going, and I'm getting sick and tired of providing all the money, doing all the cleaning, putting up with your housefulls of nilly friends, and now you've managed to ruin the one night this week I was going to go out and relax and have fun, so I'm going home, goddamnit, and don't come thundering in to smoke dope and play disco records and scream and laugh all night with Reggie and all his nilly friends, because I have to go to work in the morning because, in case you've forgotten, I'm bringing in at least one income into our household, which is more than I can say for you.

By this time, every eye in the bar is riveted on ROBERT's performance.

ROBERT glowers at DAVID.

DAVID

(scoring)

Why don't you just admit the real problem, Robert -- your shyness!
 You're just afraid of going out in public -- so fine, just fine, run
 away from meeting new people, like you always do!

ROBERT has sustained a hit. To save
 face, he turns on his heels, stalks
 angrily out, and slams door.

REGGIE

(hand on hip)

My, when did her period start??!!

DAVID laughs, in spite of himself.
 COURTNEY suppresses laughter with
 hands over her mouth. PHILLIP looks
 grim. REGGIE walks over to DAVID's
 table.

REGGIE

(throws head back; sassy)

I take it the evening's festivities have been canceled due to

REGGIE sings main theme from "Stormy
 Weather."

Stooooorrrrrmy Weatherrrrr

DAVID, COURTNEY and PHILLIP look
 at one another; nod in agreement.

DAVID

(sounds disappointed)

I'm sorry, Reggie. Robert's been on the rag all week, and I just don't feel like going now.

REGGIE

(lightly)

Not to worry, dear heart.

(sing-song voice)

Ha Ha Ha -- Joke's On You!

(back to ordinary, theatrical voice)

Lou and Bert have just invited me to Harold's Aunt Mary party.

We're all going to make Dutch Babies and do a shitload of clinical dexedrine which I managed to bring back from San Fran.

(catty)

And you can't come, bitch!

DAVID

(saucy -- enjoys repartee)

Well! Just see if I invite you to my Spring Formal!

REGGIE tosses head theatrically; goes over to the table with the three young dancers and addresses them.

REGGIE

(theatrically)

Come along kids, come along; Father Reggie is taking you to a

(sings, screams)

PARTYYYYYYYY! It's at Harold's. Hup, hup, time's a wastin'!

The dancers, LOU and BERT stand up; all follow REGGIE, chattering and laughing, out the door as though REGGIE is the Pied Piper. After they exit, COURTNEY, DAVID, and PHILLIP sit for a moment in silence.

DAVID

(bleakly)

Oh you guys, I'm sorry. I guess everything is blown now.

PHILLIP

Hell, I don't care. I didn't want to go to Club Dead anyway.

Courtney made me come along.

COURTNEY

Are you going home to talk to Robert?

DAVID

Oh shit, I don't know. He stays mad for a good long while; and I don't think I'm into that just now.

DAVID looks confused, dejected, regretful. PHILLIP intercedes kindly.

PHILLIP

Why don't you come over to our house -- we'll just spend a quiet evening at home.

(long beat)

I hate like hell to see you two blow your relationship. Robert's one of the best friends I've got, and I know it'd kill him if you broke it off with him.

COURTNEY

(quietly)

Do you want to break it off with him?

DAVID

(quietly)

No.

(beat)

But the honeymoon's sure over. What a bastard!

PHILLIP

David, give him a chance. You forget how new all of this is for him. I've known Robert since we were fraternity brothers in college, and you've only known him for maybe six months. He's come a long way in accepting himself, but for now maybe there's a line he just can't cross. Don't force him to.

DAVID

Robert's come a long way since college? Jesus, he seems so conservative.

PHILLIP

From where you're coming from, maybe. But give the guy a chance. He didn't even tell me he was gay until last year -- and even then he wasn't sure. I mean, I never had a clue.

(beat)

I'd have introduced you a lot earlier if I had.

DAVID

I still can't understand how somebody suddenly figures out he's gay at the age of 27. I knew when I was four, for Christ's sake!

COURTNEY

It's not so unusual. I see a lot of women at the counseling center who don't pick up on their lesbian feelings until their late 20's, or even 30's.

DAVID

(skeptical)

I don't know. It's still hard for me to buy that. What would you do if Phillip came home one day and said, "Hi, honey, I'm home. By the way, I'm gay now."

PHILLIP

(laughs)

Not much chance. But Robert's different. In retrospect, I think he was always gay, but he didn't want to face up to it.

DAVID

What do you mean, "in retrospect?"

PHILLIP

Just that Robert always seemed kind of set apart from the other guys. He was kind of shy; you know -- bookish -- and he didn't date very much.

DAVID

(musingly)

Having spent every night with Robert for the last four months, it's hard for me to imagine what he'd do if he found himself in bed with a woman!

PHILLIP

And I'm sure it would probably be hard for him to imagine, too.
He always dated nice Christian girls -- you know the type.

COURTNEY

David, you have to remember that you're probably the first person that Robert has ever had a real relationship with. That's pretty scary stuff, and it's only complicated by the fact that you guys are gay.

PHILLIP

I don't think you realize how much he needs you, David. He practically glows in the dark whenever your name is mentioned. He's really a different person now -- he's happy -- you can see it in his eyes. I don't think he could take it if you blew him off.

DAVID

(sardonic)

I've done it before and he didn't seem to mind.

COURTNEY

You know, Phillip, you're not being quite fair. You're making it sound like David's entirely responsible for Robert's happiness.

PHILLIP

Oh come on with that. Pop psychology can take you just so far.

COURTNEY

I resent that! And it's not pop psychology. You're sitting here telling David that he can't ask Robert to make any changes, he can't disagree with Robert, he can't leave Robert, and I think all those options are very reasonable.

PHILLIP

I'm only trying to say that a little patience is in order. For Robert, being gay is a very personal and very painful experience.

DAVID

(sour grapes)

Thanks a lot!

PHILLIP

(quickly)

I don't mean anything against you, Dave. But Robert thinks you're basically like him. Face it, since you guys met you spend all your time with Robert, or with us. You don't go to the bars at all anymore.

DAVID

(a bit dreamily)

Hell, I haven't wanted to go to the bars. I keep getting lost in Robert's eyes. God I'm in love with that guy. He's like a mystery novel that just keeps unfolding and unfolding

PHILLIP

But now that Reggie's back in town, you're suddenly back to your old bizarre self, and it freaks Robert out. He doesn't know you like we do.

COURTNEY

(to Phillip)

But the issue is, why can't Robert accept that? You've said yourself that you always have a better time at gay parties than at straight ones, and even though David is my best friend, you two have always gotten along perfectly well.

PHILLIP

Well, you have to remember I'm considered the staff flake at the law firm -- married to a feminist therapist, defender of prostitutes and gays whenever they're up on a morals charge

DAVID

Well -- why do you like me -- or some of Courtney's and my gay friends? I hardly ever meet straight men who like to hang out with gays. Don't tell me you're bisexual.

PHILLIP

Hardly -- I'm just secure about my sexuality. Besides, about half of Courtney's friends are gay, it seems like. I find them interesting, fun to be with. If I like somebody, then I like them. I don't care what label society wants to put on them.

DAVID

But you don't like Reggie, do you?

PHILLIP

(matter of fact)

Not particularly.

COURTNEY

Why??!!

PHILLIP

Mostly for the same reasons Robert was saying -- you guys wouldn't even listen to him. Reggie is a caricature, not a person. I never get the feeling, ever, that he's being straight with me -- if you'll pardon the expression.

DAVID

(stumped)

This is amazing. I think Reggie's one of the most honest people I know. He really is a screaming faggot, and he doesn't make any bones about it!

PHILLIP

Well, maybe it's just a matter of personal taste.

(wryly)

I happen to prefer dealing with sane human beings.

COURTNEY

I think you need to develop a taste for the absurd.

PHILLIP

(a trifle defensive)

I'm satisfied with my tastes, and I don't see why you think Robert needs to change his.

DAVID

Because he's gay! And part of being gay is having a a woman inside of you, in a way it's the feminine part, when it comes right down to it, that feels this profound attraction for men!

PHILLIP

Maybe for you, but that's not what Robert says. He says he feels just like a normal man who happens to like men.

DAVID

I know you know him really well, Phillip, but I have to say I don't think Robert is being honest with himself. He makes such a big deal out of being a MAN. "Methinks he doth protest too much," ya know what I'm sayin'?

COURTNEY

(to Phillip)

I'm inclined to agree with him. I believe you when you say you don't like Reggie, though I don't understand why you don't. But with Robert, I get the feeling that he's afraid of Reggie. Haven't you noticed how stiff Robert is whenever he's around gay people at a party or anything.

PHILLIP

But that's just Robert -- why can't you guys see that?

DAVID

Phillip, Robert is prejudiced! Supposedly now he's accepted himself, but part of him believes that bullshit that gays are sick, gays are abnormal!

PHILLIP

So -- what if he does? You can't expect the guy to change his whole life in four months just to suit yours. Just give him some time, ease off of him a little bit. He's doing the best he can, just like everybody else.

DAVID

(thoughtful silence; speaks)

Hmmmm. Maybe you're right. I don't know. I do know things can't go on like this. The tension's so thick at home you could cut it with a knife, and that's no fun!

COURTNEY stands, goes behind DAVID
and hugs him from behind.

COURTNEY

I know you'll do the right thing, Davy. You've got a good heart.

COURTNEY stands upright. She has
a sudden inspiration.

Say -- I've got an idea! Why don't you guys start seeing a marriage
counselor down at the clinic?

DAVID

Well, in the first place, we're not married; and we can't very well
see you, Courtney. Robert'd just think you're taking my side whenever
you agreed with me.

COURTNEY

I didn't mean me, silly. I meant Sheila Lichtenauer -- she usually
works with straight couples, but I've referred several gay couples
to her, and she seems to work well with them. Besides which, no gay
couples are actually married.

DAVID

(reflectively)

Maybe that's not such a bad idea. I'll see if I can talk him into
it.

(looks at watch)

Thanks for talking with me, you guys. I don't know what I'd do without
you two.

PHILLIP

I just want you guys to work this thing out. Robert deserves to be
happy; God knows he's waited long enough.

DAVID

I think I'll go down to the beach and sit and think for a while. I want to get this all sorted out before I talk to Robert.

COURTNEY

That sounds like a good idea.

PHILLIP stands, walks behind COURTNEY, puts hands on her shoulders. COURTNEY relaxes back into his embrace.

And listen, you know you can call me any time if you need to talk.

You do know that, don't you?

DAVID

(smiles; he loves Courtney a lot)

Yes. I know that.

DAVID takes one of COURTNEY's hands in both of his. They smile warmly at each other.

PHILLIP

(after a few moments)

Let's go home, chickadee, I'm starved.

They all stand, prepare to leave.

COURTNEY

(to David, touching him)

You're sure you're going to be all right?

DAVID

Oh sure.

They are walking out past the bar.

COURTNEY

Gee, hate to leave you all alone like this, Steve.

STEVE

Oh, it'll pick up about eight. Y'all take care.

All exit at door. STEVE leans back,
arms crossed, stares meditatively
at the table they've just vacated.
He meditatively nods head up and
down for a few moments, then is still.

THE CURTAIN CLOSES ON ACT I, SCENE I

ACT I, Scene II

THE TIME: 10:00 p.m., that same night.

THE PLACE: Robert and David's house.

THE SETTING: Refer to Appendix A for set design.

Robert's home is tasteful, but essentially masculine in character. The colors are earth tones, and the atmosphere is comfortable and homey. At front right is a living room suite with coffee table. At front left is kitchen set, with kitchen table and appliances. A swinging door separates the kitchen from the living room. Above the kitchen is a small, square platform that will not appear until the operator's (GLADYS') scene. She will be seated on the platform, with a headset, before an imaginary switchboard. Above (and behind) the living room is a bedroom loft; a dresser and closet door are against the back wall, and a double bed is on the loft. A staircase leads from center stage up to the bedroom loft. There is a front door off the living room, front right. There

is a back door off the kitchen,
front left.

THE COSTUMES: As the scene begins, ROBERT is in bed wearing bulky white boxer shorts. DAVID enters the scene wearing the same clothes he wore at the bar. When ROBERT gets up, he puts on a long terrycloth robe, in any earth tone. When DAVID disrobes, he is wearing vividly colored bikini underwear. When he puts on his robe in the second half of the scene to come downstairs, it will be a sheer, silk red kimono, knee length.

THE SOUND EFFECTS: The operator must simulate the classic, nasal telephone operator's voice for this scene. The telephones in the kitchen and upstairs bedroom must ring at the appropriate time.

AT RISE: The lights are down quite low. A soft spot illuminates ROBERT lying in bed upstairs. Both hands are entwined beneath his head (he's lying on his back) as he stares meditatively at the ceiling, eyes wide open. He occasionally shifts his position restlessly.

After 10-15 seconds, DAVID enters cautiously, quietly through front door in living room. He looks around -- glances up at the loft. ROBERT's ears perk up -- he thinks he hears DAVID downstairs. DAVID walks quietly to kitchen, gets can of soda from refrigerator, pops top, turns light out, walks softly and a bit reluctantly to base of staircase, center stage, and speaks softly.

DAVID

(gently)

Robert? Are you awake?

ROBERT

(beat; then flatly)

Yes.

DAVID

(facial expression to indicate, "Uh-Oh")

Are you too tired to talk?

ROBERT

(beat)

No, I'm not too tired. I'll be right down.

ROBERT gets up, is wearing boxer shorts, puts on terrycloth robe, quietly and deliberately pads downstairs. DAVID

is sitting on sofa, his legs on coffee table. ROBERT walks stiffly to easy chair, looks at DAVID only furtively. ROBERT sits. Drums fingers on chair arm. DAVID opens mouth to speak a time or two, but ROBERT is still looking in his lap. Allow tension to build. Finally, ROBERT speaks.

ROBERT

So what did you want to talk about.

DAVID

(small smile; speaks kindly)

Three guesses?

ROBERT

(smiles for a moment; draws breath)

Dave kiddo listen -- I'm sorry about getting so hot tonight. It's not like me to get so angry, especially at someone I really care about.

DAVID

(objects -- don't be so nice)

No -- you had every right. I broke my word, and that's unforgivable, even though I swear my intentions were good.

ROBERT

(beat)

That's what I don't understand: Why is it so important to you that I like Reggie?

DAVID

(beat)

Just because he's an important part of my life. Not just as a close friend, but his whole lifestyle -- it's partly my lifestyle too. You just haven't seen it yet.

ROBERT

But I have seen it -- at least in the last two weeks. I can't believe the change that's come over you since Reggie hit town. You're not getting tired of me, are you?

DAVID

No -- I'm not. That has nothing to do with it.

ROBERT

(sighs -- relieved)

Thank God. I was afraid you were leaving me.

DAVID

(hurts to know Robert's been thinking that)

Robert, I love you . . . and I won't be leaving you unless you kick me out -- ever.

ROBERT

Then help me to understand.

DAVID

You're just seeing a part of me I've sort of kept on the back burner since I met you --

(play this for a gentle laugh)

-- the screaming queen side.

ROBERT

(smiling)

Well, I've seen touches of it all along -- it's funny in you; I like it.

DAVID

I don't think you'd like it if you knew that it's a big part of me, a lot bigger than you've seen until now.

ROBERT

I don't understand. You've been honest with me all along -- I could tell.

DAVID

Well -- yes and no. Yes, I have a

(melodramatic; puts it in quotes)

"serious and basically mature" side, and that's who I've been for you.

This has been a deadly serious relationship!

ROBERT

And the "no?"

DAVID

And no, I haven't been completely honest with you

(hastens to add)

though I haven't tried to actually be dis-honest. Remember the first night we met and you told me how intimidated you were by the bar scene? And that you felt uncomfortable at gay parties because the whole trip was new to you, and you were basically a shy person? Well, I realized right then that I'd really turn you off if you thought I was some dizzy little air-head queen, so I cut that out of my act.

ROBERT

Your act?

DAVID

You know what I mean. I mean that I was really attracted to you. You're different. You're so serious, so deep, not to mention gorgeous -- God, I'd have done anything to get you.

ROBERT

(innocently questioning)

So you pretended to be somebody you're not?

DAVID

No, not at all. I just let my

(melodramatic; puts it in quotes)

"serious, passionate" side come out with you -- because that's what's been right for this relationship. And that was honest but now I'm feeling limited.

ROBERT

(afraid; he doesn't understand)

But I don't understand why. We've been so happy, so completely satisfied since we got together. Why now the sudden need to break away?

DAVID

Not break away, Robert just expand. I'll suffocate if I limit my whole life to you.

ROBERT

(reeling a bit)

God, I don't know; I hate to think that you want to give up what we've

ROBERT (continued)

found with each other. Things have been so special . . . so much magic you have.

DAVID goes over to chair, kneels down, kisses ROBERT slowly, soulfully.

DAVID

Like that?

ROBERT

(hopelessly in love)

Yeah, like that.

DAVID

(sweetly)

You think I want to give that up? You must be dreaming.

DAVID returns to couch. Pats spot beside him.

Come sit over here with me.

ROBERT goes, sits beside DAVID. Takes DAVID's hand in both of his, for long quiet moments runs his fingers across DAVID's hand. Looks up at DAVID, his face full of emotion, near tears.

ROBERT

(in rush of emotion; crying)

Oh David, don't leave me, please.

DAVID is overwhelmed with the sudden realization of how much he loves ROBERT. He grabs ROBERT in a swift bearhug, which is returned, and DAVID softly strokes ROBERT's hair.

DAVID

(softly)

I won't leave you.

DAVID pauses, then draws back from ROBERT, his hands on ROBERT's shoulders, looks at ROBERT full face. Gently wipes tears from ROBERT's eyes.

(seriously, kindly)

I won't leave you.

They both slowly begin to smile, getting high on how much they really do care for each other. DAVID, being gently funny, speaks in a silly sing-song voice:

I lovvvveeeee youuuu. I looovvveeeee youuuu.

ROBERT

(smiles, laughs)

Me too.

Telephone in kitchen rings. DAVID makes an expression as if to say, "it would have to ring now."

DAVID

I'll get it.

DAVID crosses into kitchen, picks up
phone from kitchen table.

Reggie, hi! Of course I want to --

(beat)

but not tonight. Robert and I just had a talk -- we're getting things
worked out What? Reggie, I can't hear you -- what's that
noise?

(laughs)

Oh my God!

(laughs)

. That's right, Mavis. Listen girl, I gotta run. Say hello
to the girls. I'll call you tomorrow while Robert's at work
O.K. Bye bye.

DAVID is smiling to himself as ROBERT
comes into the kitchen.

ROBERT

Who was that?

DAVID

Just Reggie. He wanted us to go over to Harold's Aunt Mary party.

ROBERT

What's an Aunt Mary party?

DAVID

(surprised)

Haven't you ever read Aunt Mary? It's a comic strip in National

DAVID (continued)

Lampoon. She's this dizzed-out fifty-year-old broad who wears rhinestone glasses and does a TV cooking show -- it's just a scream. She's always trying to bake up a batch of Dutch Babies.

ROBERT

Dutch Babies? What are those?

DAVID

(heartily)

Fuck me -- I don't know -- but it sounds funny! All those queens are dressed up like Aunt Mary and they're standing in the kitchen screaming about Dutch Babies.

(laughs)

I could hardly hear Reggie on the phone.

ROBERT shakes his head, as if to say,
"I know you think it's funny, and
I'm trying to see why it is, but
I just don't." Then a sudden resolve
comes into his face.

ROBERT

(trying to be a good sport)

Well -- why don't we go?

DAVID

(amazed)

Oh, surely you're not serious.

ROBERT

(earnestly)

I am serious. And don't call me Shirley.

DAVID

(opens mouth wide in delight; laughs)

Haaaa! I don't believe it.

(sing-song)

Robert's been watching Airplane on HBO!

ROBERT

(smiles, self-satisfied)

Who's Harold anyway?

DAVID

You remember Harold -- he's the one who asked you if you wanted to fuck, first names only, last January at Lou's party?

ROBERT

(sudden expression of distaste)

Oh, that's Harold. On second thought

(new thought)

Tell me something: Are gay men really as promiscuous as they seem?

DAVID

(thinks for long moment; answers matter of factly)

Yeah. The ones I know anyway. Of course I only know virtually everybody who's out in the whole state of Florida.

ROBERT

But why is that?

DAVID

(knows he's being cute)

It's probably because I like to dance.

ROBERT

(sees he's been had)

Not that, silly! I meant why do they fuck around so much?

DAVID

(parodying the old Mickey Mouse Club TV program)

Why?

(beat)

Because they like to!

ROBERT

I mean it. It seems like almost every one of the gay people I've met through you plays constant musical beds. I thought it was just a prejudiced stereotype until I actually started meeting real gays.

DAVID

Well, I hate to admit it, but I don't think it is a stereotype. That's one of the reasons I fell for you. You're old fashioned. And I was tired of fucking around. Real tired.

ROBERT looks confused.

What's the matter, Robert? You look

(melodramatic)

deeply distressed.

ROBERT

I guess it's hard for me to think of you like that. I'm so different than that.

DAVID

Yup. You're a true-blue romantic, a vanishing breed. That's why I love you. Because of you my whoring days are over; but OH GOD they were good days.

ROBERT

I can't imagine sleeping with somebody I didn't love and trust completely.

DAVID

I know. I thought you were never going to ask me to go to bed!

ROBERT

(smiles)

You mean you wanted to, too?

DAVID

Wanted to!!! My God, I had a hard-on for three weeks! But I knew from the moment I met you you'd be worth waiting for.

ROBERT

(this is new; fun to think about)

Well, why didn't you just seduce me?

DAVID

Seduce you!! And watch you run for the door? Oh no, my pretty, I knew my only chance was leaving the whole issue up to you. I've never eaten so many dinners, seen so many movies, and gone to the zoo four frigging times just trying to get laid.

ROBERT

(two beats)

I think it was the gorilla beating off that did it. I knew then I couldn't last much longer.

DAVID

Believe me, if you had waited any longer I'd have gone back and fucked the goddamned gorilla!

ROBERT

(joking)

Oh, you'll fuck anything.

DAVID

(sassy)

You bet your sweet ass I will.

DAVID looks at ROBERT, who looks
momentarily worried.

JUST KIDDING, Robert. Yust a little yoke.

(two beats)

Fuck it if ya can't take a joke.

(long pause)

You don't really want to go to that party, do you?

ROBERT

Not really, no. But maybe I should try to get used to your friends.

DAVID

Now that's a good idea. You'll like 'em, once you learn the language.

And just to be fair, I'll try to get used to your friends.

(being funny)

Robert, why are your friends so boring?

ROBERT

They're not boring. You like Rod, don't you -- he's nice.

DAVID

Yes, he's nice, if you like talking about civil engineering. I always
feel like he really hates me.

ROBERT

He doesn't hate you. He thinks you're nice.

DAVID

(taunting a bit)

Does he know I'm your boyfriend?

ROBERT

He thinks you're my roommate.

DAVID

That's just it! I can't be comfortable around your friends because I can't be me. I hate being around people who don't know me. Everybody knows I'm gay.

ROBERT

Why does he have to know you're gay?

DAVID

Oh skip it -- I really don't think you'd understand. I'll try to butch it up, but you're going to have to coach me. I'm out of practice.

ROBERT

It's easy.

DAVID

For you -- you practically are straight, except for the fact that you're not. Speaking of which, can we please go to bed?

ROBERT

Thought you'd never ask.

ROBERT walks to DAVID, embraces him, kisses him. ROBERT has a sudden inspiration.

ROBERT (continued)

Let's do it on the kitchen table!

DAVID looks at table, covered with
dishes.

DAVID

Uh-oh. Is that a hint?

ROBERT

No! But now that you mention it, you haven't done the dishes since Tuesday and I am starting to feel kind of like a maid.

DAVID

(Robert has touched a nerve)

A maid!!! Jesus, I bend over backwards to keep things clean. Don't you think you're just a tiny bit neurotic about all that?

ROBERT

Neurotic!!! I don't think it's neurotic to dislike fungus growing on the shower curtain. What's neurotic about hanging up your clothes when you take them off, for God's sake?

DAVID

(slowly)

Robert, this may come as a great shock to you, but some people only hang up their clothes once a year, and they get along just fine. We live in a frigging museum over here compared to most people I know. You can compromise just a little bit, can't you, put up with just a little bit of disorder here and there?

ROBERT

(getting defensive)

You know how I feel about that. I hate messes. Maybe my mother did

ROBERT (continued)

drill it into me, but I just don't feel right around clutter.

DAVID

God, what do we need -- a deprogrammer? -- to get rid of dear Mother?

ROBERT

Look, you make it too hard. It's easy. You just take care of everything when it happens. You eat -- you wash the dishes. You fill up an ashtray -- you empty it. You take off your clothes -- you hang them up. It's so easy -- why let things build up into a big mess when it's just as easy to take care of it right then?

DAVID

Because I don't feel like taking care of it right then. That's why. It feels fun sometimes just to be FREE, just to be off the program. Don't you know what I mean?

DAVID pauses, looks at ROBERT, then
deadpans:

No, you don't know what I mean. Well, take my word for it, it's fun!

ROBERT

Yeah, it sounds like a hell of a lot of fun not to hang up your clothes!

DAVID

Robert, you know what I mean!

ROBERT

I'm not sure I do, but I'm not gonna worry about it. Let's just not argue. FUCK the dishes. I'm beat -- let's go to bed.

DAVID

Yaaaaaayyyyyyyy! Robert said, "Fuck the dishes!!!" Now we're going to bed and Robert's going to FUCK DAVID!!!

ROBERT

(looks dubious)

I gotta be at work at seven in the morning -- we're pouring concrete on a bridge.

DAVID

Oh shit! And I was hoping we'd spend tomorrow in bed. We haven't had a Saturday morning in bed for three whole weeks. I miss it. When is this damn job going to be over anyway?

ROBERT

Three more months.

DAVID looks crestfallen.

But I don't think it's going to be this bad all the way. We'll probably be caught up and on schedule by the end of next week, so I won't be working so damn hard. Maybe I'll be easier to live with after that.

DAVID

(charmingly)

I hope so.

ROBERT

Oh, eat my shorts.

DAVID

I'd love to!

ROBERT

(from doorway)

I'm going to bed. You coming?

DAVID

(crossing, embraces Robert)

In a few minutes. I'm starving. We didn't go to Club Dead, you know, and we didn't eat supper. I was too upset about this business with you.

(they kiss)

Goodnight, sweetie.

ROBERT goes upstairs, gets in bed,
falls asleep almost immediately.

DAVID first looks in cookie jar.

Goddamnit, Robert, why do you always eat the cookies before I eat the cookies?

DAVID takes out peanut butter and crackers from cabinet, makes plate of peanut butter/cracker sandwiches, turns kitchen light off, takes plate upstairs, takes off clothes, slides into bed with his plate. In his sleep, ROBERT automatically places his hand across DAVID's body and murmurs slightly.

(melodramatically)

Does this mean we're in love?

ROBERT, of course, says nothing.

Oh God, you're such fun in bed anymore, Bob, did anybody ever tell you that? I love it the way you lie there unconscious while I'm talking

DAVID (continued)

to you. By the way, Bob, did you know I'm having a truly passionate affair with the milkman? Oh, yes, he's got a fourteen-inch prick, and really all the cream I can handle.

DAVID tires of his repartee, sits up in bed, munches crackers, holds them over plate. With mouth full of crackers, he delivers next line.

Oww, phluck, I fwogot the miwk. Can't eacchh peemit buttuw cwakews wifout miwk.

He gets out of bed, wearing bikini underwear, slips on red kimono, starts down stairs. Halfway down stairs -- closer to bottom, actually -- he steps on a small green snake. DAVID leaps down the remaining steps. He turns on light, looks aghast at wriggling snake still on steps. He is nearly hysterical.

Oh my God, oh my God, Robert, there's a snake on the staircase

Robert, get down here -- you know I'm phobic about snakes --

ROBERT!!!

A cricket chirps in the kitchen.

ROBERT remains asleep, snores loudly.

DAVID mutters to himself.

Oh my God, how am I going to get back upstairs? Robert will never

DAVID (continued)

wake up.

(pause, thinks)

I could jump over it -- oh GOD no, I can't jump over a snake, it'll leap up and bite me in the ass. ROBERTTTTT!!!!

The cricket chirps again. ROBERT
remains sleeping.

Robert Allen McGlaughlin, come down here this minute!!! Get down here and kill this cobra!

No response. An idea strikes him.

I've got it!

DAVID goes into kitchen, turns on
light, moves phone from counter-top
to kitchen table, sits down at table.

I'll call him on the extension!

(pause, thoughtful)

Now -- how the hell do you call your own number? We used to do it all the time as kids. Let's see

(picks up receiver)

It's something like dial 9 and then your own number backwards???

No, that's not it. Dial your own prefix and then hang up?

(tries that; no ring)

Ring dammit!! I dare you to ring!!

(defeated)

Oh shit.

(another bright idea strikes)

I know! I'll call the operator!

Above and behind kitchen, on small platform, light illuminates a thin, gray-haired, little old lady operator (GLADYS). DAVID dials zero, and GLADYS plugs imaginary cord into imaginary switchboard. She speaks in the classic, stereotypical, nasal operator's voice.

GLADYS

(efficient voice)

Operator. May I help you?

DAVID

(a bit excited)

Yes, operator, I need . . . oh, this is going to sound stupid . . . I need to know how to dial my own number. I know you can do it -- I mean, we used to do it as kids, playing around with the phone, but I can't remember how. Surely you know how to do it, don't you?

GLADYS

(long pause; then in exasperated voice)

Do you mean you've forgotten your number? I'm sorry, I don't have directory listings, you'll have to call 411.

DAVID

No, no, you don't understand. I'm here -- at home -- and I need to call my own number -- here at home. Isn't there a way of making your own phone ring? I'm sure there is -- I remember we used --

GLADYS

(interrupts him; out of patience)

I'm sorry, I can't help you. There is no way to ring your own number.

DAVID

But I know there is. We used to do it when we were --

GLADYS

(interrupts him)

When you were kids. I know. I don't believe you're remembering correctly. I've never even heard of dialing your own number, and I've been with the phone company for 37 years.

DAVID

Could you just let me speak to your supervisor, then?

GLADYS

(beat)

I am the supervisor. I'm sorry I can't help --

DAVID

(interrupts feverishly)

No, no, don't hang up! Would you just dial my number then? Please?

GLADYS

Dial your number?

(beat)

But you're already talking to me.

(beat; suspicious)

Is this some kind of joke?

DAVID

No, I swear. Please, now listen, I'll explain. Now listen. I was coming downstairs to get a glass of milk and as I was coming downstairs I stepped on a snake -- a living snake!! I can't go back upstairs because I am truly terrified of snakes, and my, um, my friend is upstairs sound asleep. He's not afraid of snakes. He likes snakes. I know you're thinking, "Why don't you just yell at him and wake him up?" But I did, and he's sound asleep, and I know Robert, believe me I know Robert, and he won't wake up unless the phone rings -- it's right by the bed. All I want to do is call him so he'll come downstairs and get the snake and I can go back up to bed. Honest!

GLADYS is silent, a perplexed expression on her face.

Did you hang up?

GLADYS

No, no, I'm still here.

(beat)

Now let me see if I have this straight. You want me to call Robert and tell him to go downstairs because he has to get rid of the snake? Sir, I don't even know Robert.

(curiosity)

What kind of snake is it?

DAVID

It's a

DAVID walks to kitchen door, peers out.

. . . . badly damaged little green one -- hell, I don't know

DAVID (continued)

what kind of a snake it is; it doesn't matter what kind of a snake it is; I hate snakes -- all snakes; I'm phobic about snakes, and I can't go upstairs until Robert comes down and gets rid of this snake. Look -- if you'll just dial the number, I'll wait until he picks it up and then I'll get on the line down here and I can explain what happened. You won't have to say a word to him -- O.K.? But let it ring a long time; he's really tired and it might take him a while.

(pleads)

Please?

GLADYS

(slowly)

Thirty-seven years. Thirty-seven years I've worked for this company.

(briskly)

All right sir, what is your number?

DAVID

Oh thank you, thank you. It's 483-8852. Now, do you have to stay on the line? I mean, once Robert and I are on the extensions can we talk to each other if you leave the line?

GLADYS

Yes sir, I'll leave the line as soon as I hear you talking.

(beat)

Though something tells me this is one conversation I don't want to miss.

DAVID

Hey, thanks, you're a good sport.

GLADYS

(dourly)

Yes, I suppose I am. I'll call right back.

DAVID hangs up. GLADYS mimes punching number. The phone(s) ring four times. ROBERT groggily gropes for phone on bedside table and picks it up. Immediately DAVID picks up his phone. GLADYS disconnects. Immediately after disconnecting, GLADYS puts hands to head, wears expression of great agitation, alarm.

483-8852!!!!!! Oh no!!!!!!

Lights on GLADYS go immediately to black.

DAVID

(into phone)

Robert, Robert, are you there???

ROBERT

(groggily)

Nnnnnngggggghhhhh --

(coughs)

uh, David?

DAVID

That's right -- it's me -- David. Robert, don't hang up. I'm in a dire emergency and I need your help!

ROBERT

(gathering his wits)

Where are you?

DAVID

In the kitchen.

ROBERT

In the kitchen?

DAVID

Yes. And this is not a joke, Robert. Now listen, I'm sorry, but I came downstairs to get a glass of milk and I stepped on a snake on the staircase.

ROBERT

A snake?

DAVID

Yes, Robert, it's huge -- a goddamned cobra. That's why we live in Florida, remember, so you can be close to all your little bugs and reptiles, Mr. Macho Biologist with all your macho hobbies. Why can't you like organdy and lace like all the other faggots?

ROBERT

Oh Jesus Christ, David. O.K., O.K., where is the snake? On the stairs?

DAVID

Yes -- about halfway down -- I think I partially crushed it -- it's just lying there hissing at me.

ROBERT

O.K., I'm coming. One thing, though, David -- don't hang up the phone. Meet me at the bottom of the stairs.

DAVID

What do you mean?

ROBERT

Just don't hang up the phone.

ROBERT lays phone on table, walks
halfway down stairs, picks up snake.

DAVID is at bottom of stairs, making
faces at the snake.

Oh Jesus, you woke me up for this? O.K., I'm going upstairs and I'm
going to flush this poor little thing down the toilet, after I crush
its head and put it out of its misery.

DAVID

Oh, God, you're not going to step on that snake's head with bare feet
are you?

ROBERT

It's only a garter snake! Good God!

ROBERT turns to go upstairs.

DAVID

(looking up after him)

Robert, you've got the cutest ass I've ever seen. That's why I'm so
nice to you.

ROBERT

(flatly)

Just get on the phone, David.

DAVID walks to kitchen, picks up
receiver, waits. ROBERT goes through

door upstairs, we hear toilet flushing,
he reappears in bedroom, picks up
telephone.

Are you there?

DAVID

Yes.

ROBERT

(in velvet, honied tones)

Fuck you, David!

DAVID

(mock anger)

Why, you asshole

ROBERT

(laughing)

Just come to bed, darlin' -- I miss you.

DAVID turns out kitchen light. Stage
lights dim. In gradually diminishing
light, DAVID carefully picks his way
up the stairs -- milk this for a
laugh. The lights go completely down
just as DAVID snuggles into bed with
ROBERT.

CURTAIN CLOSES ON ACT I, SCENE II

ACT I, SCENE III

THE TIME: The next day (Saturday), shortly before noon.

THE PLACE: Robert and David's house.

THE SETTING: The house, of course, appears as it did the night before. The one property that will take special precedence in this scene is an Oriental three-paneled dressing screen that stands behind the couch, near a window, as part of the decor. The several costume changes in this scene will be made largely behind this screen, with the help of an unseen dresser.

THE COSTUMES: Prior to getting into their respective drags, the three principals in this scene will be dressed as follows: DAVID will initially wear his bikini underwear and his red kimono. REGGIE will enter wearing oversize wooden clogs, short shorts with a finished seam (brightly colored), and a white gauze shirt with a plunging neckline. He will wear a string of beads and a matching bracelet. ROBERT will wear khaki slacks, a

conservative sport shirt, and casual shoes. In the drag scene, REGGIE will pull numerous items of female apparel from a straw trunk. There should be a broad assortment of filmy, silky scarves, blouses, housedresses, etc., including the three outfits that the three principals will ultimately wear: DAVID will wear glossy white, knee-length go-go boots; a brushed denim wrap-around mini-skirt; a bright yellow pull-over angora sweater with V-neck; an outrageous teased black wig, in the style of Loretta Lynn, with tresses falling fulsomely about the shoulders. REGGIE will wear a 1940's style woman's suit in dark, severe colors (brown, gray, etc.). The top half of the suit should be amply padded, giving REGGIE the appearance of a matronly old broad. His wig will be silver/gray with a bun in back. His shoes will be half-heeled, black, sensible shoes; he will wear old fashioned nylons with the seam up the back of the leg. He will be

amply rouged and made up about the face. (REGGIE will also apply makeup to DAVID and ROBERT; it must be highly exaggerated -- lipstick, rouge, mascara, perhaps eye-shadow.)

ROBERT will wear a tasteful, black, plaited cocktail dress with a round, low neckline (to display his ample chest hair). He will wear a Jackie Kennedy wig, a pillbox hat, a strand of white pearls, a tasteful metallic bracelet, and black spiked heels. He will also have white gloves and carry a smart, simple clutch purse. In the early part of this scene, REGGIE will try on several wigs: one is an outrageous black afro wig of enormous dimensions, perfectly spherical. The other is a cute, pert little blonde wig that should serve to make REGGIE look like a typical sorority girl. When ROBERT's parents enter, his mother will be rather smartly (if austerely) dressed in any suitable fashion for a well-preserved woman of 60. Her husband,

HERBERT, will wear brown polyester slacks, a white open-collar button-down shirt (with spaghetti-strap undershirt), brown shoes, belt, socks. His hair may be brown, black, or graying (or gray). GLADYS' gray hair will be brutally hair-sprayed, in any conservative hairstyle worn by women of her age.

THE SOUND-EFFECTS: At the very end of the scene, the front door is left open after the departure of ROBERT's parents, and we should hear the sounds of their car being started and driven off. Midway through the scene, a country-western steel guitar arrangement of the song, "If Jesus Drove a Pickup Truck, He'd Haul Your Ass to Heaven," will be played off-stage or via recording. The score to this song can be found in Appendix B. The guitarist must make every effort to inject as much country "twang" into his arrangement as possible. Additional instruments are desirable, but not necessary. They could include

an electric piano, percussion, or other suitable CW instrumentation. Perhaps deserving special mention as sound effects are the voices adopted by DAVID and REGGIE while playing their drag roles. REGGIE, as Eleanor Roosevelt, should if at all possible sound very much like the original, but only moreso: the voice is in the high registers, matronly, stuffy, officious, wobbly, filled with tonal variation up and down the scale. DAVID should sound, as much as possible, like any nasal, twangy, female country-western star. Patsy Cline has been dead for so long that few recall her speaking voice; thus, any caricature of any suitable CW star will do.

AT RISE: Sunlight streams in through the windows, but especially strong is the broad swath of sunlight coming in the upstairs bedroom window illuminating DAVID who is fast asleep, sprawled haphazardly across the bed without covers over his body. There is a

knock at the front door after the curtain has been raised for 5-10 seconds. DAVID remains asleep. There is a louder knock at the front door, an insistent rapping; then pounding.

REGGIE

(outside front door, knocking, yells theatrically)

David, you bitch, open this door!

DAVID sits up, opens eyes, hears REGGIE, and laughs. Puts on red kimono, prances downstairs, opens front door.

DAVID

Regina!!!

REGGIE strolls in wearing a broad-rimmed straw hat with a scarf tied around it. Hat is worn at rakish angle, causing REGGIE to look like a 1940's movie star cameo. He makes a grand, theatrical entrance to the couch before delivering his line.

REGGIE

(melodramatic Garbo)

Dahling -- I want to be alone.

REGGIE falls dramatically backwards onto

the couch. After a moment, he sits bolt upright, changes character completely. Is now simply campy, melodramatic old REGGIE.

Oh Mavis, I was just driving by and I happened to notice that Robert's car is gone, so I had to stop in and show you what I bought this morning!

He goes to open door, hauls into living room a huge, rectangular straw trunk.

DAVID

What's in there?

REGGIE

Are you ready for this, girl?

He dramatically takes cover from trunk -- pulls out armloads of silky, funny women's garments.

Ladies apparel. Half sizes and Missy too! Will you look at all this? I stopped by Edna's thrift shop this morning -- and just look at everything I found!

He pulls out a huge, cheap, spherical afro wig, puts it on. In outlandish black ghetto (falsetto) voice, REGGIE delivers his next line.

Shit, Reba, yo daddy come home wavin' his big black thang at me, I sez, "Tom, you put that big thang right back in yo pants, you sexy nigger, I

gotta do housework; sheeit, I ain't no jive-ass hussy!"

DAVID

(falling into black jive immediately)

Say what, Mama? When my daddy come home? You say my daddy was dead!

REGGIE

(still jivin')

Chile, I thought he wuz dead, I thought I fucked that po nigger to death, but he jus come 'round wantin' mo yo sweet Mama's snatch!

DAVID laughs. REGGIE takes off afro wig. He immediately replaces it with a cutsie-pie pert little blonde wig. Delivers next line in an impossibly piercing, ultra-falsetto, tiny little cutie-pie voice.

Hi! My name's Teena. I like to buttfuck!

(squeals)

Oooooohhhhhhh!

(titters, falsetto)

DAVID dissolves in laughter.

REGGIE

(reverting to plain old theatrical self)

Mavis, what time is Robert coming home?

DAVID

Well, they always knock off at noon on Saturdays -- he should be back in an hour.

REGGIE

Oh, why that's more than enough time, more than enough time. Let's play dress-up! I've been wanting to put together an Eleanor Roosevelt drag for Lou-Don's party next week -- you can help me.

DAVID

(grins; really wants to, but --)

Oh, I don't know, Reggie. Robert wouldn't like it if he came home and found you here

(mock horror)

in women's clothing!

(normal voice)

He said last night that he's really going to try to get along with you and the girls, but all this stuff is just real strange to him.

(indicates props)

He doesn't understand it. It threatens him.

REGGIE

(take-charge attitude)

Well, clearly we've got to do something about that. Now David, I'd be the first to admit that Robert's sweet.

(beat)

But such a tight-ass. My stars!

DAVID

(trying to be serious)

It's hard for Robert to . . . have fun . . . the way we do, you know? It's like I told him last night: Except for the fact that he's gay, he's basically straight. Did you know that he didn't even come out --

DAVID (continued)

even to himself -- until last year?

REGGIE

(glibly)

Well, that's his problem.

DAVID

Well, yes -- but it's my problem too. It's not his fault; my God, if you'd heard about his family you'd marvel that he's come this far.

REGGIE

I guess that's kind of hard for me to relate to. I flew down to Miami last week to see Mother, and we scandalized Merle -- that's her third husband, you know -- when we sat eating lunch and were just evil rating all those cute, rich young men primping by on the beach. Beach blanket bingo indeed!!

DAVID

Reggie, you have an unusual relationship with your mother. It took a few years for my folks to realize it wasn't just "a phase I was going through." Robert's parents don't even know! Especially about me. Robert still writes them letters that he's dating women, for God's sake. He invented this one named Tricia -- strung them along for months, told them he was going to ask her to marry him? Then one day he writes home, says she was killed in a car wreck in Boston -- where her family supposedly lived. Now he just tells them he's too broken up about poor Tricia to even think of dating again.

REGGIE

(genuine sympathy; clucking)

Oh, my, Robert does have a problem, doesn't he?

(beat)

Poor dear. Well, what can we do? We have to do something -- we can't let Robert live the rest of his life pretending to be straight, perish the thought!

DAVID

(defending him)

He knows he's not straight.

REGGIE

But he still wishes he was straight.

DAVID

No -- I don't think he does. I think he's actually pretty happy now.

REGGIE

Do you really think a happy person behaves like Robert does?!

I'm not taking anything away from you -- God knows he dotes on you, sweet little trick that you are -- but mark my words: any gay man that can't accept his gay brothers and sisters is also not accepting himself.

(significantly)

I've seen it before.

DAVID

I think it's just that he never learned how to be gay around gay people. It frightens him. He feels so awkward and out of place.

REGGIE

(conspiratorial vigor)

Then let's teach him!

DAVID

(not quite understanding)

Teach him?

REGGIE

Yes! Let's teach Robert how to act like a queer!

(sparkles with brainstorm)

We'll give him camp lessons!!!

DAVID

(skeptical; ironically)

Oh, I'm sure!

REGGIE

I mean it. And let's face it, I am the world's authority. Haven't I taught you everything I know.

(with campy pizzazz)

Haven't I taught you to scream and carry on like a scarlett woman?

DAVID

I don't know Reggie -- I don't think that's the way to go about this. Robert does have to do some changing, but I think this might be a little abrupt.

REGGIE

Then what are you going to do, my dear?

DAVID

Well -- I don't know. We could--

(stumped)

Well?

REGGIE

See! We have to start Robert off right -- in the privacy of his very own home. He'll feel safe here. Just the three of us. Playing dress-up.

REGGIE drapes feather boa behind
shoulders, twirls it with one hand.

We'll start off slow -- see, here's a cute little cocktail dress with spaghetti straps -- something sedate.

(very campy)

Oh, that's just Robert all over again! And look at these pumps girl. Very tasteful. I'm telling you, Robert will discover the chic, fashionable woman inside, just yearning to be set free. We'll probably have to tear this dress off of him. Besides, have you ever known a faggot who didn't love to dress up in Mother's clothes?

DAVID

Yes. But they're no fun. You know, Robert did tell me that once his mother came home from work early one day when he'd put on her wedding dress. And he was fourteen at the time.

(smiles)

I used to put on this slinky polka dot number my mother wore, when I was five, and traipse around the neighborhood in spiked heels carrying a handbag. God I loved that.

REGGIE

(definitively)

I never met a queer who didn't. O.K., it's settled. Here's what Robert's going to wear. Now, let's get ourselves together for when he comes home.

DAVID

(unconvinced, but leaning)

Reggie -- I

REGGIE

Will you stop, Mavis. I know exactly what I'm doing!

(grabbing yellow angora sweater)

Now put this on, girl. I picked this one out especially for you -- it's so trashy -- pure Annette Funicello.

DAVID slips off robe, puts on sweater. Stuffs something in to make large breasts.

And I found this cute little wrap-around mini skirt that will go perfectly with that. And here -- put on this Patsy Cline wig. Just a minute -- I'm gonna go out to the car and get my makeup. We're gonna do this right.

While REGGIE is outside, DAVID puts on wrap-around mini skirt. Goes to mirror against wall and puts on black, teased-up wig. Rummages in box and finds knee-high glossy white go-go boots and puts them on.

Then REGGIE walks through front
door carrying makeup kit.

REGGIE

(campy scream)

Aaaaahhhhh! It's Patsy Cline, come back from the dead!

DAVID

(in southern, nasal twang)

Hello, darlin'. How are ya? Listen, it's such a playsure to be heer
to see y'all at the Florida State Fair again this year.

REGGIE

(flighty; playing a role)

Oh, Miss Cline, excuse me, you simply can't go out on that stage without
your makeup -- I simply won't allow it!

DAVID

(glances in mirror; back to normal voice)

You're right. Let's hit it with the eyeshadow.

REGGIE quickly, deftly, applies
heavy eye makeup to DAVID and bright
red lipstick and very red rouge.
Next two lines play while makeup
is being applied.

DAVID

(in southern twang)

Regina, yer not gonna make me look like a hussy, are ya?

REGGIE

Would you just hold still, cunt!

REGGIE (continued)

(pause)

O.K., shut your eyes.

(puts finishing touches on makeup)

O.K., you can open. Look at me.

(David looks)

Oh my, pretty as a Polaroid.

REGGIE stands aside, and theatrically
plays role of announcer, to audience.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to introduce, in a rare appearance from the great beyond, the one-time queen of country music, Miss Patsy Cline!

DAVID makes kiss-throwing entrance
to center stage. REGGIE yells and
claps, now playing role of audience.

DAVID

(absurdly twangy voice)

Hi, Everybody!

(waves)

It shore is good to be back singin' for y'all, heer at the Florida State Fair.

Steel guitar introduction begins
softly in background; continues
until DAVID finishes speech. See
Appendix B for score.

As many of yew know, I have been reborn, yes reborn, into a Christian

DAVID (continued)

life. Awl I had ever known was suffering and tragedy and death, until one day, hitch-hiking down the highway of life, towards Charlottesville, Virginia, a stranger pulled up in his pickup truck and give me a lift.

All lights begin to dim rather rapidly now; at the same time a lone, bright white spot begins to come up on DAVID. By the time DAVID finishes this speech, the stage is completely dark except for that one bright spot.

Friends, this stranger didn't tell me his name, but he listened to all my problems -- I was right down in the tooth -- and he said to me, "Patsy," he said, "there's a way outta all yore troubles.

(beat)

Just one way."

(points upward)

And I looked into his deep, brown eyes, and I knowed right then he was tellin' me the truth. He never did tell me his name, but when he let me off there in Charlottesville, I knew my life was changed forever. For a while, folks, I wondered who he was, but now I think I know. In fact, I wrote down this song for y'all to tell you what I mean:

(sings)

If Jesus drove a pickup truck,
He'd haul your ass to heaven.
You don't need to worry none;
Your sins will be forgiven.

DAVID (continued)

Jesus loves the cowgirls;
He loves the cowboys too.
Goat-ropers and pig-stickers,
And Skoal chewers too.

Now you don't need to buckle up,
'Cause Mary's on the dash.
And if you get pulled over,
They'll never find your stash.
You're always safe with Jesus;
He'll never let you down.
You'll often find him draggin' Main,
A-wearin' a thorny crown.

(speaks next verse dramatically)

So Patsy if you're hopeless,
In your prison cell.
Remember brother Johnny Cash
And how his records sell.
Just haul your ass to Nashville,
And ring that silver bell.
Then the Lord will save your soul,
And you won't go to hell.

DAVID (continued)

(resumes singing)

His pickup got no gunrack;
 His bumper says, "One Way."
 So honk if you love Jesus;
 He's sure to pass your way.
 And if your Saviour passes by,
 In his pickup truck,
 Sinner stick your thumb right out (hold the note)
 The Lord will pick you up!

(rapidly)

Thank y'all and good night!

(waves to audience)

Lights return to normal. REGGIE is laughing and squealing with delight at DAVID's performance. He is pounding floor, chair, something, to emphasize his hysteria.

REGGIE

Oh my God, I've created a monster.

DAVID

(still in twang)

And I'd just like to thank my manager, Reggie McRegg, without whom my miraculous comeback could have never been possible.

REGGIE

(sarcastic; hand on hip)

Well, you can dress her up, but you can't take her anywhere.

REGGIE is uncomfortable being out
of the spotlight for so long.

All right, bitch, enough of your number; help me put my Eleanor
Roosevelt drag together for Lou-Don's party.

REGGIE walks to trunk, picks up his
various garments for the Eleanor
Roosevelt drag. He quickly walks
behind the dressing screen where
dressers quickly dress him, apply
makeup. The next three lines are
delivered while REGGIE is behind
screen dressing.

DAVID

Girl, I'm gonna run upstairs and find my camera. Otherwise, they're
never gonna believe this back home.

REGGIE

O.K.

DAVID goes upstairs, gets side-tracked
by a full-length mirror against the
wall. Primps in front of the mirror
for a minute. Play it for laughs;
much posturing, posing. Then DAVID
goes to dresser, opens top drawer,

starts throwing things out willy-nilly behind him onto the bed. Empties first drawer. He does likewise for each successive drawer.

DAVID

Where is that goddamned camera!?!??

DAVID returns downstairs, yells to REGGIE.

(normal voice)

I can't find the goddamned thing.

REGGIE

(from behind screen)

Well, it makes no never-mind.

(beat)

Are you ready for this, Mavis?

DAVID

(twangy voice)

Come on out, darlin'.

REGGIE

(speaks as Eleanor; comes out from behind screen)

Franklin, Franklin, have you seen my handbag? You haven't? Well pick up those crutches and get after it. I don't want to hear that, Franklin. This is not a fireside chat. I'm giving a speech at the Women's Press Club in 20 minutes--

(two beats)

Now Spin Those Wheels! God knows that should come naturally for you!

REGGIE (continued)

. What do you mean you're tired, you want to go to bed --
I can remember when it really meant something when you and I went to
bed. But now? Talk about your Great Depression!!!

DAVID has been laughing at all the
punchlines.

DAVID

(laughing)

Oh stop, stop!

ROBERT suddenly enters at front door.
Stops in utter surprise at the sight
of REGGIE right in front of him.
He doesn't recognize REGGIE. He
does not notice DAVID, who is back
right, behind couch, unseen.

ROBERT

(wonderingly)

Who - are - you?

REGGIE

(draws self up haughtily; in Eleanor's voice)

Who am I?

(beat)

I am Eleanor Roosevelt. And who, may I ask, are you?

REGGIE cups breasts in both hands,
pushes upwards.

DAVID

Robert -- it's Reggie!

ROBERT still does not look over at
DAVID.

ROBERT

(wonderstruck)

Reggie?

REGGIE

(in ordinary theatrical voice)

Oh grow up, Robert. Of course it's me. You were expecting, maybe,
Dolores Del Rio?

ROBERT turns to look at DAVID for
the first time. DAVID walks out
from behind couch to deliver his
line.

DAVID

(in normal voice)

And I'm Patsy Cline.

ROBERT is momentarily thunderstruck
with silence, but as it sinks in he
begins to roar with hearty laughter
from the gut.

ROBERT

(laughing)

Patsy Cline!

ROBERT walks over and collapses with laughter onto the couch. Every time he looks over at DAVID again, his laughter starts anew. DAVID, greatly enjoying ROBERT's reaction, comes over and sits sideways in ROBERT's lap; he affects a high, squeaky, sugary Dolly-Partonish voice for next line.

DAVID

(to Robert)

Hi, Porter!

(to Reggie)

Look, everybody!! It's Porter Waggoner!!!

REGGIE

(steps in, takes charge, own voice)

That's not important now.

REGGIE goes over to couch, takes DAVID by the hand, pulls him up to standing position.

ROBERT

(still laughing a bit)

Well -- who do I get to be?

DAVID looks aghast, amazed.

REGGIE

(in sarcastic mimicry)

"I don't think Robert'll like it, Reggie."

DAVID

(campy disgust)

Oh go fish!

REGGIE

(theatrically; own voice)

Well, Robert, David and I have spent hours -- days -- contemplating that very question.

REGGIE holds up black cocktail
dress and strand of pearls.

Does this give you any clues?

ROBERT laughs, as if to say, "Oh,
I could never . . ." REGGIE holds
up brunette wig, pillbox hat, white
gloves.

Does this put it together for you?

ROBERT

(stumped)

No.

DAVID

(to Robert; shrugs shoulders)

I don't know either.

REGGIE

Well be that way, Robert. Now go behind that screen and make yourself gorgeous.

(hands Robert clothes)

Then the object of the game will be guessing who you are.

ROBERT

(bemused; he's game, kind of)

O.K.

ROBERT goes behind screen with clothes.

REGGIE

(to David)

I'm thirsty.

DAVID

(points to kitchen)

Help yourself.

REGGIE goes to kitchen, hunts through refrigerator, yells back into living room.

REGGIE

Bitch, don't you have any orange juice?

DAVID

(shouting back)

We're out.

REGGIE pokes his head into living room through doorway.

REGGIE

Well you know what I always say: A day without orange juice is like a day with Anita Bryant!

ROBERT laughs from behind screen.

REGGIE returns to fridge, gets a can of soda pop. Returns to living room.

ROBERT

(dubiously, from behind screen)

Oh wow, I don't know about this.

DAVID

Oh come on -- let us see you.

After a moment, ROBERT saunters out, still walking like a man. He looks muscular and somewhat manly. The dress is too tight and too short. The hair on his chest is prominent around the pearls. His body language indicates that he feels awkward.

ROBERT

My God, how do women wear stuff like this? It feels weird to have my crotch just hanging in the air like this.

REGGIE

(campy)

Such language from a white woman!

(beat)

So -- do you know who you are yet?

ROBERT nods "no."

REGGIE

Jackie Kennedy!

(aside)

Talk about your Bay o' Pigs!!

DAVID

Oh Jackie O.

REGGIE walks up to ROBERT, examines
him appraisingly.

REGGIE

Hmmm. Needs makeup. Sit down, Robert. I'm gonna do your face.

ROBERT

(aw, shucks attitude; feeling uncomfortable, self-conscious)

Oh, ha ha, oh Reggie, gee, I don't think

ROBERT keeps stepping backwards as
REGGIE approaches, makeup kit in hand.
Finally, ROBERT has backed up to
couch, and REGGIE gives him a push
down to make him abruptly sit.

REGGIE

Nonsense, it's just what you need. A little bit of blusher here;
tasteful extended eyebrows so; pale peach on the lips; and just a
touch of black eyeshadow.

REGGIE stands back and appraises.

Well -- it'll just have to do.

REGGIE hands Robert a hand mirror.

REGGIE stands back, speaks in an
announcer's voice.

Tell me, Mrs. Kennedy, what is the next stop on our tour of the White
House? And other than that, how did you like the parade?

ROBERT just sits there, hem-hawing
self-consciously.

REGGIE

(arches eyebrows, regular voice)

I'm feeding you a line, girl; pick up the slack!

ROBERT looks a bit angry, embarrassed.

DAVID

(rescuing Robert)

But Mrs. Roosevelt, we forget you once inhabited the White House
yourself. Tell me, what do you think of Jackie's accoutrement.

(uses exaggerated French pronunciation)

REGGIE

(in Eleanor's voice)

Well, Franklin and I were so very pleased with plain white walls and
a few braided rag rugs on the floor -- not that I have anything against
Mrs. Kennedy's so very tasteful decor.

DAVID

I'm gonna call Lou. He's gotta see this. Besides, he's got a new
Polaroid. We've got to have pictures of this.

DAVID goes into kitchen; mimes
phone conversation with LOU.

REGGIE

(own voice)

Robert, I'm sure I saw the nicest little clutch purse in here that
would be just perfect for that drag.

(searches through chest)

Here it is.

REGGIE takes purse to ROBERT on
couch.

Now, you want to hold this demurely tucked up under your arm, like
this.

REGGIE shows him, then hands purse
to ROBERT. DAVID returns to living
room.

DAVID

Lou's coming right over.

(prissy)

Oh my, what a tasteful bag.

REGGIE

And speaking of tasteful bags--

REGGIE and DAVID

--how's your Mother?

ROBERT

(looking uncomfortable)

You guys, come on, this really isn't my style.

REGGIE

(in Eleanor's voice)

Oh such nonsense. Stand up, and let Aunt Eleanor see you walk.

REGGIE stands up, takes clutch purse
and tucks it under his arm, walks like
a model in front of the couch.

Here -- now you try.

Just then there is a knock at the door.

ROBERT visibly tenses up.

DAVID

Relax -- it's just Lou.

REGGIE

(closest to door; in Eleanor's voice)

Never mind, boys, I'll get the door.

(in regular voice, to David)

Watch this!

REGGIE draws self up haughtily like Eleanor Roosevelt, strides to door. There is another insistent knock at the door.

(in Eleanor's voice)

Just a goddamned min--

REGGIE flings door open. Stops in mid-sentence. After finishing sentence, lets out funny, high-pitched Eleanor Roosevelt screech.

minute. Ooooohhhhhhhaaaaaaaaaahhhhhh!

An elderly couple is standing at the door. We recognize the woman as the telephone operator from Scene II. Beside her is standing a meek, faded little man, looking rabbit and hen-pecked -- someone

of the Wally Cox school.

GLADYS

(imperious, angry)

Where's Robbie??!!

ROBERT, who can't see past REGGIE and the open door, goes rigid at the voice. GLADYS pushes door completely open, sees ROBERT.

GLADYS

(aghast)

Robbie!!!!

ROBERT

(aghast)

Mother!!!!

ROBERT stands up, jerks wig from head, holds it in hand.

GLADYS

(striding forcefully into room)

When I realized whose number that was last night, I made your father drive me all the way up here from Dade County.

ROBERT

(looks at David)

What number? What's she talking about?

DAVID

(sudden gasp)

Oh my God! It's the telephone operator.

GLADYS

(venomous)

So you're the one! I'd never forget that little fairy voice.

REGGIE

(in Eleanor's voice, comically)

Now see here! How dare you call dear Patsy a fairy! What sacrilege!

GLADYS looks at REGGIE with a mixture
of horror and disgust.

GLADYS

(no-nonsense)

Robbie, I want these creatures out of here, out of here, do you hear me? They're unwholesome and sick, sick, sick. Obviously, they've taken advantage of you.

ROBERT

(stands; tries to collect his thoughts)

Mother, I can explain. It's . . . not what you think. I mean, it is what you think. Er, uh, it is and it isn't.

HERBERT

(weak, ineffectual voice)

Now Mother, I'm sure there's some perfectly logical explan--

GLADYS

(brusquely interrupting)

Shutup! I'm waiting, Robert.

ROBERT

(takes deep breath; calmly)

Mother --

ROBERT (continued)

(points to David)

this is my partner -- my mate -- David. This is his friend, Reggie.

MOTHER wails -- all but collapses
into HERBERT's arms.

(trying to explain)

Mother, I swear -- this is all totally unusual.

REGGIE and DAVID look at each other
and burst out laughing, despite
themselves.

I mean, this is the first time anything like this has ever happened
in this house, honestly. Every other day David and I live like two
mature, adult human beings.

GLADYS

(stands up to full height)

I'll just pretend I never heard that. Your father and I are going to
the Holiday Inn, and we are coming back at noon tomorrow. And when
we do--

(points to Reggie)

that thing, and the other fruitcake, had better be gone from
this house -- permanently -- or you are no son of ours.

HERBERT

(weakly)

Well, I don't know, maybe we should let Robert--

GLADYS

(brusquely interrupting)

Shutup!

GLADYS grabs HERBERT's arm. Makes a move to leave, but turns around and faces ROBERT.

Noon tomorrow!

GLADYS and HERBERT turn and walk out, leaving the door wide open. The sound of the car starting and driving off is heard. All three stand in motionless silence for a few long moments.

REGGIE

(in Eleanor's voice)

What an unpleasant woman!

DAVID stands in shock. ROBERT puts hands to face and moans, then takes hands away and glares at door.

ROBERT

(very angry)

Great! Just great! Thanks a hell of a lot you guys.

ROBERT angrily throws the wig, still in his hand, to the floor, and kicks it at the underlined word in the next speech.

ROBERT (continued)

Thanks for the fun and games, Reggie.

(beat)

And don't bother coming back to this house again -- either of you --
EVER!!!!

Lights go immediately to black.

CURTAIN FALLS ON ACT I

ACT II, SCENE I

THE TIME: Four p.m., that same Saturday.

THE PLACE: Robert and David's house.

THE SETTING: All of REGGIE's props have been removed.

The downstairs has been picked up.

However, upstairs the dresser drawers

are still open and their contents

(lots of clothes, other miscellaneous items) are still strewn on the

bed where DAVID threw them in the

last scene. ROBERT will be going

to the kitchen to get a cup of

instant coffee in this scene. It

should be readily accessible.

THE COSTUMES: Everyone will be dressed in casual, weekend clothes appropriate to their characters.

AT RISE: ROBERT is pacing nervously back and forth, center front. He is alone. He checks his watch now and then. He looks preoccupied and agitated. He keeps pacing until there is a knock at the front door. He rushes to the door and flings it open.

ROBERT

(agitated)

Finally!!

COURTNEY rushes in first, PHILLIP
close behind.

COURTNEY

(urgently)

We came as fast as we could.

ROBERT

(impatiently)

What took you so long?

COURTNEY

I had to go by the golf course to pick up Phillip. He was on the 17th hole and insisted on finishing the round. I told him it was urgent.

PHILLIP

(looking sheepish)

Robert, I was going for a goddamned 82. And I made it!

ROBERT

(preoccupied; absently)

Great, Phil.

PHILLIP

(gently ironic)

I can see that you're impressed.

COURTNEY

Would you guys shutup! Robert, what is this? What's wrong??

ROBERT

It's David.

COURTNEY

Is he hurt?

ROBERT

(very upset, hands to head)

Oh, God. I told him to get out -- for good. And before I knew what was happening, he was storming out of here screaming that he was gonna kill himself.

PHILLIP

(wryly; matter of fact)

God, Robert, that's only about the 88th time David has threatened suicide in the last four years.

ROBERT

(momentarily arrested; then resumes hysteria)

No, no -- I mean he was really upset. I don't know what to do. Should I call the police?

COURTNEY

(amazed)

Robert, what in the hell has been going on over here? You're not still arguing about Reggie last night?

ROBERT

Oh, Lord, if it were only that simple. No -- we got that all worked out. Then, when I got home from work this afternoon, Reggie and David were dressed up like women, and they talked me into getting dressed up too.

(beat)

ROBERT (continued)

And then my parents showed up.

PHILLIP

(not quite believing)

You were dressed up like a woman?

ROBERT

(bluntly)

Jackie Kennedy.

COURTNEY

(amazed)

Jackie Kennedy???

PHILLIP

(amazed)

You were dressed up like Jackie Kennedy?

(beat)

Why?

ROBERT

(he doesn't know)

I don't know! I thought I'd try to do things David's way for a change.

David!! Courtney -- where's David??

COURTNEY

Robert, I honestly don't know! He should have called me.

PHILLIP

(still calm; to Courtney)

Honey, you know David's pulled this over and over.

COURTNEY

(concerned)

Yes -- but he always called me to save him. It's a little ritual we go through. This really worries me. He should have called.

ROBERT

(moans)

Oh noooooooooooooo.

ROBERT starts pacing back and forth.

He gets a sudden idea.

Let's call the hospitals.

COURTNEY

Have you called his friends yet? He's probably with Reggie.

ROBERT

Nobody answers.

COURTNEY

What about Harold? Or Lou and Bert?

ROBERT

(looks helpless)

I don't know any of their last names.

COURTNEY

(firmly)

I'll go try Reggie's number again.

COURTNEY strides into the kitchen, mimes making the call. Gets no answer. ROBERT stands front center, head in hands.

ROBERT

Oh God, Oh God

PHILLIP

(reassuring)

Take hold, man. Come 'ere -- sit down.

PHILLIP indicates easy chair.

ROBERT doesn't move. PHILLIP gets more forceful.

Sit, Robert!

ROBERT goes to chair, sits. PHILLIP stands behind him, rubs his shoulders briskly to get him to relax.

Look, Robert, I don't want to minimize your concern, but you know how melodramatic David is. He's probably sitting in the city park eating a lemon chiffon ice cream cone, for Chrissake.

ROBERT laughs faintly, in spite of himself. COURTNEY returns to living room.

COURTNEY

Reggie's still not home yet, so David's probably with him.

There is a knock at the front door. Everybody looks at everybody else for a long moment. The knock is repeated. ROBERT starts to stand up from his easy chair.

No, I'll get it.

COURTNEY walks to door, opens it.
There is STEVE, toting a limp DAVID
at his side. DAVID's arm is slung
around STEVE's shoulder. COURTNEY
stands aside. Steve drags DAVID in.
ROBERT jumps up, runs to them.

ROBERT

Oh my God, what's wrong with him?

STEVE

Reggie and David have been mixing booze and qualuudes. And now they're
very sleepy.

COURTNEY

(crisp and professional)

How many luudes and how many drinks?

STEVE

I really don't think it's anything to worry about. They came in to
the bar and made a big production out of taking two luudes each -- and
then they each had a couple of highballs.

PHILLIP

(a bit angry)

Why didn't you stop them?

STEVE

Look, I tried to, O.K.? Have you ever tried to get those two to do
anything they didn't want to?

PHILLIP

(sighs)

Yeah.

STEVE

God, they were hilarious goin' down, though.

ROBERT stands next to DAVID, patting DAVID's face in an attempt to rouse him. ROBERT looks solicitous and concerned.

ROBERT

David, David, are you O.K.?

DAVID opens one eye for a long moment, then closes it; appears to be asleep again. DAVID suddenly raises his head, groggily opens eyes, realizes his arm is slung around STEVE. He looks quizzical for a long moment.

DAVID

(very slurred, whimsical, adorable)

Steve, why are we standing like this?

(beat)

Are we out on a date?

(beat)

You'd better take your hands off me -- Robert is very, very
jealoussss

Last word fades and DAVID's head

flops loosely to his chest. STEVE manhandles DAVID over to the couch, flops him down on couch so he's in a sitting position, head lolling on chest. DAVID rouses up with a start.

DAVID

(from couch)

Is it morning already?

DAVID falls sideways down onto couch, like silly putty. From that position he delivers his next line.

(with alarm)

Oh my God, everybody is standing up sideways!

COURTNEY

Thanks for bringing him home, Steve. Who's watching the bar?

STEVE

Oh, John took over. Reggie's out in the car. I'm gonna take him home and put him to bed.

STEVE shakes his head as if to say,
"Those dumb guys."

ROBERT

Gee, thanks a lot, Steve. Sorry for the hassle. I really appreciate it.

STEVE

Don't mention it. You'd do the same for me. Give my best to

STEVE (continued)

Sleeping Beauty.

STEVE exits at front door. ROBERT goes to couch, sits DAVID upright, then sits beside him, DAVID's chin resting on ROBERT's shoulder.

ROBERT

David, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

(beat)

I didn't mean it -- I don't want you to leave me, ever . . . ever.

DAVID murmurs unintelligibly. Then lets out long sigh. Then is quiet. Then he starts talking, as if in his sleep; doesn't know what he's saying.

DAVID

No, no . . . get rid of me . . . I'm no good

ROBERT

(quickly)

That's not true. You're very good. You're certainly better than me!

DAVID

(foggily, sleepily)

No . . . you're so old, so mature . . .

DAVID fades off to sleep, chin on chest; suddenly jerks awake.

. . . so responsible . . .

DAVID again fades off, chin to chest; remains that way.

ROBERT

David, will you stop! I'm just as fucked up as you are.

DAVID

(jerks awake)

. . . so fucked up . . .

DAVID falls asleep, chin to chest.

ROBERT glares.

COURTNEY

Robert, I think we'd best get this little boy to bed.

DAVID

(murmurs)

. . . to bed . . .

ROBERT gently extricates himself from DAVID's side, stands and walks to front center to confer with COURTNEY and PHILLIP. They do not glance back at DAVID until the time indicated.

ROBERT

You're sure we don't need to take him to the hospital or anything?

At this point, DAVID cocks his head, surreptitiously, and opens his eyes wide, listening to this conversation with lucid interest. The audience will see that DAVID is clearly not drunk or drugged.

COURTNEY

Oh, no, two qualuudes and a couple of drinks won't kill him --
just make him very, very cozy.

ROBERT

Maybe I should just call the doctor to come over -- just to be on
the safe side.

DAVID rolls his eyes melodramatically,
a response to what he sees as ROBERT's
overreaction.

COURTNEY

Look, let's take his pulse.

They all turn and look at DAVID
who, comically, instantly shuts his
eyes and slams his head back against
the couch to appear asleep.

If it's about normal, I assure you there's nothing to worry about.
Remember, I'm a shrink -- I've spent years dealing with druggies.

COURTNEY goes over to couch, takes
pulse for ten seconds.

Perfect. It takes more than two qualuudes to get this guy down.

(to Robert)

Why don't you go turn the covers down on the bed, and Phillip and I
can carry him upstairs.

ROBERT

(looks a bit distracted)

Uh . . . good idea.

ROBERT goes upstairs. There's still a bunch of junk on bed, so he laboriously starts folding clothes, etc., neatly placing things back in dresser drawers. He eventually turns down bedcovers, just before his cue.

PHILLIP

Poor Robert. How does he put up with this nut?

DAVID

(opens eyes; matter-of-factly to Phillip; stage whisper)

I know what you mean.

(beat)

But what else was I gonna do?

COURTNEY

(loudly)

David!!!

DAVID

(shushing her wildly)

Shhhhhhhhhh!!!

COURTNEY

(stage whisper)

David!!!

DAVID

(whisper)

What?

COURTNEY

(hands on hips; low voice)

Oh, that's tricky. Oh, very tricky, David.

DAVID

(a bit defensive; low voice)

Well how else was I gonna get back in this house?

(beat)

All's fair in love and war.

PHILLIP

(ironic; sotto voice)

Very resourceful.

DAVID

Look you guys, save the sermons -- tomorrow's Sunday. You know damn well Robert would have taken three weeks to cool off if he hadn't gotten all worried about me.

COURTNEY and PHILLIP look disapproving.

But we don't have three weeks. His parents are coming back tomorrow, at noon! Help me! Robert and I have to get things ironed out before they come back; otherwise, they'll talk him into moving back home, or something hideous like that.

COURTNEY

(pauses)

Help you what?

DAVID

Look -- Robert and I have to get things completely worked out before his parents come back tomorrow.

PHILLIP

You said that. I still don't understand what the big rush is.

DAVID

Phillip, his mother has incredible power over him. If we don't get Robert's act together before she gets here, she'll write one for him -- and he'll buy it.

ROBERT

(shouting downstairs)

What are you guys whispering about down there?

COURTNEY

(fumbles for a moment)

Oh -- we just don't want to wake David up.

ROBERT

(mostly to himself)

O.K.

(looks quizzical)

PHILLIP

I still don't understand what we're supposed to do.

DAVID

I've been thinking about it all afternoon. Robert and I need to get married. Tomorrow.

COURTNEY

(too loudly)

Married!!!

DAVID

(wildly)

Shhhhhhhh!!!

COURTNEY

(stage whisper)

Married!!!

PHILLIP

Have you lost your alleged mind, David? How are you going to get married?

DAVID

Just like you and Courtney did.

COURTNEY

Oh, I see -- you mean the way we wrote our own vows.

DAVID

Exactly!

PHILLIP

I still don't understand how that's going to help anything.

DAVID

It'll make Robert realize what he really wants, which'll give him some ammunition tomorrow against his mother. And believe me, he's gonna need it.

ROBERT

(shouting downstairs)

O.K., you guys, bring him up. The bed's ready.

The three of them look at each other. DAVID delivers next speech in a rush.

DAVID

(quickly; stage whisper)

Tell him I'm waking up.

COURTNEY

Er-- Robert, David's mumbling something about coffee.

ROBERT quickly starts downstairs.

DAVID flips back into his groggy personality at the sound of ROBERT's footsteps. ROBERT enters living room.

DAVID

(hands fluttering about face; speaks weakly, like Blanche)

Oooooohhhhhhh . . . oohhhh, I feel like . . . like . . . Blanche DuBois. Stanley, would you run down to the corner and buy me a nice, cold lemon coke, honey? Ohhhhhhh . . .

ROBERT

(goes to David; perplexed, concerned)

David?

DAVID

(tentative; fluttery)

Stanley, is that you?

(pretends he's coming to)

Uh . . . oh . . . Robert? . . . Robert? Oh, I need a cup of coffee.

(delicately)

Would you mind, dear heart?

ROBERT takes DAVID by the hand gently.

ROBERT

(kindly, solicitous)

Of course, of course. You stay right here, and I'll be back in just a minute.

PHILLIP rolls eyes at COURTNEY.

ROBERT exits to kitchen.

COURTNEY

(with some humor; shaking head)

Oh God, David, you are evil, do you know that?

DAVID

The word is "pragmatic." This is saving so much time. Now, when Robert comes back, I am going to miraculously recover, and I want you guys to work the conversation around to what Robert really wants to do about this situation -- which is stay with me, of course. Then start talking about making a commitment, and the marriage vows bit, and we'll go from there.

ROBERT

(in kitchen, walking toward swinging door)

I hope you like it strong

DAVID falls back into foggy routine.

ROBERT enters living room.

. . . . because this coffee would kill a cockroach.

ROBERT takes coffee to DAVID on couch,
gently gives it to him.

DAVID

(moony-eyed; delicately; a bit of Blanche)

Oh, Robert, you are so sweet, so unutterably kind to me, and I don't deserve it, not one bit.

ROBERT

(kindly)

Now, David, we've been over that. Just drink this, sweetheart.

DAVID puts cup to lips, does violent
double-take, quickly suppressed,
upon tasting the strong coffee.

DAVID

Woooo . . . why, this'll wake me up in no time.

PHILLIP

(wryly)

I bet it will.

DAVID makes discreet sour look at
PHILLIP.

DAVID

(rapidly gaining coherence)

Why, yes, yes indeed. This coffee is just the thing -- really turns
the trick. Well, that's definitely the last time I try to commit
suicide with qualuudes.

ROBERT

(dead serious)

David, you can't ever think of killing yourself again. Ever. I could
never live without you, and you've got to remember that, no matter how
nasty I get. Promise me.

DAVID

(still a bit faint; delicately; touched)

Oh, you really mean that, don't you? I promise. I'll never attempt
suicide again

(aside)

. . . . unless I absolutely have to.

ROBERT

What?

DAVID

Oh, nothing -- I mean, if I ever felt that desperate again

ROBERT

Well, you won't.

DAVID

(still faint)

Oh, but I might. I mean, what with your parents coming tomorrow . . .

ROBERT

(seized with sudden terror)

Oh my God, I forgot. My parents!

(in demoralized, sinking tones)

Oh God

COURTNEY

Robert, that's no way to act. You're 28 years old. You don't have to be afraid of your parents anymore.

ROBERT

(glumly)

You don't know my mother.

COURTNEY

O.K. I'm going to ask you just what I ask my patients. What can you do to get what you want?

ROBERT looks at DAVID for a long moment. DAVID shrugs shoulders as he delivers next line.

DAVID

(apologetic)

I don't have any more qualuudes.

COURTNEY

(grimly, but with humor)

Drugs are not an option, David.

With humorous, fake contrition, DAVID
crosses arms to chest and flutters
eyebrows before looking downwards
and speaking.

DAVID

Oh, I'm sorry

PHILLIP

Courtney's right, Robert. Now's the time to decide what you really
want in your life. If you don't do that now, tonight, you'll never
be able to stand your ground tomorrow.

ROBERT

(thinks for long moment; firmly, with resolve)

You are one hundred percent correct.

(beat; plaintively)

What'll I tell them?

COURTNEY

You tell us. What do you want?

ROBERT

(falteringly)

Well . . . I want . . . I don't want to hurt my parents, but I do want

ROBERT (continued)

them to accept the fact that I live with David. And that's not going to change.

COURTNEY

Good for you! What else? What kind of relationship do you want with David?

ROBERT

Well . . . I don't want us to fight as much -- but that's changing. David and I are starting to really understand each other -- and I think the worst times are behind us. I also want to be able to have more outside friends, like David does -- I want to be more open with people, less afraid.

COURTNEY

(encouraging)

That's good! What else?

ROBERT

(mulls for a moment)

What else?

DAVID

(blurts out)

Do you want to get married tomorrow and write our own vows?

PHILLIP

(wryly; aside)

Subtle.

ROBERT

What?

COURTNEY

I think David is referring to the way Phillip and I got married. Phillip and I decided to write our own vows. We have lots of specific, important things in our relationship that needed to be addressed in a marriage contract

PHILLIP

. . . . and the standard version just didn't hack it. We spent a lot of time deciding what we wanted from our marriage -- what we could give -- and what we couldn't.

COURTNEY

What's important, I think, is the honesty -- you really feel a sense of commitment when you create your marriage in your own words. And you can focus on really specific things if you want to, like we did.

ROBERT

(interested)

What kinds of things?

COURTNEY

(thinking back)

Well . . . for instance, we decided never to go to bed at night mad at each other. We got that from my Grandmother.

PHILLIP

That doesn't mean we don't have major disagreements from time to time. But we always agree to continue disagreeing before we go to sleep. In other words, we're committed to working out disagreements, not getting drowned in them --

COURTNEY

-- or ignoring them, which is just as bad.

PHILLIP

Right. And we put it in our vows that I would get at least two nights a week to do whatever I wanted, without Courtney, including spending time with women friends, as long as it stayed platonic.

ROBERT

(a bit leery)

Whoa

COURTNEY

That's what everybody says, and it's silly. Phillip has always had lots of women friends, and why should getting married mean cutting off half the friends in your life? I have lots of men friends!

DAVID

(excited; on edge of seat)

Gee, this is exciting. We should do this, Robert. We could resolve so many things, right from the start.

ROBERT

Boy, that coffee sure went right to work!

DAVID realizes he's come on too strong and deliberately pulls the throttle back, to humorous effect, and reverts to weak, foggy personality for next line.

DAVID

(weakly)

Yes . . . but I still feel a bit . . . groggy. I'll have some more coffee.

DAVID sips, makes face at strong coffee.

ROBERT

(to Courtney)

You know, I think this might be a really good idea. Lately, I never feel like I know where we stand from day to day -- are we lovers? friends? enemies? are we breaking up? are we getting closer? You and Phillip have the strongest relationship I know of. And I want that too.

DAVID

(gaining strength; excitement)

Me too! All right, I'll get a pen and paper.

DAVID jumps up and takes two or three rapid steps toward desk in living room before remembering to slow down and moan a bit.

DAVID

(putting on)

Ohhhh -- I jumped up a little too fast there. Why don't we all go into the kitchen so I can write on the table.

ROBERT

Good idea. And I can make you some more coffee.

DAVID

No! No more coffee -- but thanks. I -- I'm feeling remarkably fine -- it's amazing.

PHILLIP

(wryly)

Amazing.

All make their way to kitchen. On way in, PHILLIP and ROBERT deliver next two lines.

PHILLIP

Robert, are you sure you want us in on this? I mean, it might get kind of personal.

ROBERT

Of course. You guys are our best friends.

By this time they are situated at table. COURTNEY and PHILLIP sit on one side of table, ROBERT across from them, and DAVID at head. Side nearest audience is vacant.

ROBERT

O.K. Where do we start?

COURTNEY

Well, we started by defining what marriage was to us.

DAVID

Good enough.

DAVID (continued)

(writing)

A gay marriage is

ROBERT

Why "gay?"

DAVID

Because that's what it is.

ROBERT

But why is the "gay" part really important? Marriage is marriage.

DAVID

(reflects)

I used to think so. But I've seen too many of them go down the tubes.

ROBERT

You mean because they're not legal marriages?

DAVID

Well, that too. But mostly I think it's just the pressure. It's everywhere.

ROBERT

You mean like my parents showing up?

DAVID

It's more than that. It's everywhere. I mean, I can't kiss you in the supermarket . . . there's . . . there's never any TV shows about gay marriages We can't even own this damn house together. It sucks. I mean, we don't exist -- we're not supposed to --

PHILLIP

But you can own a house together. It's legal.

DAVID

Really? I didn't know that. Now all I need is some money, of which I have none, as usual, which doesn't really matter, since Robert owns it anyway.

ROBERT

(joking)

I'll sell you half.

DAVID

(joking)

Oh, thanks.

COURTNEY

Don't get into money yet -- that's a whole 'nother issue. Back to marriage. You know, I read last week in Psychology Today that only seven percent of gay male couples have been together longer than five years.

DAVID

That's why we've got to make our marriage real. It's got to be real, or it'll just evaporate.

COURTNEY

I think you're absolutely right.

ROBERT

What did the article say about gay couples -- why can't they stay together?

COURTNEY

This guy says that our society only allows gay men to meet each other in the bars, which encourages one night stands, of course; which ultimately becomes a habit -- a lifestyle. And role models. Gay

married couples don't have any role models.

ROBERT

That's so depressing.

COURTNEY

And most of the gay couples that do stay together have outside sex partners periodically.

ROBERT

That's something I feel very strongly about: To me, being faithful is just a part of marriage. Maybe I'm old fashioned --

DAVID

(interrupts)

Stop worrying, Robert -- I feel the same way. I've told you that.

ROBERT

O.K. Write it down.

DAVID

(writing)

A gay marriage

(erasing)

Our gay marriage --

ROBERT

-- is monogamous.

DAVID

Right.

(writing)

When two people truly love each other. . . .

CURTAIN CLOSES ON ACT II, SCENE I

ACT II, SCENE II

THE TIME: 11:45 a.m., Sunday morning (the next day).

THE PLACE: Robert and David's house.

THE SETTING: The house is absolutely clean, tidy, picked up. A bouquet of fresh flowers sits on coffee table, including daisies.

THE COSTUMES: Everyone is dressed in nice, tasteful casual clothes. Both of the mothers will be wearing dresses. The fathers will be wearing sport coats.

Everyone else's clothing will be relatively subdued, yet still in character. KAY carries large handbag.

AT RISE: DAVID is sitting in chair or on couch. ROBERT is pacing, rather slowly but with anxiety, front center.

DAVID

Robert, would you relax. I know you're nervous, but they can't hurt you.

ROBERT

It keeps me more relaxed if I just walk.

(beat; looks at watch)

Shouldn't you get into the kitchen. They'll be here any minute.

DAVID

(looks at watch)

Yeah, I guess you're right.

DAVID stands, goes to kitchen door, turns.

DAVID (continued)

Now remember. Be strong -- and say what's in your heart.

ROBERT nods. DAVID turns back to go into kitchen.

ROBERT

And don't come out unless I call you!

DAVID turns back to face ROBERT.

DAVID

(stylized Uncle Tom voice)

Yassuh Massa -- No suh Massa -- Whatever you says Massa.

DAVID turns, goes into kitchen.

ROBERT walks to front door, paces back and forth in front of it, practices to himself his greeting to his parents.

ROBERT

(brightly)

Mother, Father, it's good to see you. No, no.

(quietly, seriously)

Mother. Father. Good to see you. No, no.

(chipper, absurdly boyish and cheerful)

Hi Mom, Hi Dad, how are ya?

Door swings open, ROBERT jumps back in shock.

GLADYS

(a bit sour; don't forget telephone operator's voice)

How did you know we were outside?

ROBERT

(fumbling)

I, uh, I didn't -- that is, I saw your car drive up from the window.

(beat; seriously, quietly)

Mother. Father. How are you?

GLADYS

(tiny bit peeved)

You just asked us that.

GLADYS looks around the room.

Well, I see you're alone, Robbie.

HERBERT sees that GLADYS won't respond to ROBERT's greeting.

HERBERT

We're fine, Robert.

ROBERT

Er, good.

(pauses, gathers breath)

Mother, Father, I think you should sit down. I have some things

I want to say to you, and it may not be pleasant.

HERBERT sits on couch. GLADYS meanders over to coffee table, fingers vase of flowers which contain a few daisies.

GLADYS

Oh, aren't these pretty? Daddy bought me some daisies down at Wheelers last week, and I planted them out by the storage shed -- you know, the

north side where you used to lean your bicycle.

(smiling; wistfully)

I must have told you ten thousand times to move that bicycle.

ROBERT is watching his mother with a mixture of curiosity and dread, dismay and disbelief. He's not sure what she is up to.

ROBERT

(gently)

Mother, please sit down. I want to explain about yesterday.

GLADYS

(still standing; forced brightness)

Now, Robbie, there's no need to explain. We've all done things we regret, but they're in the past, and there's no use dwelling on them.

From the kitchen, DAVID is peering through the swinging kitchen door, open a crack. He turns into the kitchen, claps hand to forehead to deliver next line.

DAVID

Oh my God!

At this point, there is a light knock at the kitchen door. DAVID runs to door, opens quickly, quietly and there is REGGIE.

REGGIE

(sotto voice)

Mavis, I couldn't stand it sitting at home wondering what's happening over here. Well -- aren't you going to let me in?

DAVID

(hesitates)

Well -- all right, but you've got to promise to be quiet.

REGGIE

(melodramatically exasperated)

Well of course I'll be quiet. Has Big Mamu eaten Robert alive yet?

DAVID motions for REGGIE to follow him over to the doorway. They stand, open door a crack, observe.

ROBERT

Mother, please.

ROBERT goes behind his easy chair.

(steels himself)

I am a homosexual, and I don't regret it.

GLADYS goes rigid.

GLADYS

(a bit of chill in voice)

Robbie, I'm sure that's not true, although you might be mistaken in your thinking. Your father and I have talked this over and we want you to see Dr. Salisbury at the mental health clinic, back home. You can just come and live with us for a while.

ROBERT

(anguished)

Mother --

GLADYS

(interrupting)

Now don't you worry about the money. You know your father and I have saved more than we've spent over the years, and it's going to be yours eventually anyway. Everything we've done has been for you; no price is too high for your happiness.

ROBERT

(earnestly)

If it's my happiness you're concerned about, then you can save your money and accept what I'm telling you. I'm a homosexual, I am not sick, and all I want from you and Father is your acceptance.

GLADYS

(that did it; she's finally ignited)

Our acceptance! After what we saw yesterday? How can you stand there and suggest to me that that's normal? I may be old fashioned, Robbie, but I am not stupid!

ROBERT

(defensive)

I can explain that! I tried to yesterday, but you wouldn't stay long enough for me to catch my breath. Look, what you saw yesterday was unfortunate.

GLADYS

(harumphs)

Unfortunate!

ROBERT

(with intensity; conviction)

Yes! But nothing more than that! Believe me, it's not what I would choose to have a good time -- dressing up in women's clothes -- but David and Reggie were having some fun, and I didn't want to be odd man out, like I usually am.

GLADYS

(angry)

Now let me see if I have this straight, Robbie. You would have been odd man out if you hadn't dressed up like that?

DAVID

(to Reggie, in kitchen)

Good for him -- he's doing great!

REGGIE

(bewildered, comically, at the expression)

Odd man out? What?

GLADYS

(upset, confused)

Well, what about Tricia?

ROBERT

(pauses; looks downward)

I'm so sorry I did that.

(looks up)

I lied to you. Tricia didn't exist. There was no engagement, and no accident. At the time, I felt I had to lie to you to make you happy.

GLADYS

(a bit righteous)

And if that boy hadn't called the operator about the snake, you'd still be lying to us!?

ROBERT

(pauses; gropes for words)

For a while, yes. But I'd have told you. Mother -- I've learned a lot about myself in the last year. I've always been gay, but I had to fall in love with a man to understand that. I'm growing, I'm changing, I'm becoming the person I'm supposed to be. It's confusing, and it's difficult sometimes -- but it's the right thing. In my own time, and my own way, I would have explained everything to you. You have to believe that!

GLADYS

(sits on couch; collapses, head in hands)

Oooooooooohhhhhhhh. Oooooohhhhhhhh my baby.

(looks up)

It was that Mr. Donner, your sixth grade teacher, wasn't it? He was forced out of the school last year when it came out that he was a . . . a homosexual. What did he do to you, Robbie?

REGGIE

(hand on hip, in kitchen)

Oh, Mary!

DAVID

Shhhh!

ROBERT

(outbursting)

Mother, don't be ridiculous! Nobody knows why people turn out to be gay, but it certainly isn't due to 6th grade teachers. I had no idea about Mr. Donner. I'm surprised at you. I'm still your son. I still love you. You're treating me as an outcast, and I haven't done anything wrong!

HERBERT

(low voice)

Mother, Robert's right.

GLADYS

(attacking)

What do you know about it?!

HERBERT

(holding his own)

What Robert is telling us. This can't be easy for him. And I've read about it. Good lord, every other article in the paper was about homosexuals during that Anita Bryant thing.

GLADYS

(bitterly)

That's right. Take his side. Just like you always have.

ROBERT

Mother -- we're all on the same side. We are a family. I'm sorry if this hurts you, but we've got to stick together, work together. If it were up to me, I would be straight, I would get married, I'd give you grandchildren. But I'm not. And no matter how much we wish it

were otherwise, I'm in love with a fine young man, and I want you to accept him . . . for me. Please.

GLADYS sits silently, then bursts out crying melodramatically.

GLADYS

Woooooooooooooooooooo

(stands)

I've got to get out of here, I've got to go home and think . . . think about all of this.

As GLADYS moves toward door, ROBERT beats her to it, blocks her exit.

ROBERT

No! You can't run away from this! I know. I've tried.

HERBERT

Robbie, your Mother just needs a little time

ROBERT

But there isn't any time! David and I . . . are getting . . . married. Tonight. And more than almost anything in the world, I want you there -- both of you. David's parents are coming, too. In fact, they should be here any minute. They're driving down from Gainesville.

GLADYS

(claps hands to breasts)

Married! How can you do this to me?

(an afterthought)

I didn't bring a nice dress, and my hair

ROBERT

(laughing gently)

Mother . . . you look lovely. Now I want you to sit down. I'm going to ask David to come in and meet you, and I want you to be kind to him. He's very nice.

ROBERT walks toward kitchen door.

DAVID and REGGIE rush over to table, stand nonchalantly, so ROBERT won't know they've been watching.

Halfway through delivering his lines, ROBERT notices REGGIE, and enters kitchen.

ROBERT

(opening door)

David, would you come in

(sees Reggie, does double take, enters kitchen)

Reggie, what are you doing here?!

REGGIE

(sincere)

Please forgive me, Robert. I just wanted to watch. I think you're doing a fantastic job, and I'm proud of you!

REGGIE impulsively gives ROBERT a big hug and a smacking kiss on the lips.

ROBERT

(a bit taken aback)

Well . . . thank you. Oh my goodness, what a day.

DAVID takes ROBERT by the arm, points
him at the door.

DAVID

Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead!

Waits for ROBERT to collect himself.

ROBERT

(collecting self)

You're right. Let's do it.

ROBERT shakes DAVID's arm away, and
they walk somewhat stiffly into living
room, over to couch where parents are
seated.

ROBERT

Mother, Father, I would like you to meet David Cooper. David,
my mother Gladys and my father Herbert.

DAVID shakes hands with HERBERT while
speaking next line.

DAVID

(very politely, with sincerity)

It's a pleasure to meet you both. I'm truly sorry about yesterday, and
hope you won't hold it against us.

HERBERT

(polite but restrained)

Well, that's fine, young man. Robert explained that to us. Besides,

HERBERT (continued)

we should have phoned.

GLADYS

(harumphing under her breath)

Should have phoned!

(looks at David)

Young man, I don't mind telling you I don't like any of this -- not one bit!

DAVID

(graciously)

Please -- I don't blame you. It must be a terrible shock. It's all happened so fast -- for us, too. If it makes you feel any better, my parents weren't exactly thrilled at our timing either. But they said they'd come anyhow. In the final analysis, they're usually good sports.

GLADYS

What does your father do?

DAVID

(taken aback for a moment)

Er, he's a wholesale liquor salesman, in Gainesville. And my mother's a beautician. She has her own shop, built onto the garage.

GLADYS

Do you have a college degree?

DAVID

Yes. In preschool education. I love children.

GLADYS

Do you have a job?

ROBERT

Mother, is this really necessary?

GLADYS

(impatiently)

Well, if there had been any time, I'd have asked you, but your father and I have to find out about this boy somehow!

DAVID

(sweetly, sincerely)

I understand, Mrs. McGlaughlin. I do have a job. I work in a nursery preschool, part time, but I hope to start a school of my own someday.

ROBERT

(surprised)

I didn't know that.

DAVID

I didn't either until last night, talking about our goals and everything.

GLADYS

What church do you go to? We're Catholic, you know.

DAVID

I was raised a Methodist, but I'm afraid I don't go very often.

GLADYS

(comically, melodramatically, very upset)

Oh, I knew he'd marry somebody out of our faith. I just knew it!

From kitchen, REGGIE, who is still watching at door, whoops and laughs uproariously.

GLADYS

Who's that?

Just then, there is a knock at the front door.

Who's that?

DAVID

It's probably my parents.

DAVID goes to door, opens it, his parents enter, they are smiling, he embraces them.

KAY

(sunny; easy-going; southern twang)

Hello, child. I called your brother and sister, and they send their best wishes. They wanted to know why you didn't give them advance notice, so they could have been here too?

DAVID

Mama, we just decided yesterday! But I do wish they could have been here. Hi Pop.

DAVID embraces LES.

LES

(sardonic, but with a twinkle)

Well, I guess I'd better give up hoping you're gonna be the football star.

DAVID

Oh, Pop.

LES

(smiling)

If you're happy, we're happy.

DAVID

Then you got it!

KAY crosses to ROBERT.

KAY

(smiling; friendly)

And you must be Robert.

KAY stretches arms out, ROBERT
takes hands.

Well, we've certainly heard a lot about you, but you're even more
handsome than David said you were.

KAY gives ROBERT a big hug.

ROBERT

(shyly)

Thanks.

LES

Don't embarrass the man, Kay.

LES crosses, extends hand.

Pleasure to meet you, Bob.

ROBERT

I would like to present my parents, Gladys and Herbert McGlaughlin.

LES extends hand to HERBERT.

LES

Leslie Cooper, Herbert. My wife, Kay.

KAY

(super friendly, natural, sweet)

Mrs. McGlaughlin, what a lovely dress. Just perfect for a spring wedding.

GLADYS looks a bit disconcerted.

This is all happening so fast.

GLADYS

Why, er, do you really think so?

KAY

You look like a picture!

GLADYS

David says you're a beautician. Do you think you could do something with my hair? My girl never fixes it just the way I want -- she always make the bangs too low, and it's too full over the ear, here.

KAY

(sunny)

Girl, I see just what you mean. Come into the kitchen with me, and we'll just fix you right up in nothing flat. I brought my hairdressing things along so I could give David his annual haircut. David, where's the kitchen, honey?

DAVID points.

ROBERT

But Reggie's in --

At that point, REGGIE expansively
enters living room from kitchen.

REGGIE

Hello, everybody. Hi, Kay, Leslie.

KAY

(with delight)

Why, Reggie! We were hoping we'd see you today!

LES

(to McGlaughlins)

You should hear this boy play the piano. His fingers move so fast,
you can't even see 'em.

REGGIE

(camping)

I'm famous for my fingers, just ask anybody.

At this point, COURTNEY and PHILLIP
show up at the open front door and
step in.

COURTNEY

Hello, everyone.

GLADYS

(abstractedly; to no one in particular)

Where are all these people coming from?

KAY

Courtney!! We haven't seen you and Phillip since the last time we
came down to visit David! When was that, Leslie?

LES

Let's see, that would have been last October, when Tampa Bay played Pittsburgh.

PHILLIP

(with enthusiasm)

Boy, that was a hell of a game!

At this point, REGGIE, DAVID and COURTNEY start busily jabbering at each other out loud, in character; as do HERBERT and ROBERT; as do PHILLIP and LES. In the meantime, KAY is slowly steering GLADYS to the kitchen -- only their conversation is loud enough to be heard clearly.

GLADYS

(dazed)

Do you know all these people?

KAY

Why -- yes, I guess we do. David has always been real good about letting us meet his friends. They're so nice. David always has such nice friends. And your son Robert -- what a fine young man. You must be very proud of him.

GLADYS

(still more or less in shock)

Well, yes, Robert's always been such a good little boy. But this . . . this is all . . . so new.

They get GLADYS seated, and KAY removes tools of her trade from a big, oversize handbag. She drapes a kitchen towel over GLADYS.

KAY

You sit here, honey. I'll just put this towel over you. Oh, I know how you feel, Gladys. It set us back some when David told us about himself; course, he was in high school then. We're a real close family, but it still wasn't easy.

(beat)

But Gladys, what can you do? They're the only kids you've got, after all. I guess you just accept it, and go on.

GLADYS

(vaguely)

Well, I guess you're right . . . I . . . Where is this wedding, anyway? Surely it's not in a church.

KAY

Well, David told us last night on the phone that they'd rented some private restaurant or bar. Evidently the kids know the owner real well.

KAY looks at her watch.

Say, we've got to get a move on here. Supposedly this wedding is at five o'clock.

GLADYS makes weak, worrisome noises.

GLADYS

Oh, no

KAY pats her shoulder as she works.

KAY

There, there, honey. Don't you fret. Everything's going to work out just fine, you wait and see. I know David seems a little flaky sometimes, but shoot, it's not his fault -- he gets that from me! He's a good boy.

(beat)

Oh, your hair is in such good condition. I can see you take real good care of it. You're gonna be the best lookin' gal at this wedding tonight. I just love a good wedding, even if they do make me cry.

GLADYS comically nods chagrined agreement.

CURTAIN FALLS ON ACT II, SCENE II

ACT II, SCENE III

THE TIME: Five p.m., that same afternoon.

THE PLACE: Steve's Bar.

THE SETTING: The bar is better lighted than normal. There is a reception table set up away from the main action. On it are plates, a cake, silver service, mints, etc. There are four long-legged barstools in front of the bar. The tables are arranged as before. A bottle of champagne sits on each table. A tray of champagne glasses sits on bar. A vase of fresh flowers sits on each table. The cake will be decorated as indicated.

THE COSTUMES: The four parents are dressed as before. COURTNEY, PHILLIP, ROBERT and DAVID are dressed very formally, fashionably. REGGIE is wearing a canary yellow suit coat and pants with a light blue ruffled shirt and a black, oversized, velvet bow tie as well as high heeled shoes. The three dancers (from ACT I) are dressed in formal wear, though ordinary. STEVE wears his usual, as described in ACT I, SCENE I. LOU, BERT are well dressed.

AT RISE: LOU, BERT, the three dancers, REGGIE, COURTNEY, and STEVE are bustling about putting last touches on reception table, new tablecloths on tables, etc. STEVE goes behind bar, is prepping for evening, pours champagne into glasses already placed on a serving tray which sits on bar.

STEVE

Hey, Courtney, where's Phillip? He is gonna be here, isn't he?

COURTNEY

(busily)

Yes -- I sent him out to the supermarket to find a cake. My God, you can't have a wedding without a cake. I wish he'd hurry; it's almost five o'clock. The wedding party's going to be here any minute.

PHILLIP enters carrying a cake box.

Speak of the devil.

PHILLIP

Well, I found one. It was the only one left, though.

PHILLIP hands cakebox to COURTNEY,
she removes cake from it.

COURTNEY

Phillip! This cake says, "Happy Birthday Gertrude."

PHILLIP

I told you -- it was the only one they had. It's Sunday, remember?

PHILLIP (continued)

(pause)

I don't know why Gertrude didn't pick up her cake.

REGGIE

(glibly)

Maybe she died.

LOU

Poor Gertrude. She died so that we might eat this cake.

REGGIE

If she'd 'a known she was dying, she wouldn't 'a baked a cake.

BERT

(falsetto, old lady's voice)

Poor Gertrude.

REGGIE, LOU, and BERT come together
and start cackling and clucking like
little old ladies, saying such things
as, "Poor Gertrude," "Poor thing,"
"Isn't it a pity?", "Didn't even
pick up her cake!"

COURTNEY

Calm down, girls; maybe it's better this way.

REGGIE

(old lady's voice)

You're right, Courtney.

(beat; crotchety)

I never liked Gertrude anyway.

COURTNEY

(taking stock)

Let's see. I think we've got everything. Champagne?

STEVE

Check.

COURTNEY

Cake.

PHILLIP

Check.

REGGIE

(old lady's voice)

Poor Gertrude!

COURTNEY

Nuts.

REGGIE

Check.

COURTNEY

Right, Reggie. Mints. Music. Music!! Oh my God, we don't have any music. Steve, is there anything on the jukebox that might be appropriate?

REGGIE

(hand on hip)

Well, "Proud Mary's" always been one of my personal favorites. If that's not appropriate, I don't know what is.

COURTNEY

Reggie, dear heart, I know this may be a struggle for you, but remember that Robert's parents are just a teensy bit conservative, and try to

COURTNEY (continued)

be tasteful.

REGGIE

Courtney, we will be the personification of tasteful -- won't we girls?

LOU

Tasteful to a fault.

BERT

Not to worry, liebchen.

STEVE

Courtney, I've got my guitar here. Maybe I could play a song? I wrote something that might be kind of appropriate -- it's a gay love song, anyway.

PHILLIP

That's a great idea.

COURTNEY

Yeah!

Enter DAVID, LES, KAY; followed by
ROBERT, HERBERT, GLADYS. All look
a bit stiff and nervous.

GLADYS

(to Herbert)

Good heavens, what a dreadful place.

HERBERT

It's not the Fontainebleu, is it?

GLADYS

I should say not.

STEVE

Welcome, one and all, to my humble tavern. I would like everyone to know that drinks and champagne are on the house this evening, as my gift to Robert and David.

KAY

Now isn't that sweet!

STEVE

(to Kay)

Would you like to pass these around?

STEVE hands KAY a tray of filled champagne glasses.

COURTNEY

(calls to order)

O.K., everybody, let's all find a seat and relax for a few minutes before we start the wedding.

LES

(enthusiastically)

That sounds like a winner. I could stand to wet my whistle before we start this thing up.

The four parents go to table #2; LOU, BERT, REGGIE, ROBERT and DAVID to table #1; the three dancers to table #3. All mime conversation where not scripted, or talk in low voices. COURTNEY and PHILLIP stand at bar, talking with STEVE.

LOU

Robert, I know Bert and I don't know you very well, but we want you to know how happy we are for you.

BERT

And please don't think of us as just David's friends -- we're your friends too.

LOU

(to everybody)

You know, this is a great idea.

(to Bert)

Why didn't we think of this?

BERT

In all my years in Tampa, I don't think I've ever known of a single gay couple to get married.

DAVID

Maybe we'll start a trend.

LOU

(to Bert, impetuously)

Let's get married, too.

BERT

But we've only been sleeping together for two weeks!

Laughter around the table.

REGGIE

(theatrically)

I, for one, shall never marry.

REGGIE uses sweeping hand gestures.

REGGIE (continued)

I am a free spirit, a law unto myself; what cruel destiny 'twould be to chain this roving heart within the shackles of wedded matrimony.

REGGIE turns to DAVID, speaks with wimpy, affected panic.

Oh, Mavis, what will become of me?

DAVID

Relax, Reggie, I'm not deserting you. You'll hear all about it when I say my vows.

REGGIE

(to David)

Mavis, if you get old and married and boring, I shall never forgive you.

ROBERT

Can you honestly picture David as old and boring?

Table #1 continues to mime conversation, while table #2 is now heard.

KAY

You know, I remember when Les and I got married. I was only 17, but shoot, everybody got married young back then. My daddy said, "Kay Ellen, the world's full of old fools with bad advice, so I'll just say, 'Do what you have to to be happy and behave yourself -- though the two don't necessarily go together.'"

LES

Well, honey, have you been happy?

KAY

(knows she's being a card)

Happier than a woman has any right to be! My babies were all born healthy; my husband never complains about my cookin'; and we have central air conditioning and an automatic dishwasher. What more could any woman want?

HERBERT

(laughing; gets kick out of Kay)

Well, this champagne is just the deal, isn't it? Mother, do you want some more?

A bottle sits on table. HERBERT takes it, pours some into everybody's glass.

I would like to propose a toast. This is to the woman I married -- just as lovely today as the day I married her.

GLADYS

(genuinely touched -- makes token protest)

Oh, Herbert!

COURTNEY and PHILLIP, who have been standing at bar talking to STEVE (who is behind bar), face the players.

COURTNEY

Could I have your attention, everybody? I think it's about time for us to begin the ceremony, but before we do I'd like to say a few words. As most of you know, Robert and David haven't known each other for very long.

REGGIE

According to Ann Landers, length doesn't really matter.

Some tittering among gay players.

COURTNEY

(staring him down)

Reggie!

REGGIE

(tiny voice)

I'm sorry.

COURTNEY

As I was saying, Robert and David haven't known each other for very long, but they have managed to pack a lot of living into the last four or five months. Those of us who have been around them know that things haven't always been perfect between them; there have been some basic differences, ongoing conflicts--

DAVID

(interjects jokingly)

Differences? Conflicts? I wonder what she means?

ROBERT laughs, joined by other friends.

COURTNEY

(smiling)

But through it all, they have persevered in a spirit of compromise and acceptance that is a credit to them both. Phillip and I are very close to Robert and David, and we are very, very happy that they have chosen to formally declare their love and commitment to each other here this evening. Phillip, do you want to explain the purpose of tonight's ceremony?

PHILLIP

First of all, I want to say that I think it is truly marvelous that Mr. and Mrs. McGlaughlin and Mr. and Mrs. Cooper have chosen to be here this evening. I know it makes us all feel very special. As for the ceremony, I'm sure it comes as no surprise to anyone present that, unfortunately, our laws do not recognize a union between two members of the same sex as legal. Nevertheless, a marriage ceremony is nothing more than a symbol of the love and commitment two people feel for one another, and such a ceremony need not be sanctioned by the state.

COURTNEY

You don't suppose he's a lawyer, do you?

Laughter.

PHILLIP

Robert and David have chosen to meet this evening to say out loud, to each other, and to all the guests present, those things they feel in their hearts. I know we all wish them love and much happiness as we now listen to them recite the vows which they have written for themselves.

ROBERT and DAVID stand, walk to where COURTNEY and PHILLIP are, pull out two barstools to sit on, as COURTNEY and PHILLIP take seats at table #1. ROBERT is nervous, clears throat several times.

ROBERT

Thanks, Courtney, Phil.

Long pause. Robert looks at all present.

ROBERT

Well, first of all, I know almost everybody here is kind of surprised that David and I are doing this -- including me.

(laughs a bit)

You see, years ago I realized that I was . . . gay . . . and I'd never be getting married. I just made my mind up that I was going to be single and . . . lonely . . . and there was nothing I could do about it. But since I met David

ROBERT takes DAVID by hand, looks at him full face.

. . . . well, everything has changed.

(pause)

David -- my friend, my brother, my lover -- thank you for giving me so much when my heart had turned to stone with seriousness. And thank you for treating my fears with such gentleness, for showing me that the world is not a savage jungle filled only with danger, but a place where I can find new friends, new challenges, new ways of being more fully myself. Thank you for putting up with my sometimes neurotic demands, and for listening to me bitch even when I have absolutely no right. But most of all, thank you for joining with me in a sacred bond of marriage, and for promising that it will last forever. Because of you, David, I finally feel free.

ROBERT and DAVID, still looking into each others' eyes, kiss briefly.

REGGIE breaks out in spontaneous

applause and cheering, quickly
joined by everyone else in bar.

REGGIE

(leading off)

Yaaaaaayyyyy!

As applause, laughter, etc., are
dying down, DAVID holds up his hands
for silence.

DAVID

Wait a minute! Now it's my turn!

(beat)

When Robert and I sat down and planned what we would say, one of the
first things we decided on was that our marriage would be monogamous.
I know that's important to Robert -- but he might not know that it's
just as important to me. I've always been really lucky in my life.
I've always been able to count on my parents

DAVID looks lovingly at his parents.

my friends

DAVID looks at REGGIE, COURTNEY, PHILLIP.

and now I know that I can always count on Robert being there whenever
I need him --

(comically)

-- and I need him all the time! I know that sometimes Robert is afraid
he can't count on me

DAVID turns to face ROBERT, full
face, takes his hand.

DAVID (continued)

. . . . but, Robert, I want you to know that I will always be your partner, and yours alone. I have wonderful, irreplaceable friends, and as you know, they are very important to me, and I would never desert them for anything or anyone. But I want you to know that my love for them can never cancel my love for you. And as far as our fights go, yes you sure make me mad as hell sometimes, but I hope I've proven that I'll always stick around to work things out -- no more qualuudes, I promise.

DAVID turns and winks at REGGIE.

Robert, you are the most mature, most magical, most honest human being I've ever known, and I learn from you -- more than you know -- and come hell or high water, I plan to keep it that way! I luv ya, darlin'.

They smile and kiss each other
(a long kiss). REGGIE leads the
crowd in spontaneous applause.
COURTNEY stands up, walks up to
stand beside ROBERT and DAVID.

COURTNEY

Now, before I propose a toast, I think Steve has a song to play for us, because, as everybody knows, you can't have a wedding without music!

STEVE comes out from behind bar,
carrying his guitar. He pulls up a
barstool, sits adjacent to ROBERT
and DAVID. REGGIE can play piano

if the director deems it appropriate.
 See Appendix B for score. As STEVE
 sits, facing theater audience,
 stage lights go down and a lone white
 spot comes up on him as he introduces
 song.

STEVE

Well, Courtney asked me to sing a song about twenty minutes ago, so
 I'm not exactly prepared for this. But I did write a song a couple
 of weeks ago that I hope Robert and David will like. It's about
 being gay, and lonely, and finally falling in love:

(Instrumental Introduction)

Well it's a sad, sad and a lonely life,
 A whirlwind of laughter and goodbyes,
 Leading intriguing double lives.
 Single men.
 Double lives.

So won't you shed your sad disguise
 don't need it anymore.

Won't you find me in your eyes

I've been there all along.

And kiss me through the rose-leaf rain,
 And let's build one castle more in Spain,
 And we'll dream one more dream there.

(Instrumental interlude; repeat verses to finish.)

When the song concludes, the guests
offer a resounding round of applause.
Lights return to normal.

DAVID

Steve, my God, that's beautiful! You ought to try to sell that!

STEVE

(with a smile)

I'm trying to, I'm trying!

ROBERT stands up from his stool.

ROBERT

(glowing)

Thank you all for coming. Let's eat!

ROBERT walks over to reception table.

(with a laugh)

Hey -- this cake says, "Happy Birthday Gertrude."

REGGIE, LOU, and BERT turn to each
other and start clucking their
tongues and talking in old lady
falsettos, saying such things as,
"Poor dear," "Poor Gertrude,"
"Didn't even pick up her cake,"
"I'm just sick about it."

KAY

(crossing to David)

Honey, we're so proud of you.

KAY hugs her son.

DAVID

Thanks, Mom.

LES hugs his son.

LES

Congratulations, son!

DAVID

Thanks for coming, Pop.

LES

(heartily)

We wouldn't have missed it!

At this point, everyone is swarming around reception table except for GLADYS and HERBERT who are still sitting at their table, looking a bit dazed and out of place. LES, KAY, and DAVID watch as ROBERT goes to them, sits beside his mother. GLADYS looks pensive, bothered, HERBERT, uncomfortable.

ROBERT

(gently)

Mother?

GLADYS looks down for a long moment. When she looks up, her eyes filled with tears and looking pained, she speaks in a rush of emotion.

GLADYS

We just want you to be happy, honey.

She grasps ROBERT in rush of emotion, hugs him tight. HERBERT sits nodding slightly, smiling tenderly at ROBERT. REGGIE steps away from the reception table, carrying the cake, now with a single largish candle in it.

REGGIE

Hey, everybody, we forgot something.

A chorus of voices ask, "What?"

"What did we forget?" "What could we have forgotten?"

We forgot to sing "Happy Birthday" to Gertrude!

There is general laughter all around. REGGIE flicks a Bic and lights the candle. He starts the singing, and everyone else joins in.

REGGIE, ET AL.

Happy Birthday to you,

Happy Birthday to you,

Happy Birthday dear Gertrude, (REGGIE: Wherever you are)

Happy Birthday to you.

As song is being sung, everyone stands, and the four married couples stand together as couples, arm in arm or otherwise embracing, as they

sing. As song ends, a general cheer goes up, and the four couples kiss; everyone is very happy.

REGGIE

The candle is still burning! O.K., everybody, make a wish so we can blow it out. Everybody make a wish!

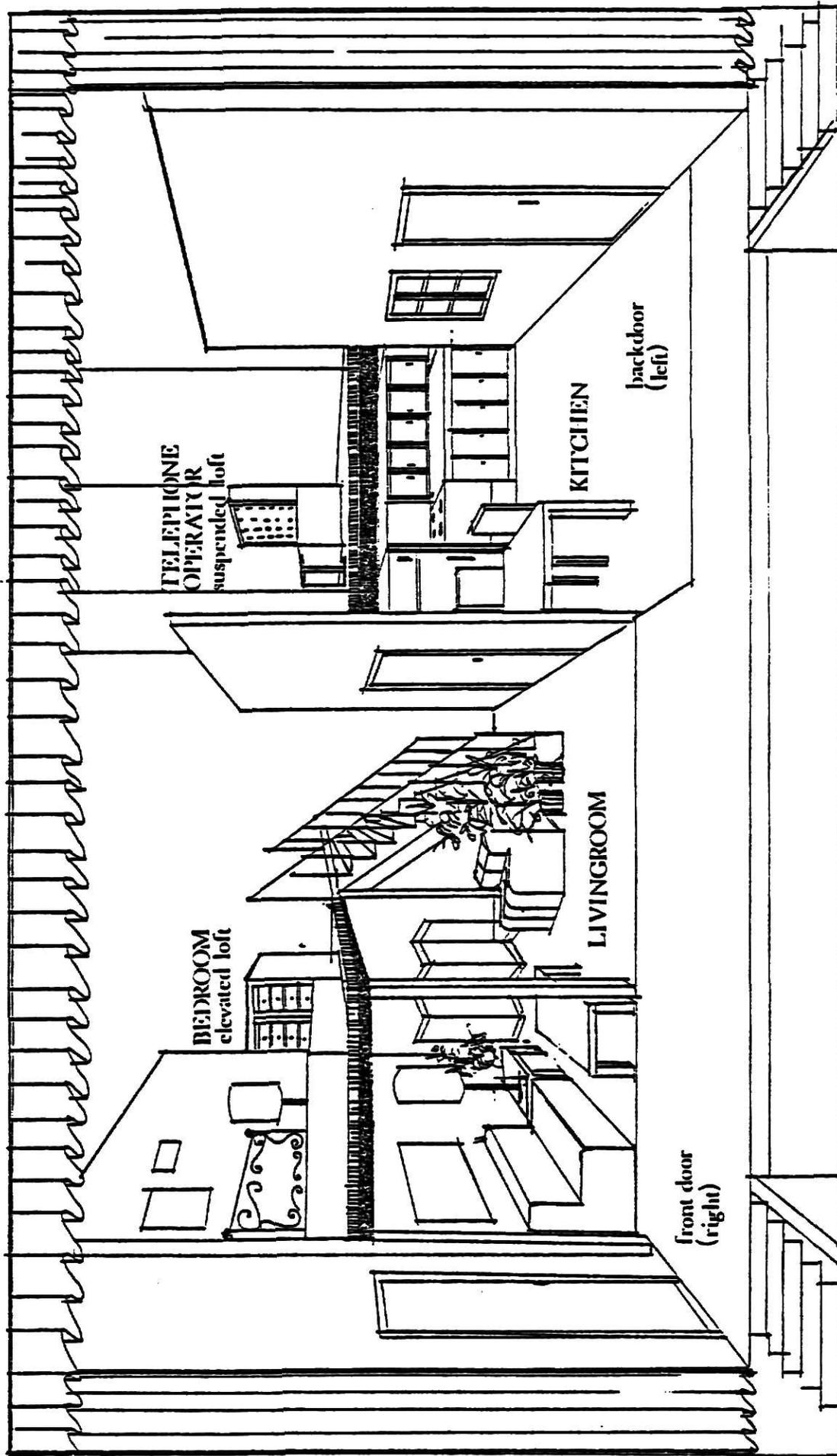
After a momentary pause, everyone gathers around the cake. The lights are dimming slowly.

O.K. On three. One. Two. Three!!!

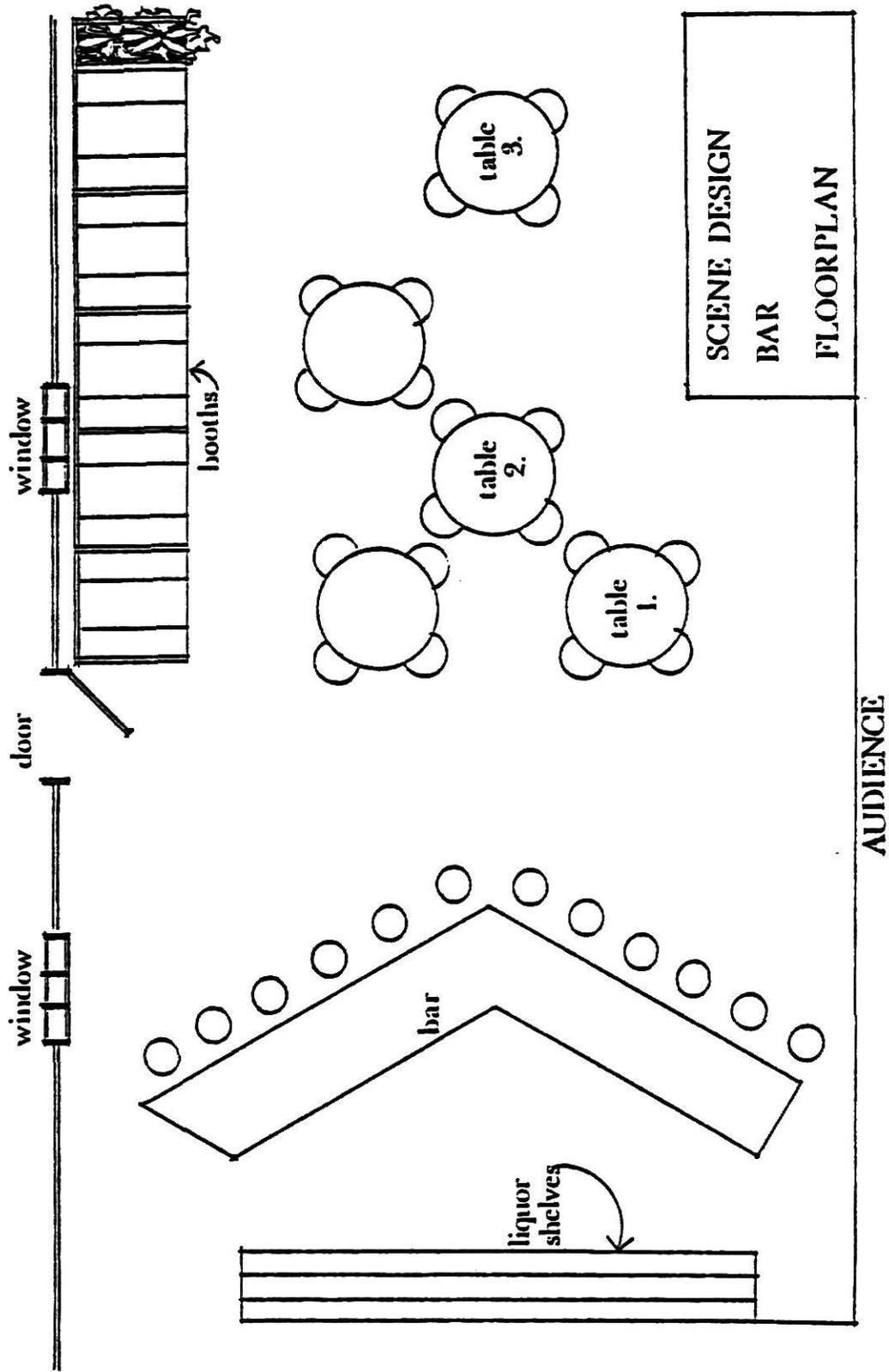
Everyone blows on cue and, of course, the candle is extinguished. The lighting is very dim at this point. Everyone lets go with general laughter, talking, cheering and in a moment or two the lights go out and the curtain falls quickly.

CURTAIN FALLS ON THE PLAY

APPENDIX A
Set Designs for the Play



SCENE DESIGN
HOME (perspective)
AUDIENCE VIEW



APPENDIX B

Scores for the Songs in the Play *

* The last three lines of "Single Men -- Double Lives" were adapted from a poem by John Bennet, "In A Rose Garden," published in The Best Loved Poems of the American People, ed. Hazel Felleman (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1936), p. 27. The original lines appeared as follows:

. . .

And kiss me through the rose-leaf rain;

We'll build one castle more in Spain,

And dream one more dream there.

IF

JESUS DROVE A PICK-UP TRUCK

HE'D

HAUL YOUR ASS

TO

HEAVEN...

WORDS BY:

KAY GOWEN,
KRIS SHAFER,
SCOTT RAZAK

MUSIC BY:

SCOTT RAZAK

IF
 JESUS DROVE A PICKUP TRUCK
 HE'D
 HAUL YOUR ASS
 TO
 HEAVEN...

Words by:
 KAY GONEN, KRIS SHAFFER, SCOTT RAZAK

Music by:
 SCOTT RAZAK

Brightly

(2x) If Je- sus drove a pick- up truck, He'd
 haul your ass to hea- ven. You don't need to
 wor- ry none; your sins will be for- giv- en.

pedal lightly throughout

Je- sus loves the cow- girls; He loves the cow- boys

to. (7) Great rop- ers and pig stick- ers, and

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. Sheel - chew- ers to. (Now) (so) Lord will pick you

up!

3/2 slower

3. NOW, YOU DON'T NEED TO BUCKLE UP,
 'CAUSE MARY'S ON THE DASH
 AND IF YOU GET PULLED OVER,
 THEY'LL NEVER FIND YOUR STASH.
 YOU'RE ALWAYS SAFE WITH JESUS;
 HE'LL NEVER LET YOU DOWN.
 YOU'LL OFTEN FIND HIM DRAGGIN' MAIN,
 A-WEARIN' A THORNY CROWN.

4. (SPOKEN DRAMATICALLY)
 SO PATSY IF YOU'RE HOPELESS,
 IN YOUR PRISON CELL,
 REMEMBER BROTHER JOHNNY CASH
 AND HOW HIS RECORDS SELL.
 JUST HAUL YOUR ASS TO NASHVILLE
 AND RING THAT SILVER BELL.
 THEN THE LORD WILL SAVE YOUR SOUL,
 AND YOU WON'T GO TO HELL.

5. HIS PICK-UP GOT NO GUN RACK;
 HIS BUMPER SAYS "ONE WAY".
 SO HONK IF YOU LOVE JESUS;
 HE'S SURE TO PASS YOUR WAY.
 AND IF YOUR SAVIOUR PASSES BY,
 IN HIS PICK-UP TRUCK,
 SINNER STICK YOUR THUMB RIGHT OUT,
 THE LORD WILL PICK YOU UP!

Single Men --- Double Lives

words and music
by

Scott Ryzak

Single Men --- Double Lives

words and music
by
Scott Rozak

moderately

pedal throughout - - - -

The first system consists of a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line begins with a whole rest, followed by a series of notes. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

The second system continues the vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a whole rest followed by notes. The piano accompaniment maintains its rhythmic pattern.

The third system includes lyrics under the vocal line. The piano accompaniment continues with its characteristic rhythm.

Well it's a sad — a sad and a lone — ly life,

The fourth system includes lyrics under the vocal line. The piano accompaniment continues with its characteristic rhythm.

a whirl wind of laugh-ter and good-byes — leading in-trig-

3.

ing dou - ble lives — . Single

now, Double lives...

so now you shed.

your sad - dis - guise, don't need it a -

— my more. Won't you find me in — your

eyes, I've been there all a- long, and kiss me through the rose

. leaf rain and we'll build our castle more in Spain, and we'll

dream one more dream there.

♩ TO CORA (2x)

5.

A handwritten musical score for piano and voice. The score is organized into four systems. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The piano part includes chords and melodic lines in both hands. The vocal line contains lyrics: "Well it's a sad" and "COBA". The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final piano chord.

APPENDIX C

Short Story: "Scene From A Marriage"

They were in bed -- it was 11:30 -- and Bob had fallen asleep almost immediately. He'd spent the entire day training a new young man to "run blue-top," the engineering slang for an exhausting process that only a healthy young laborer, hungry for a job, would be willing to do.

The blue-top runner runs about forty feet ahead of a road grader (a "blade"), and, after glancing at the blue-topped stakes pounded into the ground, he tells the blade operator, with hand signals, how deep to cut. The blade runs at a constant four miles per hour, and so, of course, does the blue-top runner. It makes for a long eleven hour day when you're behind schedule on building a forty-seven mile stretch of new Interstate Highway in northern Florida.

Bob had thought by becoming a construction engineer he was guaranteed never to have to work with his back. He hated to work with his back. But this dumb kid, Jesus, he miscued the blade operator over and over and over; the blade would dig too deep, uprooting the blue-topped stake in splinters. Bob had to run after and re-shoot the elevation and pound another stake. It had been 97 degrees. The humidity was 64%. It was an eleven hour day. Bob was asleep.

"Honey, did you turn off the water sprinkler?" Syl asked in that almost-asleep voice.

Nothing. No response.

"Boooob? Did you turn off the water sprinkler before you came to bed?"

"Nnnngngghhh...."

"Sweetheart, I know you're tired, but just wake up long enough for me to find out if you turned off the water sprinkler. I don't want to get up, put my robe on, walk downstairs, etc. etc. . . . Bob? Bob -- are you listening to me?"

Bob coughed thickly into his pillow and mumbled, "No, I'm sorry, I . . . oh God I'm tired. Would you mind doing it?"

Syl paused and smiled. "Well, how could I refuse you in that condition?"

Syl turned the lamp on, got out of bed, went downstairs, unlocked the door, walked through the wet grass, turned the water off, came back into the kitchen, and decided some food would be good. "Oh, what do we have to eat in this goddamned kitchen anyway?" Looking into the cookie jar, "Goddamnit Bob, why do you always eat the cookies before I eat the cookies?" The cantaloupe was gone too. Finally Syl found the peanut butter in the cabinet and some slightly stale saltine crackers.

Bob murmured slightly as Syl slipped back into bed and put his hand automatically and quite limply on Syl's leg.

"Does this mean we're in love?" Syl asked dramatically?

Of course, Bob said nothing.

"Oh, God, you're such fun in bed anymore Bob, did anybody ever tell you that? I love it the way you lie there unconscious while I'm talking to you. By the way, Bob, did you know I'm having a truly passionate affair with the milkman? Oh, yes, he's got a 14 inch prick -- really all I can handle you know."

Tiring of this game, Syl sat in bed, fully awake now, and munched on the little saltine and peanut butter sandwiches, holding them over the plate so no crumbs would get in bed. "Oh, phluck, I fwogot the miwk. Can't each peemit buttuw cwakews wifout miwk." Syl slipped out of bed and went naked down the stairs for a glass of milk, and halfway down the stairs stepped on a cold, slimy thing that moved. "Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhh, Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhh!" Fairly leaping down the last seven steps Syl frantically switched the light on and looked at a green, wiggling garden snake trying to maneuver off the side

of the staircase with a crushed middle. "Oh my God, oh my God, Bob, Booooobbb, there's a snake on the staircase -- Bob, Bob! Get down here -- you know I'm phobic about snakes -- BOB!!!"

Nothing. Total silence.

"Oh my God. How am I going to get back upstairs? Bob will never wake up. I could jump over it -- oh God no, I can't jump over a snake, I can't jump over a snake, it'll leap up and bite me in the ass. BOOOBBB!"

Nothing. A cricket chirped somewhere in the kitchen.

"Robert Allen McGlaughlin, come down here this minute!!" The old mother's voice bit.

Nothing.

"I've got it!" Syl walked into the kitchen and turned on the light. "I'll call him on the extension. Now -- how the hell do you call your own number? We used to do it all the time as kids. Let's see . . ." Syl picked up the phone. "It's something like dial 9 and then your own number backwards. No, that's not it. Dial your own prefix and then hang up?" Syl tried that. Nothing. The phone sat there on the table. "Ring, dammit! I dare you to ring. Oh shit. I know! I'll call the operator."

"Mrs. Rogers. May I help you?"

"Yes, Operator -- Mrs. Rogers -- I need . . . oh, this is going to sound stupid -- I need to know how to dial my own number. I know you can do it -- I mean, we used to do it as kids, but I can't remember how. Surely you know how to do it, don't you?"

There was a long pause at the other end. Finally an exasperated voice replied, "Do you mean you've forgotten your number? I'm sorry, I don't have directory listings, you'll have to call 411."

"No, no, you don't understand. I'm here, at home -- I need to call my own number. Isn't there a way of making your own phone ring? I'm sure

there is -- I remember . . . "

The operator sounded out of patience. She also sounded about fifty. "I'm sorry, I can't help you. There is no way to ring you own number."

"But I know there is. We used to do it when we were . . . "

"When you were kids. I know. I don't believe you're remembering correctly. I've never heard of dialing your own number, and I've been with Southwestern Bell for thirty-seven years."

"Could you just let me speak to your supervisor?"

"I am the supervisor. I'm sorry I can't help . . . "

"No, no, don't hang up. Would you just dial my number then. Please?"

"Dial your number? But you're already talking to me. Is this some kind of joke?"

"No, I swear. Please, now listen, I'll explain. Now listen. I was coming downstairs to get a glass of milk and as I was coming downstairs I found this, that is I stepped on, a snake -- a living snake. I can't go upstairs, because I am truly terrified of snakes, and my, um, my friend is upstairs sound asleep. He's not afraid of snakes. He likes snakes. I know you're thinking, 'Why don't you just yell at him,' but I did, and he's sound asleep, and I know Bob, believe me I know Bob, and he won't wake up unless the phone rings -- it's right by his head. All I want to do is call him so he'll come downstairs and get the snake and I can go back to bed. Honest."

There was another long pause. Finally Syl asked, "Did you hang up?"

"No, no, I'm still here. Now let me see if I have this straight. You want me to call Bob and tell him to go downstairs because he has to get rid of the snake? Sir, I don't even know Bob. What kind of a snake is it?"

"It's a little green one -- I don't know what kind of a snake it is; it

doesn't matter what kind of snake it is; I hate snakes; I'm phobic about snakes, and I can't go upstairs until Bob comes down and gets rid of this snake. Look -- if you'll just dial the number, I'll wait until he picks it up and then I'll get on the line down here and I can explain what happened. You won't have to say a word to him -- ok? But let it ring a long time, he's really tired and it might take him a while. Please?"

The operator said, "Thirty-seven years. Thirty-seven years I've worked for this company. All right sir, what is your number?"

"Oh, thank you. It's 483-8852. Now, do you have to stay on the line? I mean, once Bob and I are on the extensions can we talk to each other if you leave the line?"

"Yes sir, I'll leave the line as soon as I hear you talking. Though something tells me this is one conversation I don't want to miss."

"Hey, thanks. You're a good sport."

"Yes, I suppose I am. I'll call right back."

Syl hung up the phone and waited. Sure enough, the phone rang. And rang. It rang fourteen times. Syl was counting. Finally, midway through the fifteenth ring it stopped. Syl grabbed the phone and put it to his ear.

"Bob? Bob? Are you there?"

"Nnnnnngggghhhhh," (cough) "uh, Sylvester?"

"That's right. It's me -- Sylvester. Bob, don't hang up. I'm in a dire emergency and I need your help."

"What the fuck . . . Where are . . . What are these crackers . . . Where are you anyway?"

"I'm in the kitchen. And this is not a joke Robert. Now listen, I'm sorry, but I came downstairs to get a glass of milk and I stepped on a snake

on the staircase."

"A snake?"

"Yes, Robert, a snake. That's why we moved to Florida, remember, so you could be close to all your little bugs and reptiles Mr. Macho Biologist and your macho hobbies. Why can't you like organdy and lace like all the other faggots?"

"Oh, Jesus Christ, Sylvester. Ok, ok, where is the snake? On the stairs?"

"Yes, just come out in the hall. The light's on -- you'll see it, it's about halfway down."

"Ok, I'm coming. One thing, though, Sylvester -- don't hang up the phone."

"What do you mean?"

"Just don't hang up. Meet me at the bottom of the stairs."

Sylvester walked cautiously out to the foot of the stairs. There was Bob, naked, at the top of the stairs. He walked halfway down the stairs to the snake wriggling in apparent futility. "Oh, Jesus, Syl. You woke me up for this?" He picked up the snake. "Ok. I'm going upstairs and I'm going to flush this poor little thing down the toilet, after I crush its head and put it out of its misery."

"Oh, God, you're not going to step on that snake's head with bare feet are you?"

"It's only a garter snake! Good God!" He turned to go upstairs.

"Robert, you've got the cutest ass I've ever seen. That's why I married you."

"Just get on the phone Sylvester."

Smiling, Syl walked back into the kitchen to the telephone and waited.

A voice came on the line.

"Are you there?" Bob asked?

"Yes."

In a velvet, honied voice Bob said, "Fuck you, Sylvester."

"Why you asshole "

Bob was laughing. "Come to bed, darlin'. I miss you."

SINGLE MEN -- DOUBLE LIVES

or

BRIDE'S BED REVISITED

a romantic comedy in two acts

by

Scott K. Razak

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ABSTRACT

Single Men -- Double Lives or Bride's Bed Revisited is a contemporary romantic comedy, a gay play examining the lives of two very different gay men as they fall in love, resolve their differences, and get married. It attempts to illustrate, both seriously and comically, three main points: (1) restriction to rigid male roles, gay or straight, is unhealthy; (2) gay males are often incapable of forming lasting love relationships, for culturally determined reasons; and (3) working marriages require serious commitment.

The play is divided into two acts, the first introducing the two male principals, Robert and David, who have recently fallen in love. In scenes occurring at a neighborhood bar and Robert and David's home, both in Tampa, Florida, we learn that Robert is 28, a construction engineer, and has only recently admitted his homosexuality. He is shy, conservative, and violently opposed to stereotypical homosexuals. David is young, at ease with his sexuality, and is a stereotypical homosexual. In a boisterous drag scene at the conclusion of Act I, the conflict in style between Robert and David reaches a climax.

In the second act, the parents of both characters are introduced, and the conflicts presented in Act I are resolved. Robert and David compromise, set mutual goals, and get married at the conclusion of Act II.

The tone of the play is light, farcical, hopeful, optimistic -- a response to a considerable number of gay plays emphasizing the tragic nature of being gay in a restrictive straight culture.