

/FLYING/

by

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A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

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1985

Approved by:

  
Major Professor

LD  
2668  
•R4  
1985  
L82  
C.2

to Doc Fedder  
my mentor

ALL202 964463

to Phyllis Bixler  
who taught me about instinct

to Jonathan Holden  
who taught me to "admire art  
all to hell"

and  
for Kevin

## CHARACTERS

Isabel McNaughton  
Sgt. B. J. Holloway  
Sandy Wheatley  
Maj. Edmund Herrick  
Edwina Herrick  
An Elderly Man  
Two Movers

## SETTING

Scene i: A corridor outside a judge's chambers, suggested by a bench and two doors, one marked "Judge E. G. Bates," the other marked "Men."

Scene ii: McNaughton's living room, containing a couch, a coffee table, a hutch with china, a rocking chair, an armchair with ottoman, and a phone table, on which is a black rotary dial phone. The room should suggest good taste within not-yet-arrived means. On the walls are a portrait of HERRICK in uniform and various certificates of merit belonging to him, except for one that reads "First Place State Mathematics Contest 1969 Isabel McNaughton Pine Ridge High School." There are three exits from the room: one to the outside, one to the kitchen and upstairs, and the last to HERRICK's den, of which we can see a part. Next to the rocking chair is a box marked "Salvation Army."

Scene iii: McNaughton's living room. All the furniture and pictures are removed during the dim-out.

Scene iv: McNaughton's living room. During the dim-out WHEATLEY's furniture is brought in: a ratty couch, coffee table, beanbag chair, end table, folding chair, and an abstract painting.

Act II, Scene i: McNaughton's living room. The den has been converted to a nursery and

the original furniture restored.  
The room looks the same as in Act I,  
Scene i, except that plants have been  
added, the black phone has been replaced  
with a pale blue French phone, and  
HERRICK's portrait and certificates  
have been replaced with a portrait of  
MCNAUGHTON in uniform, WHEATLEY's  
abstract painting, and a photo of  
WHEATLEY with EDWINA.

Scene ii: Same.

LOCATION  
Wichita Falls, Texas

TIME  
Act I, Scene i: April, 1983.

Scene ii: a few weeks later.

Scene iii: two months later.

Scene iv: the next day.

Act II, Scene i: three months later  
(October, 1983).

Scene ii: the next morning.



## ACT I

## Scene i

(MCNAUGHTON and HOLLOWAY enter, the former carrying a six-month-old baby; the latter, a diaper bag and a toy airplane. They pause and look around.)

HOLLOWAY

This is it.

(They sit on the bench. HOLLOWAY sets down the diaper bag. MCNAUGHTON takes the airplane and amuses the baby with it as they talk. MCNAUGHTON is nervous; HOLLOWAY is impatient with her long-windedness.)

MCNAUGHTON

Thanks for coming, Holloway. I don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't.

HOLLOWAY

'Sall right.

MCNAUGHTON

I suppose I could've found a sitter, but I need all the moral support I can get. (Nods at baby.) Hers and yours.

HOLLOWAY

I understand.

MCNAUGHTON

I don't know. Maybe I shouldn't have brought her. I don't know why I did. Maybe I unconsciously wanted to rub the Major's nose in it. Maybe I wanted something to cling to. (To baby.) You're Mommy's security blanket.

HOLLOWAY

No biggie.

MCNAUGHTON

Which is stupid of me, to allow myself to—

HOLLOWAY

Cut it, McNaughton! (At MCNAUGHTON's surprised look.) That's better. You're working yourself up for nothing, you know. The more you jabber, the worse you'll be in there.

MCNAUGHTON

Not that it matters.

HOLLOWAY

Not that it does. It's just a formality, so relax.

MCNAUGHTON

(Waxing melodramatic.) You're right. Just a formality. The Major signed the agreement; he can't take anything more from me. No, by God, not a red cent or a stick of furniture or a hair from my Edwina's head. Not another drop of blood or another tear or a minute more of my life--

HOLLOWAY

Shut up already!

(WHEATLEY enters, comfortable and familiar with the surroundings. Seeing the women, he approaches.)

WHEATLEY

Hi. Mind if I sit down?

(Not waiting for an answer, he sits down between them. MCNAUGHTON and HOLLOWAY share a look of annoyance.)

WHEATLEY

So. Waiting to see E. G.?

MCNAUGHTON

I beg your pardon?

WHEATLEY

Judge Bates. If you are, don't sweat it. She's all right, for a robe.

MCNAUGHTON

Oh? You know her on a professional basis?

WHEATLEY

E. G. and me go way back. Revoked my driver's license three times. (At their frowns.) Hey, can I help it if I got a heavy foot? (Pause, notices baby.) Nice kid. Six months?

MCNAUGHTON

Yes. Already she's beginning to stand by herself.

HOLLOWAY

Aw, geesh, here we go with the proud mother stuff.

WHEATLEY

Bright. Big, too. What, about fifteen pounds?

MCNAUGHTON

Sixteen and three-quarters.

WHEATLEY

Name?

MCNAUGHTON

Edwina. She was named after her father.

WHEATLEY

And yours? (MCNAUGHTON hesitates.) Hey, I don't intend to come on to you or anything. I just noticed you're newly divorced--

MCNAUGHTON

Does it show?

WHEATLEY

Yeah. Your ring finger's still pale from where the ring was. And you look like that's the only thing you'd be seeing E. G. for. You got an upright citizen look.

MCNAUGHTON

Thanks, I guess.

HOLLOWAY

You don't.

WHEATLEY

Well, I'm into social protest. I'm protesting the speed limit, every time the cops aren't looking and sometimes when they are.

(HERRICK enters, embarrassed about being in court and wanting to get it over. He checks the name on the door, then his watch. Seeing the women, he hesitates. HOLLOWAY glares at him; MCNAUGHTON glances at him, then away, quickly. WHEATLEY observes the exchange with interest.)

WHEATLEY

The future ex, huh? (At MCNAUGHTON's nod.) Buck up, kiddo. Your life is your own now. (Gestures to airplane.) Fly.

(MCNAUGHTON looks at WHEATLEY curiously, then visibly steels herself as HERRICK approaches.)

MCNAUGHTON

Good afternoon, Major.

WHEATLEY

There you go.

HERRICK

Isabel. Is that Edwina?

HOLLOWAY

No, it's Brooke Shields. Who did you think it was?

MCNAUGHTON

She's grown quite a lot in the past four months. She'll be walking any day now.

HOLLOWAY

You'd know that if you ever went over to see her. You could offer to babysit once in a while, you know.

MCNAUGHTON

(Clutches the baby.) No!

HERRICK

That's not my job.

HOLLOWAY

(To MCNAUGHTON.) What did I tell you?

HERRICK

Unless her mother fails in her duties--again.

HOLLOWAY

What about your duties? You're the kid's father.

HERRICK

I pay ample child support.

MCNAUGHTON

That's enough, Holloway. It doesn't matter now.

(HOLLOWAY clamps her mouth shut and looks away angrily. HERRICK looks at both women with contempt, then, forcibly gaining control of his temper, glares at the door. HOLLOWAY suddenly smiles nastily.)

HOLLOWAY

(Pointedly.) So, McNaughton, the flying lessons still going good? You're going to make a great pilot, unlike some people who can't add two and two and flunk out the first day of flight school.

MCNAUGHTON

Holloway! It's almost over.

(With fists clenched HERRICK approaches HOLLOWAY, who jumps up, ready for a confrontation. WHEATLEY steps in between them.)

WHEATLEY

(To HERRICK.) Hi there. Do you have the time?

HERRICK

(Stares at him, not understanding at first, then checks his watch.) Thirteen hundred. Supposed to have started now. Civilians have no respect for time.

WHEATLEY

Maybe your watch is fast.

HERRICK

No. The damn judge is a woman. Probably has to fix her face before she can make a decision.

HOLLOWAY

Out your brass.

HERRICK

That remark is crude, infantile, and insubordinate, Sergeant.

HOLLOWAY

I wanted to make sure you'd understand it, Major.

MCNAUGHTON

Holloway. . . .

HOLLOWAY

Well. . . .

HERRICK

(Indicating WHEATLEY.) I thought you would have held out for better than him, Isabel.

WHEATLEY

Moi? I'm flattered.

MCNAUGHTON

He just sat down here. I don't know him.

WHEATLEY

(Offers his hand to HERRICK, who only glares at him) Sandy Wheatley. Enchantee. And don't you worry, sir, I'll take good care of her.

HERRICK

You're spitting in my face again, aren't you, Isabel? I thought you had more pride than that, but you've got to spit in my face one more time.

HOLLOWAY

Maybe after five years of spit-shining your boots she'd like to raise her aim.

WHEATLEY

Cute.

HERRICK

(Points at her.) Sergeant—

HOLLOWAY

(Saluting.) Major.

HERRICK

(To MCNAUGHTON.) I'll be watching you. The least hint of immoral behavior, and I'll have Edwina away from you so fast your head will spin. (Points at WHEATLEY.) So you'd better get rid of him.

MCNAUGHTON

Edmund, I—

HOLLOWAY

Don't you believe it, Mac. He's talking out his ass. They don't award custody of children to children.

(HERRICK and HOLLOWAY glare at each other; he on the verge of violence, she smirking. MCNAUGHTON is frightened and clutches the baby. WHEATLEY watches each of their faces with interest, especially MCNAUGHTON's.)

HERRICK

(After a tense pause.) Where's your damn lawyer?

MCNAUGHTON

Mr. Davidson should be here any minute.

(HERRICK turns toward the door. The tension broken, HOLLOWAY and WHEATLEY sit down again.)

WHEATLEY

Did you say Davidson's your lawyer?

MCNAUGHTON

Yes.

WHEATLEY

Well, he's probably already in there. Him and E. G. have lunch together every day—long lunches, if you know what I mean.

HERRICK

Just my luck! Damn civilians screwing around with the legal system. (Knocks on the door, then peeks in.) Excuse me, counselor, you about ready? (To MCNAUGHTON.) He's in here. Come on.

MCNAUGHTON

(Rises and hands baby to HOLLOWAY.) Here.

HOLLOWAY

(Holding the baby as if it might break or worse.) It's just a formality.

MCNAUGHTON

Right.

(As MCNAUGHTON and HERRICK enter the judge's chambers:)

HERRICK

I told you you should've hired Barnes. He conducts himself like a lawyer.

(After a pause:)

WHEATLEY

The judge really is a nice person. She's got nothing to worry about—in there.

HOLLOWAY

It's not like she's on trial or anything.

WHEATLEY

I can understand her being nervous, though. One dash of the pen and her whole life changes. The baby's too. She's got a lot to lose.

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, a lot of migraines.

WHEATLEY

Seriously. Once that paper's signed she'll lose her whole economic and social status. Ninety-eight percent of all welfare recipients are single mothers and their children. Lack of inexpensive day care makes it impossible for them to have jobs—even if they could find work. And almost half of all noncustodial parents—ninety-five percent of them are the fathers—don't pay child support.

HOLLOWAY

You work for Ralph Nader?

WHEATLEY

No, I don't work for anybody. I don't work.

HOLLOWAY

What do you do, then?

WHEATLEY

I've got odd jobs.

HOLLOWAY

I can believe that.

WHEATLEY

(Admiring the baby.) Let me hold her? (When she pulls the baby back defensively.) Aw, come on, I'm here for a traffic ticket, not child molesting.

HOLLOWAY

What do you want to hold her for?

WHEATLEY

Old times' sake. How about it?

(WHEATLEY slips his arms around the baby. HOLLOWAY hesitates, then gives in. WHEATLEY holds the baby expertly.)

WHEATLEY

She needs a change.

HOLLOWAY

Oh, crap.

WHEATLEY

Exactly.

HOLLOWAY

Are you sure?

WHEATLEY

Definitely. Notice the blissful look on her face?

HOLLOWAY

She does look happy.

WHEATLEY

They always look like that just after. Not to mention the distinct odor. (Rises and grabs the diaper bag.) I'll do it. There's a men's room over there.

(As he exits:)

HOLLOWAY

Hey, bring her back! You can't!

WHEATLEY

Sure I can. I've done it a hundred times.



(HOLLOWAY looks after him, worried and feeling guilty. She pulls a stick of gum from her pocket and begins to chew it furiously. She sits, stands, paces, then hurries through the door marked "MEN." She returns immediately, chased out by an ELDERLY MAN, who looks at her oddly as he crosses and exits.)

MAN

Damn women's libbers!

(HOLLOWAY crosses her arms and sulks. A moment later HERRICK and MCNAUGHTON return.)

HERRICK

Two hundred and fifty bucks in court costs and lawyer's fees for ten damn minutes.

MCNAUGHTON

It was awfully fast, and mechanical. They act like it's a traffic ticket instead of a divorce.

HERRICK

Why'd you have to take your maiden name back?

MCNAUGHTON

I don't belong to you any more.

HERRICK

That's the goddamn truth.

MCNAUGHTON

I didn't exactly want a divorce.

HERRICK

Now's a fine time to tell me.

MCNAUGHTON

But I'm glad I did it.

HERRICK

You just remember what the judge said. Immoral behavior constitutes an unfit parent, and I have the right to challenge your custody any time. If I catch you fooling around, I'm going to take Edwina. From the looks of things, I won't have long to wait. (Exits.)

HOLLOWAY

God, you just about gotta join a convent! That moron's gonna make sure he keeps on running your life--keep you in a chastity belt!

MCNAUGHTON

I'll do whatever it takes to keep Edwina. Where is she?

HOLLOWAY

In the john. (Gestures in that direction.)

MCNAUGHTON

You left her in the restroom?! Oh, Holloway, she's only six months old; she can't go by herself! (Running toward men's room, she almost runs into WHEATLEY, returning with EDWINA.) Edwina!

(WHEATLEY hands over the baby to MCNAUGHTON and the bag to HOLLOWAY.)

WHEATLEY

Say, you know, she's getting a little rash. Try leaving her diaper off a couple of hours a day.

MCNAUGHTON

I will. Thank you.

(WHEATLEY fishes into his pocket for a scrap of paper and a pen. He jots down something and hands the paper to MCNAUGHTON.)

WHEATLEY

If you ever need a babysitter, give me a call. I'm staying at the Y.

MCNAUGHTON

Oh, no, I don't think so.

WHEATLEY

I'd be happy to sit for her--or you. I did promise your ex I'd look after you.

(WHEATLEY enters the judge's chambers.)

WHEATLEY

Hiya, E. G.!

(MCNAUGHTON looks at the card.)

HOLLOWAY

He's not too bad, really.

MCNAUGHTON

He's irresponsible, lazy, and he's just a kid. He's at least five years younger than we are.

(MCNAUGHTON crumples the card and drops it.)

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, but I bet he's great in the kip.

(As they move off stage HOLLOWAY picks up the card and looks at it.)

HOLLOWAY

That's all they're good for, anyway. Hey, it's a coupon for a Big Mac. (Stuffs it in her pocket.)

(Lights down as they exit.)

## Scene ii

(MCNAUGHTON's living room, a few weeks later. The room contains a couch, a hutch with china, a rocking chair, an armchair with ottoman, and a phone table, on which is a black rotary dial phone. Next to the rocking chair is a box marked "Salvation Army." The room should suggest good taste within not-yet-arrived means. On the walls are a portrait of HERRICK in uniform and various certificates of merit belonging to him, except for one that reads "First place State Mathematics Contest 1969 Isabel McNaughton Pine Ridge High School." There are three exits from the room: one to the outside, one to the kitchen and upstairs, and the last to HERRICK's den, of which we can see a part. MCNAUGHTON is on the couch, reading brochures.)

MCNAUGHTON

"A woman's place is in the Air Force. Earn while you learn. Train in any of three hundred fields. Explore yourself as you explore the skies." Highly original.

(Doorbell rings.)

HOLLOWAY

(From off-stage.) It's me.

MCNAUGHTON

Come in. It's open.

(HOLLOWAY, dressed in military overalls, enters.)

HOLLOWAY

You ought to keep your door locked, you know?

MCNAUGHTON

I suppose.

HOLLOWAY

(Insisting.) Really. You live too close to base. You never know--we got some real S. O. B.'s running around. Lock your door--or sell your house.

MCNAUGHTON

Yes, you're right. I just haven't been thinking lately.

HOLLOWAY

Yeah. (Gestures to the certificates.) Hey, when's the Major going to pick up his stuff? Why don't you take them down?

MCNAUGHTON

(Embarrassed.) I don't mind. I kind of like it, having them around.

HOLLOWAY

Yeah? It would make me sick. I bet he's leaving his stuff here on purpose, just so he'll have an excuse to come and spy on you.

MCNAUGHTON

I don't think so.

HOLLOWAY

What are you looking at? (Picks up a brochure and reads it aloud, then laughs.) "Develop yourself as an Air Force photographer. Get your career off the ground as an Air Force pilot. Find out what's cooking as an Air Force food service specialist." Reading the funny papers, huh?

MCNAUGHTON

They are, aren't they.

HOLLOWAY

(Sitting down beside MCNAUGHTON.) Any luck finding a job?

MCNAUGHTON

Need you ask? (Imitating a male voice.) "Sorry. No openings." "Sorry. The position's been filled." "Sorry. We were looking for someone with more experience." Most of the time I don't even get that much courtesy.

HOLLOWAY

I don't get it. What's the deal? I mean, you got a college degree, for cryin' out loud.

MCNAUGHTON

B. A. in French, Chestnut Hill Women's College, 1977. Worthless. Completely worthless.

HOLLOWAY

You could always work in a French restaurant.

MCNAUGHTON

I did apply for one job today. There must have been twenty-five other applicants. I won't get it; I'm under-educated. Four of the applicants had Master's degrees, two had PhD's, and one was a former Secretary of the Interior. But it wasn't a complete waste of time. Before we had our interviews with Mayor McCheese, Ronald McDonald gave us each an autographed picture of the Hamburglar.

HOLLOWAY

There's an idea.

MCNAUGHTON

Burglary?

HOLLOWAY

No, go back to school. Study engineering or agriculture.

MCNAUGHTON

Can't you just see me in the breeding barn? Mademoiselle Bossy, may I present Monsieur Bull.

HOLLOWAY

You shouldn't sell yourself short. (Taps MCNAUGHTON's forehead.) I bet you got some untapped skills up there.

MCNAUGHTON

Possibly. But no employers are willing to find out. Once they hear I have a baby, it's au revoir.

HOLLOWAY

Don't tell them.

MCNAUGHTON

They have ways of making me talk.

HOLLOWAY

Come on, Mac. You're good at chit-chat. Change the subject.

MCNAUGHTON

I could, if I really wanted the job.

HOLLOWAY

What do you want to do?

MCNAUGHTON

You won't laugh?

HOLLOWAY

Me? You forget, when we graduated high school and you went to college, I went to truck driving school. And while you were on your honeymoon, I was in AIT for aircraft maintenance. Me laugh? Come on. Spill it.

MCNAUGHTON

(Hesitantly.) Well, I've always had this dream. . . . Kind of silly, really. . . . Ever since we were kids, and you were taking your toy trucks apart and talking about being a mechanic, and my dad was up there, testing jets and training fliers for Viet Nam. . . .

HOLLOWAY

Colonel H. A. "Hard Ass" McNaughton. My dad always said he was hell on wings.

MCNAUGHTON

And on his family. Well, I told you once about my dream, but we laughed it off. That guy we met at the courthouse a couple of weeks ago said something that made me remember. He said, "It's your life now, kiddo. Fly."

HOLLOWAY

You want to be a pilot? For real? Not just for a hobby? Fantastic! All right! (Indicates brochures.) Is that what this is all about?

MCNAUGHTON

I want to train through the Air Force. I can't afford those civilian flying lessons any more, and besides, I've always liked the military--which may be why I stayed with the Major so long.

HOLLOWAY

Wouldn't the Major just shit a brick? You a pilot, after he flunked out of flight training and got reassigned to the mess hall.

MCNAUGHTON

I must admit that did occur to me.

HOLLOWAY

Go for it!

MCNAUGHTON

There are a couple of problems. One: leaving Edwina. I'll have to send her to my sister in Miami while I'm at Officer's Training. I won't get to see her those three months. But I'll make it up to her when I get back.

HOLLOWAY

Sure. What are you waiting for? Let's go sign the papers.

MCNAUGHTON

Do you think I could handle it? Honestly, now.

HOLLOWAY

(Testing MCNAUGHTON's confidence.) I don't know. I just fix 'em, I don't fly 'em. Do you think you could?

MCNAUGHTON

(After slight hesitation.) Yes.

HOLLOWAY

Then I know you could. You've been flying Cessna one-fortys --what? five months now? You ought to be able to learn to fly a T-thirty-seven. I got to warn you, though, it'll be tough just wading through the bullshit. The E. M.'s treat servicewomen like you were hired for them to bitch and ditch, and the officers are always looking to stick you behind a desk. You got to stick it to them first. Me, I treat them just like they treat me, and when that doesn't work, a ninety degree knee to the groin will. It won't be so bad for you, since you'll be an officer. You'll just have to put up with the big brass trying to get you to resign, working you double time or telling you they smell war in the air.

MCNAUGHTON

I'll tell them they just smell. Eau de chauvanist pig. But there's a bigger problem.

HOLLOWAY

Tell me and I'll find out whose strings to pull.

MCNAUGHTON

I wish it were that simple. Single parents can't join.

HOLLOWAY

But I know some single parents in my squadron.

MCNAUGHTON

They must have been married or not had the dependent when they enlisted.

HOLLOWAY

It doesn't seem fair.

MCNAUGHTON

Franklin says it's practical. If the unit had to scramble, what would happen to the children of a single serviceman? Of course I've thought about that. I'd leave Edwina with my sister, and they'd do okay. But that doesn't solve the problem of getting in.

HOLLOWAY

Let me make a few phone calls. Somebody must have a way around it. Where's your phone book?

MCNAUGHTON

With the upstairs extension.



(HOLLOWAY exits to upstairs.)

MCNAUGHTON

(Looking at a brochure.) "Captain Isabel McNaughton, cleared for take off." Don't I wish.

(HERRICK storms in.)

HERRICK

Is it true?

MCNAUGHTON

What are you doing here?

HERRICK

I warned you, Isabel, you can't turn around without me knowing about it. This had best be some sort of sick joke. (Indicates the brochures.)

MCNAUGHTON

How did you find out?

HERRICK

Benson saw you sneaking into the recruiters'. He thought it rather funny. "The little woman gonna enlist, Herrick? What's the matter, don't you pay her enough alimony, tightwad?" The General didn't find it so amusing. Are you trying to ruin me?

MCNAUGHTON

Please, Edmund, you'll wake the baby.

HERRICK

You got the house and the bank account, you're getting ample child support, but you can't be content. You've got to ruin my reputation too. First you tried to put an apron on me--

MCNAUGHTON

I wanted a little help around the house.

HERRICK

Then you try to make a jackass out of me by taking flying lessons! Flying lessons, for Chrissake! I asked you to get some professional help for your--your need to emasculate me--

MCNAUGHTON

You ordered me to take a Total Woman seminar.

HERRICK

You needed it! You obviously still do! (Slams down a brochure.) It's that damned Holloway. She got you to make a mockery of our marriage, she got you to defy me. She's making you a butch like she is. You don't know what you're doing, Isabel. You've totally destroyed my reputation and undermined my career, and now you take up with that adolescent punk--

MCNAUGHTON

What adolescent punk?

HERRICK

That clown you brought to the courthouse.

MCNAUGHTON

(Takes his flight jacket from the box.) I found this in the closet. Please take it and leave.

HERRICK

What happened to you, Isabel? You used to work with me. We earned this rank. We were climbing up the ladder together. Now you're trying to jerk the damn thing out from under me.

MCNAUGHTON

I got tired of having my hands stepped on.

HERRICK

Have your little fling. But when you come to your senses--

MCNAUGHTON

I have "come to my senses." When you threatened to send Edwina to your parents if I didn't "straighten up," I knew it was meant to be a punishment. You expected me to submit--I always do--and my transgressions would be forgiven.

HERRICK

I don't understand you any more.

MCNAUGHTON

I'm sorry, Edmund. It was my fault. Well, not exactly; I misrepresented myself. I didn't know what I wanted. Can you blame me? You remember my father.

HERRICK

He was a great man. His trainees were proud to work under him.

MCNAUGHTON

He was a powerful teacher for me, too. When I was little I thought he must be God, because he flew up into heaven every day. He used to tell me about flying instead of bedtime stories. I wanted to be like him, to be God too. But he said girls belong on the ground. He said men need us down here, to give them a reason to come back to earth.

HERRICK

That's just how it's been between you and me. You're half of me, the half that gives me purpose. I need you here, helping me so I can achieve for both of us.

MCNAUGHTON

But it finally occurred to me I don't like being your Siamese twin. I want to win too. Partly for Edwina, partly for my dad, to pick up where he left off when he was sent to Viet Nam and. . . killed there. But mostly I want to win just because it makes me feel good. I want to achieve. I want to conquer. I want to fly.

HERRICK

You've got responsibility right here. You can't be taking off to join the military. You've got a baby to take care of.

MCNAUGHTON

I won't neglect her.

HERRICK

And what about me? You realize what it's going to do to me?

MCNAUGHTON

Not much.

HERRICK

Not much? I'll never get promoted. I'll be the laughingstock of the whole base, and an embarrassment to my unit. You know how hard it was for me to get this far, past the ninety-day wonders fresh out of college who think a man's unfit for leadership if he doesn't have a degree. If I don't get promoted soon, I'll be forced into retirement. And setting a bad image of the Air Force would be just the excuse the General needs. (Throws jacket on the couch.)

MCNAUGHTON

The Air Force will survive and so will you.

HERRICK

You're destroying my career, Isabel. You're destroying yourself. I won't have Edwina growing up with a negligent mother. If you don't quit this, I'll take her. Think about it.

(HERRICK exits. MCNAUGHTON stares after him a moment, then begins to pile the brochures. Midway through she notices the jacket, picks it up, then in a sudden decisive move puts it on. It is too large, so she pushes up the sleeves. As she looks down at herself she smiles; then she sees the HERRICK name tag. She rips off the tag and tosses it. Smug, she thrusts her hands into the pockets. HOLLOWAY enters from the kitchen.)

HOLLOWAY

Was that--whoa! Excuse me, ma'am! (Salutes.)

MCNAUGHTON

(Embarrassed.) Never mind. What did you find out?

HOLLOWAY

You don't want to know. Was that the Major I heard bellowing like a bear in the woods?

MCNAUGHTON

Yes, but forget him. Let's hear it.

HOLLOWAY

You have three choices: give up custody, get married, or don't join.

MCNAUGHTON

Lovely.

HOLLOWAY

Some people get around it by turning over custody to a relative.

MCNAUGHTON

No! She's my daughter.

HOLLOWAY

You can do it on paper and still keep Edwina with you.

MCNAUGHTON

That wouldn't work at all. The court wouldn't give her to the person I picked, they'd give her to the Major, and he'd never give her back to me. Besides, giving up custody would be admitting I couldn't take care of her.

HOLLOWAY

That leaves marriage. Hey, people have married for worse reasons.

MCNAUGHTON

That's the last thing I need.

HOLLOWAY

Nobody says you have to live with him.

MCNAUGHTON

(Brightening.) Or. . . that I can't have it annuled once I'm in the Air Force. Do you know any gentlemen looking for a wife?

HOLLOWAY

Not me, sister. I keep away from that type. Husband hunting ain't my sport; dysentary's more fun.

MCNAUGHTON

We're in this together, remember? So dust off your elephant gun.

(Lights down.)

## Scene iii

(MCNAUGHTON's living room, a few weeks later. During the dim-out two MOVERS in work shirts labelled "Allendale's" come on stage and remove the furniture. One hands HOLLOWAY a paper, which she reads, then stuffs in her pocket. As they work, HOLLOWAY takes down HER-RICK's certificates and dumps them in the Salvation Army box, which she takes to the den. She returns with a newspaper. WORKERS exit. Chewing gum, HOLLOWAY sits on the floor to read the newspaper. The phone, now on the floor, rings.)

## HOLLOWAY

Damn. Not again. (Picks up the receiver.) Hello. . . . Yeah, Ralph. . . . No, she's not back yet. . . . Yes, I'll give her your message as soon as she gets in. . . . Okay. 'Bye.

(HOLLOWAY hangs up the phone and begins to read the newspaper. MCNAUGHTON, her hair mussed and clothes rumpled, enters. She is limping slightly and carrying one of her high-heeled shoes. She is tastefully dressed; even her handbag is color coordinated with her dress. When she notices that the furniture is missing, she is crestfallen but not surprised.)

## MCNAUGHTON

They came.

(HOLLOWAY silently hands MCNAUGHTON the slip of paper left by the two MOVERS.)

## MCNAUGHTON

(Reading the paper.) "Allendale's House of Fine Furnishings. Repossessed for non-payment on account: one couch with coffee table, one hutch, one rocking chair, one armchair with matching ottoman, one telephone table. See us for all your furniture needs. Easy credit terms available." (Crumples and drops the paper.)

## HOLLOWAY

The Major sure was generous. Left you the house and furniture --and the house and furniture payments.

(MCNAUGHTON sits on the floor.)

HOLLOWAY

You sure look great. What'd you do, participate in the wrestling matches at Madison Square Garden?

MCNAUGHTON

He stepped on my foot while he was trying to make a pass.

HOLLOWAY

Incomplete.

MCNAUGHTON

I almost let him.

HOLLOWAY

Fumble!

MCNAUGHTON

Him! When the Pattersons brought him over for dinner last week and I made chicken kiev, he offered to bring the wine. He brought wine all right--ripple.

HOLLOWAY

The blitz is on.

MCNAUGHTON

(Removing a notebook and pen from her purse.) I don't know why I agreed to go out with him tonight. Once was enough.

HOLLOWAY

Time for a new game plan.

MCNAUGHTON

Can the sports commentary. (Marks in notebook.) From now on, all men referred by Marilyn Patterson are automatic rejects. Which leaves the man we met at chapel last Sunday.

HOLLOWAY

I don't remember meeting any man.

MCNAUGHTON

He introduced himself as we were leaving. Remember now? We had to shout to talk to him because he'd sat on his hearing aid.

HOLLOWAY

Not much of a selection. One who can't keep his hands off, and one who can't remember where to put them.

MCNAUGHTON

Neither of them is suitable for this project.

HOLLOWAY

Meat market's kind of slow these days. Ready to listen to some practical suggestions?

MCNAUGHTON

(Drops the notebook and pen.) All right. This is taking too long. I've been dating seven weeks and haven't found a husband. I have to find one soon. In five months I'll be twenty-nine and ineligible for OTS.

HOLLOWAY

Call Ralph Nader.

MCNAUGHTON

What?

HOLLOWAY

That kid from the courthouse. Whatsisname. He called three times tonight to make sure you had his number. Besides, he's good with diapers.

MCNAUGHTON

That's not enough. The man I marry will have to be trustworthy, responsible—someone I can divorce easily. Why does that kid keep calling? What does he want from me?

HOLLOWAY

I asked him that the second time he called. He said you need him.

MCNAUGHTON

What does that mean? I need him?

HOLLOWAY

I don't know. Maybe he noticed you're sexually frustrated.

MCNAUGHTON

Forget him!

HOLLOWAY

I figured you'd say that. Well, then, the only practical thing left is, take out an ad in Singles Quarterly. Then sit back and wait for the offers to roll in.

MCNAUGHTON

You want me to sell myself, like a side of beef or a used car?

HOLLOWAY

Yeah.

MCNAUGHTON

Out of the question.

HOLLOWAY

Hey, it's the only way you're going to get a selection. It's just like ordering a pair of socks from the Sears catalogue. You send for them, you try them on, you send them back because they don't fit right. Well, you don't have to try him on. You don't have to send for him, even. Get married and divorced right through the mail.



MCNAUGHTON

I have to meet the guy, find out how willing he is to cooperate. (Begins to write.) Perhaps a discreet ad in a reputable journal, proposing a business arrangement whereby in exchange for serving as my husband (Glances at HOLLOWAY.) in name only for a certain period of time, the gentleman will receive an allotment of X number of dollars, to be negotiated. (Looks at what she's written.) What kind of reputable journal would print an ad like this? (Crumples the page.)

HOLLOWAY

What about this Tony character? Is he really a lost cause?

MCNAUGHTON

I'd rank him a notch below the Hunchback of Notre Dame and a notch above the Boston Strangler. Besides, I already asked him. He won't marry me.

HOLLOWAY

You really are at the bottom of the barrel.

MCNAUGHTON

And there's a hole in the bottom.

HOLLOWAY

Are you sure you won't call Ralph?

MCNAUGHTON

He's even further down on my list than the Boston Strangler.

HOLLOWAY

Well, I'm going to finish reading the paper while you think it over.

MCNAUGHTON

(Snatching the newspaper.) The paper! I could check the classifieds. (Flips a page.) Here, the personals. "SWM with VW van wants PYT for B and D slash S and M. Have leather upholstery and snow chains; you bring saddle." (Looks questioningly at HOLLOWAY.)

HOLLOWAY

Don't ask.

MCNAUGHTON

"Nest is empty since chick flew the coop. Need mother hen to draw me out of my shell. No one under fifty need apply. Harold." "WM wants fun-loving lady for discreet wild times. Box 500." "WM wants macho man for discreet wild times. Box 500." "Swing your partner. We're a good-looking, hot-cooking couple who'd love to bare and share it all with same. Married couples only. We have our scruples." "Need a tune-up or a lube? Call Mr. Goodwrench. Fifteen percent off on body work this week only."



HOLLOWAY

(Reaching for the pen and notebook.) What's that guy's number? Bet he's never dated a woman with her own timing device.

MCNAUGHTON

863—oh, sorry, that's in the automotives column.

(HOLLOWAY drops the pen and notebook.  
MCNAUGHTON turns a few pages.)

MCNAUGHTON

The society page. Let's see who's getting a divorce I could latch onto. (pause) Oh, listen: "Osgood Wellington IV returns . . . Harvard Business School. . . M.B.A. . . . expected to assume a vice-presidency in Wellington Enterprises." Ozzy! Why, I'd have thought he'd be married by now, but he just graduated.

HOLLOWAY

Ozzy! Who would want him?

MCNAUGHTON

Plenty of people. He's well educated, well situated—

HOLLOWAY

Well heeled.

MCNAUGHTON

Respected family, influential friends—

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, but what about the things that matter?

MCNAUGHTON

With you there's only one thing that matters.

HOLLOWAY

Right. And he ain't got it.

MCNAUGHTON

Sex appeal isn't everything. It's not what I'm looking for.

HOLLOWAY

Good, because you'd need a laser microscope to find any sex appeal in Ozzy Wellington.

MCNAUGHTON

Good old dependable puppy-dog-eyes Ozzy.

HOLLOWAY

Basset hound, to be more specific. But you're right, he was dependable. Snap your fingers and he'd roll over.

MCNAUGHTON

Exactly. I'll marry him.

HOLLOWAY

Don't you think you ought to go out with him once first?

MCNAUGHTON

Well, I guess I could have him over for dinner.

HOLLOWAY

Marry Ozzy Wellington. I'd rather suck maggots.

MCNAUGHTON

I'll have to borrow some furniture, and a decent dress.

HOLLOWAY

What's wrong with that one?

MCNAUGHTON

It's not good enough. And some china. (At HOLLOWAY's wondering look) The china was repossessed last week.

HOLLOWAY

What have you been eating off of?

MCNAUGHTON

The pans.

HOLLOWAY

Saves washing dishes, anyway.

MCNAUGHTON

I'll have to have my hair done. I can borrow some paintings from the library. I'll need some wine--Ozzy prefers imported.

HOLLOWAY

How are you going to afford all this?

MCNAUGHTON

I'll borrow some money somewhere.

HOLLOWAY

He ain't worth it.

MCNAUGHTON

Could you babysit? Take Edwina out somewhere? I can't have her here.

HOLLOWAY

Like where? Would you prefer the barracks, the NCO Club, or the motor pool?

MCNAUGHTON

It's just that Ozzy doesn't like noise.

HOLLOWAY

You hear what's happening to you? You haven't even talked to the nerd and already you're changing your life for him. Hiding your kid—geesh!

MCNAUGHTON

Just temporarily. Just until I can convince him to marry me.

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, and suppose he does marry you. You think he's going to let you join the Air Force?

MCNAUGHTON

I'm sure he wouldn't like it, but I can control him.

HOLLOWAY

Sounds like he's controlling you already.

MCNAUGHTON

It's just to impress him.

HOLLOWAY

Face it, you marry him, you're never going to fly. With a load like Ozzy on your back you'll never get off the ground.

MCNAUGHTON

I suppose you're right. Ozzy's just like the Major; he loves me only as a china doll, or an angel with clipped wings. It's just that I'm desperate. There's so little time. (DOORBELL.) I have to get married.

(MCNAUGHTON crosses to the door. WHEATLEY enters, bearing a bunch of flowers, a package of Pampers, and a guitar.)

WHEATLEY

Good evening. May I come in?

MCNAUGHTON

I don't believe so.

HOLLOWAY

Sure, Ralph, come on in.

WHEATLEY

I was waiting for you to come home.

MCNAUGHTON

You were lurking around my house, spying on me?

WHEATLEY

Actually I was lurking around the park across the street.

MCNAUGHTON

You'd better leave or I'll call the police.

HOLLOWAY

What do you want, anyway?

WHEATLEY

Don't get upset. I just wanted to bring you these.  
(Offers the flowers; she hesitates.) Aw, come on. Could  
a guy who brings flowers be all bad? There's a card!

MCNAUGHTON

(Taking the flowers.) It's a phone number.

WHEATLEY

In case you forget. (Offers the Pampers.) This is for  
Edwina. I just happened to have them lying around.

MCNAUGHTON

At the Y? What do you want?

WHEATLEY

A date. The movies—G-rated of course. If you don't get  
fresh, I'll let you buy me popcorn.

MCNAUGHTON

No, thank you. I'm busy.

WHEATLEY

The conceited, empty-headed ass again?

HOLLOWAY

She's not busy. Ask for tomorrow.

WHEATLEY

I thought you'd play hard to get, so I came prepared. (to  
HOLLOWAY) This always gets them. (to MCNAUGHTON) You  
have inspired me to write a song, milady. (Plays guitar  
and sings, to the tune of "Bicycle Built for Two.")  
Ms. McNaughton, give me your answer, do  
I'd like to call on your little one and you  
Don't take this as a come-on  
But I've gotten kinda hung-up on  
That face so sweet  
That cute little seat  
And I even like you too.

MCNAUGHTON

Get lost.

WHEATLEY

You don't like my singing?

MCNAUGHTON

I don't like you.

(MCNAUGHTON pushes WHEATLEY out.  
As she turns away, he reenters.)

WHEATLEY

I see you're uptight. No doubt you're afraid of starting a relationship. That always happens after a divorce. I know it's none of my business, but as long as I'm in the neighborhood--

MCNAUGHTON

What do you know about it? I thought I chased you out of here.

WHEATLEY

Notice how you don't have any trouble telling me how you feel?

MCNAUGHTON

I notice you don't have any trouble refusing.

(MCNAUGHTON shoves him out again.)

WHEATLEY

Whatever. I can take a hint. I'll check back with you later.

MCNAUGHTON

I don't want you to. Get out!

HOLLOWAY

Wake up and smell the coffee, Mac. There's your husband, right there. He likes you, likes the kid, needs the money, and when you dump him, he'll be cool.

MCNAUGHTON

I don't want him. (Looking at door.) I like him.

HOLLOWAY

(Not hearing the last remark.) You don't have to live with him.

MCNAUGHTON

Stay out of it. And get rid of that damn bubble gum. (Pause.) Aw, crap. All I want is his signature anyway. (Calls out the door.) Wheatley! Get out of the bushes and come in here. I have a proposition to discuss with you.

(Lights dim.)

Scene iv

(Next day. During the dim-out HOLLOWAY, WHEATLEY, and the MOVERS, now serving as WHEATLEY's pals, bring in WHEATLEY's furniture: a ratty couch and coffee table, a beanbag chair, an end table, and a folding chair. At the last HOLLOWAY brings in a sack of dishes and WHEATLEY an abstract painting, which he hangs on the wall, inspects, then rehangs on its side. WHEATLEY waves goodbye to the MOVERS, who exit. HOLLOWAY sets the dishes on the end table. Lights up. WHEATLEY plops down on the couch as MCNAUGHTON enters with EDWINA.)

MCNAUGHTON

My God. (Remembering her manners.) I really appreciate your lending me your furniture, Wheatley. I'll return it just as soon as I get mine back.

HOLLOWAY

Hey, I can see myself in your dishes, Wheatley.

MCNAUGHTON

Don't knock it. I'm beginning to prefer melmac to china. You can depend on it.

(MCNAUGHTON takes EDWINA to the den. HOLLOWAY plops down by WHEATLEY and sets her feet on the coffee table.)

WHEATLEY

Don't scratch the furniture. I might have to hock it.

(MCNAUGHTON returns with a legal pad and pen, which she hands to HOLLOWAY.)

MCNAUGHTON

(Sitting on the folding chair.) Thanks again, Wheatley.

WHEATLEY

I think it's okay for you to call me by my first name, now that we're practically engaged.

MCNAUGHTON

Don't push it, Sandy.

HOLLOWAY

(Snickers.) Sandy.

WHEATLEY

You don't like my name? Is yours any better?

MCNAUGHTON

Touche, Sandy. Hers is Bertha.

HOLLOWAY

Hey! I was named after a great aunt, okay?

WHEATLEY

So was I. Truce, Holloway?

HOLLOWAY

Truce, Wheatley. Hey, Mac, shouldn't we be getting down to this contract negotiation? I got to get back to base.

MCNAUGHTON

You don't have duty tonight, do you?

HOLLOWAY

Let's just say I want to take head count at the NCO Club.

MCNAUGHTON

I'm ready. Sandy, you know my offer.

(HOLLOWAY takes notes.)

WHEATLEY

Let me get this straight. You want the use of my name so you can join the Air Force.

MCNAUGHTON

All you have to do is sign the marriage license. That's all I want of you—your signature. After that you can do whatever you want—leave town and never come back, for instance.

WHEATLEY

Hold it. You don't get rid of me that easy.

MCNAUGHTON

No, of course not. Leave me a forwarding address and when I file for the annulment I'll contact you.

WHEATLEY

What do I get out of this?

HOLLOWAY

Money.

MCNAUGHTON

Two hundred a month. That's what the military pays for a dependent.

WHEATLEY

Two hundred a month sounds awfully cheap. We midnight cowboys usually get fifty an hour.

HOLLOWAY

Fifty an hour for you? You'd have to pay the client.

WHEATLEY

Don't judge a book by its cover. Never had an unsatisfied customer yet.

(MCNAUGHTON looks alarmed.)

HOLLOWAY

He's putting you on, Mac.

MCNAUGHTON

Are you?

WHEATLEY

What difference does it make? You only want my name, right?

MCNAUGHTON

I'd like to know what kind of name I'm getting.

WHEATLEY

Not to worry. I can be trusted.

MCNAUGHTON

(To HOLLOWAY.) Get this down. The contract should state that I, as the wife, agree to pay the husband two hundred a month while we are married, and when I terminate the marriage, nothing.

WHEATLEY

What, no alimony? Do I get the house, then?

MCNAUGHTON

Nothing.

WHEATLEY

The T. V.? Stereo?

MCNAUGHTON

Nothing.

WHEATLEY

Not even the cuissinart?

MCNAUGHTON

Nothing. (To HOLLOWAY.) Write this. While we're married, we'll retain our own individual property, so that when we divorce, there won't have to be any property settlement.

WHEATLEY

Aw, gee, I don't know if I like this deal.



HOLLOWAY

Gold-digger.

MCNAUGHTON

You leave with what you came in with.

WHEATLEY

What a bummer.

MCNAUGHTON

What do you want, then?

WHEATLEY

To start, I'll need a little more than two hundred a month.

HOLLOWAY

Take it and stop grouching. It's got to be twice as much as you make right now, doing whatever it is you do.

WHEATLEY

You're right about that. Social protest doesn't pay much these days. But my name's worth more than that. I want half of what you make.

HOLLOWAY

Don't push your luck.

MCNAUGHTON

Half!

WHEATLEY

I also want to live here while you're at officer training school. Hey, I'll be doing you a favor. I'm a terrific housekeeper. I'm careful, I'm tidy, and I'm housebroken.

MCNAUGHTON

Oh, no—

WHEATLEY

I promise, no wild parties—more than three times a week.

MCNAUGHTON

No!

WHEATLEY

Just kidding. I'll take good care of the place. I'll keep Herrick out. And there's one more thing.

HOLLOWAY

You want to use her wardrobe too?

WHEATLEY

This is the reason I want the money and the house. I want to take care of Edwina while you're gone.

(He sits back to wait for their reaction. MCNAUGHTON is horrified; HOLLOWAY doesn't believe it.)

HOLLOWAY

"Take care of Edwina"?

MCNAUGHTON

You can't be serious!

HOLLOWAY

Take care of Edwina? For three months?

MCNAUGHTON

Nobody takes my baby! I wouldn't let you touch her, you creep.

WHEATLEY

I just want to babysit her while you're gone those three months.

HOLLOWAY

Why? Who in his right mind. . . .

MCNAUGHTON

No way! I'll find somebody else to marry.

WHEATLEY

Who had you planned on leaving her with?

MCNAUGHTON

None of your business. You're not getting your hands on her.

HOLLOWAY

You know, Mac, this could be a good opportunity.

MCNAUGHTON

What?

HOLLOWAY

Your sis and her family live in Miami, right? And your OTS will be at Randolph. If you leave Edwina here with him, she'll be just a couple of hours away. You get a weekend pass, you can come home and see her.

MCNAUGHTON

I'm not about to let this adolescent punk have my baby.

WHEATLEY

Look at it as a loan.

HOLLOWAY

I'll stay here and keep an eye on him. (To WHEATLEY.) But you change the diapers.

MCNAUGHTON

You still have to be gone during the day. Anything could happen.

HOLLOWAY

If anything does, you can be home in two hours.

WHEATLEY

I have experience. I know how to change a diaper and powder a bottom, and I'm a wiz at patty cake and peek-a-boo.

MCNAUGHTON

You've got to be sick;

WHEATLEY

You mean like you? You do those things, don't you?

MCNAUGHTON

But I'm her mother.

WHEATLEY

Holloway, would you leave the room for a minute?

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, okay, but don't try the hearts and flowers stuff this time; she won't go for it. You should--

WHEATLEY

Would you leave?

HOLLOWAY

No sweat.

(HOLLOWAY exits.)

MCNAUGHTON

Well?

WHEATLEY

You're pretty, but you're not irresistible.

MCNAUGHTON

Pardon me?

WHEATLEY

And you're a pain in the ass.

MCNAUGHTON

What?

WHEATLEY

Do you think I enjoyed getting chased off every time I came here? Well, maybe I did, but that's beside the point. You're not worth that much effort.

MCNAUGHTON

Oh, really.

WHEATLEY

So why do you suppose I keep coming back?

MCNAUGHTON

To drive me crazy.

WHEATLEY

You don't need me for that. Anyway, that's not my line of work.

MCNAUGHTON

Obviously you're a child molester.

WHEATLEY

You people are so thick into your power struggles you can't see who your friends are.

MCNAUGHTON

And I suppose you're a friend?

WHEATLEY

I would be, if you'd trust your instincts about me.

MCNAUGHTON

What does that mean?

WHEATLEY

You know I'd take good care of her.

MCNAUGHTON

I don't know.

WHEATLEY

Yes, you do. You really do trust me, you know. But that's not enough for you. So if you want to, have your lawyer check my police record. He'll find a solid citizen background, except for those traffic tickets.

MCNAUGHTON

I find that hard to believe.

WHEATLEY

It would be a lot easier if you'd have a little faith.

MCNAUGHTON

Give me a reason.

WHEATLEY

Would you believe it?

MCNAUGHTON

I don't know.

WHEATLEY

And then I'd have told you something that's none of your business, for nothing.

MCNAUGHTON

What do you want with Edwina?

WHEATLEY

I want to be a mother. That's using your terms. I want to raise a family.

MCNAUGHTON

Why don't you do it the normal way?

WHEATLEY

You should be the last one to talk about the normal way.

MCNAUGHTON

I suppose so.

WHEATLEY

Look, Edwina needs a father--okay, surrogate father. You need a surrogate husband. I need a surrogate family. Maybe it's abnormal, but if it works, why not? I think what you're really afraid of is she'll get attached to me.

MCNAUGHTON

You're saying I'm jealous?

WHEATLEY

I'm saying you're possessive of her. But you know she needs to have more than one source of affection, right? And it would help if one of those sources was a male, just to balance things out. I swear, scout's honor, I just want to take care of her, not take her.

MCNAUGHTON

It's not just that. My ex-husband is looking for any excuse to prove I'm unfit so he can take Edwina. This would be a dandy one, leaving her with a stranger.

WHEATLEY

Her stepfather.

MCNAUGHTON

You aren't exactly a paragon.

WHEATLEY

I don't know. The ladies say I'm the pinnacle of ecstasy.

MCNAUGHTON

Don't get the wrong idea, but I do like you.

WHEATLEY

(Throwing himself at her feet.) Marry me then! I want to have your baby!

MCNAUGHTON

All right, but Holloway stays here too.

WHEATLEY

You aren't going to tell her to break my face the first time I give the kid a bath, are you?

MCNAUGHTON

I'll have her keep her chain saw handy, just in case. And I'm still having your record checked.

WHEATLEY

Be my guest.

(HOLLOWAY enters.)

HOLLOWAY

Are you about finished?

MCNAUGHTON

I think we've reached an agreement.

(But she looks uncertain as the curtain falls.)

## Act II

## Scene i

(MCNAUGHTON's living room, October. Set is the same as in Act I, Scene i, except that plants have been added, the black phone replaced with a pale blue French one, and on the walls are now a portrait of MCNAUGHTON in uniform, WHEATLEY's abstract painting, and a photo of WHEATLEY and EDWINA. On the coffee table are a bottle of wine and three glasses. Over the entrance to the den, which is now a nursery, is a "Welcome Home Lieutenant" banner. WHEATLEY enters from the kitchen with a rose in a vase, which he sets on the coffee table and carefully arranges. Noticing the vase has no water, he takes it back to the kitchen. A moment later HOLLOWAY and MCNAUGHTON enter, in uniform, from outside. MCNAUGHTON carries a frame and a manual.

MCNAUGHTON

Wonder where they are. (Looks in den.) Edwina's in here. I guess I should be insulted. The conquering heroine returns and he's not even here to greet me.

HOLLOWAY

He's around here somewhere. He's been looking forward to this.

MCNAUGHTON

Oh?

HOLLOWAY

Yeah. He spent most of the day cleaning house. Made me take out the garbage this morning.

MCNAUGHTON

Aww.

HOLLOWAY

He even vacuumed under the couch.

MCNAUGHTON

I'm impressed.

HOLLOWAY

He's done a good job.

MCNAUGHTON

He's done an outstanding job.

HOLLOWAY  
(Indicates the wine.) Check this out.

(MCNAUGHTON shrugs and turns to hold her frame, containing a certificate, up against the portrait of herself.)

HOLLOWAY  
"Second Lieutenant Isabel G. McNaughton, completion of Officer Training School, 12 October 1983." I knew you could do it.

MCNAUGHTON  
I barely survived the cuts, but yes, I made it, so far.

HOLLOWAY  
You might not have, without him.

MCNAUGHTON  
And you. With the two of you to fill in for me here, I was able to concentrate on my work. I knew Edwina would be all right. That was the hardest part--waiting for the pass at mid-cycle so I could fly back here for a weekend. I could take the three a. m.-runs; I could take the constant drilling over protocol and M-16 parts; I could even take the mess hall food, but I never learned to deal with homesickness. But I'm back now. Conquered the Air Force; I'm ready to take on the world.

HOLLOWAY  
Now you're talking. After the annulment you and me can cut loose and have some fun. We'll start small--take over Orion's Bar on the west side, then move downtown. I know a captain I can introduce you to. How long do you think it will take?

MCNAUGHTON  
How long will what take?

HOLLOWAY  
The annulment.

MCNAUGHTON  
I don't know.

HOLLOWAY  
A couple of weeks, maybe?

MCNAUGHTON  
I don't know. I don't know if I want an annulment.

HOLLOWAY  
You're not getting hung up on him, are you?

MCNAUGHTON  
No, I'm not interested in him like that.

HOLLOWAY  
Why the change? You agreed when you got back that would be the end of it.



MCNAUGHTON

Do you think he still wants an annulment?

HOLLOWAY

He never wanted it; he just agreed to it.

MCNAUGHTON

If he doesn't want it, why should I annul the marriage? I'll keep him around a while. He's handy around the house, as you pointed out, and as long as he's here, I know Edwina will be taken care of.

HOLLOWAY

You could just hire somebody.

MCNAUGHTON

Not as dedicated. Or as cheap.

HOLLOWAY

That's no reason.

MCNAUGHTON

It's a liberating feeling, knowing I don't have to worry about Edwina. I could hire somebody else, but Sandy's fully devoted.

HOLLOWAY

That's just it. I got to tell you something, Mac; I'm not so sure it's a good idea to keep up this arrangement.

MCNAUGHTON

You're the one who thought I should marry him.

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, well, I was wrong.

MCNAUGHTON

You were right. It's working out beautifully. Like clockwork.

HOLLOWAY

You don't know, you haven't been here. But I've been living here --(WHEATLEY enters at this point.) I'll tell you later.

WHEATLEY

You're home! Finally! Hi, Holloway.

MCNAUGHTON

Hi.

(WHEATLEY tries to hug her but she breaks away.)

MCNAUGHTON

Did you get my message about the party tonight? It's important that we both be there. It's General Tupper's birthday.

WHEATLEY

I got your message. Hey, did you get that drawing I sent you that Edwina did last week?

MCNAUGHTON

Yes.

WHEATLEY

The next Picasso, if I can get her to devote as much enthusiasm to drawing with her crayons as she has for eating them.

MCNAUGHTON

I knew she was smart. Did you pick up a gift for the General?

WHEATLEY

Yesterday. Remember I wrote you that Edwina's made friends with the two-year-old down the street? Well, I took them to the park yesterday—don't worry, I bundled her up warm—and they discovered trees together.

HOLLOWAY

Discovered trees?

WHEATLEY

Yeah. They tottered around from tree to tree, just staring up at them and eating bark.

MCNAUGHTON

That's cute. Now I know I left it up to you, but I hope you got the General something classy but not ostentatious.

WHEATLEY

Don't worry about it. It's neatly wrapped and sitting in on the kitchen counter. Unless Edwina got a hold of it and ate it.

MCNAUGHTON

Sandy! You didn't leave it in her reach!

WHEATLEY

No, of course not. Just wanted to see if you were paying attention. You didn't even ask about Edwina.

MCNAUGHTON

Oh, I'm sorry. I've been preoccupied.

WHEATLEY

You could've inquired about her health.

MCNAUGHTON

How is Edwina?

WHEATLEY

That's better. She's terrific. I just put her down for a nap. She's got a little present for you.

(WHEATLEY removes a folded piece of paper from his jeans and gives it to her.)

MCNAUGHTON

How lovely. What is it?

WHEATLEY

An airplane. Can't you tell?

MCNAUGHTON

Oh, sure. (Pockets it.)

WHEATLEY

So, home for good?

MCNAUGHTON

I'll be taking my flight training here for the next year, then a couple of months specialized training, which could be anywhere, and then I'll be assigned a duty station, which could also be anywhere.

WHEATLEY

Edwina's missed you.

MCNAUGHTON

I've missed her.

WHEATLEY

I showed her your picture every day right after her oatmeal.

MCNAUGHTON

Now she can have the real thing. Are you ready for the party?

WHEATLEY

I've been practicing my nose elevation.

MCNAUGHTON

Great. There is one thing. . . .

WHEATLEY

Yes?

MCNAUGHTON

You need a haircut.

WHEATLEY

Yeah? (Annoyed, he turns to HOLLOWAY, who pours him wine.)

MCNAUGHTON

And a shave. And that shirt I ordered for you from Browning's.

WHEATLEY

Anything else?

HOLLOWAY

Well, he's not a man, he's just a kid.

MCNAUGHTON

You're corrupted, Holloway. Like it or not, you'll never be able to look at another man as a sex object. Your love life is ruined.

(WHEATLEY, wearing a necktie over his sweatshirt, returns.)

WHEATLEY

(Posing.) Ta da! I'm ready for respectable society.

MCNAUGHTON

Sandy. Okay, I'll compromise. If you dress better, I won't say anything about your hair.

WHEATLEY

You're harder to please than ever, Bel, which is saying a lot. I think your uniform's too tight.

MCNAUGHTON

The uniform fits comfortably, thank you. I'm going to shower, then you can get ready.

WHEATLEY

I know a way we can save on your water bill. (At MCNAUGHTON's nasty look.) Just kidding.

(MCNAUGHTON exits.)

HOLLOWAY

I'm hungry. We got any Kentucky Fried left over from last night?

WHEATLEY

You finished it while you were watching "Magnum, P. I."

HOLLOWAY

Oh, yeah. Guess I'll pick up a twelve-piece bucket this time. Coleslaw or baked beans?

WHEATLEY

Baked beans. Edwina hates coleslaw.

(HOLLOWAY exits. WHEATLEY sits down, picks up a copy of Parents and begins to read. HOLLOWAY pokes her head back in.)

HOLLOWAY

Man the guns! Herrick at twelve o'clock!

WHEATLEY

Jeez.

HOLLOWAY

Don't let her tell him off till I get back. (Exits.  
From off-stage.) Sir!

HERRICK'S VOICE

You got somewhere to be, Sergeant?

HOLLOWAY'S VOICE

Yes, sir!

HERRICK'S VOICE

Be there.

HOLLOWAY'S VOICE

Yes, sir! (Laughs.)

(HERRICK, in uniform—with lieutenant colonel insignia—enters.)

HERRICK

Where's my wife?

WHEATLEY

My wife is in the shower. She just got back from OTS.  
Where have you been?

HERRICK

Training mission at Keesler. So she really went through with  
it? And she married you?

WHEATLEY

Yep. We wondered why you weren't there to catch the garter.

HERRICK

Where's the baby? Who's been taking care of her? (WHEATLEY  
grins.) You? Isabel left our baby with you?!

WHEATLEY

It's okay, I've had my shots.

HERRICK

What the hell's gotten into her, to leave a nine-month-old  
baby with you?

WHEATLEY

Actually, Edwina's thirteen months old, and Isabel checked  
me out first with the FBI, the Wichita Falls Police, and the  
Department of Health.

HERRICK

You pervert. This isn't normal. Normal men don't pretend  
they're mothers. I'm getting my kid out of here.

WHEATLEY

Huh uh.

HERRICK

What have you been doing to her?

WHEATLEY

Changing her diapers, heating her Gerber's, stacking blocks, cleaning spit-up. . . .

HERRICK

You are some kind of fruitcake.

WHEATLEY

Me and a couple of million other parents.

HERRICK

You touch her and—

WHEATLEY

It comes with the territory, you know? Kind of hard to change a kid without touching her.

HERRICK

This proves it. No fit mother would abandon her baby to some faggot.

WHEATLEY

I think the term you want is "pedophile." Sorry to disappoint you, Jack, but I'm not that kind of guy.

HERRICK

I'm taking my kid. Where is she?

WHEATLEY

Over there. Her downstairs suite.

(HERRICK moves to the baby's room.  
WHEATLEY follows with a diaper.)

HERRICK

She's coming with me.

WHEATLEY

Fine. But you'd better learn how to take care of her first. Let's start with diaper changing.

HERRICK

That's not my job.

WHEATLEY

It will be if you're going to raise her.

HERRICK

I'll get a sitter.

WHEATLEY

A sitter needs a day off once in a while, but a baby never takes a day off, if you know what I mean.

(WHEATLEY demonstrates the changing as HERRICK watches from a safe distance.)

WHEATLEY

Now, always make sure you have something under the baby. You never know what's going to happen once the diaper's off. Now just pull the diaper off. Do not leave the baby unattended--or uncovered--while you discard the diaper. This job will require a thorough cleaning.

HERRICK

My God, that's disgusting.

WHEATLEY

You'll get used to the smell. Now wash her bottom. (Offers a cloth to HERRICK.)

HERRICK

No way.

WHEATLEY

What? You're just going to leave her like that? She'll get a rash.

HERRICK

I'm not doing it.

WHEATLEY

You want to keep her? You're doing it. (Tosses the cloth at HERRICK.)

HERRICK

(Tosses it back.) Not now. I'll get my uniform dirty.

WHEATLEY

You coward. (Finishes the chore.) Now hold her while I clean up.

(HERRICK holds the baby down with one hand.)

WHEATLEY

Pick her up, you jerk. You can at least do that.

(HERRICK picks her up but holds her away from him as WHEATLEY exits.)

HERRICK

You'd better not spit up on me. (Pause.) This isn't my job, you know. Your mother should be here, instead of leaving you here with that oddball. (Pause.) If Benson or any of the other guys saw me like this, I'd be a laughingstock for a week. This isn't a man's job.

(WHEATLEY enters.)

WHEATLEY

You're improving. Not fast enough, but you're improving. (Lays EDWINA in the crib. HERRICK and WHEATLEY return to the living room.) Why do you want Edwina?

HERRICK

I told you, she's my child.

WHEATLEY

Why are you afraid of her, then? Why haven't you bothered to visit her?

HERRICK

I've been gone.

WHEATLEY

Before that. This is the first time since the divorce that you've come to see her, isn't it?

HERRICK

Her mother is supposed to be—

WHEATLEY

Don't give me that crap. Why do you want Edwina?

HERRICK

She's my child, damn it!

WHEATLEY

Don't you mean, she's your means for revenge?

HERRICK

What?

WHEATLEY

Or a way to hang onto Isabel?

HERRICK

You don't know what you're talking about.

WHEATLEY

Sure I do. Screw you, Jack. Edwina's not a leash; she's a child, and she's got to have respect and attention and clean diapers. You want this baby? All right, but you've got to give her her rights as long as you're squealing about yours. You want Isabel back? It won't work this way.



HERRICK

What the hell does that mean?

WHEATLEY

Figure it out. You're not as stupid as you act.

HERRICK

(Grabs WHEATLEY.) I could take you apart right now.

WHEATLEY

Conduct unbecoming an officer. Would it change anything?

HERRICK

(Lets him go.) What do you want with Edwina?

WHEATLEY

I'm making up for lost time.

HERRICK

What does that mean?

WHEATLEY

I care about her. I want to be around a while. I want to help her walk, teach her the names of things. I want to be a parent, and this baby needs me. She's got one parent working her tail off to make a future for them both, and another who shows up once in eight months and won't even hold her.

HERRICK

I pay ample--

WHEATLEY

Bullshit! What you send won't keep her in Gerber's for a week. Let me tell you something for your own good, Jack. I had a family and I blew it with them. I'm making up for it now. So that's what I'm doing here. Now you've got a kid here, and the only one who's going to take her away from you is you.

(HERRICK sits down, beginning to soften.

WHEATLEY

Believe me, I know how it is.

HERRICK

What do you know? You're just a kid.

WHEATLEY

I know you're afraid of losing everything at one shot. I know you feel like Isabel's showing you up, because she's got a chance at something you want but can't have. I know you feel cheated. Adam's rib's beginning to show some backbone, huh.

HERRICK

(Pours himself some wine.) Cheated, yeah, that's the word for it.

MCNAUGHTON

Well, if they ask you, tell them you're in med school or something.

WHEATLEY

I guess I could toss in a couple of "taxoplasmoses" or "gastrointestinal disturbances."

HOLLOWAY

Why tell them anything?

MCNAUGHTON

If they think Wheatley doesn't do anything it would look bad.

HOLLOWAY

Aw, hell.

MCNAUGHTON

It's part of being an officer. I have to play the game if I'm going to get my first lieutenant's bars. Being good isn't good enough. If it gets around that Wheatley is a househusband--

WHEATLEY

Child caretaker.

MCNAUGHTON

--That he doesn't have a job, I'll be a laughingstock. I'll never get promoted.

WHEATLEY

(Hands her some wine.) I'll help you out, if it's what you want.

MCNAUGHTON

Thanks. (It strikes her that she's heard this conversation somewhere before.)

WHEATLEY

You look good. Happy.

MCNAUGHTON

It's the uniform.

HOLLOWAY

(To WHEATLEY.) You'd better get going. You got a lot of brass to polish tonight.

WHEATLEY

Yeah. (Exits.)

HOLLOWAY

What's with you? You're acting weird.

MCNAUGHTON

How so?

HOLLOWAY

I can see you wanting to clean him up some before you take him in front of that crowd, but telling him what to say, telling him to lie—you're pushing it, Mac. He's cool, he won't mess it up for you.

MCNAUGHTON

I can't take chances. It's too important.

HOLLOWAY

Why not? He's taking chances for you.

MCNAUGHTON

Pardon me?

HOLLOWAY

Yeah. He knew from the start he'd have to leave when you got back.

MCNAUGHTON

Maybe now he won't have to.

HOLLOWAY

Yeah, he has to. You'd better see to it. The longer he stays, the harder it's going to be. He's really attached to the kid. You know what? He introduced her in the grocery store the other day as his daughter.

MCNAUGHTON

All the more reason to keep him on.

HOLLOWAY

What's going to happen when you do decide to dump him? What if you want to get married again for real?

MCNAUGHTON

I'll worry about that then.

HOLLOWAY

By then he's going to think he really is Edwina's father—and so will she. It's going to cut them both up if you put off the annulment any longer. I don't think he should have to go through that kind of mess again. Give him a break.

MCNAUGHTON

I see. You really like him, don't you?

HOLLOWAY

He's a nice kid, when he's not being a smart ass.

MCNAUGHTON

I never thought I'd see the day when Bertha Holloway would admit she liked a man.

WHEATLEY

And to top it off, you lost your wife to some punk kid.

HERRICK

Why'd she marry you? Why'd she have to think she's got to be a pilot? It's like she did it on purpose--everything she could think of to screw me up.

WHEATLEY

I don't think she meant it like that. It just looks that way.

HERRICK

She doesn't know what she's doing. She's going to get hurt.

WHEATLEY

Maybe.

HERRICK

Can't you stop her? Make her resign, or at least not go to flight school.

WHEATLEY

I'd rather try to talk a Kennedy into not running for president.

HERRICK

You must have some influence. She married you.

WHEATLEY

I wouldn't count on it. Be cool, Herrick. However it works out, it'll work.

(MCNAUGHTON enters in uniform, minus the jacket, and brushing her hair.)

HERRICK

Isabel.

MCNAUGHTON

What are you doing here?

HERRICK

I wanted to talk to you. Benson told me you'd be getting back today.

WHEATLEY

(Rising.) Pardon me. I think I'll just. . . protect my hide.

MCNAUGHTON

Yeah, why don't you take a shower now.

WHEATLEY

I'll take Edwina, in case there are any flying obscenities-- or chairs. (Picks up EDWINA. As he passes MCNAUGHTON.) Ball's in your court, Bel. (Exits.)

(A pause. MCNAUGHTON looks at HERRICK, then turns away and sits down to brush her hair. His presence is an intrusion to her. He watches her, collecting his thoughts. He turns to look at the wall.)

HERRICK

You took down my certificates. And my portrait.

MCNAUGHTON

They didn't fit in any more.

HERRICK

Where are they?

MCNAUGHTON

In a box in the basement.

HERRICK

Guess I'll take them back with me when I leave.

MCNAUGHTON

Please do. You got promoted.

HERRICK

(Embarrassed.) Uh, yeah.

MCNAUGHTON

Uh-huh. Where are you staying now?

HERRICK

What do you care?

MCNAUGHTON

Just trying to be civil. I do care.

HERRICK

You do?

MCNAUGHTON

Sure. I couldn't have stayed with you five years if I hadn't loved you. I probably always will have feelings for you.

HERRICK

I'm glad to hear that. I just want to help you.

MCNAUGHTON

Good. Put in a good word for me with General Tupper.

HERRICK

That's like giving you the pen to sign your own suicide note.

(Sounds of a baby crying from upstairs.)

HERRICK

You don't know how hard it's going to be, Isabel. OTS was kindergarten compared to flight school.

MCNAUGHTON

I know it will be rough.

HERRICK

The quota for minorities got you in, but they'll push you so hard you'll beg them to throw you out.

MCNAUGHTON

I realize I might fail. (Calls upstairs.) Sandy! The baby!

HERRICK

You only know what you've heard. I know firsthand. I was used to military life; I was enlisted almost ten years before I got my commission. I was used to some D. I. with bad breath screaming in my face, calling me every name in the book--and some that weren't. I was used to standing in formation till my legs were numb, and then running ten miles in a pair of boots I hadn't even broken in yet. I could've handled the training, if I just could've passed the math exams. But you--it's more than you can take. You'll get hurt.

MCNAUGHTON

That's nice. After all the bad blood between us, you still want to protect me. And you're worried about me, not yourself now. I appreciate that, Edmund.

(Sounds of a thump from upstairs and more crying.)

HERRICK

You can resign. Nobody will blame you. They know it's brutal.

MCNAUGHTON

Sandy!

HERRICK

I'll help you outprocess. It won't take long--maybe a week.

MCNAUGHTON

It'll take a lot longer than that, because when I get out it'll be by retirement, not resignation. I don't want to quit. I like what I'm doing. I don't know if I'll get my wings, but I passed the preliminary exams and I lasted through OTS. I think I've got a good shot.

HERRICK

Maybe you do.

MCNAUGHTON

Thanks, Edmund.

HERRICK

Edwina's still crying.

MCNAUGHTON

I guess Sandy can't hear her over the shower.

(She exits to upstairs. HERRICK stares thoughtfully at the floor a moment, then loosens his tie. The crying stops. HERRICK looks tired; he runs his hand through his hair and sighs, glances up at MCNAUGHTON's portrait and shakes his head, then sits down and freshens his drink. In a moment WHEATLEY and MCNAUGHTON enter, the former in a shower cap and bathrobe, the latter carrying EDWINA. )

WHEATLEY

Don't worry about it. She'll be okay.

HERRICK

What's going on?

WHEATLEY

She'll have a knot on her head for a few days. And a headache.

MCNAUGHTON

Shouldn't I take her to the hospital for X-rays?

WHEATLEY

No. It's nothing to worry about. She's fine, see? (To baby.) No biggie, right, mousie? See? She's smiling.

MCNAUGHTON

(Hugs baby.) If I'd been paying more attention--if I'd gone when she called, this wouldn't have happened.

HERRICK

What's wrong with the baby?

WHEATLEY

Edwina got a little impatient, so she climbed out of her crib and went boom, didn't you, sweetie? I told you to watch that first step. Maybe next time you'll listen to your elders.

MCNAUGHTON

I should've gone. I didn't even think. I just expected you to take care of her.

WHEATLEY

You're just out of practice. Trust me, she's fine.

HERRICK

I think he's right.

(WHEATLEY and MCNAUGHTON look surprised.)

WHEATLEY

We'll watch her close, just in case. (Puts baby down in the side room.) Now back to sleep, short stuff, and no more mountaineering.

MCNAUGHTON

Should we stay home from the party?

WHEATLEY

I could. You go ahead.

MCNAUGHTON

No. Edwina's more important.

HERRICK

You need to go to that party. I could stick around—but if you see Benson, not a word about it.

MCNAUGHTON

I could tell him you're training a new recruit.

HERRICK

You got something I can read while I'm here?

(MCNAUGHTON hands him the manual; WHEATLEY offers Parents. HERRICK makes a face as he takes them.)

HERRICK

It's going to be a long night.

WHEATLEY

That's okay, Holloway will be home any minute.

HERRICK

(Sitting in the rocker.) God.

MCNAUGHTON

Sandy, I take it back. You can wear anything you want—except that.

WHEATLEY

You got it.



(WHEATLEY exits.)

MCNAUGHTON

Tomorrow we've got to have a long talk. (She follows him.)

(Lights down.)

Scene ii

(Next day. Sounds of a baby crying upstairs. MCNAUGHTON, in flight uniform, enters from outside, removes her flight jacket, then exits to upstairs. A moment later she returns with the baby.)

MCNAUGHTON

Looks like Mommy got back from formation just in time. We'll spend the whole day together, okay? Maybe we'll go to the park, just you and me. We'll have the whole week together; I don't have to go in for training until next week. Now you get a little more sleep, and then we'll play. (Puts the baby in the side room.) Shh. Let's not wake up Sandy. Go to sleep now. Mommy has to think.

(WHEATLEY, half asleep, enters.)

WHEATLEY

Where is she? I heard her crying. Oh, did you--is she down here?

MCNAUGHTON

Go back to bed.

WHEATLEY

I should check on her.

MCNAUGHTON

I told you last night, I'll take care of her now.

(WHEATLEY moves to the side room anyway. MCNAUGHTON blocks him.)

MCNAUGHTON

She's okay.

WHEATLEY

Okay, okay, don't get nasty. Why the snit? (Lies on couch.)

MCNAUGHTON

I'm not in a snit. I'm just--trying to think. Go back to your room and go to bed.

WHEATLEY

I can't sleep once I've been up. You want to talk?

MCNAUGHTON

(Sitting.) Not yet.

WHEATLEY

Okay.

MCNAUGHTON

Stop staring at me.

WHEATLEY

Okay. (Looks at the ceiling.)

MCNAUGHTON

Stop that stupid smiling!

WHEATLEY

Okay. (Frowns.)

MCNAUGHTON

And stop being so damned agreeable!

WHEATLEY

I'll try to be a little more disagreeable! Come on, what's the problem?

MCNAUGHTON

(After a pause, more congenially.) You were great at the party last night.

WHEATLEY

Hey, what can I say?

MCNAUGHTON

You threw those stuffed shirts for a loop, especially the wives.

WHEATLEY

Naturally.

MCNAUGHTON

I was uncomfortable, but you handled it beautifully. I didn't know where I belonged. I used to belong on the wives' side of the room, talking about bridge tournaments and grass stains. But now I don't belong there, but I don't belong on the men's side, either. I try to ask them about the military budget or Lebanon, and they just smile and say, "How's the baby?"

WHEATLEY

I know what you mean. I tried for half-an-hour to get Mrs. General Geralnik to give me her recipe for chicken tetrazzini, but she kept asking me whether I thought Joe Montana would be the next Rosey Grier. I still don't know what she meant by that.

MCNAUGHTON

How can I get them to accept me?

WHEATLEY

Don't worry. They'll soon come to see you as a pair of gold bars, instead of a pair of nice legs.

MCNAUGHTON

Thanks. You've been a big help to me.

WHEATLEY

Must be my charisma.and natural good looks.

MCNAUGHTON

Will you be serious? I'm trying to tell you something important.

WHEATLEY

You're not after my body again, are you? Because if you are, it's not in my contract. I'll have to charge you extra.

MCNAUGHTON

(Offers a quarter.) This ought to cover it.

WHEATLEY

Keep it. For you, first one's on the house.

MCNAUGHTON

We have to talk.

WHEATLEY

If it's about that starch in your slips--

MCNAUGHTON

Sandy, the contract's been fulfilled. (He ignores the remark.) Did you hear me? We've met all the requirements. You can leave now. I'll see my lawyer tomorrow and take care of the annulment. You don't have to do a thing but sign the papers.

WHEATLEY

They make it easy, don't they?

MCNAUGHTON

You've done a marevelous job with Edwina. I want you to know how much I appreciate it. You've cared for her as if she were your own child.

WHEATLEY

I feel like she is.

MCNAUGHTON

Please feel free to come by and visit her.

WHEATLEY

Gee, thanks.

MCNAUGHTON

We'd be glad to have you.

WHEATLEY

Is this the brush-off?

(WHEATLEY throws himself at her feet melodramatically.)

WHEATLEY

Darling, darling! How can you cast me aside? After all we've been to each other, after all the nights of passion, the mornings of tender intimacy—

MCNAUGHTON

Oh, yeah? Funny how those things slipped my mind.

WHEATLEY

Darling! Don't do this, I beg you!

MCNAUGHTON

Cut it out.

WHEATLEY

(Resuming his seat.) Do you really want to quit now?

MCNAUGHTON

I'm not quitting anything. I don't need to be married any more. Besides, I'm sure it's cramped your style with the ladies.

WHEATLEY

Naw, it only makes things easier. The ladies think I must be the sensitive type.

MCNAUGHTON

There's no point in continuing.

WHEATLEY

I like it this way. Don't you?

MCNAUGHTON

No, not exactly. I mean, I like talking to you, I like the way you are with Edwina, I like having you around.

WHEATLEY

Well then?

MCNAUGHTON

There's just no need for us to be married any more.

WHEATLEY

Then let's stay together because we like it.

MCNAUGHTON

I think I need to be alone a while. On my own. See? When I was the housewife, I had Edmund to tell me what to do, how to act, how to look—

WHEATLEY

You mean, like telling you to cut your hair or wear certain clothes?

MCNAUGHTON

Yes. Then when I became the breadwinner, I tried to turn you into my angel in the house.

WHEATLEY

It'll just take some adjustment.

MCNAUGHTON

I don't think so. (Takes a checkbook from her pocket.) I want to give you something extra for taking such good care of Edwina.

WHEATLEY

(Slaps it out of her hand.) God damn it! God damn it all to hell! I didn't mind it when you wanted me to play shirt-and-tie apple polisher, but you're not going to buy me off too!

MCNAUGHTON

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to insult you.

WHEATLEY

You still don't believe me, do you? I told you when I signed that stupid contract I was getting into this because I wanted a family and I knew you needed my help. But you never believed me. Dammit, Bel, first you thought I wanted to kidnap Edwina, then when I proved that wrong, you thought I wanted your money. If it was money I wanted, I wouldn't have bothered with you. (Takes a booklet from his jeans and tosses it at her.)

MCNAUGHTON

What's this?

WHEATLEY

It's Edwina's.

MCNAUGHTON

It's a savings book. You did this?

WHEATLEY

During those three months you were gone, I socked away fifty a month out of what you sent home. It's the best I could do, after I paid all of your bills. Your house payments are ridiculous.

MCNAUGHTON

I'm sorry I doubted you, Sandy.

WHEATLEY

Good! Can I stay?

MCNAUGHTON

No. It's not good for either of us. All we did was switch roles around. I took over the Major's, you took over mine. It's not right.

WHEATLEY

No, it's not, but that doesn't mean what we want is wrong.

MCNAUGHTON

No, but we're wrong together. I can't be with someone right now. Maybe in a few years, after I've outgrown role playing.

WHEATLEY

I can understand that. How about if we get a divorce and just shack up?

MCNAUGHTON

No! Why is it so important for you to stay? There's never been anything between us. . . has there? Because if there is, I'm afraid we got our signals crossed. I don't feel . . . in love with you. . . .

WHEATLEY

No, it's not like that.

MCNAUGHTON

Then why are you so bent on staying?

WHEATLEY

(Angry.) Okay, if you think you've got to hear it. When I was eighteen, my girlfriend got pregnant. She was seventeen. I wanted to do the right thing, so I had her move in with me. My parents disowned me then; they said I was throwing my life away and that was the last act of rebellion they'd put up with from me. When the baby was a couple of months old, my girlfriend booked. Couldn't handle it, I guess. I wasn't much help; I'd been trying to figure a way to get out of it myself. I hated the whole thing—my girlfriend for caging me, the baby for keeping me there. So she left, and I had to take care of the kid myself. She was gone about four months. I hated it at first, but I will admit, I thought me raising a kid by myself would be a great way to screw society. After a while I started to like it. My kid had a real personality; demanding as hell, but she always looked at me like she was trying to soak me in. You know; Edwina looks like that.

MCNAUGHTON

Yes.

WHEATLEY

Well, but after my girlfriend came back, I lost the kid. My girlfriend's family put her up for adoption. I didn't say anything; I knew it was the best thing.

MCNAUGHTON

I'm sorry.

WHEATLEY

No big deal. That was a long time ago. But that's why I want to stay.

MCNAUGHTON

I wish I could let you. But for all of us, I have to stop it here. If you're here, I'll use you, ruin both of us. I like us too much to let that happen.

WHEATLEY

(Hopefully.) I could live in the basement, go in and out the back door. You'd never know I was here.

MCNAUGHTON

(Hugs him.) Goodbye, Sandy.

WHEATLEY

I can take a hint. I'll get my stuff.

(WHEATLEY exits to upstairs. MCNAUGHTON rises and paces, considering her decision. She stops to look at the portraits of herself and WHEATLEY with EDWINA, then noticing her flight jacket, picks it up and looks at it thoughtfully. She moves to the side room, still holding the jacket, and looks in on EDWINA. Then she places the jacket over the back of the arm chair, runs her hand over it, and looks sad but peaceful. WHEATLEY returns with a duffle bag.)

WHEATLEY

See ya, Bel.

(He exits. MCNAUGHTON stares after him. A moment later there is a knock on the door. MCNAUGHTON starts for the door but WHEATLEY breezes on in.)

WHEATLEY

Good morning, ma'am. I understand you need a babysitter. I'm here to apply for the job.

MCNAUGHTON

What experience have you had?

WHEATLEY

I was a babysitter and housekeeper for three months for a pilot and her infant daughter.



MCNAUGHTON

Of course I'll have to check your references.

WHEATLEY

Naturally.

MCNAUGHTON

And I'm not interested in a live-in sitter.

WHEATLEY

Understood.

MCNAUGHTON

And I only need a babysitter, nothing more.

(HOLLOWAY enters, in white t-shirt and fatigue pants, and carrying a cup of coffee. She has just awakened.)

WHEATLEY

I won't let you take advantage of me.

MCNAUGHTON

(After a pause.) When can you begin?

WHEATLEY

Now.

MCNAUGHTON

We'll give it a try. Set down your bag. Let's get acquainted. Have some coffee. (Takes HOLLOWAY's cup and offers it to him.) I'm Isabel McNaughton, flier. And you?

(MCNAUGHTON offers her hand and HOLLOWAY watches in confusion as the lights go down.)

## Critical Apparatus

Writing the play was the easy part. Justifying my own ways is more difficult. I am reluctant to attempt a cold-blooded criticism of a piece for which I spent three years in a semi-rational state; I would prefer to drop it in the laps of an audience without the traditional "be kind to the poet" prologue. I am of Congreve's mind, who would step aside and let the audience and the play confront each other without interference: "He owns, with what toil he wrote the following scenes,/ But if they're naught ne'er spare him for his pains. . . . So save or damn, after your own discretion." But then, in the epilogue, the "passive poet" can't resist just one plea for a softer judgment and just one comment on his work, lest he be misunderstood--and perhaps even sued for libel: "So poets oft do in one piece expose/ Whole belles assemblees of coquettes and beaux."

Congreve couldn't help it, and neither can I. The desire to expound upon one's work seems especially strong among playwrights, perhaps because this form, more than any other, has such a disparate audience, from those who plunk down their pennies for a place in the pit to those who toss out double- and triple-digit bills for a seat in the balcony. As Congreve stated in his caution to the audience for The Way of the World, it's impossible to please them all, although a few writers, like Shakespeare, come close. And so the writer

may be compelled to explicate or defend his/her play, and the compulsion is even stronger when the writer is him/herself a work-in-progress and would be treated more leniently on that basis.

And so, mea culpa, and I cry you mercy.

To begin with a definition: Flying is a traditionally structured, light, domestic comedy. To address the former: I was trained first by the movies, then by Professor Norman Fedder, and then by a succession of the master and less-than-master playwrights, from Shakespeare to Simon. Thus, Flying has, as an audience would expect, a beginning, a middle, and an end; rising action and a brief falling action; a compounding of complications in each scene; and unity in story line and characters--although the other neoclassic unities are violated, for which, I hope, Johnson would forgive me. This violation of the unities of time and place has become in itself a sort of tradition, born of necessity among English dramatists, who have tended to concern themselves with tracing a character's growth over time, while the French masters were more interested in exposing a character's weaknesses, which can be accomplished in one incident.

The plot of Flying progresses in this fashion: McNaughton wants to find a career that will provide both a sufficient income and an opportunity to test and prove herself; in short, she wants economic and emotional independence, which she has never experienced, having always been under someone else's care. When the more practical and less

appealing routes fail, she decides to follow the impractical: her childhood ambition, recently recalled to her mind by a stranger's comment, to become an Air Force pilot. But two obstacles immediately arise: the Air Force regulation prohibiting the enlistment of single parents and the interference of Herrick, McNaughton's envious, chauvinistic, and explosive ex-husband. The Air Force is the easier to dispatch; after a few months of searching for a husband "in name only," McNaughton contracts a platonic, short-term marriage with Wheatley, the perceptive but flippant stranger.

The negotiations are impeded, however, by Wheatley's insistence that he be installed as a live-in babysitter, a demand that McNaughton finds unnatural but that her sidekick Holloway finds useful. With Holloway's urging and Wheatley's assurances, McNaughton is persuaded to proceed with the arrangement. With some reservations, she leaves the baby in Wheatley's care while she undergoes basic training—and a gradual change of heart; for when she returns and finds all is well, she decides to continue the convenient arrangement, despite Holloway's protestations that Wheatley and the baby will become too attached to each other.

Only after a near accident with the baby shows McNaughton her insensitivity does she confront the final obstacle: her own immaturity. She realizes that she is not yet capable of a role-free relationship and therefore must terminate the marriage, although she will allow Wheatley to continue as babysitter.

The problem of Herrick is never completely resolved-- he will continue to prove an interference--but after heated arguments with first Wheatley and then McNaughton, he softens up a bit, learning to tolerate his ex-wife's untraditional career choice and to keep his views on men serving as "mothers" to himself.

So much for the mechanics of Flying. Expectations are raised and answered; a complete story is told. I have since come to suspect that such a plan may become routine if strictly adhered to, much like a shooting gallery where tin ducks are knocked down one at a time until none remain, and I offer as evidence Neil Simon's career. Simon's early works became such popular and critical successes that, instead of experimenting and growing, he has opted to imitate himself, producing a flock of tin ducks--decoys, at that.

While the structure of Flying, then, is nothing new, the characters and themes are more interesting. The key word for me in writing and explicating the play is "integration," a concept that leapt out at me while I was studying the Romantics, particularly Coleridge. I do not profess to fully understand Coleridge's theory of the imagination; I have taken it to mean that the primary imagination works on instinct, gathering impressions, while the secondary imagination imposes reason on them. This is probably a gross simplification, but from there comes the spirit of Flying.

Integration was the creative process: I incorporated changes suggested by Norman Fedder, who directed the play when it was produced at Kansas State University, and by the cast, and I picked up on themes and motifs introduced by other writers; for example, the metaphor equating melmac with down-to-earth personalities (I, iv) was inspired by Shirley Jackson's use of brightly colored plates as a symbol for the owner's cheery personality in "The Flower Garden."

Integration is the impetus behind McNaughton's decisions in the play. Her career choice comes as an attempt to combine a childhood ambition with a pressing present need, and a personal wish for conquest with a familial sense of honor and duty, passed on to her by her father. Her acceptance of Wheatley as primary caretaker for her child is a result of his speech urging her to let instinct as well as reason, imagination as well as intellect, inform her decision--an idea I lifted from the Romantics. Her decision to terminate the marriage, on the surface a disintegration, is necessary to provide her with time and opportunity to integrate her own personality, that is, to pull together the sensitive, domestic, easily led McNaughton she was in the beginning of the play with the insensitive, sophisticated, ambitious leader she has become after Officer's Training School. She has come to realize that neither personality by itself will allow her to participate fully in a relationship, be it male-female or parent-child, nor is either

reflective of her true nature; rather, it takes both halves—the male and the female, the yin and the yang, the id and the superego—whatever one wants to call them—to form the soul. The contrary forces in our nature must be recognized and consulted, as they have equal worth. It's that tension that keeps us growing, and it's that striving for balance between them that keeps us whole.

Wheatley has known this all along; he is an integrated personality, but he has been thwarted by a society of soul dividers and frustrated by his inability to find a place for himself where he can openly express his "feminine" side, hence his anti-social behavior. The secondary characters, Holloway and Herrick, have both suppressed their softer sides to adopt a military mentality, Holloway for self-protection and Herrick for the proper Air Force image that will lead to his advancement. Through exposure to Wheatley, Holloway learns she can let down her guard a little; maybe some men can be trusted, after all. But it takes Wheatley, McNaughton, and Edwina to reach Herrick. He will continue to dominate, to bully, to categorize people—including himself—by gender, but by the end of the play he has decided the embarrassment of revealing a need to be tender is outweighed by the opportunity to participate fully in his daughter's upbringing.

And integration was my purpose. My favorite writers at the time I began Flying were Shakespeare, Dryden, Twain, and Dickens; as I wrote, I began to understand their appeal for me.

Becoming acquainted with the plays of Shaw solidified my conviction that literature has a two-pronged potential: entertainment and education. The best works--the ones that not only are pinched and poked at by scholars playing doctor (sometimes M. D., sometimes psychoanalyst) but are also public favorites--are those which communicate on both levels; that is, they work on both emotions and minds--and adroitly. To borrow a metaphor from Fielding, we need the meat, but we must have the sauce for flavoring. And that's why I chose comedy: it makes a tasty sauce.

But a cook who wants to feed a large number of gullets has to be careful to not make the sauce too spicy or too bitter, as Swift is wont to do, nor too thin, as Simon, Coward, and, unfortunately, many others do. When one has the public eating out of one's hand, one really ought to take advantage of it. Shakespeare does this so well; Henry IV, Part I, for instance, gives us lessons in history, psychology, politics, military science, medicine, language, and home economics (marriage, child development, and manners)--a truly across-the-curriculum approach, and yet the entertainment value of the play never suffers for it. Shakespeare did have a few clinkers, of course, but he is the undisputed Colossus of literature, with a foot solidly planted on each shore. Shaw at times--for instance, Man and Superman--comes close, but shifts his weight toward education.



The need to integrate education and entertainment is especially strong now, when the world needs to be educated out of its apathy, when the public has fallen away from reading, and when word has gotten around that if it's a classic, it's highbrow, and therefore no fun (my parents still chide me for reading Dickens, that "dry stuff"). It may be too late to win back the masses to reading, or to convince them that despite the difficult language, Shakespeare is fun, but the popularity of television and film suggests the dramatic arts still have a chance, as they did in the Bard's day, of reaching the public. And so that's why I chose to write plays.

My admiration for the social critics has led me to feel an obligation to write propaganda. I would not go so far as to say, with Shaw, that all art is propaganda, but I would suggest that, in the broad sense of the word, it ought to be. A good play, or a good book, ought to make one consider change. Comedies are prime shakers and movers, since, as Walter Kerr has pointed out, comedy looks man straight in the eye and shows him plainly what a fool he is. Aristophanes must have made his audiences squirm when he insulted their gods in The Birds and made fun of their sexual urges and their noble wars in Lysistrata.

And here is where comedy can be more useful, at least to modern audiences, than tragedy, for it cashes in on the audience's desire to identify with characters close to their own experience. We may learn something about psychology

through studying a MacBeth or an Othello, but the man in the penny seats is more likely to see himself and learn something about himself through a Falstaff, an Orgon, a Horner, or a Jack Tanner—a character whose desires are not unlike his own, whose flaws originate from within rather than from the gods, whose speech and ideas are recognizable, and whose situations are ones anyone might stumble into.

And when it comes to domestic comedies, there's where the lesson hits home. It must be more than just coincidence that so many of the most capable and most popular dramatists have chosen to write about the foibles of family members, particularly spouses. The Romans did it; the Greeks did it; the French and the British did it; and even Americans, who as yet lack a great comic playwright, do it. Comedy of manners, in which the sexual and financial escapades of the upper class are exposed, was especially powerful in Europe and Britian, from Moliere to Congreve to Shaw. The democratic system hasn't left sufficient space for comedy of manners to develop in America, but comedies of marriage are as popular and numerous as ever, lending themselves readily to audience identification and to conflict based on intense love/antagonism relationships.

Flying is in good—and not so good—company.

And I think experienced audiences will see something of the comic conventions in the characters of Flying. Holloway, the smart aleck sidekick whom Wheatley tones down, can claim as her ancestors the clever, wisecracking slaves in Old Comedy

and servants in Restoration comedy, and the shrew Kate who is "tamed" by an equally clever man. Herrick is kin to Moliere's Arnolphe and Wycherley's Pinchwife, in that all three worry that the socially unacceptable behavior of their wives (specifically, adultery for the former two and McNaughton's career for the latter) will ruin their reputations, and hence try to keep the women locked in. McNaughton has foremothers in Lysistrata, the gentle wife and mother who steps out of domesticity and into battle gear to wage a war of wills against men; Major Barbara, the naive but determined young woman who learns to accept reality; and the many women who, like Viola and Rosalind, don masculine attire to free themselves of social restrictions on women. Wheatley's lineage goes back to Chrysalde, who urges tolerance and flexibility in an imperfect world; Prince Hal, who redeems himself from a bad reputation; and Michael Dorsey of the film Tootsie, who discovers his "feminine" side after dressing as a woman to get an acting job.

The difference between those characters and the ones in Flying is, generally speaking, in authorial stance. Comic playwrights tend to scorn their characters, since, according to Walter Kerr, it's hard to laugh at someone one has taken to heart. But it can be done: Pisthetairos, Benedick and Beatrice, and Jack Tanner are examples of characters we know and love anyway. And when we love them, we are more

inclined to identify with them. Few of us would admit to seeing Volpone or Tartuffe in ourselves, yet many of us will, with an embarrassed laugh, say of Falstaff, "Mon semblable,—mon frere!" As Shaw declared, "To laugh without sympathy is a ruinous abuse of a noble function." Besides, it's downright pessimistic and less effective as propaganda.

So I struggled to make all four characters in Flying sympathetic and recognizable, yet exaggerated enough to be comic. McNaughton and Wheatley were easy, but Herrick and Holloway, although they were secondary characters, needed to explain themselves to win hearts. As their motives were revealed they became less stereotypical. My intention was achieved when the actor portraying Herrick told a reporter for the college newspaper, "I get a lot of flashbacks to my own service time through my character."

Whether my intentions for the play as a whole are achieved—whether the choices I have made in its structure, tone, plot, and characterization were the right ones—can only be determined by the audience. Flying is meant to both entertain and educate; the recipient must decide if it succeeds.

"So save or damn, after your own discretion."

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FLYING

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

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Abstract. When the two-act comedy opens, Isabel McNaughton is divorcing Major Herrick, which leaves her and her infant without support. To fulfill her financial and emotional needs, McNaughton tries to enlist as an Air Force pilot, a dream she has had since childhood, but is impeded by a regulation prohibiting single parents from enlisting and by her jealous ex-husband, who had flunked out of flight school early in his career. McNaughton contracts a platonic marriage with Wheatley, a young, self-proclaimed social reformer. While McNaughton undergoes basic training, Wheatley babysits, with McNaughton's hard-boiled friend Holloway as chaperone. Herrick, perceiving this as unnatural, threatens to take the baby, but Wheatley calls his bluff, then shows him his possessiveness and chauvanism will damage his relationship with the child later on. Distraught, Herrick admits to McNaughton his anger stems from fear of losing his family and his position, but comes to realize he must adapt to the changes to preserve what is really important to him. When McNaughton finds herself becoming as domineering and insensitive as her ex-husband, she realizes she needs more time on her own before she can handle an egalitarian relationship, and so terminates the marriage but allows Wheatley to continue as babysitter.