

ATTACK OF THE FAG MONSTERS

A Play in One Act

by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

BEVERLY, A Director
MICHEL, His Assistant
KELLY, A Playwright
KIM, His Assistant
RHONNIE, A Producer
JO, Her Assistant
SAM, A Stage Manager
JODY, An Actor
B.B., A Designer
TERRY, A Theatre Manager

TIME

Now.

PLACE

An Off-Off-Broadway Theatre in New York City.

(Lights up. No set. JODY sits on a battered metal folding chair)

JODY

He shot it. His full load, right in my face. I couldn't breathe at first; the hot, white curds dripping from my lips. "Daddy, why?" I sputtered. "Oh, baby, spread it open for me. Give me that little rosebud. It's all for me, my baby." "But it's wrong, Daddy, it's wrong..." I could feel my hot tears streaming, mixing with the hot... hot tears mixing... Shit, sorry, I'm gonna start again, okay?

(BEVERLY enters from the audience)

BEVERLY

Actually, luv, I was going to stop you anyway. The material: what is it?

JODY

Oh, um, it's from the screenplay to the... it's the final scene...

BEVERLY

First of all, darling, why would you...? This is a stage play, you know.

JODY

Mmmmm. Yeah.

BEVERLY

So, sorry, what movie?

JODY

It's from "Daddy's Angel"? It's from the final scene? When Shauna has the breakdown in her therapist's office?

BEVERLY

Mmmmm. And why would you choose material that was written for a woman, luv?

JODY

Oh. Well, umm... I really connected to it. Let me just finish. This is a gay play, right? I thought it would still work.

BEVERLY

Mmmmm. Well, great. I think that's all I need to see right now.

JODY

Can I just start again, please?

KELLY

(Enters) Beverly, can I just jump in here? I'd like to hear him read from the play, if we could.

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BEVERLY

(Glares) Um, no, luv, I don't really need that at this point.

KELLY

Well, you see, I've told Jody that the monologue was just a formality, really.

BEVERLY

Hmmmm.

(A long pause)

JODY

Sorry, I... um... is this where you want me to take off my clothes?

KELLY

Oh, no, no, no, no, no. I mean, the side - the scene will give you the opportunity, um, if you feel comfortable enough, I mean, if the moment happens, it's in the scene...

BEVERLY

Thanks, but I don't need you to read the scene. Thanks. Thank you. Sam, could you send in who's next?

SAM

(Enters) There is no next.

BEVERLY

Sorry.

SAM

He's it. The seven-fifty appointment didn't show.

BEVERLY

Well, what about the one that came late? The seven-thirty?

SAM

He read the sides and then left.

BEVERLY

Oh. Well, send... um, just send this one out, please, Sam.

(SAM takes JODY off)

God, actors today are becoming more unprofessional by the second. I used to read for anything. ANYTHING.

JODY

Thanks, it was great meeting you.

BEVERLY

Yes, luv. I mean, why do they all have cellphones and not use them? Well, who the hell else are we supposed to see for this role?

KELLY

Actually, Beverly, I really think he... I um... I want to read him.

Are you fucking him?
BEVERLY

No. God, no.
KELLY

He's a friend?
BEVERLY

No. Um, well, not really. See, I wrote a lot of this play
at the coffee bar on Greenwich. And he, um, works there.
KELLY

Yes?
BEVERLY

And he was really great about reading stuff through for me.
Giving me comments and stuff.
KELLY

And if I needed someone to make me a latte, I'm sure he'd be
brilliant. But I need someone who can act. Have you seen
him act? Really, has ANYBODY seen him act? His resume
appears to be mum on the subject. Oh, I see he played
"Xanadril" in a Merck-Medco industrial. Whatever the hell
that is.
BEVERLY

(SAM enters and begins setting up
several folding chairs)

I promised him that if the play ever got produced, I'd at
least let him read for it.
KELLY

So you want to take up my time, everybody's time, for a
promise you made after too much caffeine?
BEVERLY

(Enters) May I say something, Bev?
MICHEL

Ah! Another country heard from!
BEVERLY

Aren't you both from the same country?
SAM

An expression, luv.
BEVERLY

I've been to that coffee bar. He's really very good.
MICHEL

Pardon me, did I just wake up on another planet? Are we
seriously talking about casting someone based on the way he
steams milk?
BEVERLY

MICHEL

No, no, hear me out, cunt.

(SAM bristles. KIM enters)

KIM

(To SAM:) Can I help you with anything?

SAM

Hmm. A gentleman. Yeah, bring in the big table from backstage.

MICHEL

I think he's got a quality that's very right for what Kelly has written. And Kelly says he's heard him read. And he's got the body for it, God knows.

BEVERLY

I don't see what his body matters if he can't act.

MICHEL

I might differ with you there, luv.

KELLY

I don't think he's gay, though.

MICHEL

I'm not so sure.

BEVERLY

Oh, of course he is.

KIM

God, this table weighs a ton.

SAM

So those muscles are, basically, cosmetic? Ugh, never send a man to do a woman's job.

(SHE drags the table into place. B.B. enters and sits at the table, opens a portfolio)

Didja see those Tony nominations?

KELLY

Ugh. Why don't they just put them all in a crate and send them directly to London? (To BEVERLY:) No offense.

BEVERLY

None taken, luv. It takes no courage to come over here with a hit and then go running back home once it's over. They should give to awards to those who stay.

KELLY

They do. They're called Oscars.

SAM

Beverly, I can only find five chairs.

BEVERLY

Yes? And?

SAM

Well, there are six of us.

BEVERLY

Oh. Well, Kelly can sit in the house, he doesn't need to be at table.

KELLY

Beverly, this is Kim. Kim is, um, he's going to be my assistant. So I'd like him to be here for this.

BEVERLY

Well, fine, but he'll have to sit in the house, too.

KIM

It's very nice to meet you.

BEVERLY

Yes. Sam, dear, I asked for a yellow pad, not this gray thing you've handed me.

SAM

Sorry, Beverly, my wand is broken. You'll have to make do.

KIM

I'm Alex's friend? We spoke on the phone once?

KELLY

And this is Beverly's, um... This is Michel.

MICHEL

I assist Beverly as well.

KELLY

Yeah, but I bet YOU get to sit at the table.

KIM

Nice to meet you as well.

SAM

(To KELLY:) Beverly's assistant? What is that, an abbreviation for "takes it up the assistant"? We've got a budget of three dollars and fifty-nine cents, and he's got an assistant. I'm recycling glow tape from a show I did two seasons ago, and he's got an assistant.

KIM

I really don't think I should be here.

KELLY

No, I want you here.

KIM

I don't need to be here yet. Once rehearsals start, then you can bring me in. I'll be at the place on the corner.

Okay. I love you. KELLY

(Kisses him)

Uh-huh, me too. KIM

(KIM exits)

(To KELLY:) So who is Beverly, exactly? SAM

What do you mean? KELLY

Who is he? Or, rather, who was he? Or, rather, who does he think he was? SAM

Are you kidding? He got a Tony nomination. KELLY

Yeah. Sure. When? SAM

I don't remember. Sometime in the '80's. KELLY

He's that old? SAM

He was in his twenties. He was a wunderkind. KELLY

Hmmm. I was wondering. SAM

(KELLY exits)

(To BEVERLY:) Bobby called; she's stuck in Branson with Lola. So we'll have to do this without her.

A production meeting without the lighting designer? Smashing. BEVERLY

So why am I here? B.B.

No, we can manage, I suppose. Have you got my tea, luv? BEVERLY

Sorry, Bev. MICHEL

(HE gives him a thermos and a paper bag)

B.B.

So I design something that's predominately rust and then she lights it in amber. That'll be pretty.

BEVERLY

Well, you're here first, so you get dibs on the color palette, how's that?

(TERRY enters from the lobby)

TERRY

Excuse me, is Kelly here?

SAM

I think he's in the back.

TERRY

Could I see him a sec?

SAM

I think he's counting instruments.

TERRY

Well, could you go get him?

SAM

(Shouts off:) Kelly?? Terry!!

KELLY

(Entering) Yeah, Terry, what is it?

TERRY

(Pulls him aside) We've got a problem.

KELLY

Yeah?

TERRY

I remember specifically telling you, and, as a matter of fact, it's spelled out in the contract, that no food is to be brought into the theatre. In fact, there's a notice posted in the lobby to that effect.

KELLY

Uh-huh. We don't have any food in here.

TERRY

Well, your director has a thermos of coffee with him.

KELLY

Oh. Sorry. Um, Beverly, you're gonna have to drink your coffee in the lobby.

BEVERLY

It's tea.

KELLY

We can't bring food in the theatre.

BEVERLY
Oh, I see. Tea is food, is it?

TERRY
We have a vermin problem.

BEVERLY
You have tea-drinking mice?

TERRY
Well, they're attracted to the sugar.

BEVERLY
Sweet & Low. Are they on diets, these mice?

TERRY
Well, we have a roach problem too. They're attracted to liquid of any kind. So please.

BEVERLY
Oh, I see.

TERRY
And in fact the sign in the lobby says "No Beverages" as well, so...

(HE stomps off)

KELLY
Sorry, Beverly.

(KELLY returns offstage)

BEVERLY
No, I have no doubt he knows exactly what roaches are attracted to. So this means, what? For the scene in the restaurant they'll be miming their salads? Using imaginary vinaigrette?

SAM
Jeez, "We've got a problem." What, is he working for Houston ground control?

BEVERLY
Can we start, or are we waiting for someone else who isn't going to show?

SAM
Oh, yeah, sorry, Beverly, but the sound designer said his night manager didn't show, so he has to work the extra shift.

BEVERLY
So who do we have, exactly?

SAM
Well, you. And me. And B.B.

KELLY

(From the house:) And me.

BEVERLY

Oh, so we have room at the table for Kelly after all. Come, Kelly! Join us!

B.B.

This is what I've got.

(B.B. puts a design in the middle of the table)

I went with what you said about a unit set.

(A pause)

I think that with what little money I've got, this is the best you're gonna get.

(A pause)

BEVERLY

Hmmm. Yes, well. It's awfully brown, isn't it, luv?

B.B.

It's not brown, per se. It's a shade of brown.

BEVERLY

Mmmmmmm.

B.B.

It just makes sense to me.

BEVERLY

I'm not so sure.

B.B.

Well, that's my best shot.

BEVERLY

Pardon?

B.B.

I mean, nobody's paying me to sit around all day and do endless sketches for you. It's, you know, kind of take it or leave it.

BEVERLY

Are you telling me I can't say anything about it?

B.B.

Well, within reason. But you change the color, you change the concept.

BEVERLY

I see. You know, my first Broadway show I worked with Ming Cho Lee.

B.B.

Well then see if you can get him to come down here and work for carfare.

(A pause)

BEVERLY

Maybe it just seems too dark to me in the sketch. It is a comedy after all, darling: I don't want it to look like they're swimming in a sea of mud.

(HE laughs. B.B. doesn't)

Just something a little lighter, maybe. Mushroom, perhaps.

B.B.

Hmm. I don't think that'll work AT ALL.

(A long pause. BEVERLY takes a sharp intake of breath)

SAM

Well, Bobby can bring it up a little bit with the light, make it less brown.

BEVERLY

Well, that could work, I suppose.

SAM

I mean, if she throws white on it, rather than a color, it'll pop a little more.

BEVERLY

That could work.

B.B.

Excuse me, but did any of you think that maybe I don't want it to "pop"? That maybe my choices are intentional? And artistic? Kelly, would you step in here, please? These people, these characters are mired in their own shit, so to speak. That's my point. Get it? Kelly? HELLO? Listen, you people make up your mind if this is what you want or not and then call me, otherwise this just feels pointless.

(HE rolls up the sketch and exits)

BEVERLY

I really wish you would reconsider and just cut the damn thing.

KELLY

I just need to hear it in front of an audience.

BEVERLY

Luv, I've directed more plays than you've had hot lunches; I'm telling you, it won't work, audience or empty chairs.

KELLY

I just wish... can we just...? Can I just hear it ONCE? Please?

BEVERLY

So if I say yes, you'll cut it?

(JODY enters)

JODY
Hey, guys.

KELLY
Hey! Welcome aboard!

JODY
(To Beverly:) I really appreciate this. I know I wasn't your first choice, and I just wanna say, um... you know...

BEVERLY
Mmmmm.

JODY
Where should I sit?

BEVERLY
Doesn't matter, really. No, don't sit there.

KELLY
It's okay for Kim to be at the read-thru?

KIM
(Entering:) No, if it's a problem, I really don't need to.

BEVERLY
Not if he's just going to sit there and laugh at your jokes.

(A pause)

KELLY
You're joking, right?

KIM
(Laughs) Oh, I won't laugh at anything. I promise.

BEVERLY
Then you may stay. Where's Sam? Sam? What are you doing, hardly working, or...? What's the line? Hardly working, or...?

SAM
Hardly working my last nerve.

BEVERLY
Help me with something, Sam. It's five after one, we have a cast of six, and one of them is here. What's wrong with this picture?

SAM
I don't know, Beverly. I'm the stage manager, not their Mommy. I'll call.

(SHE takes a phone off her belt and dials)

JODY

Oh, we're not starting?

(HE takes a cellphone out of his satchel, dials)

BEVERLY

Off to a roaring good start, I'd say. Tea's a little weak, luv.

MICHEL

I could read Connie's role, if it comes to that.

(HE sits at the table)

BEVERLY

Hopefully, it won't come to that.

SAM

(Pacing:) Hey, it's Sam and it's five after... no, seven after one and you're not here. Just wondering. Call my cell.

(SHE clicks off, dials again)

JODY

Hi, it's me. No, we haven't started. I'm just waiting. No, I'm sitting at the table waiting. No, nothing. I don't know, I told you, I'm sitting, waiting. You're breaking up... what?

BEVERLY

Luv, would you mind doing that somewheres else?

JODY

Sorry, hang on.
(HE gets up from the table)
What? No, now I'm standing, waiting.

SAM

Hi, it's Sam. Where are you, you should be here. Call my cell if there's a problem.

JODY

No one else is here yet. No, it's just me. I'm at the theatre. Well, yeah, the director. And the director's... ummm... (Whispers:) ...assistant, I guess. Nothing, I'm standing around.

KIM

I just want to say, ummm... to tell you, I thought your production of STREETCAR was totally fabulous.

BEVERLY

(Snorts:) And she wanted me fired. Class A Cunt. Oh, don't get me started on THAT. (To MICHEL:) Wallis was making some unpleasant sounds this morning.

MICHEL

I didn't hear anything.

BEVERLY

Of course you didn't, darling, you were snoring away.

MICHEL

What kind of sounds?

BEVERLY

Oh, I don't know. Unpleasant ones.

SAM

Hey, it's Sam. It's almost ten after one and we were supposed to start ten minutes ago. Where are you?

JODY

I had a sandwich. Turkey. All turkey is low-fat turkey. No, pita. It doesn't have as many carbs! No, it doesn't. Well, not like a roll or anything. It was a really small pita!

MICHEL

What did you do to her?

BEVERLY

I didn't do anything to her, she was in bed on the other side of the room.

MICHEL

Yes, and...?

BEVERLY

I'm just saying, you might want to check it out.

MICHEL

Now? I thought you wanted me here?

SAM

Hey, it's Sam. What do you mean, "Yeah"? Where are you? No, sweetie, today is the fifteenth. Monday the fifteenth is today, dear. Ten minutes ago. Get in a cab. No, that's your problem.

JODY

A little mayo. It was low-fat mayo, Jesus!

KIM

I can do anything you need me to do. When my advisors found out YOU were doing the play, they said I could get graduate school credit.

BEVERLY

If you don't think you can find a more useful way to make a living.

JODY

Well, I'm sick of protein bars.

BEVERLY

That's enough. Jody, put the phone down, please.

JODY

Call you later, bye. (Hangs up) Sorry. My manager. Watches me like a hawk.

BEVERLY

If you could TRY to help me out here...

JODY

I AM trying. I'm doing... I mean, I'm giving more than I'm getting.

BEVERLY

You think so?

JODY

Yes, I do.

BEVERLY

So I make no contribution?

JODY

That's not what I'm saying. You don't listen. I never feel like you're really hearing me.

BEVERLY

What's to hear? You never talk about what's going on. How much more open do I have to be?

JODY

Well, for one thing, you could turn off the attitude. I'm doing the best that I know how. And if that's not enough for you, then I don't know what more, sorry, how much more I can do.

BEVERLY

That's just it. It's not about doing more, it's about...
(A long pause)
...About something else... that you should be...

JODY

Sorry. What IS it about, can you tell me? Please. You talk in circles, but you never get to what's there, in your heart, in your soul...

KIM

Your gut.

JODY

Sorry, your gut. Instead, I get your thoughts, your ideas, your... sorry, what is it?

KIM

Your perceptions of...

JODY

(Very slowly)...your perceptions of how you want me to be, but you never see me, what I'm capable of...

BEVERLY

Because you don't...

(A long pause)

That's where you cut him off, luv.

JODY

Sorry. ...capable of... And you don't know all that I feel.

(A pause)

That I'm feeling?

KIM

That I feel.

JODY

That I feel. Right. Can we take that back?

BEVERLY

Let's stop. That's getting there. But I'm still not sensing your frustration strongly enough.

JODY

Hmmm. I don't know what more I can do, Bev. That would be indicating.

BEVERLY

Then try indicating.

KELLY

And, Jody, the line is "the best that I can," not "the best that I know how."

JODY

Hmmm.

(A pause)

Does it really matter?

KELLY

Ummm... well, I like to think so.

JODY

Hmmm. Why?

KELLY

He's an English major. He'd speak directly.

JODY

Well, maybe that's the problem. I think if I say... what did I say, I don't even remember.

KIM

"...the best that I know how."

JODY

Yeah, it shows that I haven't always got it all together. It makes him a little more vulnerable, don't you think?

KELLY

Well, maybe, but "best I can" flows better. To me.

JODY

Hmmm. Kinda boring. But okay.

BEVERLY

And listen, darling, as first performance is rapidly approaching, I'd like to start spending rehearsal time watching you act, rather than watching you try to remember your lines.

JODY

Well, fine. Are you giving that note to Connie too? I've got more of my lines down than he has.

BEVERLY

He's in every scene, luv.

JODY

So different rules apply because of the size of my part?

BEVERLY

Fine. Sam, make a note to give Connie a note.

SAM

The only reason anyone's gonna see this play is because of the size of his part.

(KIM enters with a set of keys and some mail, including a small Federal Express box, which HE gives to BEVERLY)

KIM

Is this what you were waiting for?

BEVERLY

Oh, thank God. Let's take a five. No, let's take a ten.

(HE exits with the box)

KELLY

He's straight.

SAM

Why, because he said he wouldn't blow you?

KELLY

No, I heard him on the phone with his girlfriend.

SAM

Girlfriend, or (Snaps her fingers) "Girlfriend"?

(SHE exits)

MICHEL

Did she poop?

KIM

A little one. (Shouts off:) Beverly, your keys are in your bag.

BEVERLY

(Off:) Lovely, luv.

KIM

The plumber said it's gonna be twenty-five hundred.

MICHEL

Jesus. Tell Bev.

KIM

I don't know if Kelly's said it in so many words, but he's... we're both so grateful Beverly's doing the play.

MICHEL

What, that old has-been?

KIM

I'm sure he gets offered everything under the sun.

MICHEL

Not so much anymore.

KIM

That pile of scripts in his study...

MICHEL

Oh, that's for show, mostly.

(HE laughs)

I'm just being a cunt. His day will come. Again.

KIM

What he's done with the third scene alone, it's amazing, the layers within the relationship, just through the blocking. I think he's a genius.

MICHEL

Well, for God's sake don't tell him.

KIM

I only hope that I can someday be able...

(MICHEL starts to exit as BEVERLY re-enters)

MICHEL

Is there any left?

BEVERLY

Prop table, bitch. All right, let's try and get this thing on its feet. Can we clear the stage, please, Sam?

SAM

(Off:) I was just... yeah, sure, just a sec, Beverly.

BEVERLY

At your entrance, luv, I want you to come straight down left, hit this spot, take the line.

JODY

Gotcha.

(He moves downstage)

BEVERLY

No, down left.

JODY

Here?

BEVERLY

No, luv, your other left. What's the first line?

(SAM enters, starts to clear off the table and chairs)

JODY

Of the play?

BEVERLY

No, luv, this scene. Your first line in this scene.

JODY

Sorry. "He thought it was a good idea."

BEVERLY

Who did?

JODY

Ummm... Brad?

BEVERLY

Who?

JODY

Isn't it Brad? Connie's character?

BEVERLY

What?

JODY

That thought it was a good idea.

BEVERLY

Oh, sorry, luv, that's the line!

(HE laughs. MICHEL re-enters)

He was acting, dear. MICHEL

Sorry, who can tell? BEVERLY

(THEY laugh)

Sorry to interrupt, but since everyone seems to have an assistant but me, could somebody help me with this so I can be on book? SAM

Like who? BEVERLY

Anybody. Kim? SAM

Where's Kim? Oh, that's right, Kim's doing something for me. BEVERLY

Michel? SAM

(A pause)

Well, Michel's really here for dramaturgical purposes. BEVERLY

(A pause)

Hmmmm. Well, is dramaturgical work going on this very moment? SAM

I'll do it. KELLY

No, no, no problem. What do you need me to do? MICHEL

Just help me get this stuff offstage. SAM

(SHE takes two folding chairs off.
MICHEL tries to fold one of the folding chairs)

Sorry. What is it again? BEVERLY

"He thought it was a good idea." JODY

THAT'S the line? BEVERLY

JODY

Uh-huh.

BEVERLY

God, who wrote this shit?

(A pause. Silence. BEVERLY laughs.)

KELLY exits)

Great, so you're in, wait till you're on the mark, then take the line.

(SAM re-enters)

MICHEL

This one must be broken. I can't seem to...

(SAM takes the chair, folds it)

Oh, like THAT. I see. Now what?

SAM

Just put 'em backstage.

MICHEL

Sure.

(HE exits. SAM goes into the house)

BEVERLY

Okay, so you take the line, then turn to Connie, who's already on.

JODY

Where am I coming from?

BEVERLY

Offstage, dear.

JODY

No, I know. Where offstage?

BEVERLY

Offstage right, I guess. Yes, offstage right. Is that right, Sam?

SAM

Hang on, I'm trying to find the page.

JODY

No, I mean from where? Am I in another room in the apartment? Or am I coming from the hallway?

BEVERLY

Well, you're addressing the audience directly at this point, so you're not really... um... you're just coming on.

JODY

But still, I'm somewhere before I get here, right? Is it, you know...

BEVERLY

Fine, yes, you're coming from another room in the apartment.

JODY

But isn't it a studio?

MICHEL

(Off:) Sam, where backstage?

SAM

Where the other ones are.

MICHEL

(Off:) Where are they?

SAM

Against the wall by the sink.

BEVERLY

Could somebody please...? I can't hear myself think.

MICHEL

(Off:) I don't see them.

(SAM sighs, comes to the stage. KELLY enters)

KELLY

I'll do it. You stay on book.

(HE takes two folding chairs, folds them, exits)

BEVERLY

Let's just move on from here; we'll go back.

JODY

You know, sorry, part of the problem I'm having is I really didn't have to deal with all this AIDS stuff.

BEVERLY

I don't understand. You're living now, aren't you?

JODY

No, I mean back then, when it meant something. You'll have to explain it to me. It must've been awful. Did you lose a lot of friends?

BEVERLY

Not nearly enough. Just take the next line.

JODY

"I think it's going to be a bumpy night."

BEVERLY

Right, and you cross to Connie and you're into the scene. Great. Now really take the line.

JODY
"I think it's going to be a bumpy night."

BEVERLY
No, I want you to do the impersonation.

JODY
Huh?

BEVERLY
The line. Do it like "All About Eve."

JODY
What?

BEVERLY
From "All About Eve." You're quoting it.

SAM
It's a line from "All About Eve."

JODY
Oh, it's from a movie?

(KELLY re-enters for more chairs)

BEVERLY
Yes, dear, you need to do it like Bette Davis.

JODY
Who?

BEVERLY
Well, I guess we've answered the gay question. You don't know who Bette Davis is?

JODY
Yeah, an actress.

BEVERLY
You don't know how to impersonate her?

JODY
Well, I can watch some of here movies.

BEVERLY
Just clip off every word. "It's going to be a bumpy night."

JODY
Uh-huh.

BEVERLY
And she's always smoking, so you should probably mime a cigarette.

KELLY
And she would do it circling her arm.

BEVERLY

Yes, perfect, circling the arm.

(A pause)

Well, go on.

(A long pause)

Come on, luv, let's go.

JODY

Well I can't do it if you're all going to look at me.

BEVERLY

Oh, I see. Well, should we just ask the entire audience to turn their backs at this point?

JODY

WELL, in order to do this, I need to feel safe. And I don't right now. At all.

(A long pause. KELLY exits)

SAM

Let's take a five.

(B.B. enters)

B.B.

If you expect anything to get done, I need you all out.

(TERRY enters. BEVERLY, JODY and SAM start packing up their stuff)

TERRY

Kelly? KELLY??? Is he around?

KELLY

I'm right here.

TERRY

Oh. We've got a problem.

KELLY

What now?

TERRY

Well, somebody's left the door to the theatre wide open.

KELLY

I did.

TERRY

Well, don't.

KELLY

We're loading in. I've gotta keep the door open.

TERRY

PLEASE.

KELLY

There's nothing to steal in the lobby, anyway, Terry.

TERRY

We attract a lot of trash from the river, if you know what I mean.

KELLY

I don't.

TERRY

Well, we're right across the street from FIST. I'm sure you know what THAT clientele is like. They see an open doorway down here, it's like moths to a flame. I left the door open once for five minutes, I came back and there were three men doing something unmentionable behind the concessions counter. So, please.

(HE starts to exit)

Oh, and Kelly, let me ask you something.

(HE pulls him aside)

That boy. What's his story?

KELLY

Whose story?

TERRY

The young 'un.

KELLY

His story?

TERRY

Is he or isn't he?

KELLY

We really don't know.

TERRY

Find out. I think I've got something for him in our next production.

(BEVERLY lights a cigarette)

Well, I guess no one told you, but smoking is prohibited in the theatre.

BEVERLY

Oh. It's part of the play.

TERRY

Oh, I'm sorry.

(HE starts to exit. Goes to SAM)

I thought he was the director.

(SHE exits. TERRY stops B.B., who is entering with cans of paint)

Isn't he the director?

B.B.

I'm only the designer, so of course I don't know anything.

(TERRY exits)

Kelly, you promised me the space starting at 11:30. It is now...

KELLY

We're leaving, we're leaving!

B.B.

It's just that if you expect me to be out of here and for the space to be ready for a run-thru at 7:30...

(HE exits)

KELLY

I know, we're going. Sam, have you got everything you need?

SAM

Oh, you're leaving?

KELLY

I have to. I have to sleep. Do you need me? I'll stay if you need me.

SAM

No, it's fine. Bobbi Jo'll be here soon. She can take over listening to me complain. You can have the night off.

KELLY

(Takes out his wallet) Here. Get everybody some pizza. And beer. Or whatever. Here. Do you need more?

SAM

No, please. Save your money.

KELLY

In case.

SAM

Um, listen, I just got a call from Sage Lighting and they said your credit card was denied. They won't let me pick up the equipment.

KELLY

Oh, um, well... I'll give you another card. Tis one should still work.

SAM

Only cash, they said.

KELLY

Oh. Shit. Where'm I supposed to get fifteen hundred dollars at 8:30? Okay. Gimme a minute.

SAM

Sorry, I know my timing's off. And listen, I'm sorry to do this, but I've got some receipts. How do you wanna handle that?

KELLY

Hmmm. Up to you. How do YOU wanna handle it?

SAM

I can wait 'til the run is over, if that's better for you.

KELLY

How much have you laid out?

SAM

Couple hundred.

KELLY

Well, no, you need that. I'll give you a check.

SAM

Oh, by the way, have I mentioned that Terry is driving me stark raving mad? He leaves these fucking Post-its on everything. Look at this.

(SHE hands him a Post-it)

KELLY

"Fix this."

SAM

That was stuck on the light switch in the dressing room. I said, "You manage this dump, isn't that your job?" He said, "Read your contract." I guess he only rents out the theatre so somebody'll come in and fix everything that's broken. He's got a bucket backstage with a Post-it that says "Hole in bucket."

(JODY enters, on cellphone)

JODY

I can't baby, I'm just gonna go home and crash... I'm telling you, I won't be any good to you. I have to detox.

BEVERLY

Listen, luv, I'll be home during the day tomorrow if you need to talk.

JODY

Thanks, I'll be okay. (To phone:) Not you.

KELLY

But let me know before you lay out something big.

(JODY exits. B.B. re-enters)

B.B.

I need to start painting right where you're standing.

BEVERLY

Just going, luv. Did Michel leave?

B.B.

Who's she?

KELLY

Sam, listen, there's a bench in the lobby. I'm just gonna lie down for a minute. I'm right there if you need me.

(HE exits into the lobby)

SAM

Go home. Really. (To B.B.): Can I do anything for you?

B.B.

Yeah, stay out of my way.

(SHE exits. HE watches her go. HE looks around the space. Moves a folding chair offstage. Picks something off the floor. Sighs. Brings the folding chair back on. Takes a beer and a pack of cigarettes out of his backpack, sits in the chair, pops open the beer, lights a cigarette. KELLY re-enters)

KELLY

Listen, B.B... Oh, sorry, you can't smoke in here.

B.B.

Kelly, I'm telling you, you're pushing it. If you expect anything to get done tonight...

KELLY

I'll be out of your way in a second.

B.B.

By the way, thanks for all the extra helping hands, that'll really speed things along.

KELLY

That's part of it. I need to talk to you about something.

B.B.

What now? The check's going to bounce?

KELLY

No, no, that's fine. But listen. The guy who's doing my running crew... or, rather, the guy who I THOUGHT was gonna be running crew...

B.B.

Oh, I know where this is going...

KELLY

Well, yeah, that's it. He dropped out. So I was wondering...

B.B.

Yes? Wondering?

KELLY

Well, Sam has to be backstage during the show, she can't be in the booth. I know you've run lights before...

B.B.

Oh, sure. Maybe you can stick a broom up my ass and I can sweep the floor during scene changes?

KELLY

I don't have anybody left to go to.

B.B.

I'm leaving town two days after we open. It's impossible. Sorry. Why am I apologizing? I'll try to find someone, but I make no promises. What are you paying?

KELLY

Well, I'm already three thousand over budget, so...

B.B.

Three thousand? That's nothing. On the last showcase I did...

KELLY

Anyway, I don't have any money left, so I'm hoping to find someone who'd be willing...

B.B.

You're insane. Nobody's gonna do running crew for free, dude.

KELLY

On my last show I found someone.

B.B.

Well then, get that idiot to do it.

KELLY

He's not calling me back.

B.B.

Thanks for proving my point. When you wake up, let me know and I'll try to find someone.

KELLY

Well, I could maybe do five hundred.

B.B.

A week?

KELLY

No! No! For the run.

B.B.

For a four week run? Keep dreaming.

KELLY

You really don't think...?

B.B.

Who knows? Try the internet. You might find some theatre major schnook from Jersey who wants something on his resume.

KELLY

Well, I could maybe do a thousand.

(A pause)

B.B.

Well, let me see if I can re-arrange my schedule.

KELLY

Oh. You mean you?

B.B.

If I can re-arrange my schedule.

KELLY

Great. Thanks, B.B.

B.B.

You owe me big time. Oh, and I want it up front.

(HE exits. KIM enters, throws some letters and envelopes on the floor in front of KELLY)

KIM

What's up with this?

KELLY

Where'd you get those?

KIM

Buried on your desk.

KELLY

You know how busy I've been...

KIM

(Overlapping:) You start performances in four days. If you expect any of these people to come... And have you sent out a single postcard?

KELLY

In case you haven't noticed, I've had a few other things demanding my attention... to futz around with... this kind of bullshit.

KIM

Well, fine, then you want all of that work to be for nothing? You bust your ass and you'll have an audience of actors' friends and friends of friends'. Just sit and sign them; I'll mail them out.

KELLY

God, what are you, my mother?

KIM

No, I care about your career.

(A pause)

KELLY

Gimme.

(HE picks up the letters)

Did you bring me a pen?

KIM

A writer without a pen. Great.

(HE takes a pen out of his backpack)

And where the hell is your agent, by the way? Has he even called since rehearsals started?

KELLY

He's giving me space. I told him to stay away until I felt I was ready.

KIM

Oh, brilliant.

KELLY

Say that with a British accent and you'll sound just like Beverly. Besides, if he hates it, he's not going to do me much good, will he?

KIM

More good than if he never sees it.

KELLY

At least let me just get through the first week.

KIM

Oh sure, and then he shows up at the end of the second week and starts making calls in the third week and people start calling him back in the fourth week and then they want to make reservations for the following week, but whoops! We're closed!

KELLY

Why do you care so much? It's my life I'm flushing down the toilet, if that's what you think I'm doing.

KIM

What am I investing in? Four weeks of performances that our friends come to see and then we go back to eating takeout Chinese in front of the T.V. the Monday after? No. We haven't done all this work for that.

KELLY

We?

KIM

You're right. I'm sorry. I haven't done all this work for that. I haven't spent the past month picking up the poop from Beverly's mutt so that people at your temp job can see the show and brag to their friends they went out for cocktails with the writer. Is that what you want?

KELLY

Oh, by the way, you've picked up that British thing of putting the stress on the last word of each question. It's annoying as fuck.

KIM

(Without irony:) Is that what I'm doing?

KELLY

I don't know why I even bother.

KIM

You could... you should get work out of this! You should be... I don't know...

KELLY

Listen, it'll move or it won't. And then I'll sit down and write something else. And then I'll spend another year or two raising money to get it up and I'll invite everyone and only my real friends will show up and it happens all over again. That's the way this goes. I'm sorry you don't understand that.

KIM

No! No! That isn't the way it goes! You get your goddamn agent down here and he brings people and you take meetings and you write treatments and you get paid. Screenplays, pilots, whatever.

KELLY

Ugh, please.

KIM

What?

KELLY

That's not writing. That's just taking a bunch of old I LOVE LUCY scripts, a pair of scissors and a bottle of Wite-Out.

KIM

I'm sorry, you're right. You've just spent the past year of your life designing the world's best rotary phone.

(HE takes the letters and envelopes from
KELLY)

KELLY

Exactly. I'm just some old dinosaur nibbling away at the top branches while some parasite is chewing away at my ankles. I'm thinking everything's great up here and what's holding me up is about to give way for good.

(SAM enters)

SAM

Listen, the gal I thought was gonna do running crew just bailed. Sorry. I'm trying to remember the name of the kid that...

KELLY

Don't worry about it. B.B.'s gonna do it.

SAM

You're totally kidding.

KELLY

Nope.

SAM

How in the hell did you manage that? Blow him? No, even a blow job wouldn't work on him. He'd think he was doing you a favor.

KELLY

I... um, just sweet-talked him.

SAM

Sweet talk? What kind of sugar? Nose candy?

KELLY

Did Bobby leave a gel for the work light?

SAM

Wait a minute. You just asked him and he said yes?

KELLY

Yeah. Is there a gel?

SAM

I rigged it already. No money?

KELLY

Um, nope.

SAM

That makes me very nervous.

KELLY

It's taken care of. I have to call Equity.

SAM

He's gonna pull something, you heard it here first.

(JODY enters)

JODY

Is this the set?

KELLY

Well, I think he's still got some finishing touches.

JODY

Jeez. Yeah. How am I supposed to do the thing with the door? There's no door.

(B.B. enters)

B.B.

Careful! The floor is still wet!

(BEVERLY enters)

BEVERLY

We've got a run-thru, luv. You mean we can't walk on the floor?

B.B.

Well, no, you can walk over here, but this part is still wet.

BEVERLY

Well, this part I were the first scene of the play happens.

B.B.

And I just told you, it's still wet.

BEVERLY

And I'm telling you, darling, that an audience is going have their asses parked in these seats in less than forty-eight hours and they're coming to see a play, not a floor. You've had the theatre for sixteen hours, now get the fuck off my stage.

(A pause)

B.B.

Kelly? Kelly, I need to speak to you right now.

(HE exits)

KELLY

I don't have an answer for you. Work it out with Beverly.

JODY

Aren't you the producer?

KELLY

Don't talk to me now, please.

(HE exits)

JODY

Oh, yeah, actually, I need to talk to you. But he wouldn't talk. All I got from him was that he needed time.

(A doorbell rings)

B.B.

(Off:) Sorry.

JODY

Ummm... All I could get from him was that he needed time.

KIM

(Off:) "All I got from him..."

JODY

But time was something neither one of us had.

(A doorbell rings)

B.B.

(Off:) Sorry.

BEVERLY

(Off:) And there's supposed to be a light cue here too, luv.

B.B.

(Off:) I don't have it.

SAM

(Off:) No, it's there. Cue 49.

B.B.

(Off:) Cue 49 isn't until Scene Three, Sam.

SAM

(Off:) Well then, cue 39, whatever the hell it is, it's there.

B.B.

(Off:) I don't see it.

SAM

Jesus.

(SHE stomps across the stage from left to right. BEVERLY enters)

BEVERLY

I do just want you to mark it, luv, but I think it's important for you to realize that he's getting a little desperate here.

JODY

I know that, but it would help if Connie were here.

BEVERLY

I understand, I understand. Where is Connie again?

KIM

(Enters) Sam said he had a callback, but he should have been here half an hour ago.

KELLY

(Shouting from offstage:) A callback! Great! Maybe I'll go write another play so I don't have to re-write this one!

BEVERLY

Let's just plod on. Sam, call Connie and ask him if he'd like to join us prior to opening. Okay, let's skip to Scene Six, since it only requires the one actor who actually happens to be in the theatre.

(JODY exits. SAM stomps back across the stage from right to left)

Let's start with the light fade from the end of Scene Five.

(BEVERLY exits. The stage is clear for a moment. Blackout. In the dark:)

No, luv, it's a very slow cross-fade.

B.B.

(Off:) I've got a blackout.

BEVERLY

Well, then, what you've got is wrong.

SAM

(Off:) Page thirty-eight.

B.B.

(Off:) Oh, thirty-eight.

SAM

(Off:) Yes.

B.B.

(Off:) No one told me.

(Lights come back up. There is a cross-fade with lights focusing down right. A pause)

B.B.

That's it.

BEVERLY

Isn't there a sound cue in there, luv?

B.B.

(Off:) Oh, I didn't see it. Whose handwriting is this?

(The cross-fade happens again. The sound of a flushing toilet)

BEVERLY

Correct me if I'm wrong, Sam, but isn't it supposed to be a music cue?

B.B.

(Off:) I have cue 49.

SAM

(Entering:) No, no, it's cue 48.

B.B.

Sorry, I can't read this handwriting.

SAM

Isn't it yours?

B.B.

(Off, testily:) Well, I was writing in the dark, Sam.

BEVERLY

Can we take it again, please? And Jody, please take your place during the cross-fade. Are we ready?

(The cross-fade. A toilet flushes)

B.B.

(Off:) Sorry. This fucking soundboard has a hair trigger.

(Music. JODY enters and takes a spot downstage left as the lights come up downstage right. A pause)

JODY

Is this right?

BEVERLY

Sam, could you come out and look at this?

B.B.

(Off:) That's exactly the cue that's in the book; I'm just doing what I've got.

KIM

This is all like water off a duck's back to you, isn't it?

MICHEL

What do you mean?

KIM

You're taking all this very calmly. But I guess you've been through this a hundred times before. And worse.

MICHEL

Oh, I've just gotten to the point where I don't see any reason to worry about it; it'll all work out in the end. You need to have an attitude that ultimately what happens, good and bad, is really for the best.

That's it?

KIM

Well, that and Paxil.

MICHEL

No, that's right. Jody's in the wrong spot.

SAM

I am?

JODY

He's always been down left, Sam. Jody's not always wrong, Sam. He's supposed to be in the magic spot. The magic spot is always down left.

BEVERLY

So I'll refocus them.

SAM

And how long will that hold us up?

BEVERLY

I'll do it after the tech.

SAM

So what you're saying is that I won't be able to see what this scene looks like until tomorrow, less than 24 hours before we open, is that what you're telling me?

BEVERLY

Well, no, you can see it tonight if you want to sit there for half an hour while I refocus the lights.

SAM

I see. While I wait for something that should have been taken care of before we started. Is that right?

BEVERLY

(A long pause)

Shut. Up. You. Big. Queen.

SAM

(SHE exits)

Terrific. My stage manager uses me as a vent for her internalized homophobia.

BEVERLY

(Off:) Maybe it's not homophobia. Maybe I just hate you.

SAM

That's a productive attitude. What IS that cologne she bathes herself in?

BEVERLY

KIM

I don't think she uses cologne. It's probably one of those oils you buy off the black guys on the sidewalk.

BEVERLY

She smells like a dryer sheet. Kelly, can I speak to you a minute? Jody, take a five. Michel, bring me some tea.

(JODY exits. SAM re-enters with a ladder and begins to refocus light down left)

Tell me, does it bother you that we open in less than 24 hours and Jody has yet to play the nude scene, um... nude?

KELLY

I don't really look at it as "opening", Beverly. I look at this entire run really as a kind of preview period. I want us all to think that the work continues, even though...

BEVERLY

Michel, where's my tea?

(HE exits)

KELLY

American tea's not good enough for him. He's got to have his own special British frou-frou tea.

SAM

Oh, Jesus Christ, Kelly, is this your first show? That's not tea.

KELLY

I'm just saying, someone needs to take him down a peg.

SAM

A peg? Somebody needs to take him down a Margaret.

KELLY

Huh?

SAM

It's a dyke thing.

KELLY

It is?

SAM

It will be. Speaking of dykes, there was a message on my voice mail from the Equity Rep. Something about getting the insurance certificate or they're gonna shut us down.

KELLY

I told them I was... Jesus! Kim, where the fuck is the insurance certificate?

KIM

Oh, I couldn't make it. I had...

KELLY

I said three times they had to be there today.

KIM

Beverly needed me to find a jacket for Connie in the last scene. Which reminds me, I've got a receipt for you.

KELLY

Great, so Connie'll look fabulous in the last scene but he won't

be allowed to walk on the stage because Equity's shutting us down. You're supposed to be MY assistant, goddamnit.

KIM

Well, I can't... I wasn't...

KELLY

Two hundred dollars for a fucking jacket? You couldn't go to a fucking used clothing store?

KIM

Beverly said he saw a specific jacket. But it was marked down from five hundred.

KELLY

Great. I hope it's big enough to move into when the rent check bounces.

KIM

I'm doing this for you, you asshole.

BEVERLY

(Off:) Where's my fucking tea?

MICHEL

Jesus.

KIM

I'll bring him his tea.

MICHEL

You better let me.

KIM

No, I know how he takes it. I want to.

KELLY

Kim, I'm sorry. I love you.

KIM

I know. Me too.

(HE exits)

KELLY

And what the fuck does that mean? You love you too?

(BEVERLY re-enters)

BEVERLY
Okay, let's just plow on. Sam, keep doing what you need to do. B.J.? C.B.? What the hell are his initials?

SAM
B.B.

BEVERLY
B.B.? Are you with us?

B.B.
(Off:) Whatever.

BEVERLY
Okay, where were we? Jody, luv? We're moving on.
(JODY enters)
So we'll pretend there's a spot down left.

JODY
What does memory mean when there isn't any future?

BEVERLY
No, luv, that's not the line.

JODY
What does... What does memory... No, that's the line.

BEVERLY
Sam, what's the fucking line?

SAM
I don't have the script up on the ladder with me. Is anybody on book? B.B., what's the line?

B.B.
(Off:) What page are you on?

(KIM re-enters)

KIM
No, that's the line. "What does memory mean..."

BEVERLY
Doesn't "the future" come first?

KELLY
That's it. "What does memory mean..."

BEVERLY
It is? God, who wrote this shit?

(JODY laughs. KIM giggles)

JODY
Yeah, this isn't writing, it's wronging.

(Laughter)

KELLY

Listen, everybody...

BEVERLY

Seriously, luv, you need to do something about this scene.

KELLY

I need to hear it in front of an audience.

BEVERLY

Well, I don't. I can't make it work.

KELLY

And that's my fault?

BEVERLY

At this point? Yes, luv. It's your fault. I've been talking about this since Day One.

KELLY

Then cut it. Cut the fucking thing. I don't give a shit anymore.

BEVERLY

Well, that's not going to help.

KELLY

Really, I don't care anymore. You can't make it work, I can't make it work, do whatever you want to it. Do it in mime. Re-write it yourself. I'll walk on during the performance and do a monologue explaining it. I don't know what you want from me, I'm not capable of doing another fucking thing.

(HE goes to exit)

BEVERLY

Kelly, please, wait a moment. Take a five, everyone, please. I need to talk to Kelly, obviously.

(Tentatively, KIM, JODY and MICHEL exit.

SAM stays on the ladder focusing light)

I'm truly sorry it had to get to this point, truly I am, but I'm actually glad to hear you say what you just said. Surrender is the first step toward success. I've been keeping Michel up most nights going over and over this scene, trying to figure out a way to make it work. And finally, last night he said to me, "why don't you just...?" well, let me have him tell it. He's come up with some wonderful stuff that certainly solves... Just a line here, a line there... well, let me have him tell it. Michel? Luv? Can you come out here a minute? Now, understand that I care about the play more than anything else, I would never do anything to hurt this play, understand that. My loyalties are with you first and always.

(HE takes KELLY offstage. JODY enters)

SAM

I just need to get your skin tone for Scene Six.

JODY

Okay.

(HE takes off all his clothes)

SAM

We don't want you to look green.

JODY

Good. I'm gonna need to go to a tanning salon tomorrow before the performance. I'm pasty.

SAM

You look fine. Just stand in the spot you're in at your entrance.

(As HE speaks, SAM plays with the light)

JODY

Why would a writer put a nude scene in a play? A director I can understand; he needs to get his nut off just like everyone else. What better way than to have a room full of naked boys, or in your case, girls, running around with their dicks flopping, or in your case, tits flopping around, asking "What would you like me to do now?" Or the producer, God knows. Stick a naked boy on the poster and every tired queen lines up at the door. But the writer? Like anybody's going to care what's going on from the neck up. I mean, who's listening? You know they're all sitting out there thinking, "Oh, I'm bigger. Oh, I'm smaller. Does he fluff before he goes on? What does he eat? How often does he go to the gym? Does he go to MY gym? I should go to the gym. Does he shave, I wonder? Or trim? Who trims him? Do they need someone to trim him? To fluff him?" I think I should just walk on at the top of the play, strip down and just stand there for thirty seconds, a minute maybe, show my dick, show my ass and then say, "Seen enough? Now would you like to hear the play? Can we actually start acting now?"

SAM

Not a good idea. 'Cause the answer to "would you like to hear the play?" would probably be "no."

(TERRY enters with a script)

TERRY

Oh, great, I'm glad I caught you without Kelly around.

SAM

I'm working right now.

TERRY

Not you. I'd really love for you to take a look at this script, which is the next play we're doing. I think you'd be perfect. We load in right after this closes. It's not a large role, but I think the actor who does it will really get a chance to shine.

JODY

(Reading:) "No Nudes Is Good Nudes"?

TERRY

It's an indictment of the religious right, but told in an upbeat way.

JODY

Hey, lemme get some clothes on, dude.

(HE exits)

TERRY

Oh, okay, I'll follow you. Oh, Sam, I was going to give you this.

(HE hands her a Post-it)

SAM

(Reading:) "Trash"?

TERRY

That goes on the trash bag in the lobby.

SAM

I'd've put two and two together eventually, Terry.

TERRY

Umm, listen, um... (To SAM:) Jody? Is that his name? Jody?

(SHE nods)

Jody, we've already started rehearsals, which is why this is such...

(HE's gone. SAM lies down on her back in the middle of the stage. Sticks the Post-it on her forehead. Starts to cry. MICHEL enters)

MICHEL

You alright, luv?

SAM

Shit. Sorry. I thought everyone had gone.

MICHEL

They have. I was just trying to get some work done in the eye of the storm.

SAM

Work?

MICHEL

I was in the dressing room, trying to write.

SAM

You write?

MICHEL

A little. Try not to take it personally. He always gets like this during tech.

SAM

Oh, it's me. I just need... I don't know. A nap, probably. I'm just not used to... I guess it's the British thing. No offense.

MICHEL

Beverly's from East Rutherford.

SAM

(Posh accent:) Oh, East Rutherford.

MICHEL

In Jersey.

(A pause)

SAM

Isle of?

MICHEL

State of. He studied at RADA. The accent is a recent acquisition.

SAM

Oh. And you?

MICHEL

No, I'm for real. Beverly brought me here. Do you... have anyone?

SAM

That's all I can think of right now. Me and Bobby Jo have a place just south of Asbury Park. Right after the strike, we jump in the car, floor it down the turnpike, I rip off my clothes, lie on the shore, let the waves wash over my cooter and I can almost forget the hell I've been put through these last two months.

MICHEL

If it means anything, he makes my life a living hell, too.

SAM

Oh, it's all good, I guess. Isn't that what they say these days? It's all good. Like fuck. Good for the play, I guess. Beverly should be able to get a lot of industry down here.

MICHEL

Oh, darling, he can't get anyone here. He's alienated every theatre professional this side of the Mason Dixon Line. There may still be some people in Wisconsin who'll return his calls, but that's about it. He burns his bridges while he's still on the entrance ramp.

SAM

Don't tell Kelly. I'm right now trying to find a way to break the news that my mom's going in for chemo and I may have to fly to Florida for the weekend.

MICHEL

Well, it's your mother, luv. You've got to go.

(BEVERLY enters)

BEVERLY

Where the fuck did Kelly go? What are you two on about?

MICHEL

What a pain in the ass you are.

BEVERLY

Just learn to relax more, the pain goes away.

(KELLY enters)

That was a joke. Sam, luv, sorry about before, would you get Jody for me?

(SHE exits)

Kim's actually quite bright, don't you think?

MICHEL

Best pooper scooper ever.

BEVERLY

I'm serious. He had some good points about Scene Five. Why don't you take off? I'm almost finished here. Get me a Moo Shoo Pork. Extra pancakes.

(JODY enters as MICHEL exits)

JODY

(To MICHEL:) Giving up?

MICHEL

About three days ago.

(HE exits)

BEVERLY

I've been wanting to do some work on Scene Five. I've sent everyone home, so if there's something you need to say, now's the time.

JODY

I thought I was getting it. Am I totally off-base?

BEVERLY
It's better, but...

JODY
I think I need the audience.

BEVERLY
At this point, that's the last thing you need. You seem to be holding back. Are you uncomfortable with it?

JODY
No, it's not that...

BEVERLY
Let's just try something. I'll be Connie.

JODY
From where?

(A pause)

BEVERLY
I have something I need to say.

JODY
I have something I need to say...
(A pause. BEVERLY takes JODY's head in his hands and kisses him. A long pause)
I'm sorry. Was that to get me to have some kind of reaction?

BEVERLY
No.

JODY
Oh. Ummm... well, I...

BEVERLY
I'm afraid I'm falling in love with you a little bit.

JODY
Oh.

BEVERLY
It always happens. I hope I'm not making you uncomfortable.

JODY
Well, yeah, kinda...

BEVERLY

Once the show closes, I probably won't want to see you again. But right now, I can't stand it, I have to have you. Actually, once it DID last past closing. I did a show with... well, an actor who's now on a stupid sitcom making more money than certainly you or maybe even I will ever make in a year. But that was different. I saw something in him. I knew he'd... well, let's just say I'm pretty good at predicting success. And let's say he could learn to be a little more grateful. He's still be in the hosiery department at Barney's if I hadn't... Ah, well. Water under the bridge.

JODY

Who?

BEVERLY

He'll come to the show. I'll introduce you. Oh, he'll love you.

JODY

What show is he on?

BEVERLY

Later.

JODY

Come on, tell me. Come on. Come on.

(BEVERLY puts an arm around him and leads him offstage. HE pulls KELLY onstage as JODY exits)

BEVERLY

Kelly, darling, let's talk.

KELLY

Uh-oh.

BEVERLY

Why "uh-oh"?

KELLY

'Cause when you want to insult me, it's "luv." When you have bad news, it's "darling."

BEVERLY

Yes, well, I just got a call from Liz McCann. She's got this new revival up in Boston...

KELLY

What's a "new revival"?

BEVERLY

What? Oh, don't be difficult. It seems the director's a real pain in the ass...

Really?
KELLY

BEVERLY
...and she's been calling in other people. What?

Nothing.
KELLY

BEVERLY
She just wanted to know if I might be able to fly up for the weekend.

Oh.
KELLY

MICHEL
The man who directed "Moose Murders" must not be returning her calls...

BEVERLY
I would, in all likelihood, be back by Monday evening.

Oh. When would you leave?
KELLY

BEVERLY
Well, tomorrow morning, of course.

KELLY
We start performances tomorrow night.

BEVERLY
Yes, well, I'll do all I can tonight, and then you'll be... well, you'll be on your own over the weekend and then you and Sam can give me a full report on Monday and then we'll have Monday night and Tuesday day to fix things. I've thought it all through, and really, it might just work to our advantage, nothing to worry about. Unless, of course, they ask me to take over, in which case I won't be back, of course. But we can cross that bridge when we come to it. In fact, it might be best to leave Kim in charge while I'm gone. He's been at all the rehearsals; he has a good sense of what I'm trying to do here.

KELLY
So you're just going to...

BEVERLY
But now, let me give the cast a head's up, so we won't have any difficulty there...

(HE exits)

B.B.

(Off:) Yes! Hallelujah!

(HE enters, with cellphone)

Hey, Kelly, guess what? Oh, God! Yes! I just got a message from the production manager at Yale Rep. They're interested in me for their next mainstage. Oh, my God! What, aren't you happy for me?

KELLY

I'm not really in the frame of mind...

B.B.

Your negativity is really... So, I'm taking the train up on Monday, and if the director likes what he sees, well then, I guess that's that.

KELLY

What's what?

B.B.

Well, I start work.

KELLY

Terrific! Yeah, fuck this stupid showcase that starts performances tomorrow night! Let's all spend the weekend in New England! What the hell am I supposed to do?

B.B.

What do you mean, "what do I do?" This is a paying gig, Kelly. Price of doing business. Or, really, cost of making people work for free.

KELLY

Well, not exactly free...

B.B.

Don't nickel and dime me at this point, Kelly.

KELLY

Can you at least get me a replacement?

B.B.

Oh, sure, that's just what I have time to do, start making calls to everyone under the sun when I should be doing sketches for the most important meeting of my life. Walk into reality, Kelly. Jesus Christ, I should've known better than to expect you to be happy for me.

(HE exits. SAM enters)

SAM

I don't quite know how to tell you this.

KELLY

What? The theatre's on fire. There's a tidal wave headed this way. The sun won't be rising tomorrow.

SAM
Um...

KELLY
Great, it's worse. What?

SAM
I just got a call from Connie's agent. He's flown to the coast. For pilot season.

KELLY
Who, the agent?

SAM
No, Connie. He's gone. He's in L.A.

KELLY
I don't understand. Isn't pilot season in February?

SAM
I thought so.

KELLY
It's June.

SAM
Maybe it's mid-season replacement pilot season.

KELLY
Well, you've gotta call that agent back right now.

SAM
And say what?

KELLY
Tell him that is Connie isn't back by tomorrow, that we're... that he's...

SAM
What? That he's fired? That we're not gonna pay him his carfare? That he'll never work Off-Off-Broadway again?

KELLY
No, just tell him that... we're... really, really... mad. Tell him I want my script back immediately. That I want him to pay for that two hundred dollar jacket Beverly made me buy. I want him to personally visit the five hundred people I sent postcards to and have him cross out his name. I want him to go to all the newspapers and magazines that might be running his picture next week and put a big red "X" through his face. I want him to pay the thirty thousand dollars I've just flushed down the toilet for a production that's never going to open.

SAM
Don't go there. Don't go there. We can... this is not that big a deal. We know hundreds of actors. We can move Jody up; he can do it.

KELLY

Oh, please, he hasn't even learned the lines for the role he's been rehearsing. You think he can learn a three-page monologue in twenty-four hours?

SAM

You really should cut that monologue.

KELLY

Don't talk to me right now.

(HE exits)

SAM

(To herself:) Oh, by the way, my Mom's sick.

(MICHEL and BEVERLY enter)

MICHEL

I know exactly what you want; Kim's never directed anything in his life.

BEVERLY

I need you in Boston with me, luv.

MICHEL

To do what?

BEVERLY

Things! I need somebody in Boston, luv.

MICHEL

I don't see why it has to be me. And stop "luvving" me. It's nauseating.

BEVERLY

Why? Because you're going to need to start fucking me better if you want to keep hanging around.

MICHEL

Hanging around? Oh, have I just been hanging around for eight years?

BEVERLY

Sorry, luv, my seven year itch came a bit late.

(BEVERLY exits. KIM and KELLY enter)

KIM

I don't care honey, cut it.

KELLY

I'm not fucking cutting it.

KIM

It's terrible. Sorry.

KELLY

The past six months I'm a genius and now it's terrible?

KIM

Listen, when Beverly comes back you can fight with him to put it back in, but this weekend I'm the director and I want it gone. Don't argue with me about it anymore, I've got too much to do to make YOUR play work.

KELLY

I don't know who the fuck you think you are all of a sudden, but you're not cutting my play. Do whatever blocking changes you want to show Beverly how brilliant you are while he's gone, but not at my expense.

MICHEL

He's actually right, luv. Bev wouldn't cut without his permission.

KIM

Go help Michel learn his lines, I can't be bothered with this.

MICHEL

I'll be in the dressing room.

(HE exits)

KELLY

And by the way, that character can't have a British accent; he's from Bay Ridge. It makes no sense.

KIM

He's working on the accent.

KELLY

But it makes no sense!

KIM

He's all we've got; he's doing it. Where the fuck is Sam?

SAM

(Enters:) Right the fuck here. What now?

KELLY

I'm just saying, if he's going to go on on book, anybody can go on on book...

KIM

Get out of here. Please. The light cue on Scene Eight is still too fucking late. B.B. is useless.

SAM

Well, in his defense, you added those two sound cues right before that light cue. He's like an octopus back there.

KIM
Fix it. Or do I need to put that on a Post-it? Where the fuck is Jody?

(HE exits)

SAM
Kelly? Kelly?

KELLY
(Entering:) What, goddamnit, what?

SAM
Don't you dare snap at me; I'm all you've got left. Listen, here's this hour's bad news: The repairman wants five hundred dollars for the air conditioner.

KELLY
No way. That's Terry's job. The theatre rental includes the air conditioner.

SAM
He said, "Read the contract." Oh, and here's his helpful Post-it. (Shows it to him:) "No cold air."

KELLY
You're kidding.
(SHE shrugs)
Well, fuck it then, we won't have air conditioning.

SAM
Honey, it's supposed to be ninety-six degrees and raining this weekend. Why don't you just shoot the audience members in the head when they enter the theatre?

KELLY
Okay, okay, Gimme a minute.
(HE takes out a cellphone, dials. SAM does the same)

KELLY (CONT'D)

Hi, it's me. No, your son.
It's Kelly. Fine, fine,
never mind me. How are you?

(A pause)

Uh-huh. What did the doctor
say? Well, then, you should.
Well, not for a while; I'm
in the middle of rehearsals.
Maybe July, but you know,
hopefully we'll get some
interest and then we'll
extend the run, which means I
may not be able to get there
for a while.

(A pause)

Uh-huh. Wow. That is a lot
of food for \$5.95. Listen,
I'm calling because I... I'm
trying to get to the point
where it's as good as it can
be... uh-huh. No, no, I'm
not asking for all of it.
But five thousand would be...
Well, no, it's really not
that much when you
consider... Well, no, I
could use it now. Well, no,
not if YOU need it. Do you
need it? Well, it IS the
money that Dad said was
for... No, I spent that.
Well, the rent on the theatre
alone is almost twice that,
so yes, that's gone.

(A pause)

Well, Lisa got hers. Well,
my father's money...

(A pause)

All right, our father, OUR
father.

(A pause)

Forgive me, but why should I
suffer just because she keeps
popping out unwanted kids she
can't afford like a Pez
dispenser?

(A pause)

Well, this play is MY kid.
That's goddamn bullshit.
Sorry. Listen, I'll call you
back, I've got to get back to
rehearsal. Keep taking the
prescription. Uh-huh. Love
you too.

(HE hangs up)

SAM

Mary, it's me. It's Sam.
How's she doing?

(A pause)

I know, I thought I could,
but we're opening this
weekend.

(A pause)

No, not before Monday.

(A pause)

Listen, I explained all of
this to her and she was fine
with it, so just let it go.

(A pause)

Well, what did the doctor
say? Well, that sounds
better than we thought.

(A pause)

Yes, I've heard of
complications, but did the
doctor say anything about
complications? Well, why do
you automatically jump to
that?

(A pause)

Well, complications could
mean anything. I'm having
complications just talking to
you now, Mary.

(A pause)

That's not possible. How
could it be snowing there?
It's June.

(A pause)

Well, if it's making noise,
it's not snow. It's hail,
Mary.

(A pause)

Can I talk to her? Well, is
she there? Just give her the
phone, please. Oh. Well,
then, when she wakes up, tell
her I called and ask her to
call me back on my cell,
doesn't matter what time.
Well, you can dial the number
and then hand her the phone,
can't you? Well, then, if
YOU happen to be awake when
she wakes up, then you...
oh, fucking forget it. I'll
call her back.

(SHE hangs up)

My sister is an ass.

SAM (CONTINUED)

Is everything all right?

KELLY

I don't wanna talk about it. B.B., we're going from Cue 39.

SAM

(Off:) The toilet flush?

B.B.

No, the top of the next scene, Cue 41, 45, whatever the fuck it is. Go.

SAM

(Blackout. Disco music. Lights up. MICHEL sits on a bench, a script in his lap. HE has a white towel tied around his waist, over his clothes. JODY enters wearing a towel and nothing else. A noise from the audience: Coughing)

JODY

I've seen you looking at my ass all night.

MICHEL

(A horrible Brooklyn accent:) I been tryin' NOT to look.

JODY

Want a closer look?

(HE comes over to him)

MICHEL

Sorry. I gotta problem with this.

(Noise from the audience: a yawn, unstifled)

JODY

Looks like it's a BIG problem.

(HE kisses him. MICHEL breaks the kiss and turns a page)

MICHEL

Mmmm... That feels good.

JODY

Yeah? You ain't felt nothin' yet.

(A pause. MICHEL turns the page, then turns back. Looks up at the booth)

Ummm... yeah. You're gonna like this.

(A pause)

Really. A lot.

(A pause. There's some loud whispering offstage. Slowly, JODY gets down on his knees, takes one last look at the booth, then puts his head under MICHEL's towel, bobs his head back and forth)

JODY (CONTINUED)

Mmmmm! Mmmmm!

MICHEL

Oh, yes.

(His accent goes out the window)
That feels good. Oh, yes. Mmmmm.

(Finally, a blackout)

MICHEL

(In the dark:) Thank God.

SAM

(In the dark:) Can we got some light?
(Lights up. SAM and KELLY onstage)
That wasn't so bad.

KELLY

That's you, Sam. When life hands you shit, make shit-ade.

SAM

That's what the first performance is for. To work out the bugs.

KELLY

Bugs? Those were tarantulas. Those were the ants from "Them!"

B.B.

(Enters:) Can you guys lock up? I'm gonna get shit-faced.

SAM

I can give you notes tomorrow.

B.B.

Great. Notes. You think I don't know what I did wrong? Get the fucking actors to learn their fucking lines, and you'll get the right cues. Fuck, well, I guess this is my life from now on. Running the light board for pieces of shit Off-Off-Off-Off Broadway Why would Yale Rep want a brilliant American designer when they can get the latest hack from the Royal National London What-the-Fuck? Where's Paul Revere when you need him?

KELLY

B.B., I know you need sympathy right now, but it's a little hard when my life is crashing torrentially on top of me.

B.B.

Yeah, you're the only one hurting, Kelly. Fuck you.

(HE exits as JODY enters)

JODY
Hey, guys! We goin' out? I've got some friends... Where should I meet you?

KELLY
I don't know. The confessional? The I.C.U.?

JODY
Is The Confessional that place on Hudson?

KELLY
It was a joke. Which went over about as well as anything else I've ever written.

JODY
Well, my friends thought it was fucking brilliant.

KELLY
Were they the ones that were giggling uncontrollably during the death scene?

JODY
No, really. They're not in the theatre, but they thought...

KELLY
Great. It's not a play for people who go to the theatre. I wrote a play that resonates with... what are they? Portuguese fishermen? Latvian sod-farmers?

SAM
Kelly. Leave. Get drunk. I'll lock up.

(SAM exits as TERRY enters)

TERRY
Jody, have you had a chance to read the play yet?

JODY
No way, man. I'm in performance mode.

TERRY
No matter. I have another project I'd like to talk to you about. There's a piece of furniture in my apartment that's way too heavy for me to move. I was thinking... There's a hundred and fifty dollars in it for you.

JODY
No way, man. I just did a show. Two fifty, minimum.

(HE exits to the dressing room)

TERRY
Oh, Kelly, would you put this on the toilet in the women's room before you leave?

(HE hands KELLY a Post-it and runs after JODY)

KELLY

(Reads:) "Doesn't flush."

(KIM enters)

Cut the scene. Cut the monologue. Cut them. I don't even know if anything works in the play anymore, but those definitely don't. I was wrong. You were right. Happy now?

KIM

I'm sorry. It'll get better. It's not your fault. We'll spend all day tomorrow working.

KELLY

Whatever.

KIM

Oh, and I think we could stand to lose about five minutes at the top of Act Two. And let me pick your brain about something.

KELLY

I swear to God, if you use the phrase "pick your brain" once more, I'll chop your head off.

(KELLY lies down on the floor)

KIM

What are you doing? Let's go home.

KELLY

I just thought it'd be easier for you to kick me if I was lying down.

(A WOMAN, JO-ANNE, enters)

JO

Hi. Um, are you Kelly?

KIM

If you're RSVPing to the Pity Party, it's already started on the floor over there.

(HE exits. JO approaches KELLY)

JO

Um... Kelly?

KELLY

Yeah.

JO

Hi, I'm Jo-Anne. First, I thought the play was fucking brilliant.

KELLY

You must be friends with Jody.

JO
Even as a woman, I thought the play had some important things to say. I mean, it's not just for gay men.

KELLY
Thanks?

JO
I'm just in from L.A. and I somehow wound up down here. Don't ask me how.

KELLY
How?

JO
I work for Cindy Pollack's production company.

KELLY
Sydney Pollack?

JO
No, Cindy Pollack.

KELLY
Oh. Is she related?

JO
No. I don't think so. I'm not sure. Who is she?

KELLY
Sydney Pollack? She's... Never mind.

JO
Cindy's done a lot of work with... Did you see "Thelma and Louise"?

KELLY
Sure.

JO
Cindy's right now working on setting up the sequel.

KELLY
Oh. Uh-huh.

JO
Anyway, I thought the play was fucking brilliant and I want to set something up with you and Cindy.

KELLY
What's the sequel? Their autopsies?

JO
No, no; they live.

KELLY
Oh. Uh-huh.

JO

So Cindy should be coming in in the next week or so. I just called her from the lobby and she's totally juiced about seeing it.

KELLY

Well, great. But we close next week.

JO

She's got one project that's in turnaround right now, but with one more decent rewrite, it could be a go. You don't always have to write gay, do you?

(JODY enters)

Oh, you! I thought you were fabulous! (To KELLY:) Excuse me, I'll call. (To JODY:) Hi, I'm Jo-Anne. You were amazing.

JODY

Thanks. Tell him, he thought the whole thing was a car wreck.

KELLY

Train wreck. Planetary wreck.

JO

Aw, what do writers know? I'm just in from L.A. I work for Cindy Pollack.

JODY

Oh, wow.

JO

We're developing something that... Can you go out for a drink?

JODY

Huh? Sure, sure. There's a place just down the street. Later, Kelly. So, what's your last name, Jo Anne?

JO

No, that's it. Jo-Anne. Like Ann-Margret.

JODY

Wait, so, your name's Jo-Anne-Margret?

JO

So are you shaved or do you wax?

(SHE laughs and THEY exit. MICHEL enters, sees KELLY and joins him on the floor)

MICHEL

I'm SO sorry.

KELLY

What are you sorry about?

MICHEL

Oh, please. I embarrassed you. I embarrassed myself. I embarrassed people sitting in the coffee bar down the street. I'll be off book tomorrow, I promise.

KELLY

Stay on book. We'll have everybody on book. We'll put the audience on book.

(A pause)

So I'm ready to take your rewrites.

MICHEL

You don't need them. Once we're up to speed, it'll play fine.

KELLY

Any word from Beverly?

MICHEL

He's back tomorrow. Every director on the Eastern Seaboard was up there. No one cares about a Tony nominee from 1981 when there's a Tony nominee from 2004 around.

KELLY

What happened?

MICHEL

(Shrugs) His moment's gone. He only got his shot because he was fucking Evelyn McKnight at the time.

KELLY

Sir Evelyn?

MICHEL

And Evvie brought him over here for a project. They split, and everyone looked at Bev as a star-fucker. And a difficult one at that. Don't get me wrong, I think he's brilliant. It's just... it's gone and it'll take a miracle to get it back.

KELLY

I guess he doesn't think my play is that miracle.

MICHEL

Oh, luv, why don't we talk about all of this over a drink? I need one. You need one.

KELLY

I need several.

MICHEL

Several.

(A pause)

And my husband is out of town.

KELLY

Mine isn't.

MICHEL

Well, I don't think you have to... no, I'm not going to talk out of school. Or out of dressing room, in this case. But I don't think he'll be coming home tonight. Besides, luv, it's not sex. It's consolation.

(HE touches KELLY'S hand, stands)

Let's take a cab. There's a liquor store on our corner.

(HE exits. SAM enters)

SAM

Kelly...

KELLY

How many in the book for tonight?

SAM

Ummm... Five, I think.

KELLY

Five? Five reservations? Where the fuck is everybody? I sent out five thousand postcards! That's point one percent! Where is everybody?

SAM

Maybe we'll get a lot of walk-ins. Listen...

KELLY

It's Gay Pride Week! We're a gay play! Where are they?

SAM

Didja ever stop to think maybe they'd prefer to watch a float full of muscle queens in Speedos than a searing look at a suicidal queer?

KELLY

We have nudity!

SAM

From a character who's selling his body to pay for his lover's AIDS meds. Not exactly jerk-off material. Listen to me. Terry's dead.

KELLY

Oh, shit. What did he do this time?

SAM

What? No, no. Dead. He's dead. He's sitting in the lobby, dead.

KELLY

I... No, no, I just said hello to him on my way in.

SAM

Did he say hello back?

(A pause)

Call 911.

KELLY

Isn't that for emergencies?

SAM

We've got a performance in half an hour and there's a corpse in the lobby. That's an emergency.

KELLY

Maybe I'll just stick a Post-it on him that says "To Undertaker."

SAM

(THEY laugh, maniacally)

Well, we have to do something. Do you know CPR?

KELLY

Yes, but I think you have to do CRP before the person gets stiff. Otherwise, I don't think it works.

SAM

(THEY start to exit. JODY enters)

Have a great show, guys!

JODY

Great show? Didn't you see Terry?

SAM

Yeah, for once he's not following me into the dressing room.

JODY

(JO enters)

Hey.

JO

Hey, good to see you again.

JODY

It's Jo.

JO

(Offering his hand:) Sure, I remember.

JODY

What's going on?

JO

Well, I'm a little nervous.

JODY

Did you get the script?

JO

JODY
What script?

JO
I sent you a script, Fed Ex.

JODY
Did you send it to the theatre, or...

JO
It should be there.

JODY
If it went to my manager... I can give him a call.

JO
Never mind. What else?

JODY
Well, like I said, I'm nervous.

JO
Uh-huh.

JODY
I mean, meeting someone of your stature, at this point in my career...

JO
What?

JODY
I said, at this point in my career, it's nice to be...

JO
Sorry, I can't hear you, someone's shouting at me.
(SHE puts a finger in her downstage ear.
The other ear has a cellphone earpiece)
Sorry, who called?

JODY
Oh. Sorry.

JO
Under no circumstances give him my number. Listen, I've got this actor thing. I'll check in with you in an hour. Bye.
Sorry. What's up?
(A pause)
Hello??

JODY
Oh, sorry. Me now? Hi.

JO
Let's go.

JODY
Go? Where? I've got a show.

JO
Oh, shit. Can't you call in sick?

JODY
Well, not really, I mean, I'm here and they've all seen me. You wanna sit in the dressing room?

JO
Not really what I had in mind. You gonna tell me more about your girlfriend?

JODY
That's really not... we're kinda taking a break.

JO
Uh-huh.

JODY
What about your boyfriend?

JO
Ex.

JODY
Ex-boyfriend.

JO
My ex was a "why"?
(THEY exit and then immediately re-enter)
Well, that's the last time I do THAT. You're on stage too much; it was boring as hell back there. I had to talk to that woman who plays the hospice nurse for two hours. She has cats. Three of them.

(RHONNIE WEISS enters. SHE wears a mink coat and sneakers)

RHONNIE
Are you Kelly? Bravo!

JODY
No, man, I was in the play.

RHONNIE
So you were. Bravo!

JO
You're Rhonnie Weiss.

RHONNIE
Thank you.

JO
We met a few months ago? At Priscilla Wetherby's barbecue?

RHONNIE
Oh yes, I remember you. How is Butchie?

JO

Actually, I'm not her assistant anymore. I'm in L.A. with Cindy Pollack.

RHONNIE

Hmmm. L.A.

JO

Cindy has something you might be... we should get in touch while I'm in town.

RHONNIE

That might be nice.

(B.B. enters)

B.B.

Jody, I was wondering... Are you going to take that much time before the last line in Scene Six? Just wondering.

JODY

(Shrugs) Maybe. However I'm feeling it. In the moment.

B.B.

Oh. Okay. Just wondering. 'Cause it could go a little faster.

JODY

Oh, are you the director for today?

B.B.

No, no, I was just wondering.

(JO hands RHONNIE a card)

JO

Here. Home. Office. Cell. E-mail. Hotel number on the back. Great seeing you.

(SHE pulls JODY off)

Where should we go? Is the Standard still hot?

(THEY're gone)

RHONNIE

(To B.B.): Are you Kelly? Bravo!

B.B.

No, no, I'm just the untouchable that sweats in the booth.

(HE exits as KELLY and SAM enter)

KELLY

I'm telling you, I had ten Kit Kats on the concessions table. I sold two. There are three left. That's another five bucks never to be seen again.

SAM

I don't know what to tell you.

KELLY

If you see any Kit Kats lying around, let me know.

SAM

First thing.

RHONNIE

Are you Kelly?

KELLY

Yes. I mean, why?

RHONNIE

Bravo! I know the phrase "blew me away" is literally overused, but you literally blew me away.

KELLY

Thank you.

RHONNIE

This isn't my first time, you know. It's my fifth.

KELLY

Oh. We've only done four performances so far.

RHONNIE

Four, five, two; whatever. I love it.

(KIM enters and pulls SAM aside)

KIM

Do you know who that is? That's Rhonnie Weiss. Kelly's agent finally got off his ass.

SAM

Who?

KIM

You're kidding. She's a producer! Major. And she's like, best friends with Liz Smith.

SAM

"Friends"?

KIM

I don't know. She's in her column all the time.

SAM

Sure you don't mean "up her column"?

KIM

Ugh.

(HE goes to RHONNIE)

SAM

Well, if she's a friend of Liz, I'm sure she's a friend of mine. And Dorothy.

KIM

Thank you so much for coming! Hi, I'm Kim. I'm Kelly's... I worked with Beverly on the play. And took over, in previews. But our vision of the piece was so similar that...

SAM

Kim, I need the food props cleaned up NOW, please.

(SHE exits)

KIM

Excuse me a moment. Off-off Broadway, what can I say?

(HE laughs and exits)

RHONNIE

So Beverly directed this play? I hear she's difficult.

KELLY

By "she" you mean...

RHONNIE

I'm not talking out of school. She's a friend.

KELLY

Not a very close one, I imagine.

RHONNIE

Well, we've had dinner... no, not that close. The "difficult" thing is probably just patriarchal bullshit. They hate women in this business. They say I'm difficult. I'm on the Board at Manhattan Theatre Club. Lynne Meadow, another "difficult" woman. They've had a slot open up in late fall. Charles Busch is unavailable. Or Linda Lavin's unavailable. Well, somebody's unavailable; in any case, I'm interested.

KELLY

Wow. Thank you. Obviously, you didn't read the mediocre review we got in the Voice.

RHONNIE

Ugh. Never read reviews, they're all idiots. Does anyone still read the Voice? So is this play autobiographical?

KELLY

Not really, no. I mean, it has autobiographical elements, I mean, we all write from our...

RHONNIE

Autobiography is what closes on Saturday night.

KELLY

Uh-huh. I thought that was satire.

RHONNIE

Well, something closes on Saturday night and I don't want it to be my first show.

KELLY

Oh, this would be your first show? I thought...

RHONNIE

Well, my first show... of this type of show. No, I've done shows, darling. Believe me, I've done shows.

(BEVERLY enters)

KELLY

Oh? Are you still working on this project?

BEVERLY

I am as long as my name's on the poster out front.

KELLY

Quick, who's got a can of paint? This is Beverly.

RHONNIE

Who?

KELLY

The director.

RHONNIE

Oh.

(A long pause)

I've heard... well, obviously, I've not heard enough about you.

(SAM enters. BEVERLY pulls her aside)

BEVERLY

Sam, luv, why in hell didn't you let me know everything was running amok down here?

SAM

I tried! I call your cell and get your voicemail and you call my voicemail when you know I'm in the middle of a performance and I got sick of playing tone fag... of playing phone tag with you endlessly. And right now I'm working.

(SHE exits)

RHONNIE

So, listen, my notes: You ready? I think it's a little confusing that the play takes place in one night, what with all that jumping around they do. I think you need to announce at the beginning that it's all in one night.

KELLY

Announce? You mean through dialogue? I mean, there's a note in the program...

RHONNIE

Nobody reads programs. No, announce, announce, like an announcer at the beginning says over the P.A. or whatever, "This is all set in one night."

KELLY

Well, I think it would be "ON one night."

RHONNIE

Well, it doesn't have to be those words exactly.

KELLY

Well, I think part of the fun for the audience is discovering that. I drop hints, and the audience has the... the fun of putting it together.

RHONNIE

Nobody like that kind of fun. No one wants to work that hard. It's called a "play." Now aside from the line at the beginning, I was thinking... Did you "Chicago"?

KELLY

The movie or the show?

RHONNIE

Ugh, movie, schmoovie. I'm a theatre person. I'm talking about the show. There's a scene between Mama Morton and Velma at the top of the second act that I just love. Here, I typed it up.

(SHE hands him a page)

Remember that scene?

KELLY

Ummm... I think so.

RHONNIE

I just love it. It would be great if you could work that into the second act somehow, you know, how things are not like they used to be.

KELLY

Work it...? I don't understand.

RHONNIE

You know, just stick it in somewhere.

KELLY

This is copyrighted material.

RHONNIE

Oh, we can work out the details later on down the line, that's what the lawyers are for. Now let me meet your wonderful cast. Oh, and one other thing I'd like you to think about. I want someone to root for. There's no one to root for in this play.

(SHE exits)

BEVERLY

That's because it's a play, luv, not a baseball game. I will not let you go forward with this woman.

KELLY

Leave me alone.

BEVERLY

You know I care about this play. And I care about you. Protecting you. Protecting your interests.

KELLY

Listen, just 'cause your career is being sucked down the toilet, don't try to pull me in with you. Please don't louse this up for me. Let's just see what she has to say.

(MICHEL enters)

MICHEL

Marion was in the house tonight. He sends his love. God, he looks terrible.

BEVERLY

God, yes. He's fat as a house.

MICHEL

Beverly, dear, he's sick. I think that's called crix-belly.

BEVERLY

Oh, please. Then he's also got crix-ass and crix-love handles.

(MICHEL exits)

I'm sorry I haven't been around the theatre a lot lately, but I figured no one wanted to see me much.

KELLY

You figured right.

BEVERLY

Why didn't you wait until I came back? I could make that scene work. But no, you cut it.

KELLY

Why did you abandon me when I needed... when you were needed most?

BEVERLY

Why did you let some upstart do my job? Why didn't you trust me? I trust you completely.

KELLY

As well you should; I didn't go flying off to Boston. I DID trust you and you threw me to the wolves.

BEVERLY

I care about this project more than anything.

KELLY

Could've fooled me.

(BEVERLY grabs him and kisses him so hard they fall onto the floor. A few moments of passion on the floor and BEVERLY straddles KELLY)

BEVERLY

God, I can't wait to fuck you.

KELLY

I'm a top.

BEVERLY

Not tonight you're not.

(THEY kiss. KELLY rolls him over and straddles him)

KELLY

Always on top.

BEVERLY

I'm a director. I have to be in charge.

(THEY kiss and playfully roll over each other)

KELLY

This isn't Hollywood. In the theatre, I'm in charge.

BEVERLY

Not in my theatre.

KELLY

Did you bring protection?

BEVERLY

There's nothing you need to be protected from, luv.

KELLY

Hah. Famous last words.

(Their playfulness is becoming more aggressive)

I told you, you've fucked me enough already. You want me to trust you, you're gonna take it up the ass.

BEVERLY

Just get your goddamned pants off.

KELLY

And drop the phony accent, it's making me soft.

BEVERLY

Shut the fuck up and take it!

(SAM enters)

SAM

Ummm... Boys?

(THEY jump)

KELLY

Beverly was showing me some re-blocking for Scene Seven.
(To BEVERLY:) Yeah, that should work.

(HE starts to exit. SHE stops him)

SAM

Can you help me with the worktable? And chairs. We need six. Unless she's bringing someone. Is she bringing anyone?

KELLY

You got me.

(HE exits)

BEVERLY

(For KELLY's benefit:) How great a producer can she be if she can't even afford a conference room?

(B.B. enters)

B.B.

Hey, Beverly.

(HE goes to hug him. BEVERLY flinches)
Can you believe it? Only two more shows? I really hope we can work together soon.

BEVERLY

Mmmm.

(KELLY and SAM bring on the folding table)

SAM

Do you think you could deign to carry a chair?

BEVERLY

Excuse me?

SAM

Show's closing, I don't have to be nice. Get your fat ass backstage and bring in some chairs.

BEVERLY

And when we move?

SAM

(To KELLY:) Oh, he thinks he's going with it?

BEVERLY

What?

KELLY

Well, you weren't the director of record on opening night.
I don't really owe you an offer.

BEVERLY

I thought we didn't have an opening night, luv.

(MICHEL enters)

MICHEL

Sorry, luv, all they had were sandwiches. Nothing hot.

BEVERLY

What? Oh, I'm not that hungry.

KELLY

That's fine.

(HE and MICHEL kiss)

BEVERLY

Sorry, I thought you were talking to me.

MICHEL

You'll know when I am. I'll look at you.

BEVERLY

That's how it's going to be?

SAM

Beverly? Chairs?

(SHE exits)

MICHEL

Oh, I'll get them.

BEVERLY

No, I'll get them.

MICHEL

Please let me.

(BEVERLY exits. KIM enters)

KIM

Oh, hi.

(A pause. MICHEL moves towards him.
Thinks better of it, exits)

What's everybody...? Are we still having the meeting?

KELLY

Sure. Why?

KIM

Did anybody call Rhonnie's office?

KELLY
She doesn't have an office.

KIM
Don't get nasty.

KELLY
That's not nasty. But I can show you nasty.

KIM
Has anyone called her cell?

KELLY
I think Sam.

KIM
So she's still coming? Even after The Times?

KELLY
What do you mean?

KIM
The review.

KELLY
They ran it?

KIM
How is it possible you didn't see The Times?

(HE takes the paper out of his backpack
and hands it to KELLY)

KELLY
I saw The Times!
(KIM points out the article)
Oh, how could I have missed it, here on the lower left hand
corner of Page C-23?

(HE reads. SAM enters)

SAM
Kelly? What, now that I've got Beverly working, you've
decided to play the diva?

KELLY
Did you confirm this meeting?

SAM
Of course.

KELLY
When?

SAM
Yesterday afternoon.

Call her again. KELLY

She's still got ten minutes. SAM

Try her. Please. KELLY

Why? SAM

(Reads:) "You might want to spend an evening in a cramped, uncomfortable theatre, but as intermission approaches, remember: there are some wonderful restaurants nearby." That's our Times review. KELLY

I've got her on speed dial. SAM

(SHE takes out her cellphone. JODY and JO enter, JO on her cellphone)

Hey, guys! Didja see this? I got my picture in this magazine! JODY

(HE hands it to KELLY)

You read THIS? KELLY

A friend showed it to me. JODY

Cindy, I tried, but I only got voicemail. JO

Oh, great, they finally give us a listing the day before the show closes. KELLY

No, it's a review. JODY

(To KELLY:) Voicemail. SAM

(KELLY leafs through the magazine)

Page 43. JODY

(MICHEL enters with chairs, BEVERLY following)

BEVERLY

I have to say, you've still kept your ass.

MICHEL

What am I, a Ziegfeld Girl? I should hope so, I'm not even fifty. My father kept his ass until he was eighty.

BEVERLY

What happened at eighty-one?

MICHEL

Don't ask. Don't worry, you won't be seeing my ass at eighty-one.

BEVERLY

Awww. Please?

JO

Well, I don't know what else you could possibly expect me to do.

SAM

Hi, Rhonnie, this is Sam, the, um, the stage manager for Kelly's play, we spoke yesterday...

KELLY

Hang up.

SAM

We, um... we just wanted to...

KELLY

Hang up.

JO

He uses an alias at the hotel, what am I supposed to do...?

SAM

...to confirm today's meeting... Please call me...

KELLY

Hang up! Hang up!

JO

Well, yeah, I could, but it seems kinda stupid...

SAM

...at 646-789-3105. Thanks.

(SHE hangs up)

JO

No, not stupid. It just seems a little... Right...

SAM

What the fuck...?

KELLY

Another review, this from Next Magazine: "There's a really hot guy in Act One, but who cares? Let's party!"

(HE snaps the magazine closed)

SAM

Yeah, I wasn't going to tell you about that one.

KELLY

You saw this?

SAM

But only gay mean read that.

KELLY

Only gay men come to see this play!

SAM

At least Jody got his picture in there twice.

KELLY

What do you mean?

(SAM flips to the back of the magazine)

JO

The minute it happens. I'll call you that second. Sorry. Well, I don't know what else I can say but sorry. 'Kay. 'Bye.

KELLY

These are escorts.

SAM

Look at the body.

KELLY

That's not him.

SAM

Please. I've been looking at him naked for a month. The tattoo. I know what his body looks like.

KELLY

This is somebody named Marco.

(SHE takes out her cellphone, dials. A phone rings. JODY takes his cellphone out of his backpack)

JODY

Hello?

SAM

Oh, never mind. I wasn't sure I had your number. Now I know that I do.

JODY

Rock on.

SAM

Yes, I will.

(THEY hang up)
I give him more credit. I thought he was a trust fund baby,
I never could figure out how he could afford that apartment.

BEVERLY

I've got a project coming up that I'd like to talk to you
about. But this time, we've got to set a few ground
rules...

KIM

Well, actually, Rhonnie's offered me a job at her office,
so...

BEVERLY

She doesn't HAVE an office, luv.

KIM

Well, that's the point, Beverly. It's all up to me. I can
make it all that it's capable of being. She trusts me to
start it from the ground up.

(A long pause)

BEVERLY

Good luck!

KIM

And Rhonnie's gone over some ideas with me for the top of
Act Two.

BEVERLY

And I'd be happy to discuss them. With her. Well, no,
"happy" is probably too strong a word.

JO

A week, tops.

JODY

It shouldn't take me that long.

JO

And Cindy sometimes likes to stay over. If we work late.
In which case, you're gonna have to go someplace else.

JODY

No problem. Don't worry. You'll get crow's feet.

(SHE looks at her feet. HE kisses her)

KELLY

B.B., you don't really need to be here for this.

B.B.

I'm gonna miss this. We should all get together next weekend.

KIM

I just keep getting her voicemail.

KELLY

Listen, I need you to get those boxes out of the hallway.

KIM

Jesus Christ, Kelly, I'm moving as fast as I can; I've got a lot going on right now. Another week at most.

KELLY

I need the space.

KIM

Oh, fuck you. Hi, Rhonnie, it's Kim. Just checking on you. Call my cell. I'm at the theatre. We're at the theatre. Bye.

JO

What's up? Is she coming?

JODY

Just checked my voicemail; I've got a meeting on Monday already. My manager's been trying to get me out to L.A. for a year. He said it'd be much better for me out there.

JO

It is. Much better.
(A pause)

Hello?

(JODY snuggles her)

Hello.

JO

I'm losing you.

JODY

No way, babe.

JO

No, keep talking, I'm gonna step outside. The reception in this theatre sucks.

(SHE exits)

SAM

I don't have a good feeling about this.

KELLY

About this? I haven't had a good feeling for three months. I inherited forty thousand from my Dad. It's gone. I can't go back to waiting tables.

SAM

You may have to. I have to.

KELLY

No, I can't. I did something to my rotator cuff moving Kim's stuff. I can't afford to have it looked at, much less fixed. I can't type fast enough to temp. I don't know Excel, PowerPoint, Lotus, whatever the hell the software of the second is. I can't even... I don't know what... I'm doomed, I guess is what I'm saying.

(MICHEL comes up from behind and hugs him)

BEVERLY

Is something wrong?

JODY

You said you'd take me to Boston. You said a weekend in a luxury hotel. Instead, I spent it in an unairconditioned coffin.

BEVERLY

I said I would send for you.

JODY

And? The FedEx guy didn't come.

(JO enters)

JO

Just spoke to Rhonnie. She's... having an issue with the financing. She'll call in the next few days to reschedule.

(There is some noise offstage)

KELLY

What the hell was that?

SAM

What time did you tell the strike crew to show up?

KELLY

Strike crew? What are you, nuts? The strike crew is me and a dumpster. I can't even afford a volunteer pizza.

B.B.

Well, guys, I guess this is it. I love ya. Whew. Those post-show blues are gonna hit me hard on this one.

(HE starts to exit)

KELLY

Hold it. You're not helping with the strike?

B.B.

Can't. Remember, I told you: I've got my Mensa meeting.

Really? Me too! I'm in the L.A. Chapter.

JO

Must get lonely.

SAM

You wanna come?

B.B.

Love to.

JO

It starts in half an hour.

B.B.

We'll cab it.

JO

(THEY exit)

It's raining Mensa.

SAM

(There is more noise from offstage)

Jesus Christ! You know, the polite thing to do is to wait until one show is gone before you start loading your shit in.

KELLY

(The ACTOR who played TERRY enters with some empty boxes)

Holy shit!

SAM

Oh my God!

KELLY

(Simultaneously:) Hey, sorry about the noise, I couldn't sit backstage any more. Oh, that's right. Sorry, didn't mean to scare you. I'm Gerry, Terry's brother. I thought you all would be gone by now. But don't rush on my account. Take your time. Do your theatre thing. Terry would have wanted that.

ACTOR

I doubt it.

SAM

I've got a contractor waiting out in the lobby. Would he be in your way if he came in and just took some measurements?

GERRY

No, no, we're almost gone. So you're gonna be managing the theatre?

KELLY

GERRY

Sorry, let me just give this guy a head's up. Charging me by the hour. Sorry.

(HE exits)

SAM

He seems nice. Well, it's good to know the house dropped on the evil twin. I'll lock up in back and meet you out front.

(SHE exits. KELLY looks around the space. HE goes into the aisle and looks at the stage. HE takes out a notebook and starts jotting down notes. GERRY re-enters)

KELLY

So do you write? Direct?

GERRY

Oh, no. Terry was the one with all the artistic talent. I envied him. He had a dream, he went after it. My only talent is making money.

KELLY

Somebody should. So are you planning renovations? The dressing room could use some work. And the toilets.

GERRY

Somebody very high profile just moved in a few blocks away and wants to open a very low-profile place to get her street cred back up. She's never done a restaurant, but it's a natural.

KELLY

This isn't going to be a theatre?

GERRY

That was Terry's little vanity project. But Daddy's... Our father is tired of floating it. He wants... WE want to make a little profit on this joint. This neighborhood's exploding!

KELLY

I'm just on my way out.

GERRY

Take your time. And come back in a coupla months, have a drink on me. I'm gonna make this place fabulous.

KELLY

No more theatre.

GERRY

You get the right design, the right menu, the right chef, the right crowd... THAT'S entertainment.

(KELLY exits. GERRY pulls out the work table, sets it up center stage, puts four chairs around it, exits. The lights focus on the table as the ambient sounds of a restaurant at the height of the dinner rush fade in. Acid jazz music. Then we softly hear KELLY reciting a LIST OF SPECIALS. SAM yells at the chef for a badly prepared order. BEVERLY calls a party's reservation and escorts them to a table. RHONNIE complains that her entrée is cold. JODY orders another round of drinks for his entourage at the bar. An arctic wind blows)

BLACKOUT

THE PLAY IS OVER.