

COOTIES

A Play in Three Acts

by

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*"Yes, I'm lonely - Hope you don't catch it..."*  
- John Hiatt, *"No Business"*

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MARTIN, 35 years old	Performs as a female impersonator.
OLIVER, 35 years old	Dying of spinal cancer. Wheelchair-bound.
IRA, 35 years old	High school classmate of MARTIN and IRA. Works for an advertising agency. Lives with his mother.
SOPHIE, 67 years old	IRA's mother.
NANCY, 35 years old	MARTIN's roommate. LINDA's secretary at the agency.
ANDREA, 39 years old	OLIVER's sister.
LINDA, 32 years old	IRA's boss at the agency.
VINCE, 36 years old	LINDA's husband.
TONEY, 30 years old	African-American.
A WAITER (Diner)	Greek.
A RADIO ANNOUNCER	Male.
A WAITER (Restaurant)	Gay.
A KID	Male.

TIME

1996.

PLACE

Staten Island.

## SCENE BREAKDOWN

### ACT ONE

- Scene 1: The Unicorn Diner, 2:00 AM.
- Scene 2: Sophie and Ira's house. The next morning.
- Scene 3: A therapist's office. That afternoon.
- Scene 4: Martin and Nancy's apartment. That night.
- Scene 5: Andrea and Oliver's house. The same night.
- Scene 6: The finished basement of Sophie and Ira's House. Friday night.
- Scene 7: Vince and Linda's apartment. Saturday night.
- Scene 8: Martin and Nancy's apartment.

### ACT TWO

- Scene 1: A therapist's office. Saturday afternoon.
- Scene 2: Martin's bedroom. Early Saturday morning.
- Scene 3: Toney's apartment. Late Sunday night.
- Scene 4: Andrea and Oliver's House. Thursday Night.
- Scene 5: Two booths at the Unicorn Diner. Sunday night.
- Scene 6: Another booth at the Unicorn. The following Saturday night.
- Scene 7: Vince and Linda's living room. Tuesday afternoon.
- Scene 8: Linda's office. Friday afternoon.

### ACT THREE

- Scene 1: The patio of Oliver and Andrea's House. A Summer afternoon.
- Scene 2: The Staten Island Ferry. 9:00 Saturday night. A month later.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

(The Unicorn Diner, 2:00 AM. A pin spot on MARTIN, in drag. HE lip-synchs to Barbra Streisand's recording of "Prisoner." As HE performs, NANCY, IRA, LINDA and VINCE assemble at an upstage table. As HE finishes, he removes his wig, costume and make-up and joins THEM at the table. HE may continue to remove his make-up during the scene. The TABLE is in animated conversation. As MARTIN enters, THEY fall silent)

NANCY  
No, you were fine. You were good.

MARTIN  
Sugar coat it.

NANCY  
Jesus, what do you want me to say?

MARTIN  
Something nice.

NANCY  
You slipped a little on the third chorus of the "Laura Mars" song. After the instrumental break. Your lips were off.

MARTIN  
It's a fucking hard song.

NANCY  
Yeah, well, if you're gonna impersonate Barbra Streisand and you sing live, you can afford to be off a little bit. Nobody expects you to sound exactly like her.

MARTIN  
It's not an impersonation, for Christ's sake.

(ANDREA enters, pushing OLIVER in a wheelchair)

OLIVER  
Darling, you were fabulous!

MARTIN  
Thank you. That's a real friend. Nancy thought I sucked.

NANCY  
I didn't say...

COOTIES I-1-2

No, you were fabulous!  
OLIVER

There. That wasn't so hard, was it?  
MARTIN

Nah, didn't kill me. Well, not yet.  
OLIVER

Ollie. Don't kiss me, uh, I've got some kind of bug. Hi,  
Andrea.  
NANCY

Hi.  
ANDREA

Long time no see.  
NANCY

Yeah, well.  
ANDREA

Ollie, did you meet Linda and Vince? Vince, right? Linda's  
Nancy's boss at the agency.  
MARTIN

And Ira's boss.  
LINDA

Oh, yeah. Ira's boss.  
MARTIN

Good to meet you.  
LINDA

How's it goin'?  
VINCE

Huh. Barely.  
OLIVER

Vince is Linda's husband.  
MARTIN

You're looking lovely.  
NANCY

Fuck you.  
ANDREA

That green belt goes beautifully with your pink blouse.  
NANCY

Huh?  
ANDREA

Do you think that matches?  
NANCY

ANDREA  
It's not green, it's like... beige.

NANCY  
Sure. Now look at it in the light.

ANDREA  
I have to pee.

(SHE exits)

MARTIN  
Cunty.

OLIVER  
Oh, please, rip her to shreds. Okay, bad behavior report:  
what did I miss?

MARTIN  
Just Nancy telling me I should open a paper bag store.

NANCY  
I'm just saying that if you're going to lip-synch, I mean,  
if that's what your talent is...

MARTIN  
I'm not supposed to be Streisand... I mean, I don't have a  
fake nose or five-inch fingernails, in case you didn't  
notice...

NANCY  
...then you damn well better be letter perfect, or it's...  
it's just not... Gimme some of that.

(SHE sticks her fork into his plate)

MARTIN  
I haven't even tried it yet!

NANCY  
Just a taste.

MARTIN  
I thought you were sick.

NANCY  
I won't put the fork back in!

MARTIN  
I wonder why that diet isn't working.

NANCY  
I haven't eaten today!  
(SHE eats)  
I'm just saying: you're not doing Streisand, you're lip-  
synching, and if the lip-synching is off, then it's...  
Well, I don't know what it is.

MARTIN

It's about what I'm singing, not about who I'm supposed to be.

NANCY

Well, at the beginning of the show, you wear a turban.

MARTIN

Yeah?

NANCY

Well, Streisand wears a turban on the "Way We Were" cover.

MARTIN

Yeah, but when you think of Streisand, you don't think of her in a turban. It's not, like, her trademark.

NANCY

Still...

MARTIN

That's, like, the stupidest thing you've ever said.

NANCY

You asked me.

MARTIN

I wear lipstick, too. And so does she. So does that mean... Wait a minute. I wear lipstick and so did Eleanor Roosevelt. Maybe I'm impersonating Eleanor Roosevelt.

NANCY

Do you just want me to tell you it was fabulous? It was fabulous.

MARTIN

I want you to get some food in your mouth so you'll stop talking.

OLIVER

The dress was gorgeous. Was it made for you?

MARTIN

Nancy made it.

NANCY

The dress did look great, I have to say. Where the hell is he? Didn't I say onion rings?

MARTIN

Yeah, and if it was up to her, I should just put the dress on a dressmaker's dummy and play records - it'd be a better show.

NANCY

Did you hear me say onion rings? Ira, didn't you hear me say onion rings? Where the hell did he go? The onion farm? The breadcrumb factory?



IRA

Yeah, I heard you say onion rings.

MARTIN

Christ, the whole diner heard you say onion rings.

NANCY

What, you're angry at me just because I want what I ordered?

MARTIN

I'm not angry, I'm just tired of listening to you bellow like a lioness who's had one of her cubs stolen.

NANCY

Jesus. Because I want what I ordered...

MARTIN

Yeah, onion rings and a cheeseburger. At two A.M. That'll help you shrink into that new dress you spent two hundred bucks on.

NANCY

Fuck you, bitch.

MARTIN

Oh, I forgot. You got a diet Coke. Then it's okay.

NANCY

Kiss my ass.

MARTIN

Can't miss it. (To OLIVER:) Somebody's gonna tell you to put out your cigarette.

OLIVER

Let 'em try. (To IRA:) So what's with you? You're silent.

MARTIN

He hated me.

IRA

Not at all, honey. I guess I'm just tired. You were great.

NANCY

You may think you're helping him by lying, but you're not.

OLIVER

Tired?

IRA

Some of us have to get up in the morning and go to work.

OLIVER

I'd love to get up and go to work in the morning. But my chair won't fit through the revolving door at Bloomie's.

(Silence)

IRA

Did that sound really unfeeling? Oh God, Ollie, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be hurtful. If I did, I'm really, really sorry. That was a stupid thing to say.

OLIVER

I love to tease you. It's so easy. No effort at all. Instant guilt.

IRA

No, really, I'm sorry.

OLIVER

Still the kid on the playground who always used to get his books pushed on the floor.

IRA

Well...

OLIVER

It's just so much fun!

MARTIN

You're a horrible person. I remember holding my books close to my chest like this. And they'd say, "Ooooh, look, he holds his books like a girl." So I'd hold them under my arm, as if that meant something, and then they'd come up behind me and knock them on the ground. So I went back to carrying my books like a girl and go fuck yourselves.

IRA

Like the Senior Concert.

OLIVER

Ugh. The piano story.

IRA

He knocked my music down!

MARTIN

It was an accident!

IRA

Oh, sure. The finale of the senior concert, Martin was turning pages for me and managed to knock the entire score onto the floor. At the finale.

MARTIN

I was cruising the drummer and Ira whispers "Now! Now!" in that the-world-is-coming-to-an-end way that he has, and I got flustered.

IRA

Pages all over the floor and suddenly there's no piano in the finale and the conductor's looking at me like he wants to kill me.

Oh, it came out all right. MARTIN

There was no melody line! IRA

Nobody cared, Ira. They were all asleep by that point, anyway. OLIVER

(ANDREA returns, squeezes into a seat)

Excuse me. ANDREA

Sure thing. Can you get by? VINCE  
(SHE sits)  
Hi, I'm Vince.

Hi. ANDREA

This is my wife, Linda. VINCE

Hi. LINDA

Hi. ANDREA

Were you at the show? VINCE

No. ANDREA

How do you know everyone? LINDA

Oliver's my brother. ANDREA

Oh. The guy... I'm sorry. LINDA

(ANDREA snorts)

Why wasn't Clell here? IRA

Oh, he's gotta be at work in three hours. He'd never make it. MARTIN

So will you be giving him his walking papers? IRA

MARTIN

Oh, I don't care. I didn't want him here anyway.

OLIVER

He's very supportive of you.

MARTIN

Oh, who wants that kind of support? If he were here, he'd just say something asinine like "Oh, I loved it!" He doesn't even know what he's looking at half the time.

OLIVER

He tries, poor thing.

MARTIN

Yeah. My patience.

NANCY

You know what I was thinking would be great? If you and Ira performed together. Like back in high school. Wouldn't that be cool?

MARTIN

What are you babbling about?

NANCY

You could get an act together.

MARTIN

Doing what?

NANCY

Well, he plays the piano.

IRA

Played.

MARTIN

Oh, I see. So he comes on, plays a Rachmaninoff Concerto, while I lip-synch to Barbra Streisand records. That sounds fabulous.

NANCY

Well, no, he plays something, like, I dunno. Show tunes.

MARTIN

Yeah?

NANCY

Well, you know. You sing. "Funny Girl."

MARTIN

Yeah, now all I have to do is learn how to sing on pitch and we're headed for Vegas. Nancy?

NANCY

Yeah?

MARTIN  
Shut up. Eat something.

NANCY  
Yeah, right, where the hell are my onion rings?

MARTIN  
Here. Here's some parsley. An orange slice. Eat the garnish. Delish.

OLIVER  
We should go out sometime, Nancy.

NANCY  
Go out?

OLIVER  
Like we used to. I haven't been dancing in... hmmm...

NANCY  
What are you gonna do, pop a wheelie? I don't think the dance club is wheelchair-accessible, Ollie.

(SHE laughs)

OLIVER  
Well, we'll find out. You still go to Sandcastles?

NANCY  
Ollie, Sandcastles was torn down two summers ago.

OLIVER  
Oh. It figures. So where do you go?

NANCY  
I don't.

(WAITER enters)

ANDREA  
Excuse me? Could I get an Absolut and Tonic?

WAITER  
Sorry, no cocktails. The bartender's off duty.

OLIVER  
Just point her in the right direction, she'll mix it herself.

ANDREA  
Just a vodka on the rocks?

WAITER  
I got no one to help me tonight.

OLIVER  
I wonder why.

COOTIES I-1-10

WAITER  
I could maybe get you a glass of wine.

ANDREA  
Fine. Red.

WAITER  
Anything to eat?  
(ANDREA shakes her head)  
(To OLIVER:) For you?

(OLIVER indicates the IV drip attached  
to his chair)

OLIVER  
Brought my own cheeseburger deluxe. Sorry.

(The WAITER starts to exit)

Excuse me, could I get a glass of water?

WAITER  
I got no busboy tonight.

OLIVER  
What does that have to do with wanting a glass of water?

WAITER  
I don't have a busboy.

(HE exits)

OLIVER  
What, he hasn't shown you where the faucet is?

IRA  
Why do we keep coming to the Unicorn? The food stinks and  
the service is rotten.

MARTIN  
Because at two AM it's this or a microwave hoagie in the  
parking lot of the Seven-Eleven.

OLIVER  
He is hot, though.

MARTIN  
Don't start, Ollie.

OLIVER  
Hot and stupid. My favorite.

MARTIN  
Oh, Sir? Excuse me, sir?

WAITER  
(Stressing the "S":) Yesssssss?

MARTIN  
She had asked for a side of onion rings and she still  
hasn't...

WAITRESS  
No, yeah, they're coming. Faggot.

(HE exits. A long silence)

VINCE  
Well...

LINDA  
That was...

MARTIN  
Why didn't Louis...? (HE laughs) I meant to ask you...

IRA  
You know what part I really liked?

(A pause)

MARTIN  
No. What part?

IRA  
Ummmm... It was...

OLIVER  
What the fuck was that?

MARTIN  
Shhhh...

OLIVER  
What, he doesn't need any more tips tonight?

MARTIN  
Don't worry about it.

OLIVER  
Guess he's already saved enough for that round-the-world  
cruise.

MARTIN  
It's okay, it's okay.

LINDA  
That's terrible. (To NANCY:) Were you able to get that  
memo to Perry?

NANCY  
Yeah, it's on your desk.

LINDA  
Terrific, thanks. Listen, if it's not a big deal, could you  
try to come in a little early tomorrow?

NANCY

How early?

LINDA

Oh, not too. Fifteen minutes. Maybe half an hour.

NANCY

Well, what is it? Fifteen minutes or half an hour?

LINDA

Well, if you could do half an hour, that'd be great. I've got that presentation at nine-thirty. You know, just to make sure the coffee's there and that the food isn't all fucked up like usual.

NANCY

Sure.

OLIVER

He's just hostile 'cause he wants my dick in his pussy.

MARTIN

Ugh, Ollie.

LINDA

Did you happen to see that memo I got from Harry?

NANCY

Yeah.

LINDA

What'd you think?

NANCY

I don't know. It was one of Harry's anal memos.

LINDA

No, but I felt like, reading between the lines, it was kind of a put-down. Did you get that?

NANCY

No.

LINDA

You didn't think it was a dig? The way he used the word "kindly"? Then what did he cc it to Rosen?

NANCY

Got me. You know, Martin, you should end with "I Believe in Love," not that other thing.

MARTIN

It's too loud. I want a soft ending.

NANCY

It's dull.



MARTIN  
Could you shut up for the night, please?

OLIVER  
What's the matter with you?

IRA  
Oh, Nancy got me thinking.

OLIVER  
Huh. Considering she's incapable of it herself.

IRA  
No, the piano. It's become... knowing how to play the Chopin Nocturnes doesn't do me much good at the agency. It's all this information stuck in my brain that I don't need anymore, and I can't get rid of it. It's a handicap, almost. Like having another thumb. An appendix. It served some obscure purpose long ago, now it's useless.

OLIVER  
When was the last time your medication was increased?

VINCE  
You really were terrific.

MARTIN  
Oh, thanks.

VINCE  
I've never seen... anything... you know, that kind of show before.

MARTIN  
No, I didn't think you had.

VINCE  
You were really beautiful.

MARTIN  
Stop.

VINCE  
No, I thought you were very sexy.

MARTIN  
Gee. Thanks. Most straight men find me... scary.

VINCE  
No, it was hot. Usually, though, I thought... when I heard you were doing a bunch of Streisand songs, I expected the nails... the nose... you know.

MARTIN

Well, yeah, but, I figure, anybody can do that. Everybody does do that. You know, dress up like Diana Ross and lip-synch to Diana Ross records. I wanna, you know, create my own character. I don't really do impersonation. My act is about opening the song up, emotionally. It's more of a performance. Less of a characterization. Per se.

VINCE

Oh, I getcha.

(A long pause)

And the songs were... not really ones that I knew.

MARTIN

Well, yeah, do you really need to hear "People" again? I mean, you say "Streisand" and people just expect you to come out doing "The Way We Were" or something. It takes a certain amount of risk to do something from the "Songbird" album.

VINCE

Uh-huh.

(A long pause)

So where do you go from here?

MARTIN

What do you mean?

VINCE

Well, I thought I heard you saying you were going to take it to the city.

MARTIN

Well, I'm going to try.

VINCE

Oh, you have to. You'll be great. You have to. They'll love you.

MARTIN

Well, I guess I'll find out.

VINCE

I mean, if I liked you. And I don't know anything.

MARTIN

Oh, I'll bet you know plenty.

VINCE

Huh?

MARTIN

Forget it. I'm sorry, I don't usually flirt with straight, married men.

VINCE

Oh...

MARTIN

What am I saying? I always flirt with straight married men. My Achilles Heel, as they say. Only it's not my heel. It's further north.

(HE laughs)

VINCE

Are you making fun of me?

MARTIN

Of myself. Once I get going, I can't stop. So, what do you do?

VINCE

Not so much anymore. I'm kinda the handyman at the multiplex at the mall. I do carpentry work, stuff like that. But I've given up a lot of my clients since Linda's job has really taken off. Mostly, I take care of my kids.

MARTIN

Oh, you're the dad.

VINCE

Huh?

MARTIN

Jennifer and Alex are your kids. Love them.

VINCE

You know my kids?

MARTIN

Yeah, Nancy's my roommate.

VINCE

Oh, of course. I knew that.

NANCY

So what's up with you?

ANDREA

Like you care.

NANCY

Yeah, that's true.

VINCE

So, do you... um, make a living? Doing this?

MARTIN

RuPaul is the only person who makes a living doing this. I do... I don't know. I get by. I walk dogs.

VINCE

You can make a living doing that?

MARTIN

I live frugally. I babysit. Sometimes clean apartments. Houses. Stuff like that.

VINCE

You babysit? Are you good? We're always looking for good babysitters.

MARTIN

What's "good"? When the house catches fire, I take them outside. Sorry. I have a twisted sense of humor.

VINCE

Uh-huh.

MARTIN

Being a good babysitter's a matter of listening. Not having an agenda. I don't know. Yeah, I'm good.

NANCY

So you're not gonna talk to me?

ANDREA

Why should I talk to you?

NANCY

Well, you're just sitting there. Are you gonna pretend I'm not here?

ANDREA

Hard to pretend that.

NANCY

You don't have to be such a bitch.

ANDREA

You started in on me the second I walked in.

NANCY

I mean, I realize... we've been through this, but... Isn't it possible for us to try to be friends?

ANDREA

You haven't made any attempt to be my friend.

NANCY

Well, maybe that's up to you.

ANDREA

No, I don't think so. I think that is most definitely up to you.

NANCY

We've talked about how I feel...

ANDREA

I have no idea how you feel. I only know what you do.

What does that mean? NANCY

Ask Martin. ANDREA

What are you...? NANCY

I told you; ask Martin what it means. (To OLIVER:) Come on, Cinderella. Time to go home. ANDREA

I just settled in, for chrissake. OLIVER

I can bring him home, Andrea. IRA

No, you can't. I'm not staying up all hours waiting for him to roll in. It's either now or he spends the night in the garage. ANDREA

If you want, I can take you home. IRA

No, I better go. Really, honey, you did a great job. Next stop, Greenwich Village. OLIVER

Yeah, sure. MARTIN

He knows he sucked. Don't encourage him. NANCY

He didn't suck. VINCE

No, he didn't suck. But he knows he still has a lot of work to do. Am I right? NANCY

Shut up. MARTIN

Give Clell my love. OLIVER

He's not my husband. MARTIN

He's not? OLIVER

Absolutely not. MARTIN

LINDA  
Yeah, we should really be leaving too.

VINCE  
Oh, honey. It's...  
(HE looks at his watch)  
Oh, it is late. I didn't think it was so...

LINDA  
I'll meet you in the car, I'm just going to the ladies'.  
Will you take care of what we owe, or do you want me to take  
care of it?

VINCE  
No, I can. Wait. Better give me a five.

(SHE gives him a bill out of her purse  
and exits, bumping into OLIVER)

LINDA  
Oh, sorry.

OLIVER  
After you.

LINDA  
Oh, no, I... can I help you?

OLIVER  
I can manage.

LINDA  
Here, let me...

(SHE wheels him off)

OLIVER  
Really, it's fine, I can...

(THEY're off. A pause)

MARTIN  
Well... thank you again so much for coming.

VINCE  
Oh, it was great. Really. Don't forget us little people  
when you hit the big time. But listen, I'll be calling you.  
About the kids.

MARTIN  
Oh, sure. I know for a fact we're on Linda's speed dial.

VINCE  
Take care.

(HE exits)

NANCY

I should shove off, too. That bitch is expecting me at eight-thirty tomorrow. Look at this.

(SHE gestures to IRA, who has fallen asleep in his chair)

Ira. Ira!

(HE wakes with a start)

Good morning, Mary Sunshine.

IRA

Shit.

NANCY

See you bright and early. (To MARTIN:) You gonna hang?

MARTIN

That expression is too young for you, sweetie. But yeah, I'm going to spend some time reveling in my overwhelming success. I'll see you later.

NANCY

So what did you say to Andrea?

MARTIN

What?

NANCY

Well, she said that you said something to her?

MARTIN

When?

NANCY

Never mind.

(SHE exits)

IRA

I'm so sorry.

MARTIN

At least you stayed awake for the show.

IRA

I don't know what it is. The change in the weather, maybe. All I wanna do is sleep. I fell asleep at my desk last week. No one saw, thank God.

MARTIN

Should I drive you home?

IRA

No, I've got my car. But you could follow me, if it's no problem.

(MARTIN and IRA start to leave. The WAITER enters with a plate of onion rings)

COOTIES I-1-20

WAITER

Didn't somebody say onion rings?

(MARTIN spits into the plate, tips it  
onto the floor)

I'm calling the manager.

(HE exits)

MARTIN

Call him irresponsible!

(IRA takes a bottle of ketchup and  
empties it across the top of the table.  
THEY exit arm-in-arm)

BLACKOUT



Scene 2

(SOPHIE and IRA's house. The next morning. Music: A clock radio, blasting. MARTIN exits as IRA moves to a bed, taking off his suit en route. Down to his underwear, HE climbs into bed, falls asleep. In the bed: empty boxes of cookies, bags of chips, magazines, used Kleenex, a coffee mug. A portable phone, which rings. IRA comes to, answers the phone)

IRA  
 (Froggy:) Hello?  
 (Lights up on LINDA)  
 LINDA  
 Ira?  
 IRA  
 Linda?  
 LINDA  
 What are you doing? Where are you?  
 IRA  
 Oh, shit. What time is it?  
 LINDA  
 Where are you?  
 IRA  
 Ummm... I'm sick.  
 LINDA  
 You're sick?  
 IRA  
 Yeah, yeah, I'm sick.  
 LINDA  
 You didn't call in this morning...  
 IRA  
 Yeah, I'm sorry I didn't call...  
 LINDA  
 You seemed fine at two this morning.  
 IRA  
 Yeah, it hit me on the way home. I'm sorry. The change in the weather...

COOTIES I-2-22

LINDA

And what about the Teacher's presentation we have at 9:30?  
And you're not here?

IRA

Oh, shit, I'm sorry, Linda.

LINDA

Sorry?

IRA

I forgot, or I'd be in. The notes for... the, um... the proposals are in a folder, um... top of my desk... left hand side. Nancy knows where... ask her. They should be in order, and, um... the memo on top pretty much explains everything. I'm leaving now. I should be able to get there in...

LINDA

Why bother? By the time you get here, the day'll be half over. We did the presentation without you. Nancy found all the materials. You owe her a dinner.

IRA

I'm... sorry. Did it go well?

LINDA

See me first thing tomorrow when you get in.

(SHE hangs up. IRA gets up, shuts off the radio. Puts on a bathrobe, moves into the kitchen where SOPHIE sits, drinking coffee)

IRA

Why didn't you wake me?

SOPHIE

I tried. You snapped at me. Are you in trouble? I still have some coffee. Are you going in?

IRA

Probably not. What time is it?

SOPHIE

Eleven-thirty.

IRA

Shit. No, I guess I'm not going in.

SOPHIE

It'll be like a vacation. I'll make your favorite breakfast.

IRA

Just coffee for now. Shit. Shit, shit, shit. Maybe I should get a new alarm clock.

I'll be at the mall today.                   SOPHIE  
Want me to get you one?

Yeah, sure.                                   IRA

What kind?                                   SOPHIE

Whatever's loudest.                       IRA

With a radio?                               SOPHIE

Doesn't seem to make any difference.      IRA

Maybe you should move it to the other side of the room.  
Then you'd have to get up.                   SOPHIE

Maybe I should have it embedded in my skull.                   IRA

You're just like your father. He was always a grouch first  
thing in the morning.                       SOPHIE

Ma, everyone's a grouch first thing in the morning.                   IRA

I'm not.                                     SOPHIE

That's true. You're not.                   IRA

(A pause)

You remember the cemetery this weekend.                       SOPHIE

Uh-huh.                                     IRA

Will you call the florist or do you want me to?                   SOPHIE

I can call.                                 IRA

Get a wreath. They last the longest.                           SOPHIE

(A long pause)  
Seventeen years.

IRA  
Huh?

SOPHIE  
It's seventeen years now.

IRA  
Eighteen.

SOPHIE  
Nah.

IRA  
1978.

SOPHIE  
Well of course I know what year it was.

IRA  
Well, this is '96. That's eighteen years.

SOPHIE  
Oh yeah. It is, isn't it? I'm glad one of us has a brain that works. Can I make you some eggs?

IRA  
No, thanks.

SOPHIE  
I got some of those sausages, if you want some. The spicy ones.

IRA  
No, thanks.

SOPHIE  
I hope it's not in the mess it was in last time. Better bring the clippers and some garbage bags, just in case. I mean, "perpetual care." Huh. They charged a premium for that when we bought the plot in... '62 or '63... whenever we got it. It was a couple of hundred dollars, if I remember, and back then, that was something. Of course, nobody's gonna care for it as well as you would yourself. You're gonna call the florist?

IRA  
I said I would.

SOPHIE  
Don't let him talk you into one of those stupid flower horseshoes.

IRA  
Nope.

SOPHIE  
I've got some bagels, though I don't know how fresh.

Nah.

IRA

SOPHIE  
There are a couple of those blueberry muffins you like.

IRA  
No, thanks.

SOPHIE  
Toaster Strudel.

IRA  
Mom. I'm not hungry.

SOPHIE  
What else have we got? You know, I was reading in the paper that somebody spray-painted swastikas on the gates to the other Jewish cemetery over in Tottenville.

IRA  
Yeah, it's happening.

SOPHIE  
What do you think of that, huh?

IRA  
What do I think of it? It's horrible.

SOPHIE  
I hope our cemetery is safe.

IRA  
We'll just have to wait and see.

SOPHIE  
You know, I was reading about these people in Jersey got swastikas painted on their garage. The garage to their house! And these people weren't even Jewish. They don't have any idea who did it. Bunch of noodniks. You'd think somebody that stupid would be easy to catch, huh? Go figure. If I had some challah, I could make you French toast. Unfortunately, I don't have any challah. You don't want oatmeal, do you? I thought you didn't like oatmeal.

IRA  
No, Ma, I don't like oatmeal.

(A pause)

SOPHIE  
So what do you feel like?

IRA  
I don't know, Ma. I'm still waking up.

SOPHIE  
No, it's up to you.

IRA  
Let's make it up to you. If it were up to me, I'd probably go back to sleep.

SOPHIE  
No, don't do that.  
(A pause)  
I'm worried about you. Sleeping.

IRA  
I like to sleep.

SOPHIE  
What do you think causes that?

IRA  
(Shrugs) Being tired?

SOPHIE  
No, I mean, so much. Do you talk about this with... with the doctor?

IRA  
We talk about a lot of things.

SOPHIE  
And what does he say?

IRA  
She. My doctor's a woman.

SOPHIE  
Oh. She.

IRA  
Why are you asking me this now? I'm sorry, Ma, but I'm trying to stay awake. I don't wanna talk about how all I want to do is sleep.

(IRA takes off his robe, puts on a sweater and pants and moves to an overstuffed chair)

SEQUE

Scene 3

(A therapist's office. That afternoon)

IRA

The woman on the subway who keeps sneezing. I want to push her head into the glass.

(A pause)

The people who won't get out of my way when I'm walking behind them. I picture myself with a baseball bat, swinging, knocking them over. They don't fight back. They don't dare.

(A pause)

The man walking towards me who won't get out of my way. He expects ME to avoid HIM. I won't. I picture the top of his bald head sticking out of the top of one of those old fashioned meat grinders, and I'm pushing down on his head with a wooden mallet while the ground-up curls of his face trickle out the front.

(A pause)

The teenage girl who mutters something about "fags" as I pass by. I'm holding a machete and I lop her head off cleanly at the neck... her head goes rolling into the middle of Victory Boulevard, the eyes picking up gravel. The cars skid to avoid hitting it, but crash into each other and explode, a tower of fire and smoke flies fifty feet into the air.

(A pause)

The man who insists on pushing into the train while I'm trying to get off, then curses me because I bump into him. I see him getting stuck as the doors close, he falls to the ground. I see him being dragged, screaming, along the platform as the train speeds out of the station, scratching a wide red stripe of blood and skin along the platform.

(A pause)

The woman with the stroller who moves too slow. The man who stops dead in front of me on the sidewalk, then turns and bumps into me as if I'm invisible. The trio of friends walking in a phalanx down the sidewalk who force me into the street because no one can get past them. The person who slowly weaves from side to side, not caring that I'm walking behind him, trying to get past. Those people with umbrellas who make no concession to anyone walking in their path. I see all of their bodies in a pile, blackened and burned, the smoke rising off them, their Reeboks melted to their feet, their hair singed to a solid clump on their heads, their tongues hanging out, charred and bloated with pus.

(A pause)

God, is forty-five minutes up already? Well, I DO feel better. See you next week.

(IRA stands, moves to a telephone, picks it up, dials)

IRA (CONTINUED)

Oh, hi, it's just me. Checking to see if you're around. Um... I'm in the city, and I thought maybe if you were around you might want to come in and join me for dinner or something, but I guess you're not, and you probably wouldn't want to schlep all the way into the city anyway, so... um... you can't call me back. Maybe I'll try you again before I get on the ferry, or... maybe I'll just come on home. Talk to you soon. Um... take care.

(HE hangs up and exits as MARTIN enters  
and rushes for the phone)

MARTIN

Ira? Hello? Shit.

(HE hangs up)

SEQUE



Scene 4

(MARTIN and NANCY's apartment. That night. NANCY at TV eating a Stouffer's dinner. MARTIN enters)

NANCY

(Jumps:) You scared me.

MARTIN

Sorry. I didn't think.. I'd be...

NANCY

I thought you'd be gone all night.

MARTIN

Why didn't you get that?

NANCY

(Shrugs) He's your friend.

MARTIN

Whatcha watchin'?

NANCY

I don't even know. It's just on. I was about to go to my room.

MARTIN

Any cookies left?

(HE exits)

NANCY

I didn't eat them all, if that's what you mean.

(MARTIN re-enters with box of assorted cookies)

MARTIN

Oh no, you didn't eat them all, no. You left one. One fucking lousy cookie. You know how this makes me just want to beat you over the head? I'd be less angry if you ate the whole box and said "Fuck you, I ate the cookies." No, you have to make it LOOK like you're not a big, fat pig, that you actually showed self-control and saved one! And it's not even an Oreo or anything good, no, it's a goddamned, dry, tasteless, dusty old Lorna Doone that nobody likes anyway. Thanks. And I'll bet there's an eyedropper of milk left in the carton for me to wash it down with, huh? After I wipe your lipstick from the spout, of course.

(A long pause)

NANCY

Sorry.

MARTIN

If you could chew that food with your mouth closed, it would please me immeasurably.

(A pause)

By the way, in order for that to qualify as "Lean Cuisine," you're only supposed to eat one.

NANCY

What, are you having your period? What are you doing home so early, anyway? I was hoping to be asleep by the time you got home.

MARTIN

Oh, I just got tired of standing at the bar being passed over like a bruised tomato. When they played three Whitney Houston songs in a row, I knew it was time to go.

NANCY

C'mere. I'll give you a massage.

MARTIN

No, that's not it.

NANCY

Sit.

(HE sits. SHE rubs his shoulders)

Ira got in big trouble at work today. Linda was furious.

MARTIN

I'm not in the mood for one of your hour and a half monologues on office gossip.

NANCY

He's a friend of yours, I thought you'd care. I don't care.

MARTIN

And I'm sure he doesn't care, so I don't care.

NANCY

What do you want to talk about?

MARTIN

Maybe I don't want to talk at all.

(A long pause)

Where's the lovely Louis this evening?

NANCY

We're taking a break.

MARTIN

Oh?

NANCY

Well, okay, I'm taking a break. I just haven't told him yet.

MARTIN

What happened?

NANCY

Oh, I don't know. Nothing happened, really. I went over to his house the other night, uninvited, and do you know he's sitting in front of the TV eating a Morton's TV dinner and drinking a can of C&C Grape Soda. Loser.

MARTIN

He loves you.

NANCY

Oh, please. He gets drunk on Tequila Sunrises.

(A pause)

So what did you say to Andrea?

MARTIN

What?

NANCY

Last night. Andrea made it sound like you said something to her about what I said to you.

MARTIN

I'm not even going to try to make sense of that sentence. The only conversation I've had with Andrea over the past six months has been, "Hi, is Oliver there?"

(A pause)

NANCY

Well, did you say something to Oliver?

MARTIN

I don't remember what I said to Oliver. Whatever I said, it's sure to come out different after it's made its way through Andrea's game of Absolut telephone.

BLACKOUT

Scene 5

(ANDREA and OLIVER's house. The same night. OLIVER watching television. ANDREA enters)

ANDREA  
What's this shit?

OLIVER  
Swan Lake.

ANDREA  
Ugh. Put on something good.

OLIVER  
Shut up.

ANDREA  
I thought you hated this faggy shit.

OLIVER  
Maybe after hearing your voice all day long, I want something pretty in my ears.

ANDREA  
Come on. 7:30. Hard Copy.

(SHE grabs the remote, changes channels)

OLIVER  
Come on, gimme that. Isn't there a vodka bottle in the kitchen that needs your attention?

ANDREA  
What are you talking about? Don't get smart with me.

OLIVER  
"What are you talking about?" I'm not an idiot, you know. Just because you pour it into a Poland Spring bottle, doesn't mean you've worked a reverse miracle. Vodka into water.

ANDREA  
You don't know anything.

OLIVER  
You think all my senses are dead? I can smell it on you, stupid.

ANDREA  
You cannot.

OLIVER  
You sweat it. Your sweat is ninety proof, for chrissake.

ANDREA

You're a lying sack of shit, you know that? A lying sack of shit. I should pour some in your IV drip, maybe it'd make you shut up for a while.

OLIVER

Would you shut your fucking mouth and let met watch this fucking ballet?

ANDREA

What, is it getting you off, watching some fruity fags in tights? Whyn't ya just put in one of those cocksucker tapes you've got hidden and get it over with?

OLIVER

That's really pretty. No wonder you can't get a date.

ANDREA

I can't get a date 'cause I'm stuck with you all fucking day and all fucking night.

OLIVER

So get the fuck out of the house. Who asked you to be under my feet... my wheels!... who asked you to be under my wheels all day long?

ANDREA

(Overlapping:) I don't have ten seconds where I can sit and think by myself. Alone. I look forward to taking a shit in the morning so I can get away from you for five minutes.

OLIVER

Like anybody would want that flabby, drunken pussy of yours, anyway.

ANDREA

At least mine still does what it's supposed to, unlike that dried-up pod you've got dangling between your legs. I swear, if Mom were alive and heard your mouth, she'd smack you into next week.

OLIVER

Yeah, if Mom were alive I'd be taken care of, I wouldn't have to empty my own catheter and eat Chef Boy-Ar-Dee out of the can.

ANDREA

Yeah, and if I weren't alive, you'd be lying in some state hospital, waking up in a pile of your own shit, you selfish fuck.

OLIVER

Oh, did I forget to thank you today for all the wonderful things you do, is that what this is about? Thank you, sweet Jesus for blessing me with my dear self-sacrificing sister, who is making my few remaining moments on earth such unadulterated joy. Happy? Go to your grave guilt-free. I absolve you.

(A pause)

OLIVER (CONTINUED)

If I could take a walk around the block, if I could get in the car and drive away... You're the only one with a choice here. Don't you understand that I just need you to leave! Sometimes! Just to be alone. Get in the car. Go to the mall. Anything.

ANDREA

It's cold out.

OLIVER

Wear a coat!

ANDREA

The mall closes in half an hour.

OLIVER

I don't know what you want me to say. So stay here. Stay here and torture me. Go to a bar! Go to a diner, drink a cup of coffee! Just drive! Sit in a parking lot with the motor running.

ANDREA

I can't. I can't just...

OLIVER

Sit in the garage with the motor running. Just sit there with your mouth shut. I don't care what you do.

(Lights up on SOPHIE and IRA's house.  
Ira enters the house. SOPHIE enters)

SOPHIE

I thought you were going to stay in town late.

IRA

Nah. It was cold. I was near the ferry. It just made sense to come home.

SOPHIE

This is a nice surprise. I'm glad you're home.

IRA

Any banana cake left?

SOPHIE

Want some?

(SHE exits. Lights up on MARTIN and  
NANCY's apartment. NANCY massages  
MARTIN's shoulders)

NANCY

So where were you?

Bay Club. MARTIN

Anybody there? NANCY

Anybody who? MARTIN

Clell? NANCY

Didn't see him, thank God. MARTIN

There's a message on the machine. NANCY

Ick. I'll call him tomorrow. MARTIN

He's so sweet. NANCY

(A long pause)

MARTIN  
I try to remember why I started talking to him in the first place, he is so not my type. You know, he joined the gym, which I think he only did for my benefit, and he goes on the Stairmaster for half an hour and then goes home and eats a quart of ice cream. "It's just not working," he says. Hmmmm. Let's puzzle this out.

NANCY  
You're harder on him than anybody.

MARTIN  
I feel lonelier with him than I do when I'm alone. That's not right. Why is the yearbook out?

NANCY  
I was looking at it.

MARTIN  
Why?

NANCY  
Bored.

(MARTIN thumbs through the yearbook)

MARTIN  
Such a dweeb.

NANCY  
Well, you still wore glasses then.

MARTIN

I meant you.

ANDREA

So stay in your room.

OLIVER

What am I, thirteen? I want the house. You have legs. Use them. Join a gym. Take an Adult Ed class. Better, go to an AA meeting, for chrissake.

ANDREA

Go fuck yourself. All you have to do is put something on T.V. that I like and I'll sit here and not say a word.

OLIVER

Oh, shove the remote up your ass.

ANDREA

No thanks. You're the only member of this family who likes to take things up the ass.

OLIVER

You'd take anything up anywhere if anybody ever asked you. Especially that fat ass.

ANDREA

At least I still have one, not just a space between the two sticks that used to be my legs.

OLIVER

(Smiling:) Oh, yeah? Well, your ass is so fat that they could use it for... something.

ANDREA

(Smiling:) Oh, yeah?

OLIVER

Yeah.

ANDREA

Oh yeah?

(THEY laugh)

OLIVER

Yeah. Red.

ANDREA

Red.

OLIVER

Blue.

ANDREA

Blue.



Green. OLIVER

Green. ANDREA

Grey. OLIVER

Grey. ANDREA

ANDREA and OLIVER  
(Singing:) "Put on your old grey bonnet with a blue ribbon  
on it..."

(THEY explode in laughter)

SOPHIE  
Flossie and me were talking about going to Atlantic City  
over the weekend.

Uh-huh. IRA

Would you like to join us? SOPHIE

Oh. Uh... IRA

SOPHIE  
We'll probably make it an over-nighter. Stay at one of the  
casino hotels. How does that sound?

Uh-huh. IRA

You can have your own room. SOPHIE

It's not that. IRA

SOPHIE  
I don't like doing it all in one day. By the time you get  
there, you have to turn around and come home.

You taking the car? IRA

SOPHIE  
Oh no, it's cheaper on the bus. They give you coupons for a  
free lunch, you know. It's a good lunch, too. Buffet.

(A pause)  
Well? It'll be my treat.

I don't think so, Ma. IRA

Awwwww... SOPHIE

I think I just wanna rest this weekend. IRA

Getting out might be good for you. SOPHIE

There's a lot of work I could do around the house. I could finally rake the backyard. IRA

I could stay and help. SOPHIE

No, I want you to go. You'll just be in my way... I'll get more done if you're not here. IRA

(IRA picks up the yearbook, thumbs through it)

NANCY  
I was looking at that picture of the senior concert and I realized I remembered the exact moment the picture was taken. We were singing the Beatles medley, and Missy Schlossberg was in the row directly behind me and would sing right in my ear. And on the "Let it be, let it be..." she was always way off, at that's when the picture was taken and there's this pained expression on my face of me trying to find the note. And that's what got recorded for history. And there you are, two rows down, selling it like Ethel Merman on the opening night of "Gypsy."

(NANCY, ANDREA and SOPHIE exit)

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

(The Finished Basement of SOPHIE  
and IRA's House. Friday Night)

IRA  
He was gay.

MARTIN  
Not.

OLIVER  
Who?

IRA  
He was. He was gay.

MARTIN  
Steve D'Ambrosio.

OLIVER  
Yeah, in your dreams he was gay.

IRA  
Anyone who spent that much time working on his body...

MARTIN  
Actually, I did hear a rumor. My sister's best friend's  
brother was the brother-in-law of the woman who married  
Steve's brother.

OLIVER  
So we're talking a reliable, first-hand source.

IRA  
You followed that?

MARTIN  
The rumor was...

IRA  
I don't care about rumors. He was. Maybe he didn't know it  
then, but I'll bet he knows it now.

OLIVER  
I'm telling you,. in your dreams. In your dreams on  
Saturday night when you're in bed alone with a dildo up your  
ass, that's when Steve D'Ambrosio is gay.

IRA  
You're a pig.

OLIVER  
Please. I'm sick.

IRA  
I'm sorry.

MARTIN

He's sorry. He means you're a sick pig.

IRA

You know, I can remember meeting you as if it happened yesterday.

MARTIN

Forgive me if I'm a little vague on the details...

IRA

Oh, I wouldn't expect you to remember. It was on the playground. First grade recess. You were all by yourself...

OLIVER

Surprise.

IRA

And you were in the cement tube. Remember? It was like a hunk of sewer pipe or something, plopped down in a corner of the playground. Isn't that funny? Back then, it seemed like a really cool place to hide or to climb. Now it seems pathetic. Anyway, you were inside, by yourself.

MARTIN

Yeah, couldn't get a date back then, neither.

IRA

Reading a book.

OLIVER

That even I remember. You were always off by yourself, reading a book, drawing in the dirt, finding some way of entertaining yourself. I used to think you were weird.

MARTIN

It never occurred to you that I was trying to get away from you?

OLIVER

I was the best little boy in the world.

MARTIN

You were a horrible brat. Chasing me, pushing my books.

IRA

Can I finish my heartwarming story, please.

OLIVER

Maybe I had a big crush on you.

MARTIN

Yeah, from the back of your padlocked closet. Even back then you were such a big fag, and you always acted so tough.

IRA

Anyway, you were in the tube, reading this book, and I asked you if you wanted to play.

MARTIN

You had that little gang and that little clubhouse. What was the name of that gang? Did it have a name?

OLIVER

Play what? Play house?

IRA

Probably. I used to love to play house.

OLIVER

Used to, he says.

MARTIN

Did it have a name?

IRA

You said you didn't want to play, you wanted to read. I remember I felt hurt for about a second, like I wasn't worth playing with.

OLIVER

I don't remember. "The Good Gang," or something equally unimaginative. Maybe just "The Gang." We were very post-modern.

MARTIN

The members of the gang used to wear cotton roving through their noses. Wasn't that what that stuff was called? That thick yarn you'd use to tie up packages? Cotton roving, right?

IRA

So, Martin, I felt hurt because you were ignoring me.

MARTIN

Oh, sorry. So I was reading and I didn't want you bothering me.

IRA

Yeah, and then you asked me if I wanted some candy.

MARTIN

Each gang member wore a different color through his nose and I wasted hours trying to determine if the colors meant something. Rank, or something.

OLIVER

I doubt it. We weren't really that smart a gang.

IRA

So, anyway, I said yes, but then regretted it. I figured you'd offer me a SweetTart or a Sugar Baby or a LifeSaver that you'd spit on or stuck up your nose or your butthole and then you'd call everyone over to laugh at me while I ate it.

OLIVER

I can't even remember what the gang did. What our purpose was, if we had one. We used to watch "Lost in Space" at each others' houses, but it wasn't really a club.

IRA

So I said yes, and you pulled out a roll of Coffee-flavored Charms and offered me one. Individually wrapped. Do you remember those? Regular Charms were like LifeSavers, only they were square and didn't have a hole. Fruit flavored. But these were coffee-flavored.

MARTIN

Sure. Brown wrapper. Yellow writing.

OLIVER

They still make Charms, stupid. They're not like Bonomo Turkish Taffy, or, like... what's that stuff?

MARTIN

Not Coffee flavor.

OLIVER

No, not coffee.

IRA

Anyway, I thought, how sophisticated! I mean, I'm sure I didn't know what the word sophisticated meant in first grade, but that's the only way I can describe the feeling. How adult. How not like a kid. I was in awe. It was as if you were offering me a straight-up vodka martini and a cigarette.

OLIVER

No, there was no purpose that I can recall.

MARTIN

No, the purpose was to run around with cotton roving up your nose, terrorizing everyone. And giving everyone cootie shots. Whenever somebody not in the gang touched somebody in the gang, you gave them a cootie shot. Once you pushed me onto the ground and then you made somebody in the gang give you a cootie shot. I mean, you pushed me. I wanted you to die a slow, horrible death.

OLIVER

Got your wish.

(A long pause)

(A la Lucy:) Illlllllle. MARTIN

Let's have some music. IRA

What do you want? MARTIN

Anything but Barbra. OLIVER

Is there anything else? MARTIN

I'm thinking of the three of us, six years old, standing on the picnic table in my backyard lip-synching to Supremes records. How did we survive childhood? IRA

I was doing it at four. MARTIN

So much for the theory that it's not genetic. IRA

Wanting to lip-synch is an inherited trait? OLIVER

How come you always sang lead? IRA

Huh? MARTIN

Well, we let you be Diana, but then when she left, me or Oliver should have moved up. IRA

I don't lip-synch back-up. MARTIN

Well then, you should have gone off in a corner and lip-synched "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by yourself. OLIVER  
(MUSIC: Barbra Streisand's "I Believe in Love")

I said no Barbra!

For me there is no other. MARTIN

She is easy to lip-synch to. IRA

Fuck you. MARTIN

COOTIES I-6-44

IRA  
I didn't mean it as... as a...

OLIVER  
So what are you boys up to tomorrow night?

IRA  
Um... Gee...

OLIVER  
This is pretty pathetic. Here we are, three eligible, attractive gay boys and on Friday night we have no plans for Saturday? Come on, Ira.

IRA  
I'm not really sure. My mom may be going out of town.

OLIVER  
So your house is empty?

IRA  
I'm not sure.

OLIVER  
You seeing Clell, I suppose?

MARTIN  
Babysitting.

OLIVER  
Eeeuuuu. I just can't spend another Saturday alone with my sister. I can't. Let's do something, Ira.

IRA  
It's just... I'm not sure what I'll be doing...

(HE wanders off into SOPHIE'S kitchen)

MARTIN  
You're welcome to join me.

OLIVER  
Where is this juvenile detention center?

MARTIN  
Todt Hill.

OLIVER  
Oh, they live on the hill?

MARTIN  
Yeah, Todt Hill. It ain't Fifth Avenue and the Park.

OLIVER  
For Staten Island it is.



MARTIN

I'll torture you. I'll make you watch the new numbers I'm working on for my act.

OLIVER

I'll take your act over Andrea's. With yours, there's less likelihood that one of us is gonna wind up dead.

SOPHIE

Would you give me a scratch?

IRA

Where?

SOPHIE

Right in the middle. Yeah, there. Pick up my blouse, I can't feel it. Under where my bra is. Yeah, right there. Ooooooh. Is there something there?

IRA

Like what something?

SOPHIE

A bug bite or something?

IRA

A mole.

SOPHIE

A raised one?

IRA

Yeah.

SOPHIE

What color?

IRA

Brown.

SOPHIE

Dark brown?

IRA

I don't know. Mole color brown.

SOPHIE

Scratch it again. Yeah, that's good. Thanks. Do you recognize it?

IRA

What?

SOPHIE

The mole. Have you seen it before?

IRA

I guess. I don't know. I haven't memorized your back.

COOTIES I-6-46

SOPHIE

Ah, I've got so many of 'em. Arms, back, legs. One day I'm gonna be one big mole.

IRA

Huh.

(VINCE enters)

SEQUE

Scene 7

(VINCE and LINDA's Apartment.  
Saturday Night. MARTIN and  
OLIVER are looking out over the  
audience)

VINCE  
Thanks for doing this.

MARTIN  
No problem. Nice view.

VINCE  
Yeah, it's nice on the hill.

MARTIN  
So what are you guys up to tonight?

VINCE  
Oh, there's a new Italian on Hylan Boulevard Linda wants to  
try. We shouldn't be very late. We may do a movie, but I  
doubt it. I'll call you if we do. Or if we don't.

MARTIN  
No rush.

VINCE  
Jennifer won't be any trouble tonight. She got new glasses  
and the kids at school were... well, you know what kids are  
like with... something like that. She'll be in her room  
all night, probably.

(Lights back up on IRA and SOPHIE)

SOPHIE  
Your eyes are better than mine. What's this say here, 350?

IRA  
What, where?

SOPHIE  
This recipe. 350?

IRA  
450.

SOPHIE  
What?

IRA  
Twenty minutes at 450.

SOPHIE  
That can't be right.

IRA  
'swhat it says.

COOTIES I-7-48

SOPHIE  
It'll burn. I always bake it at 350. 400, maybe.

IRA  
How long.

SOPHIE  
Maybe an hour.

IRA  
Well, that's why. This says only twenty minutes. It's a hotter oven, so it don't take as long.

SOPHIE  
You're so smart.

(LINDA enters)

LINDA  
She won't even open the door. So what do I do, Dad? Pound on the door until she opens it?

MARTIN  
Believe me, I know what this is about. She just doesn't want to have to tell you the kids at school think she's a retard.

VINCE  
Awww...

MARTIN  
She just needs to cry her head off for a couple of hours. Then she'll look for somebody to talk to.

VINCE  
Think we should stay home?

LINDA  
Well, I ain't eating Spaghettios, and that's all we got in the house.

MARTIN  
Between me and Oliver, I think we can offer her some advice on what it's like to be picked on.

VINCE  
Let me give it one last try.

(HE exits)

LINDA  
I'm sorry, I didn't realize you would be... I hope you don't mind, but... I'd appreciate it if the kids didn't... if you... I'm sorry, I just have to say this. I mean, I understand that it can't be transmitted casually, but even so, I'd appreciate it if you didn't... you know. The kids. You've got all these needles...

OLIVER  
I have cancer.

LINDA  
What? Don't you have AIDS?

OLIVER  
No, cancer. I have spinal cancer.

LINDA  
Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you had AIDS. Well. That sounded stupid.

(SHE exits)

OLIVER  
Well, that's the story of my life. I was the last person in high school to start wearing jeans. I got into disco music in 1981. Now I can't even die the right way.

(Lights up on SOPHIE and IRA)

SOPHIE  
What do you feel like tonight?

IRA  
What is it? Saturday: chicken.

SOPHIE  
I just thought you might like something other than chicken.

IRA  
Like what?

SOPHIE  
Oh, I don't know. What do you like? Pot roast?

IRA  
Pot roast is Thursday.

SOPHIE  
Well, I don't know. Something different.

IRA  
Chicken is fine.

SOPHIE  
How about if I make it another way?

IRA  
Like how?

SOPHIE  
Oh, I don't know. How do you like it? You used to like those fried chicken T.V. Dinners. Remember? When your dad and I would have liver?

IRA  
Your doctor said you should only eat it broiled. Broil it like always.

(IRA exits)

OLIVER  
What's Clell doing tonight?

MARTIN  
I haven't spoken to him in a couple of days.

OLIVER  
What, you have so many other boyfriends?

MARTIN  
He's a nice guy. Gimme a break, why do you have this thing about me and Clell?

OLIVER  
I thought he wanted you to move in.

MARTIN  
So?

OLIVER  
You like living with Nancy?

MARTIN  
More than I would Clell.

OLIVER  
He's a very decent guy. And he has a beautiful house. You should move in with him, try it for a while.

MARTIN  
There's nothing there. I don't love him. I don't even know how much I like him. I need a warm body beside me sometimes.

OLIVER  
I'd live with any man who asked me, especially if he was a decent guy like Clell.

MARTIN  
Well...

(IRA re-enters)

IRA  
I'm going out.

SOPHIE  
So late?

IRA  
It's Saturday night.

Taking the car? SOPHIE

No, I'll leave it for you. IRA

I don't need it. Going to Martin's? SOPHIE

Nope. IRA

Going to the city? SOPHIE

I don't know, Ma. I have no idea. IRA

I want you to have friends, Ira. SOPHIE

(IRA exits)

I'm gonna go. OLIVER

I'm sure Vince'll drive you. MARTIN

What, and get cooties in Linda's car? Nah, I'll call a cab. OLIVER

(SOPHIE exits)

What time is it? OLIVER

Nine-thirty. MARTIN

Oh, Andrea's sure to be passed out by now. OLIVER

(OLIVER exits. VINCE re-enters)

SEQUE

Scene 8

(MARTIN and NANCY's Apartment)

MARTIN  
Thanks again for driving me home.

VINCE  
No problem. Thank you.

MARTIN  
Ummmm... Wanna drink?

VINCE  
Sure, that'd be great.

MARTIN  
Come on in. Nancy must be at her boyfriend's.

VINCE  
Would you mind...? I know this sounds stupid, but can I put on your T.V.?

MARTIN  
Sure.

VINCE  
You see, Linda can't sleep if I have the T.V. on, so I don't get to watch much.

MARTIN  
Why don't you move the T.V.?

VINCE  
She likes to watch in the morning when she's getting dressed.

MARTIN  
What would you like?

VINCE  
Got any scotch?

MARTIN  
Think so. Rocks?

VINCE  
What? Oh, yeah. Rocks.

MARTIN  
Why don't you get another T.V.?

VINCE  
I like to know what the kids are watching.  
(MARTIN re-enters with VINCE's drink)  
Aren't you drinking with me?



MARTIN  
Oh, no. I had way too much to drink at your house.  
(A pause)  
Kidding.

VINCE  
Thank you for taking the time to play games with her. She  
loves games.

MARTIN  
Oh, so do I. I love to... no, it's too easy.

VINCE  
You're making fun of me again.

MARTIN  
Not at all.

VINCE  
She doesn't really have anyone to play games with.

MARTIN  
She's good.

VINCE  
Smart.

MARTIN  
Yeah, very smart.

VINCE  
Her mother doesn't really have time. And I... well, she's  
much smarter than I am. I'm pretty stupid when it comes to  
games.

MARTIN  
You're not stupid.

VINCE  
That way I am.

MARTIN  
What're we watching?

VINCE  
I don't know. I just like to have it on. It's nice. It's  
quiet here.

MARTIN  
Cause Nancy's not home.

VINCE  
You get along?

MARTIN  
Sometimes.

VINCE

You did your place nice. You do this? Or Nancy?

MARTIN

No, it's all me. As you can tell from her figure, Nancy's taste is in her mouth.

VINCE

I don't get it.

MARTIN

Nah, neither do I. I'll try to stop... quipping.

VINCE

Can I take my shoes off?

MARTIN

Sure.

VINCE

This is nice.

(VINCE keeps his attention on the T.V.  
Crossfade to OLIVER, in his chair, at  
home, on the telephone)

OLIVER

Blond. Do you like that? Sure, blue eyes. The whole nine yards. No, not nine yards. (HE laughs) Well, what do you like? How about eight and a half inches. Yeah. Oh, sure, sure. I always have a tan, even in winter. No, I have no tan line. I'm tan all over. I go to the nude beach. Don't you like that? Well, what do you wanna do? No, I want you to take charge. Don't you want to tell me what you like? Tell me. I'll do it. Okay. Okay. Let me put something on you. Oh, I've always got suntan lotion. Well, what do you like? Crisco? Oh, you don't really like that, do you? Do you like it rough? No, I can be very gentle, if you like it that way. How 'bout some oil? I've got some nice scented oil. Do you like that? No, not yet. I need you to get me hard. I've got the oil in my right hand. I'm sliding it way down into your pants. Onto your cock. I've got my finger sliding back and forth, back and forth in that space between your balls and your asshole. Do you like that? Tickling you. Do you like that? Mmmmmmm... Do you like that?

(Crossfade to IRA, on a subway car. Saturday night, late. HE holds the Sunday Times on his lap and looks at sections of it from time to time. The train pulls into a station. The Conductor announces the station. A BLACK MAN, TONEY, gets on, sits across the aisle from IRA. IRA glances at him and goes back to the paper. TONEY listens to a Walkman, moving to the music. A bell signals the closing doors. The two MEN make eye contact. IRA holds a little too long, goes back to his paper. TONEY keeps his eyes on IRA. IRA looks up, sees TONEY looking at him. HE looks around the car, looking for other passengers. The train makes another stop. IRA looks up at TONEY, who looks back. IRA glances away. The doors close. IRA can't focus on the paper. The train pulls into another station. IRA looks at TONEY, who looks back. IRA stands, waits for the doors to open. HE looks around the car to see if anyone else is getting off. The doors open and IRA gets off. TONEY immediately stands and gets off as well. IRA walks a few paces, keeping his back on TONEY. The doors of the train close and the train begins pulling out of the station. TONEY stands a few steps behind IRA, watching him. IRA quickly moves forward another step and glances over his shoulder at TONEY. TONEY quickly moves up behind him, grabbing him around the waist with one hand, around the chest with the other, pushes him up against a pillar. IRA gasps. TONEY thrusts his hips into IRA, pinning him against the pillar. IRA turns around to face him and THEY kiss on the mouth. IRA wraps his legs around TONEY's waist, drops the Times on the ground. The lights of the departing train flash across them. VINCE and MARTIN turn and look at each other)

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT ONE

COOTIES I-8-56

ACT TWOScene 1

(A therapist's office. Saturday afternoon. Music: Streisand's "Left in the Dark." Lights up on MARTIN, in performance at the Bay Club. As HE performs, lights come up on IRA at his kitchen table, using the tabletop as a piano keyboard, "synching" the piano part of the same song. Lights come up on LINDA, speaking animatedly, although we can't hear her words for the music. Lights fade on MARTIN and IRA and as the music fades as well, we hear LINDA)

LINDA

I shouldn't have tried to quit smoking. I was doing okay today until lunch. I went to the Wendy's Drive-Thru and got a cheeseburger. Plain. Nothing on it. And I had to repeat this, like, three times.

(SHE sneezes)

And now I'm getting a cold on top of it. The idiot at the Drive-Thru kept repeating the order back to me wrong, and then I'd have to repeat myself again. This went on like three times until the idiot repeated it back exactly the way I said it. Plain. Nothing. Meat. Cheese. Bun. Period. So I pick up my order and I'm driving down the service road and I open it up with one hand to eat it and there's ketchup all over it. So I start to curse and I'm trying to scrape it off, but it's just smearing around and the bun rips and the car behind me starts beeping and I put my hand back on the steering wheel and get ketchup all over it and it drops off onto my dress. Which, as you can see, is silk. And I pull the car over to the side of the road to let the asshole behind me pass and I start to scream. I roll up the windows and first I'm cursing the idiot at Wendy's and her lack of education and her deafness and her incomplete grasp of English and how you can never get anything the way you want it, and then that turns to gibberish and I'm just screaming. And then that turns to sobbing. And I'm just sitting behind the wheel of my car on the service road, screaming, and with these dry-heave sobs for about fifteen minutes. My breathing got back to normal, I calmed myself down and I got out of the car. There was a deli about fifteen feet from where I'd stopped. I wiped my eyes, straightened my hair, went into the deli, bought a pack of cigarettes and went back to the car. Got back in, smoked about five and then I felt perfectly fine. I didn't even want the hamburger anymore. I gave it to a stray I saw in the deli parking lot. And I went on my merry way.

COOTIES II-1-58

LINDA (CONTINUED)

Something's going on with VINCE, I'm not sure what. Oh, sure, sure, we'll talk about it next Saturday. What do I owe you?

(SHE exits. Crossfade to MARTIN and VINCE)

SEQUE

Scene 2

(MARTIN's bedroom. Early Saturday morning)

VINCE

I'm sticky.

MARTIN  
Mmmmm... Me too. Wanna cigarette?

VINCE

Yeah... Don't put on the light!

MARTIN

Sorry, darlin'. Have to.

(HE clicks on the night table lamp.  
Offers VINCE a cigarette)

VINCE

Light it for me.  
(MARTIN smiles, lights two cigarettes)  
I gotta clean up.

MARTIN

Stay there. Let me wash you off.  
(HE gets out of bed, exits to bathroom)  
(Off:) Ooooh, I squish when I walk.

(VINCE looks at him, as the water runs  
in the sink)

VINCE

You know, I wasn't sure if you... Hey, you've got blood...  
you're bleeding.

MARTIN

(Off:) Huh? Oh, shit.

VINCE

There's blood on the sheets... me, too. I've got blood...

(MARTIN returns with a hot, wet  
washcloth)

MARTIN

No problem. I'll wipe you off.

VINCE

Ahhhh, Jesus! That feels good. Are you okay?

MARTIN

Oh, I'm fine. I wanted to prove it was my first time.

VINCE

Like I believe THAT. Honey, if that's the way you act your  
first time, you've got a big career ahead of you.

COOTIES II-2-60

MARTIN  
Are YOU okay? Not grossed out?

VINCE  
Look, you're getting me hard again.

MARTIN  
Is that a problem? This certainly wasn't your first time.

VINCE  
First time in an actual bed. Actually. You sure you're okay?

MARTIN  
Really, don't worry. I guess I wasn't quite ready for something so... expensive.

VINCE  
Expensive? That was a freebie.

MARTIN  
No, expensive. Something that looks... well, just the right size, but then it overwhelms you. My eyes were bigger than my asshole, as Mama used to say.

VINCE  
Your Mama said that?

MARTIN  
Or words to that effect.

VINCE  
Did I hurt you?

MARTIN  
In a good way.

VINCE  
Your skin's so smooth.

MARTIN  
And you're used to a woman's skin.

VINCE  
Yours is smoother.

MARTIN  
Linda has nice skin.

VINCE  
I guess. She gets stubbly a lot.

MARTIN  
Well, so do I, dumbbo.

VINCE  
I don't feel it.



MARTIN

Well, I pay through the nose for it. I get waxed.

VINCE

Doesn't that hurt?

MARTIN

In a good way.

(HE laughs)

(Southern accent:) Any pain is fine if it creates desire.

VINCE

Huh?

(Crossfade to TONEY and IRA. TONEY  
fills an overnight bag while IRA stands  
by, in his coat)

SEQUE

Scene 3

(TONEY's Apartment. Late Sunday Night)

IRA

Can I help you with something?

TONEY

This'll just take a second. First thing I wanna do is get out of these office clothes I've been wearing for three days.

IRA

It'll just be overnight. You don't need much.

TONEY

So did I tell you that cunt at the office, first thing out of her mouth, "So where did you spend the night?" Just because I hadn't shaved.

IRA

Well, and you had the same clothes.

TONEY

Oh, yeah, that. I forgot. Anyway, I went into the bathroom at work and shaved just to keep that bitch quiet which is why my face is hacked to shit.

IRA

I'll be gentle.

TONEY

Oh, I hope not. Now don't distract me, or we'll never get out of here.

IRA

Sorry. I'll just sit here.

TONEY

It's catching up with me now. I'm exhausted. Aren't you exhausted?

IRA

Not really.

TONEY

Oh, I am. This day is really catching up with me. That woman is such a bitch. I thought she wanted to be my friend, but I guess that's what she wanted me to think from the start, but it was just so she could get information from me. Do you have an iron?

IRA

Huh? Sure, sure I have an iron.

TONEY

I think I'm gonna bring this shirt. Do you like this?

(HE holds it up)

IRA

Yeah.

TONEY

But I can't stand to wear a wrinkled shirt. Maybe it's too much trouble. Awwww, I'll bring it anyway.

IRA

You don't have to work tomorrow?

TONEY

No, thank God. I don't think I could go in there after what happened...

IRA

So what does it matter? Throw something in a bag.

TONEY

What?

IRA

I'm sorry, it's just since I'm double-parked, I'm nervous.

TONEY

No, it'll just be a second. Luckily, she's not my real boss. My real boss likes me. I mean, I still have to answer to her, but if I really have a problem, I can go straight to the real boss. Toothbrush.

IRA

Oh, I have plenty of extras. Don't worry about that.

TONEY

Are we going straight to your place, or are we stopping to get something to eat?

IRA

Oh, I don't... Are you hungry?

TONEY

I don't know. Are you?

(A pause)

I'm not really sure. Where would we go? Should I dress up?

IRA

Just put on some jeans. A sweatshirt.

TONEY

I don't have any jeans. I feel like having a shrimp cocktail. Can we go someplace where I can get a shrimp cocktail?

IRA

Sure, sure. Get dressed.

COOTIES II-3-64

TONEY  
Okay, lemme just... God, I look like shit.

IRA  
You look great.

TONEY  
Ugh. I've been putting this off, it'll just take a second.

(HE puts cream on his hair)

IRA  
What's that?

TONEY  
Just some hair straightener. This only takes fifteen minutes.

IRA  
I better move the car.

TONEY  
It'll be fine. Eleven o'clock on Sunday night? Nothing's gonna happen. Stay here and keep me company. Get that timer over the sink. See it? Set it for fifteen minutes.

(HE stands in front of the mirror, applying hair straightener. IRA gets the timer)

IRA  
Fifteen?

TONEY  
Uh-huh.

IRA  
I hope you're not doing this for my benefit.

TONEY  
No, no, look at me! I look like shit. I meant to take care of this on Thursday, but... well, by the time I got home, all I wanted to do was sleep. That's all I'd really like to do right now, actually.

IRA  
Well, if you'd rather... I mean, I can go home. You don't have to come home with me.

TONEY  
Oh, honey, that's not what I meant.

IRA  
Well, no, I can go. We can see each other... I don't know... next week.

TONEY

No, stop. I'm just complaining. Don't pay any attention to me. I think I'm coming down with something. Everyone at work has it, it figures. Would you check over the sink? I think I've got some Advil. I figured it was just a matter of time before I came down with it.

IRA

Just an empty bottle.

TONEY

Shit. That cunt breathing her bad breath into my face all day long, that's how I got it. She tries to act like she's my best friend, but her boss has told me some of the things she's said about me. (Into mirror:) "I FEEL PRETTY, OH SO PRETTY..." Today I was getting some coffee and she called me "blood." I just looked at her. Not just that she's white, but that phrase is, like, so last week. I know the smell of this is horrible, but it goes away. (Into mirror:) "I'M LOOKIN' GOOD FROM MY HEAD TO MY SHOES, I GOT A NEW ATTITUDE..." And, I mean, I know that's the only reason she hired me in the first place. I know that her boss was giving her a hard time because she didn't have any minorities under her. So I'm sure she figured, "Oh, this nigger fag without a college degree won't give me any trouble." My problem was I started doing my job well, I guess. That's when I became a threat. She couldn't have that. She needed somebody to blame when she fucked up, but it sure as shit wasn't going to be me. What time is your mother due back?

IRA

Huh?

TONEY

When does your mother get back from Atlantic City?

IRA

Oh. Her bus gets in at two.

TONEY

PM?

IRA

Yeah, PM.

TONEY

Great. We can have the morning together. (Into mirror:) "TOUCH ME IN THE MORNING... THEN JUST WALK AWAY..." Her boss asked me to do him a favor. A simple little nothing favor, it doesn't matter what. So I did it, and he was really grateful, kept thanking me and then told her how great I was for doing this thing. Well, instead of being glad that I'd done something which only made her look good for hiring me in the first place, she got all bent out of shape and started telling me how I should always come to her first whenever he asks me something, and then she'll take care of it. I mean, she did it in this real buddy-buddy, candy-assed way, but I could tell she was pissed.

TONEY (CONTINUED)

I just don't want to be her friend, it's as simple as that, and she can't stand it. But I know if any decent job opens up, she'll never put in a good word for me. It just isn't fair. Do you want something to eat? I could make some microwave popcorn.

IRA

It's really getting late. Maybe I should... I don't know...

TONEY

It's just gonna be... did you set the timer?

IRA

I have to be at work on time tomorrow. I've been getting into trouble at work...

TONEY

It's probably only seven minutes left. Then I'll be ready. Maybe you can spend the night here tomorrow night. Can you?

IRA

I don't... I think... my mother will be... I'll have to... I guess I'm trying to say no, I don't think so.

TONEY

Well, think about it. (Into mirror:) "OOOOOH, LOVE TO LOVE YOU BABY, OOOOOH, LOVE TO LOVE YOU BABY..." Have you ever had somebody like that, where they act like they're your best friend, but they're really trying to stab you in the back? It's like that "Stepford Wives" movie. You ever see that? When she's saying "I thought you were my friend?" and she's got that knife?

(HE picks a bread knife out of the dish rack)

"I thought you were my friend! I thought you were my friend!"

(HE mechanically slices the knife through the air)

IRA

(Laughing:) Come on, stop it.

TONEY

Heh, heh, heh! "I thought you were my friend!"

IRA

(Laughing:) Stop! Put it down.

(HE moves his hand in front of himself and it gets nicked by the knife. HE winces)



TONEY

No, no, just hear me out. Just give me five minutes. Then you can do whatever you want.

(The timer rings)

IRA

The timer...

TONEY

Well, I guess I'll just burn all the hair off my head. Please. Stay.

IRA

It's just... I was thinking we'd be at my house. There's not much time left. The whole house is empty. And I just wanted... to be with you. Be naked with you.

TONEY

Oh, honey, honey. I'm sorry.

IRA

My mother's coming back and now it's all ruined. I'm sorry, I'm acting like a baby.

TONEY

Give me your hand.

IRA

It's got blood... Careful...

TONEY

Gimme.

(HE takes IRA's hand, puts the bloody finger in his mouth)

Let me try to make it better.

(HE licks the blood off IRA's finger. IRA takes TONEY's head and kisses him hungrily on the mouth and pulls him onto the floor, still crying. Crossfade to ANDREA at home, alone. SHE's on the phone)

SEQUE



Scene 4

(ANDREA and OLIVER's House.  
Thursday Night)

VOICEOVER

Turn your radio down.

ANDREA

Is that...? Can you hear me now? Is that better?  
(A pause)  
Hello?

VOICEOVER

Now we're cool. Who's this?

ANDREA

Can you hear me now?

VOICEOVER

What's your name, sweetheart?

ANDREA

Oh, hi, I'm Amy.

VOICEOVER

Hey, Amy. What's happening?

ANDREA

Not a whole helluva lot.

VOICEOVER

Well, something's goin' on, or you wouldn't be wasting your  
message units, am I right?

ANDREA

I can't believe I got through.

VOICEOVER

Miracles of modern science.

ANDREA

Huh. Yeah.

VOICEOVER

So... what's on your mind?

ANDREA

Ummm... it's like, now I don't know how to start. Ummm...

VOICEOVER

Listen, Amy...

ANDREA

My brother's sick. He's out of the house right now, which  
is why I can talk. If he were here, I couldn't... well, I  
wouldn't want him to know... Anyway. He's going to die, I  
guess.

VOICEOVER

It's serious.

ANDREA

Yeah. It's been so long now, it's like, it's hard to remember before. You know, before he was sick.

VOICEOVER

Is it AIDS, Amy?

ANDREA

Huh? Oh, no, no, it's just cancer.

VOICEOVER

Oh. Uh-huh.

ANDREA

I spend a lot of time thinking about him dying. Planning it, you know? Does this sound sick?

VOICEOVER

Ummm... no.

ANDREA

I get so mad at him sometimes, it's like I want him to die. I mean, I know he's in pain, I know it hurts, but he takes it out on me. Like there's something I can do about it, right? I mean, I'm doing my best. He doesn't appreciate it at all.

VOICEOVER

I'm sure you are. Ummmm... I'm sorry. Amy, right?

ANDREA

So that's when I start to wish he would just go ahead and die. That's horrible, I know, but we're both of us hurting, what's the point? He gets mad at me 'cause I drink, sometimes too much, I admit it, but really, I just do it 'cause it helps me get to sleep. But, yeah, it also makes me get madder at him than I should. So when I start to feel guilty about wishing him dead, that's when I start to think about what happens after. And what happens to me.

VOICEOVER

And does that help? I mean, do you feel better?

ANDREA

No, no, it's worse! Haven't you ever had anyone die?

VOICEOVER

Sure, sure. In the gay community, Amy, we've all lost friends. Lovers. My lover.

ANDREA

Was it sudden?

VOICEOVER

No, we expected it. But still, you know, it was terrible.

ANDREA

We're living off his disability. After that stops, what? I mean, his insurance policy is going to be eaten up by the funeral and all that shit. Then what? I'll have to go back to work. I mean, I guess I could sell the house, but... well, I can't do that overnight. I'm going to have to do something for money. And that's when I don't want him to die. I mean, from the second I get out of bed, it's all about him...

(Lights up on MARTIN, IRA and OLIVER in the car, listening to the radio. IRA drives. MARTIN in the passenger seat, OLIVER in back)

MARTIN

Sure sounds like Andrea.

OLIVER

Could you pull over a minute?

ANDREA

His meals, his meds, getting him out of bed, bathing him, taking him to the toilet, wiping his ass...

VOICEOVER

He's that bad?

ANDREA

It's in his spine. He's in a chair. But, I mean, do you understand what I'm telling you?

VOICEOVER

Guilt is a horrible thing, Amy. Have you talked to... are you getting any help on this?

ANDREA

Help? You mean like a nurse? We can't afford that.

VOICEOVER

No, I meant...

ANDREA

Just lemme finish this thought. So, it's like... what was I saying?

VOICEOVER

I don't think this is something we can solve over the phone, Amy.

ANDREA

I'm not expecting you to solve it, that's not why I called, I don't get to talk this stuff out...

VOICEOVER

So if you'll hold on, Amy, I'll put you in touch with my producer who can refer you to someone... someone to talk to.

ANDREA

I'm just saying I can't afford it. That's why I'm calling you. I know I need to talk...

VOICEOVER

Like I said, Amy, the topic tonight is AIDS...

ANDREA

I know that, asshole, but I'm talking about death, so I think they're kinda related...

VOICEOVER

Now, Amy...

ANDREA

I mean, maybe somebody listening to this could tell me... I mean, they've been through this part that happens after...

VOICEOVER

This isn't a magic bullet. You need counseling.

ANDREA

I said I don't... Goddamnit! After he dies, what do I do? That's what I'm asking. What happens after?

VOICEOVER

I hear you, Amy, but I don't feel you're really listening...

ANDREA

Fuck you.

(SHE hangs up)

VOICEOVER

Well. Hmmm. Sounds like denial to me, huh?

OLIVER

Could you put in a tape? Another station? Anything.

IRA

Uh-huh.

OLIVER

And could we go someplace to eat?

IRA

I thought you said you weren't hungry.

OLIVER

Well, can we go someplace and I'll watch the two of you eat?

(A long pause)

After chemo last week, the ambulette dropped me off at the house and I find her asleep on the sofa with a dry cleaning bag over her head. She's taken off her belt and tied it around her neck to keep the bag on. But she'd forgotten to tie off the other end of the bag. So there was this big hole letting the air in. So she was sound asleep with a dry cleaner's bag on her head. I took off the belt, I took off the bag, she was so plotzed she didn't even feel a thing. I was kind of hoping she'd wake up the next morning, see me there, and think she was in hell. But she didn't seem to remember a thing.

IRA

I'm sorry.

OLIVER

What are you sorry for?

IRA

Oh, fuck, everything. Fuck you then, I'm not sorry.

OLIVER

What's the matter with you?

IRA

Oh... ugh. I gotta get out of here. I've gotta move to the city or I'm gonna lose my mind. I swear. You don't know... If I show up at the ferry at 11:31 one more time only to see the ferry pulling away, knowing I have to wait down there for another hour, I'm just gonna... go insane. I've gotta find someplace in the city.

OLIVER

So?

IRA

Well, it's expensive! And my mother.

OLIVER

Get a roommate.

IRA

I don't want a roommate! I'm thirty-five, for Chrissake. And my mother.

OLIVER

She's not an invalid. Ship her off to live with your sister.

IRA

What, like a UPS package?

OLIVER

Your mother idolizes your sister.

IRA

Only because they see each other once every three years. Put them together in the same house and there'd be a murder/suicide by the end of a month.

OLIVER

I'm trying to help.

IRA

No, it's just... if I move, I want it to be something better. I don't want to be living in a worse situation. I can park my car, I've got all this room... I couldn't afford the kind of space...

OLIVER

Well, what do you want me to say? You want to stop commuting, you have to give up something else.

IRA

But I... fuck it. It's... I'm thirty-five and I'm still stuck out here. It's... I'm going out of my mind out here.

OLIVER

Well, I don't have a magic wand, if that's what you want. I'd be using it myself. What the hell's up with him? He's sitting there like the Sphinx.

IRA

Oh, it's Vince. He's in love.

OLIVER

What are you talking about?

IRA

Vince.

OLIVER

Who's Vince?

MARTIN

You've met him. He was at my show.

OLIVER

I don't remember.

MARTIN

He was sitting next to you.

OLIVER

That was Linda's husband.

MARTIN

Yes.

OLIVER

Oh, I don't want to hear this.

MARTIN

Hear what? That I'm in love with him? That you won't let me have five seconds of happiness or show one ounce of support?

OLIVER

Don't give me that. I'd show support if it was something that made sense.

MARTIN

Makes sense? I'm in love with him, what do you mean, sense?

OLIVER

Have you told his wife?

MARTIN

You're not gonna bring me down.

OLIVER

Better yet, have you told him? Have you even seen him, spoken to him, alone?

IRA

They've fucked.

OLIVER

Get out of here.

IRA

They have.

MARTIN

Yeah, we have. For three weeks.

OLIVER

You're insane. He's got kids.

MARTIN

Oh, please. So do lots of cocksuckers.

OLIVER

And what are you hoping to get out of it? Not much, I hope.

MARTIN

Oh, for Christ's... if anyone should understand living for the moment, Camille...

OLIVER

Ever heard the phrase "Don't shit where you eat?"

MARTIN

I don't eat there. He doesn't employ me.

OLIVER

You babysit his kids.

MARTIN

Well, if worse comes to worst, I'm sure I can make do without his eight dollars an hour every two weeks.

OLIVER

And his wife. Ever heard the phrase "Don't shit where your roommate and one of your best friend's eat?" Eats. Whatever. Stop the car, I'm getting out.

IRA

What are you talking about?

OLIVER

I said I want you to stop the car. I want to go home.

IRA

What, I'm gonna leave you in your chair by the side of the road?

OLIVER

I don't care, I can get home by myself.

IRA

You're gonna wheel yourself three miles in seventeen degree weather.

OLIVER

I don't care.

IRA

Fine. If you want to go home, I'll turn around and drive you home.

OLIVER

Fine.

(A long pause. IRA turns the car around)

IRA

So...

(A long pause)

So... what are the two of you doing this weekend?

(A long pause)

MARTIN

Well, obviously I can't share anything about my life, so I better not say what I'm doing.

IRA

Martin, come on...

MARTIN

No, no one cares.

OLIVER

I do care, asshole, that's the only reason I got upset.



MARTIN

Okay, you just want it to meet with your approval. Fine. I'm spending the weekend in a monastery, eating bread and water. And what are you doing, Ira?

IRA

Marty...

MARTIN

What are you doing, Ira?

IRA

I don't know.

(A long pause)

Probably playing nursemaid. My mom caught my cold, so I'm probably going to be making soup and plumping pillows. Doesn't that sound fun? Actually, when it comes to getting sick, I'm probably worse than she is. Or my father. When he got sick, the world had to stop...

MARTIN

Stop the car.

IRA

What?

MARTIN

Stop the car. I'm getting out.

IRA

Oh, what is this, "Attack of the Drama Queens?"

MARTIN

Stop the car. Stop the car. Stop the car. Stop the car. Stop the car.

IRA

Fine. It's freezing out, stupid.

MARTIN

I'm going to McDonald's. 'Bye.

(MARTIN exits. A long pause)

OLIVER

Well, are we just going to sit here?

IRA

Why did you do that?

OLIVER

Do what?

IRA

Get so angry at him.

OLIVER

In case you hadn't noticed, I'm angry at everybody.

IRA

Do you want to talk to one of my doctors?

OLIVER

No.

IRA

It could help.

OLIVER

Nothing helps. I get into the bathtub, my one remaining escape, with the water as hot as I can stand it. No soap, no oil; just water. It takes a while, but eventually I'm completely submerged. And I visualize my pores opening and all the poisons in my body are released into the water. They float up and slick on the surface of the water. I stand up and I turn on the cool water. I rinse them off me like lather, and I watch them, I actually see them, swirl down the drain like ink. And for those few moments as I'm drying, I feel healthy. I feel all clean again. My cock comes to life - gets hard as stone. But by the time I'm dry and back in the chair, my chair, it's all back. My body is once again filled up with this... thing. I long to feel clean. I want to feel my cock again for what it's supposed to be. Not some withered, overripe fruit dangling from a winter tree. God, he was right. There was a guy in the hospital who said the sicker us terminals get, the more poetical. Another month and I'll be speaking like Yeats, no doubt. So who's the nigger?

IRA

Huh?

OLIVER

The nigger you're seeing that my sister saw you with last week, driving away from the mall.

IRA

That's really... sick. You shouldn't call him that.

OLIVER

Why not? He'd be the first to call me a faggot, I'm sure.

IRA

He's a faggot himself, stupid.

OLIVER

Said the kike.

IRA

To the wop. Cut it out.

OLIVER

Just tell me who he is.

IRA

It doesn't matter. You'll be glad to know I'm not seeing him anymore. You'll be glad to know I'm spending Saturday night at home with my mother. And then I'll get into bed with an old Blueboy Magazine. Does that help? You feel better?

OLIVER

No. No, Ira, it doesn't help.

IRA

I think taking you home isn't such a bad idea after all.

(HE puts the car in gear. Crossfade to  
MARTIN and NANCY)

SEQUE

Scene 5

(Two booths at the Unicorn  
Diner. Sunday night)

MARTIN  
Say that again.

NANCY  
You open with "Watch Closely Now."

MARTIN  
I open with "Watch Closely Now." Then I segue into "Honey,  
Can I Put On Your Clothes"?

NANCY  
Definitely.

MARTIN  
In the green dress or the black dress?

NANCY  
No, no, I told you, the green dress. You save the black  
dress for the second half.

MARTIN  
The green dress is prettier.

NANCY  
Doesn't matter. The black dress is classier. You finish in  
the black dress. Barbra herself would finish in the black  
dress.

MARTIN  
I'm not doing Barbra...

NANCY  
I know, I know, blah, blah, blah...

MARTIN  
I wish I looked prettier. I want her to be pretty.

NANCY  
I should look so ugly. Don't think "pretty." Think  
"striking."  
(A pause)  
What's the matter?

MARTIN  
I don't know. Sunday night.

NANCY  
So what?

MARTIN  
Nothing, just... Sunday night.

NANCY  
 (Laughs) You don't have school tomorrow.

MARTIN  
 Doesn't matter.

(ANDREA enters, in her coat)

ANDREA  
 Hi, there.

MARTIN  
 Shit. You scared me. Where'd you come from?

ANDREA  
 I was just sitting at the bar.

NANCY  
 That we could've guessed.

ANDREA  
 And I noticed you two sittin' here.

NANCY  
 Well, her eyesight ain't blurry yet. She must've only had five or six.

MARTIN  
 (Overlapping:) Is Ollie here with you?

ANDREA  
 He's home. It's an experiment. We're seeing if he can get through one night without burning down the house.

NANCY  
 Yeah, but then you'll get home, light a cigarette, and your breath'll set the place ablaze.

(SHE laughs. A long pause. ANDREA weeps)

MARTIN  
 Oh, Jesus. Sit down, Andrea.

ANDREA  
 No, I don't want to.

MARTIN  
 Come on, come on, sit.

NANCY  
 I'm sorry, Andrea. I'm sorry.

ANDREA  
 You're really... horrible. You're a horrible person.

NANCY  
 (Shrugs:) You know me. Listen, let me take you home.

ANDREA  
You don't have to do that.

NANCY  
No, I want to. Come on, you can't drive yourself.

ANDREA  
Oh, don't you worry about me...

NANCY  
Come on, let's go. Did you have a purse? Are you okay?

(A pause)

ANDREA  
Maybe I better go puke first.

MARTIN  
Jesus.

NANCY  
Come on, come on...

ANDREA  
Gimme a second.  
(A pause)  
I don't need your help, I can take care of myself.

(SHE exits)

NANCY  
And you don't like Sundays.

MARTIN  
What are you gonna do with her?

NANCY  
Ah, I'll take her home, she'll cry, she'll pass out.

MARTIN  
She'll misinterpret everything.

NANCY  
She won't remember anything.

(LINDA enters)

LINDA  
Look who's here.

NANCY  
Hey. I was just on my way out.

LINDA  
Is this why you couldn't babysit?

MARTIN

Oh. No. This was... I couldn't... It fell through. What I thought I'd be doing.

LINDA

Oh, I'm sorry. I'm sorry you couldn't babysit. We had to use the neighbor's stupid teenage daughter. Jennifer likes you.

MARTIN

Hmmmm. Maybe next time. Is Vince with you?

LINDA

He's parking the Lexus. He likes to park in the middle of nowhere so it won't get scratched. Listen, Nancy, I'm glad I ran into you. Did you see that stuff I left on your desk on Friday? The presentation sheet is going to need to be faxed to Atlanta first thing tomorrow.

NANCY

Uh-huh.

LINDA

When Vince comes in, tell him I'll be right out.

(SHE exits)

MARTIN

This is like some nightmare version of "It's a Small World After All."

NANCY

I never thought I'd be happy to watch Andrea puke.

(SHE stands)

I guess it is a school night after all. Call me tomorrow.

(SHE exits. MARTIN desperately waves for the WAITER. VINCE enters)

VINCE

Hi.

MARTIN

I wasn't waving. I was trying to get the waiter, actually.

VINCE

I... I'm sorry you didn't babysit.

MARTIN

Yeah, Linda said.

VINCE

I really wanted to drive you home tonight.

(A pause)

MARTIN

I wish you'd told me. I'd've done it in a second.

COOTIES II-5-84

VINCE  
Sorry. Too late. Story of my life. Huh.

MARTIN  
I'll be home all night. You can still come over.

VINCE  
It'll be hard.

MARTIN  
I'm counting on it.

VINCE  
No, hard to find an excuse to go for a drive at eleven o'clock on a Sunday night.

MARTIN  
You could...

(LINDA re-enters at the same time as the  
WAITER)

LINDA  
Oh, good, you found each other.

MARTIN  
Could I get my check, please?

WAITER  
Yeah, yeah, sure.

VINCE  
Let's find a table.

LINDA  
There's a table right here. Can we take this table?

WAITER  
Anywhere you like, pretty lady.

(HE exits. THEY sit at the adjoining  
booth. VINCE and MARTIN are back-to-  
back)

LINDA  
Isn't it funny that Martin's here?

VINCE  
Small world.

LINDA  
We'll leave you alone, I promise.

MARTIN  
Oh, I'm on my way out.

LINDA  
Did you see Nancy?



VINCE  
No.

LINDA  
I'm so glad I ran into her!  
(A pause)  
Do you know what you're getting?

VINCE  
I think so.  
(A pause)  
Did Alex tell you the book report story?

LINDA  
Honey, please, let's not talk about the kids for five minutes.

VINCE  
Sorry.  
(A pause)  
Just...  
(A pause)  
Will you remember to pick up those sneakers for him in the city? He won't leave me alone about them.

LINDA  
Well, it's just the only time I can go out shopping is during my lunch hour and I can't even remember the last time I actually had a lunch hour. I've got other things to do, honey. Maybe I could send Nancy out tomorrow to look for them.

VINCE  
No, don't do that. I'll check at the Mall tomorrow. Maybe they finally got them in stock.

LINDA  
So... have you thought about what you want to do next weekend?

VINCE  
Um... no. Do you want it to be a big deal?

LINDA  
Nine years, I dunno. Next year's the big one; we should go away. I don't even know what nine years is. Lace? Wood? Something like that. And that's the traditional. The modern is probably toasters. Or Tupperware. You can meet me in the city on Friday night and we'll go to a great restaurant.

VINCE  
Um... yeah. That sounds good.

(The WAITER enters)

MARTIN  
Could I please have my check?

COOTIES II-5-86

WAITER  
Sure thing. (To LINDA:) You know what you like?

LINDA  
You ready?

VINCE  
Go ahead.

LINDA  
Okay. First, I want a glass of water.

WAITER  
Sure, sure.

LINDA  
Then, I'd like a spinach omelette with cheddar cheese.

WAITER  
Ummm... the Spanish omelette has cheese.

LINDA  
No, not a Spanish omelette. Spinach.

WAITER  
(Nodding:) Spanish omelette.

LINDA  
No, spinach. Spinach.

WAITER  
We don't have.

LINDA  
Well, you've got a Florentine omelette, so obviously you have spinach. So I want that, but with cheddar cheese.

WAITER  
Florentine has feta cheese.

LINDA  
I know it does, but I don't want that. Jesus. Cheddar.

WAITER  
Feta.

LINDA  
If I spoke Greek, I would tell you what I want. But I don't, and you're working in the United States dealing with English-speaking people...

VINCE  
Honey, go easy...

LINDA  
I'm sorry, this drives me crazy. Spinach. Spinach.

WAITER  
Okay, okay. You, sir?

VINCE  
Turkey club. White toast.  
(The WAITER takes the menus and exits)  
Honey, it's a diner.

LINDA  
Oh, I don't care. He's an idiot.

(A long pause)

VINCE  
Maybe we should go out of town this weekend. A weekend trip. You could probably use it.

LINDA  
Oh, honey, I can't get away for a whole weekend.

VINCE  
I thought it was a good idea.

LINDA  
Here's an idea. Meet me in the city on Friday night. We'll go to whatever restaurant is reviewed in the Friday Times and then we'll check into a hotel for the night. That'd be fun.

VINCE  
Sure. Sure, if you want to.

LINDA  
We'll have to get a babysitter.

(MARTIN puts change in the tabletop jukebox. Barbra Streisand's "Guilty" plays. MARTIN stares off. VINCE sings along with the record. Lights crossfade to IRA and OLIVER)

SEQUE

Scene 6

(Another booth at the Unicorn.  
The following Saturday night)

IRA

I feel bad.

OLIVER

So what else is new?

IRA

She got it from me. I mean, I gave it to her.

OLIVER

She goes out into the world. Other people have germs, Ira.

IRA

No, I was sick. Then she got sick.

OLIVER

So what if you did give it to her? You can't live inside a plastic bubble.

IRA

Huh. I feel like I already do. But it's no protection. The bad stuff still gets in.

OLIVER

She's gonna be fine. She just got it worse than most.

IRA

I'm not used to seeing her... so...

OLIVER

Yeah, she looks bad now, with all the tubes and stuff. Take it from me, most of those tubes are for the relatives' benefit. Make 'em see what's costing three million dollars a day to stay in the hospital. Don't cry. She's gonna be fine.

IRA

The littlest thing can set me off, and I either get really sad or really pissed off. I was getting the Christmas decorations and there's this stack of Life Magazines in the corner of the attic. My father saved them, I don't know, I guess he thought they'd be worth something someday and they've been sitting there untouched for as long as I can remember. Anyway, I picked one up and I'm flipping through it, this issue of Life Magazine from like 1955 or something, and there's this ad for BelAir Cigarettes. And I'm looking at it. It's no great ad, just some drawing of a smiling woman smoking a BelAir and some stupid copy. And suddenly I'm thinking that back in 1955 someone was running around spending their entire day making sure that this took place.

IRA (CONTINUED)

Some guy spent a sleepless night worrying that the BelAir people wouldn't think the woman was smiling wide enough, or was smiling too wide, or the word "cool" should really be "fresh" or "clean" or whatever. And here it is, thirty years later and BelAir Cigarettes don't even exist anymore and who knows how many people died from smoking them, and... it's like getting on a train that doesn't stop. I start thinking that in fifty years, is all my work, all that I do all day long, going to wind up in somebody's dusty attic? That all I've spend my days doing is something to flip past on the way to the good stuff? I called in sick to work today and got hell for it.

(A pause)

Define "the good stuff." OLIVER

(IRA stands)

Be right back. IRA

Where you going? OLIVER

The toilet. Is that okay? IRA

Liar. You don't need change for the toilet. OLIVER

Huh? IRA

I saw you checking the change in your pocket. OLIVER

The shift's changing. I just wanna check on her. And I have to go to the toilet. IRA

(HE exits. The WAITER approaches)

Could I get a refill? OLIVER

You had a refill already. I have to charge you. WAITER

I come here all the time! OLIVER

(TONEY enters)

It's the rules; I don't make them. WAITER

Fuck that. OLIVER

Hi. Excuse me. TONEY  
(The WAITER exits)  
I'm sorry to bother you.

Do you believe that shit? OLIVER  
They just want me out.

I know you're a friend of Ira's. I'm a friend, too. Is he TONEY  
coming back?

He's on the phone. Does he know you're here? OLIVER

No, I don't want him to see me. I know you're his friend a TONEY  
long time. I was hoping you could... well, I dunno. Can I  
sit down?

Sure. OLIVER

Let me know if you see him coming. TONEY

(The WAITER approaches)

You want menu? WAITER

Oh, I'm not staying. I'm just... TONEY

Dollar-fifty minimum at tables. WAITER

Oh, you are truly kidding. If there were someplace else to OLIVER  
go besides this place, I'd go there.

You want menu? WAITER

I'll just take a Coke. TONEY

And I'll splurge and pay the refill charge for another cup OLIVER  
of that Paris-quality coffee.  
(The WAITER exits)  
Sorry. This place is horrible.

TONEY

Oh, I'm used to that.  
 (A long pause)  
 I really like Ira.

(A pause)

OLIVER

Uh-huh. Does he know how you feel?

TONEY

I'm pretty straightforward. He's stopped returning my phone calls.

OLIVER

Oh. Well...  
 (A long pause)  
 His Mom's been sick. He's been at the hospital a lot.

TONEY

I really thought he liked me. You know, apart from the sex. I can usually tell. I mean, I can tell when it's just about sex. Most guys think, you know, black man: big cock. I mean, in my case it happens to be true, but... still..

OLIVER

Yeah, my dates used to think I was of African descent.

TONEY

I went home with this guy last week who was... he seemed... we met at Moscow...

OLIVER

Huh?

TONEY

Club Moscow. Haven't you been?

OLIVER

Ummmm... not yet. Is it near Xenon?

TONEY

Huh?

OLIVER

Never mind.

TONEY

Oh. So, he takes me back to his place, he lives in this fabulous... I mean, really good taste. Huge apartment. Works for a law firm. I think. Something like that. Anyway. Excellent husband material, I thought. Go to Moscow after work, a friend told me. Guys in suits. Mmmmmmm. The door to the apartment closes, and he's all over me. I mean, I'm barely across the threshold, and my pants are down around my knees; I can't even walk. Thirty seconds later, he's begging me to fuck him. We're still in the hallway! I don't know anything about art, really, but you can tell this is expensive stuff on the walls. Recessed halogen lighting just to highlight the artwork. We go into the bedroom, it's like a Metropolitan Home wet dream. He's got those sheets, what're they called, the ones that cost like five hundred dollars a sheet and he doesn't even mind that I'm spilling lube all over them. He greases me up, he lies on his side and he's guiding me in and he's screaming, begging, "Please! Please!" Well, "tight" doesn't begin to describe it. I'm working on him for what feels like an hour, just trying to loosen him up, and he's having the time of his life. I'm just trying to stay hard until I can fuck him. The view of the park was amazing. Anyway, I start to fuck him, or I try to start to fuck him, I get the tip of the head in, he screams and shoots all over the place. And it's over. He jumps up, offers me a drink. I don't think he kissed me once. Ira likes to kiss. I like that. He got me off the sheets pretty quick; I didn't get to come. He wanted to put them in the machine. I left about fifteen minutes later. I was pretty sure if I stayed he would ask me to do his laundry. Well, at least he took me home with him. Usually I'm lucky to get a cab ride to my place. I mean, what's up with that? IRA at least lets me use my mouth to talk.

OLIVER

Yeah, he's old-fashioned.

TONEY

It's just nice to be appreciated for something other than my cock.

OLIVER

It's not all it's cracked up to be. Take it while you can.

(Crossfade to MARTIN and VINCE)

SEQUE



Scene 7

(VINCE and LINDA'S living room.  
Tuesday afternoon)

VINCE  
You just gonna stand there?

MARTIN  
I don't know that I'm staying.

VINCE  
Suit yourself.

MARTIN  
What is it that you're doing?

VINCE  
Window lights. I'll be done soon. Then we can play.

MARTIN  
I'm getting a cold, it feels like.

VINCE  
Or talk, if you'd rather.

MARTIN  
Talk. Huh. About what?

VINCE  
I don't know. Whatever.

(MARTIN takes off his coat)

MARTIN  
Does she always keep it so hot in here?

VINCE  
Cold-blooded.

(HE laughs)

MARTIN  
Stop.  
(HE laughs. VINCE kisses him)  
No, please. Don't start. Mmmmmmm. I'm missing you.

VINCE  
Help me with this.

MARTIN  
I'm not very mechanical.

VINCE  
Just plug it in. I'll straighten it out.

(MARTIN plugs the lights in. Nothing)

MARTIN

Dead.

VINCE

Must be a loose one. Check them. If one's loose, they all go out. I'll start on the second set.

(HE pulls out another set of lights.  
MARTIN tests each individual bulb on his set)

MARTIN

So what happens once I get these to work?

VINCE

Windows. They go in the windows. This bunch is working.

(HE sets to work, stapling the string of lights around the window frame)

MARTIN

I can't believe I'm doing this.

VINCE

Huh?

MARTIN

Why don't I dress up like Santa and your kids can sit on my lap and tell me what they want?

(A long pause. VINCE works)  
I'm getting a cold. I'm going home.

VINCE

We should probably cool it for Christmas, anyway. It's not cool. I should be... it just doesn't feel cool.

MARTIN

God knows we want you to be cool.

(A pause)  
Where is she?

VINCE

Work. She's never home before six-thirty.

MARTIN

Uh-huh. Kids at school?

VINCE

At her sister's.

MARTIN

Well, I guess I'm outta here.

VINCE

I'll be done in fifteen minutes. Faster, if you help me.

MARTIN

I don't know. I think these things are screwed in right.

(A pause. MARTIN laughs)

VINCE

Yeah, you'd know about that.

(A long pause)

MARTIN

Can I tell you that last night before I fell asleep, I imagined you sitting in that very chair while I was riding your cock.

VINCE

Come on, I gotta finish this. I promised.

MARTIN

Just fuck me and then I'll go outside and paint the house red and white stripes like a candy cane, if you want me to.

VINCE

Cut it out, you're making me hard.

MARTIN

You're making me crazy.

VINCE

Now you're sounding like my wife.

(A long pause)

MARTIN

That was absolutely the wrong thing to say.

(A long pause)

These don't work. They're piece-of-shit, dime-store, Korean crap. Buy new ones.

VINCE

Sometimes when we have sex, it's like I... I feel like your dildo sometimes.

MARTIN

Well... sometimes that's what you are. That's all I need. What's wrong with that? I still need you.

VINCE

But that's what it's like with Linda. A way to relieve the tension. She gets into a fight at work and comes home and we fuck. It's like having sex with my wife. I don't want that.

(A long pause)

You better go, before we both get in trouble.

(HE exits)

COOTIES II-7-96

MARTIN

You could just eat my heart raw, if you'd enjoy that.

(Lights fade on MARTIN. Lights up on  
LINDA and IRA)

SEQUE

Scene 8

(LINDA'S office. Friday  
afternoon)

LINDA

You're always sick. I've had a cold for two weeks, and I've been here. I don't stay home when I get sick.

IRA

I don't know what you want me to say. I do.

LINDA

You're never at your desk. I'm tired of playing tone fag, uh, tag, phone tag, with your secretary. And now the thing with Rosen... I would call that, the employee manual would call that being insubordinate. That's insubordination.

IRA

I'm trying to tell you what happened...

LINDA

It don't matter to me what happened. It don't matter what he did, do you understand that? He don't have the right to tell you what to do or what not to do. Only I have that right. Do you understand that?

IRA

Doesn't.

LINDA

What?

IRA

The word "doesn't." You never use it. You say "don't."

LINDA

What the fuck are you talking about?

IRA

"Don't" is the contraction for "do not." It's not interchangeable with "doesn't," which is the contraction for "does not." So when you would say "It does not matter," the proper contraction is "doesn't": "It doesn't matter." But you say "It don't matter." Proper grammar is NOT "It do not matter."

LINDA

Is this an example of why you're seeing all those shrinks?

IRA

No, I'm just pointing out to you that no matter how high you may wish to climb in this company, no matter what brand of make-up or perfume you wear, no matter who designs your clothes, no matter who made your shoes or your bag or your car, or whatever, you say "It don't matter," and you're back to being the stupid little Wagner College dropout who just got off the ferry.

LINDA

You're fired.

IRA

Oh, and your husband is fucking my friend Martin.

(IRA puts on his coat, grabs his shoulder bag, exits, moves to a subway car, sits. Lights fade on LINDA. IRA takes a Walkman out of his shoulder bag, puts it on, closes his eyes. A KID enters and sits opposite him. IRA opens his eyes, notices the KID. The KID looks at him. IRA closes his eyes. A pause. HE opens his eyes again, looks at the KID. Immediately:)

KID

What the fuck are you looking at, faggot?

IRA

(Flustered:) Nothing.

(A pause)

Nothing.

(IRA stands)

Nothing. NOTHING!

(HE stomps his foot into the KID's crotch, and the KID doubles over, rolling onto the floor of the subway car. IRA takes the strap of his shoulder bag, wraps it around the KID's neck. HE pummels him on the back, clawing at him, kicking him, pulling out handfuls of hair. Crossfade to MARTIN, in drag, in a dressing room of the Bay Club. After a beat, the CLUB OWNER is heard over an intercom)

CLUB OWNER

I was gonna call places, hon, but there's nobody out there. You can go home, if you like.

MARTIN

I'm all made up.

CLUB OWNER

No one's there.

MARTIN

Nobody at the bar?

CLUB OWNER

Yeah, but they don't want to come into the club, they wanna cruise.

MARTIN

Well, get 'em in.

With what, a cattle prod? CLUB OWNER

Clell isn't out there? MARTIN

Nope. CLUB OWNER

There isn't a guy in a wheelchair? MARTIN

Nope. No wheelchair. CLUB OWNER

I sent out three hundred postcards. MARTIN

Up to you. Wanna cancel? CLUB OWNER

(A long pause)

No. MARTIN

(MUSIC: Barbra Streisand's recording of "A Woman in Love." As MARTIN lip-synchs, lights come up on IRA at home, slowly taking off his clothes and getting into bed. HE lip-synchs as well. Lights come up on OLIVER, in the blue light of a television screen. ANDREA is passed out on the sofa. OLIVER wears a bathrobe and unsuccessfully attempts to achieve an erection under the robe. HE lip-synchs. Lights fade on all THREE)

END OF ACT TWO

COOTIES II-8-100



ACT THREE

Scene 1

(The patio of OLIVER and ANDREA's house. A Summer afternoon. Lights up. Onstage: MARTIN and IRA)

IRA  
Only you would wear black to a backyard birthday party in July.

MARTIN  
It's slimming.

(A long pause)

IRA  
He looked terrible.

MARTIN  
Well, he's dying. Maybe you should lower your expectations.

IRA  
Well, no, I'm just saying... He seemed thinner than usual.

MARTIN  
And if you spend a day with him after chemo, you'll find out why.

IRA  
You... you're being kind of hostile, don't you think?

MARTIN  
I really don't think I'm being... anything.

(NANCY enters with a drink for MARTIN)

NANCY  
It's all I could get. She hasn't put any food out yet.

MARTIN  
What is it?

NANCY  
Some kinda punch.

MARTIN  
(Sniffs it:) Booze?

NANCY  
In this house? Shit, I would hope so.

MARTIN  
Pass.

(HE puts the cup on the ground)

IRA

Where's Clell?

MARTIN

Working. One of us should, God knows. Have you seen him? He shaved off his moustache and goatee. They always annoyed me and now he's shaved them off, and... I can't tell you what he looks like. Yes I can. Without all that fur, his mouth looks like an asshole.

NANCY

What do you say about me when I leave the room?

MARTIN

You don't wanna know. That's not true. You, I say it to your face.

(ANDREA enters)

ANDREA

Listen, everybody, he should be here in a couple of minutes... What is this music? Martin, can you give something a little more "up?" What did you bring? Anything but this. You all don't have to hide or anything, I'm just going to ask that you be quiet when we bring him up the driveway. I just don't want him to be tipped off. Okay?

(SOPHIE enters with a plate of food)

No, Sophie, bring that back in. Leave it in the kitchen.

SOPHIE

Nobody's eating it.

ANDREA

I don't care, I don't want it out here. That's why I left those little plates out. People can fill up a little plate inside and then bring it out here. It's much easier to control that way.

SOPHIE

If that's what you want.

(SHE exits)

MARTIN

Your mom looks in good shape.

IRA

Does she? She's not, really.

MARTIN

She's getting around.

IRA

It's not something you can see, really. She's just... faded. What was once really vibrant about her... it's like she's been left out in the sun. I think of her as like... bright red. And now she's just a kind of pastel pink. It's hard to describe. It's sad.

ANDREA

If people want hors d'oeuvres and stuff, you're gonna have to go inside to get it. Martin, the music. What is this?

MARTIN

It's old seventies stuff. He loves this stuff.

ANDREA

No, no, no... Haven't I got some...? A little more mellow. Did you bring my records out?

MARTIN

Yours are all scratched.

ANDREA

I'll be right back.

NANCY

Can I give you a hand out there, honey?

(ANDREA glares at her)

ANDREA

No.

(SHE exits)

NANCY

So what are you up to, Ira?

IRA

Not a helluva lot.

NANCY

You working yet?

IRA

Not yet.

NANCY

What are you doing for money?

IRA

I'm making do.

(A pause)

NANCY

So what kind of a job are you looking for?

Oh, I don't know... IRA

I've got friend who books acts for weddings. NANCY

What? IRA

Well, they sometimes need piano players. NANCY

Gee, thanks. IRA

Just trying to help. NANCY

I know. I'm sorry. IRA

(A pause)  
You know, I sat down at the piano the other day and I couldn't make it through an entire phrase. Whole chunks of memory are disappearing. I can't remember the piece I played at my senior recital. Andrea asked me to play for the party. I couldn't get through any of the things I used to know. All gone. Maybe it's better this way. What do you think?

I'm sorry, what? NANCY

She's going through all of this for three people? MARTIN

No, there are more people coming, I think. NANCY

(ANDREA enters and picks a balloon off the floor)

Please don't pull the balloons down. I mean, at least wait until he gets here. Then you can do whatever. ANDREA

(SOPHIE enters)

The taxi just pulled up. Andrea. Andrea, the taxi's here. SOPHIE

Okay, okay, he's here, shut up everybody, shut up! I'm gonna go get him and bring him... Martin, shut the music off, he'll hear it! Okay, I'm gonna get him. Shhhh! ANDREA

(SHE exits. EVERYONE is silent. MARTIN turns off the music and lights two candles on a small cake. The lights are lowered. ANDREA enters, pushing OLIVER in his chair. HE looks worse. The lights come up)

EVERYONE

Surprise!

(OLIVER's eyes widen. HE tries to speak, gasps for air. Gestures wildly, then slumps forward in his chair. A long silence)

ANDREA

Oh my God.

OLIVER

God, no one has a sense of humor anymore.

ANDREA

Did you know about this?

OLIVER

Like you can keep a secret, with all your obvious tip-toeing around...

ANDREA

You're an asshole!

(SHE runs off. MARTIN comes to OLIVER with the cake)

MARTIN

Happy birthday, honey.

OLIVER

What is this? "Rally 'Round the Fag"?

MARTIN

Make a wish.

OLIVER

Oh, you betcha. I'm sure this one's the charm. The chemo hasn't done a fucking thing, but this blue baby candle's the cure.

(HE blows it out. Applause. MARTIN hands him a wrapped box)

MARTIN

It's really no big deal. I couldn't afford anything really fabulous. But I thought it was something you might like.

(HE opens it)

Crayons? OLIVER

Well... yeah. MARTIN

You're expecting me to fall into dementia soon? OLIVER

I don't know. It seemed like a good idea at the time. MARTIN

At least it's the 96 color selection. OLIVER

Sorry. MARTIN

(HE moves back to the music system,  
starts the music again. OLIVER opens  
the box of crayons)

(To IRA:) I remember this copper one. That was my favorite  
color. Oh, and periwinkle! I used to love periwinkle! Do  
you have any paper? OLIVER

(IRA hands him a gift)

I wasn't sure what to bring you. I was gonna bring a box of  
candy, but your sister said the chemo was making you sick. IRA

Well, I have to throw up something. Given the choice of  
throwing up chocolate or throwing up lima beans and Diet  
Pepsi, I'll take the chocolate. OLIVER

You're not gonna open it? IRA

I will later. OLIVER

Oh. IRA

Why? Do you have to leave? Am I throwing you off schedule? OLIVER

You opened Martin's. IRA

I just don't feel like opening yours. Is that a problem? OLIVER

Are you mad at me? IRA

OLIVER

It's my present. I should be able to open it when I want to.

(A pause)

When your mother was sick, you were calling me every day. The minute she got out of the hospital, I haven't heard from you. I guess that's what they call a "bad-weather friend."

IRA

Geez.

OLIVER

And you don't have to come by to pay your respects, you know.

(HE throws the gift back)

I'm not yet a grave where you can come by, toss some flowers and scam. You actually have to deal with me; I'm still here. Eating and breathing and peeing and shitting. And cumming, too. Sometimes. In those rare down times between chemo visits. That's how I know when it's time to go back. When I start to get horny again, I know the last shot of chemo is wearing off and my body's starting to come to life again. And it's time to go back for another zap. All your hair falls out, not just your head. In other words, I avoid mirrors when I jerk off. Those little sprouts of hair start poking out of my skin and I get ragingly horny and I realize that my body's weeds are gonna grow back, too. Is it worse to have a garden overrun with weeds or to have a patch of dry, dead soil? I wonder.

(SOPHIE enters)

SOPHIE

Andrea asked me to ask everybody if... Andrea can't find her oven timer. Has anybody seen it?

MARTIN

Oh, shit! She caught me!

OLIVER

There. I feel better now. Let me have the gift back.

(IRA runs off. LINDA and VINCE enter)

LINDA

Hi, I'm sorry we're so late. The traffic on Bay Street is... there's some kind of a protest. Did anybody else have a problem?

VINCE

Hi, all.

MARTIN

Fuck me. Who did the invitation list? Satan?

SOPHIE

We haven't met. You must be Linda. I'm Ira's mother.

Oh, yes. Um. Hello. LINDA

Can I get you something to drink? SOPHIE

Oh, I'd kill for a beer. VINCE

I'm sorry? Oh, a drink. Um... I'm not quite sure. Thank you. LINDA

(SOPHIE exits)

(To NANCY:) Are we the only ones who got stuck? Is Ira here?

Sure. He and Oliver are best friends. NANCY

I wish I'd known. LINDA

I thought I told you. NANCY

(ANDREA enters)

(To VINCE:) Hi. Who are you? ANDREA

Oh, I'm... Linda's husband. VINCE

Linda? Oh, yeah. Like a drink? ANDREA

Oh, thanks, I asked for a beer. VINCE

We should have some food in a couple minutes. ANDREA

(IRA enters from the house, SOPHIE behind him)

You don't understand, Ma. I don't want my old job back. IRA

There was some kind of a protest on Bay Street. It'll probably come right past here. You'll hear it. Did anybody come down Bay Street? It was incredible. Looked like a riot or something. Some kind of a black thing. LINDA

You know Oliver. NANCY



LINDA

Hi. Um, I wasn't sure what to get you, I hope you can use it.

(SHE hands him an envelope)

OLIVER

Thanks. Welcome.

(HE opens it)

ANDREA

The lasagna should be ready in about ten minutes, but if you could bring your plates out here instead of staying in the house, I'd really appreciate it.

OLIVER

Ooooh, a Body Shop Gift Certificate.

NANCY, IRA, MARTIN

Ooooh!

OLIVER

Actually, this is a great gift. Thank you. (To the PARTY:) A thoughtful gift. (To LINDA:) I love this kind of stuff.

LINDA

Well, I try to imagine, if I was the recipient, what I would like. And I figured, well, if I was... I'd like something... I don't know... that smells nice.

(A long pause)

OLIVER

Uh-huh.

LINDA

I love their Body Butter.

OLIVER

Uh-huh. Does it work on bedsores?

(A long pause)

LINDA

Gee, I don't know. You can ask.

MARTIN

This is from Clell. He's gonna try and drop by later.

OLIVER

It's good somebody we know is rich.

ANDREA

There's a big garbage can here where you can dump all your plates later. I'd just like to ask that you try to use the same cup if you get another drink. Thanks.

IRA  
What is it?

OLIVER  
Creative Visualization tapes.

MARTIN  
Ugh. That's dreadful. I'm sorry, he didn't tell me what he was getting you.

IRA  
It's the thought.

OLIVER  
Too bad it's his only one. He got me the same thing last Christmas.

MARTIN  
I'll get the receipt. Sorry. Who's this from?

ANDREA  
From me.  
(OLIVER starts to open it)  
Sorry, but you can't return it.

OLIVER  
My God. It's our graduation party. Look. I've never seen this picture before.

ANDREA  
It was in with Mom's things.

OLIVER  
Look at us.

MARTIN  
You look... almost cute.

OLIVER  
I can top that. You look almost butch. Look at Ira!

IRA  
What's the next question? What happened?

MARTIN  
Yeah, whatever happened to them?

IRA  
Look at Oliver's hair.

OLIVER  
I'm gonna cry.

IRA  
I want a copy. Beautiful frame.

OLIVER  
She made it.

IRA  
You didn't.

ANDREA  
No big deal.

IRA  
I don't believe it.

OLIVER  
When she puts her mind to something...

ANDREA  
Don't start in on me.

OLIVER  
I'm trying to pay you a compliment. When she focuses, she's...

ANDREA  
Shut up, Oliver.

MARTIN  
I just... I wish you weren't here.

VINCE  
This party?  
(A pause)

MARTIN  
This planet.

VINCE  
You heard we're moving to Jersey? You won't have to deal with running into me in the supermarket.

MARTIN  
Who knows? Maybe I'll start shopping in Jersey.

VINCE  
We got a great house. A much bigger yard for the kids to play in. Better schools. It's gonna be so much better for the kids. And Linda's commute isn't as bad, so, hopefully, she'll get to spend more time with them. There's a little fresh water brook that runs through the back of the property. That's what really won the kids over, I think.

MARTIN  
I wish you well.

VINCE  
I wish that was true.  
(A pause)  
Jennifer says "Hi."

MARTIN  
Don't.

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(A pause)

We had great sex. VINCE

DON'T EVEN START. MARTIN

(HE exits)

LINDA  
Nancy tells me you do imitations. She said you do a  
hilarious Barbra Streisand. Would you do some?

OLIVER  
(As Barbra:) I can't just do it on cue! I need a script!  
Costumes! Make-up!

LINDA  
Well, maybe some other time, then.

(SHE moves away)

OLIVER  
Straight people are hereafter forbidden to enter this house.

IRA  
Hey, Vince, how's it goin'?

We're... good. VINCE

Aren't you drinking? IRA

VINCE  
Well, I really wanted a beer. Somebody's... getting it.  
(A pause)  
Listen, I'm sorry about... the agency and all that.

IRA  
No, it was time. Time to move on.

VINCE  
What are you doin'?

IRA  
Oh, looking. Just looking. And I'm getting unemployment.

VINCE  
Uh-huh. Sure. Take it easy for a while.

IRA  
So...

VINCE  
I wonder what happened to my beer?

IRA

I remember somebody telling me... maybe it was Linda, that you do some carpentry work sometimes.

VINCE

Yeah, sure.

IRA

I think I might like to make an appointment with you to come over to the house. I've got this project I don't think I can handle by myself. I got one of those wall unit/entertainment center things and I know I'm gonna need some help putting it together.

VINCE

Usually the instructions are pretty clear on those things.

IRA

I don't trust myself, I'm not good that way. I'm bound to leave something out.

VINCE

(Overlapping:) With our move and all, it's gonna be tough for me to find the time...

IRA

Oh, totally at your convenience. No rush. Whenever.

(A long pause)

VINCE

Let's see if I can track down that beer.

(HE moves away. MARTIN re-enters, holding a beer)

ANDREA

Could I ask that people please not leave glasses on the ground? It's just that they tend to get kicked over.

LINDA

Listen, they're getting closer. Does anybody know what all the hoo-ha is about?

MARTIN

Yeah, I do.

LINDA

Hi, Martin.

MARTIN

Hello, Linda.

LINDA

The kids ask about you.

MARTIN

Vince said.

IRA  
Anybody want anything from inside?

VINCE  
A beer! Any kind; doesn't matter.

(IRA exits)

LINDA  
So... what's going on?

MARTIN  
Some guy who lives over on Alaska Street was walking down the South Beach Boardwalk last weekend and some punks with baseball bats beat him up.

LINDA  
Oh, I heard about that. I didn't know he was black.

MARTIN  
He's not.

LINDA  
So why are they...?

MARTIN  
The Bay Club organized it. They've been passing out flyers all week.

LINDA  
Oh, he was gay?

MARTIN  
We don't know. The punks thought he was. They said he cruised them. So they smashed in his face and then they tried to get one of the baseball bats up his ass.

(A long pause)

LINDA  
But he's not dead.

MARTIN  
No.

LINDA  
So why are they...? No, it can't be a bunch of gay guys, they were much too loud. They must have been black, Listen. Hear 'em? You can hear them from here.

(TONEY enters)

TONEY  
Hi. Excuse me.

LINDA  
Oh my God. Vince?

I'm looking for a friend. TONEY

I'm sorry, this is a private party. Vince? LINDA

My friend Ira is supposed to be here. TONEY

Ira? LINDA

Is he here? TONEY

Oh, sorry, sure. LINDA

What's up? VINCE

You seen Ira? LINDA

He's getting me a beer. VINCE

(IRA re-enters, without the beer)

Oh my God. Um... Hello. Um... IRA

I heard it was a surprise party. Surprise. TONEY

Well. Have you met Vince? And LINDA? IRA

(IRA moves away)

Hi. Um. Toney. TONEY

Hey. VINCE

(TONEY follows IRA)

Um. This is Oliver. It's Oliver's birthday. IRA

Hey, happy birthday. I don't really know you, but... TONEY

(HE hands OLIVER a gift)

OLIVER

Okay, you can stay.

TONEY

It's hard to shop for someone you haven't met. I'm sorry I missed the surprise part. It took me half an hour to get here from the ferry. You should see what's going on out there. Lots of broken glass. Those guys are pissed.

(OLIVER opens the gift. A flashy Lycra shirt)

OLIVER

Disco wear!

TONEY

I'm sorry, maybe it's too...

IRA

Too expensive, for one thing.

OLIVER

Oh, I love it.

TONEY

I can tell you where I bought it, you can...

OLIVER

No, I absolutely love it. It's perfect. Thank you.

IRA

How did you know about this?

TONEY

A friend of yours. Invited me.

IRA

Oh.

TONEY

I had to see you again. Whew. This is tough. I didn't want to leave it...

IRA

I just thought it was best... Things are different now.

TONEY

I'd like another chance. I know the last time...

IRA

I got scared. I just... I was scared.

TONEY

Of me?

IRA

No. I... I felt scared.



TONEY

I really liked you a lot, is why I'm... I just got too... Too much too quickly, and then I... I'm sorry. I felt so much.

IRA

I felt scared. Let me drive you home.

TONEY

I can go slow. Really.

IRA

I'm not really date material. I've been out of work for almost six months.

TONEY

I don't care.

IRA

I can't take you out anywhere.

TONEY

I don't care.  
(A long pause)  
I really liked you.

IRA

My mother's been sick. I don't have a lot of free time.

TONEY

I'm sorry.

IRA

Don't touch me.

TONEY

I don't...

IRA

No, really. Don't touch me.

TONEY

I felt better when I was with you. I don't have to be with you all the time. I'm alone too much. I don't like being alone all the time. I'd just like to be with you sometimes. I have no one to complain to who listens.

ANDREA

You want me to fix you a plate?

OLIVER

Nah. I'm afraid of eating.

ANDREA

What'd you wish for?

OLIVER

With my luck? So... is this it?

What? ANDREA

Aren't any of the guys from the hospital coming? OLIVER

No. ANDREA

None of 'em? OLIVER

I didn't invite them. ANDREA

They're my friends, too. They should be here, too. OLIVER

It's a birthday party! I didn't want the patio full of bald guys in wheelchairs. ANDREA

No, not them, but you invite Vince and Linda. Ira and Martin are my best friends, and you have to go ahead and ruin... OLIVER

I didn't invite them. What's with this music, Martin? Can we get something that'll sound... I don't know. ANDREA

What? Something what? MARTIN

I don't know... ANDREA

Well, neither do I. Let me know when you do know, 'cause I don't know what you want. MARTIN

I just want something that I like, Martin. ANDREA

What does it matter what you like? It's Oliver's party. I'm playing what he likes. MARTIN

(SOPHIE enters)

The lasagna's done, Ira, gimme a hand. Andrea's as good as useless. SOPHIE

Mom, this is a friend of mine. Toney. IRA

TONEY

Very nice to meet you, ma'am.

SOPHIE

Nice to meet you, Toney. Have you eaten? Come inside. We've got so much food, I don't know what we're going to do with it all.

TONEY

Thank you, ma'am.

(SHE leads him off)

SOPHIE

My name's Sophie. Call me that.

ANDREA

I can't believe you're not going to say anything to me.

NANCY

'Bout what?

ANDREA

Uh. Last night?

NANCY

Last night?

ANDREA

I waited for you for three hours.

NANCY

Oh, God. Did you really? I didn't say I was definitely coming. I said I might.

ANDREA

So? You could've called to tell me you were standing me up.

NANCY

I didn't stand you up. You could've called me and confirmed, when I didn't show up you could've called just to make sure that I wasn't murdered.

ANDREA

Well, actually, I did. I got your fucking machine.

NANCY

You should've started talking. I'd've picked up.

ANDREA

You were home?

NANCY

Me and Louis just decided to rent some movies and stay in.

ANDREA

You're... And I suppose you invited Vince and Linda.

She's my boss.

NANCY

You are...

ANDREA

You told me I could invite people if I wanted.

NANCY

I didn't want it ruined! I give one party in... I haven't given a party in, like... I wanted this one to be...

ANDREA

Honey, ix-nay on the ooze-bay.

NANCY

Go to hell.

ANDREA

(SHE exits. MARTIN puts on a '70s disco tune. VINCE starts to move)

God. Remember this?

VINCE

No. Vince...

LINDA

Sure you do. Summer of '77? '79? Am I embarrassing you?

VINCE

I think you're embarrassing yourself.

LINDA

Well, since I can't seem to get drunk, I'm gonna dance. Did you talk to Ira?

VINCE

I think it's up to him to talk to me.

LINDA

Come on, dance with me.

VINCE

(LINDA starts to move)

Come on, Ollie. Just like old times.

IRA

(HE takes OLIVER's hands and starts to sway)

It's not. It's not like old times.

OLIVER

Pretend.

IRA

OLIVER

I can't. I was always a better dancer than you.

MARTIN

These amateurs ain't gonna show me up.

(HE grabs NANCY and THEY do a fairly expert Hustle)

OLIVER

Did you say anything to Linda?

IRA

Like what? "Hello. I hate you."?

OLIVER

So how did Mom take to your friend? I'm sorry I missed that. I'd loved to have seen Sophie's face when she met the schwartze.

(SOPHIE enters, comes over to NANCY, pulls her offstage)

MARTIN

Okay, I'm cutting in.

(HE dances with OLIVER. IRA dances alone. TONEY re-enters with a huge plate of food. Slowly, TONEY comes to him)

TONEY

Can I dance with you?

IRA

It's better if you don't ask.

(THEY dance. NANCY re-enters)

NANCY

Who's got the blue Camaro?

VINCE

That's mine. Am I blocking you?

NANCY

C'mere, Vince. I need you to do us a favor. Can you take ANDREA to the hospital? The ambulance can't get through, the traffic on Bay Street is blocked...

VINCE

What's goin' on?

NANCY

She's just... she did something stupid. Please. I'll get Linda to meet you in the car.

(VINCE exits)

Linda, sorry, but I've Vince doing me a favor. You're gonna have to leave.

LINDA

What's the matter?

NANCY

A little emergency. Sorry. I'll save you some cake.

LINDA

That's okay, it don't matter. It doesn't matter.

(LINDA and NANCY exit as SOPHIE enters from the house)

SOPHIE

Here's the beer. Where's the guy who wanted the beer?

(SHE moves to IRA)

Keep Oliver occupied for a few minutes. Andrea's in some kind of trouble. She swallowed some Drano, it looks like. I don't think she swallowed much, it's mostly around her mouth, but we've got an ambulance coming. I think it looks worse than it is, but no need to upset his birthday. She just got a little too excited.

(SHE exits. MARTIN dances with TONEY. IRA and OLIVER hold hands and "dance")

OLIVER

You don't mind that I invited Toney, do you?

IRA

You did?

OLIVER

I felt sorry for him. I thought one of us deserved some happiness. At least as far as fucking goes.

IRA

No, I don't mind.

OLIVER

Marty! Marty! You know what I want, Marty? You wanna give me something really great for my birthday? Take me to the march. I wanna see the faggots of Staten Island finally taking a stand against something. All five of them. Come on! Just wheel me out into the street. Come on. Come on!

MARTIN

Ollie...

OLIVER

I won't shut up until you do. Come on, Ira. Come on, Toney, even though I don't even know you, but you give good presents.

(MARTIN, OLIVER, IRA and TONEY exit. A pause. The music ends. Silence. SOPHIE enters)

SOPHIE

Where is everybody? Hello? Are they all gone? What, they just left me here alone? Awww, kids... What's gonna happen to all that food? Ah, I've got no strength left...

(SHE sits. Lights fade on her)

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

(The Staten Island Ferry. 9:00 Saturday night. A month later. Slowly, lights come up on MARTIN, IRA and OLIVER. OLIVER wears the shirt TONEY gave him)

MARTIN  
When do you start?

IRA  
A week from Monday.

MARTIN  
Excited?  
(IRA shrugs)  
Better than the agency.

IRA  
Is it?

MARTIN  
Better than working for Linda.

IRA  
Who knows. Maybe my new boss is "worse than the other one was."

MARTIN  
It'll be more creative.

IRA  
In what way?

MARTIN  
I'm desperately trying to put a positive spin on this.

IRA  
Why bother; there isn't one. It'll be fine.

MARTIN  
Why don't you try to do something with music?

IRA  
Now you're sounding like my mother.

MARTIN  
Her final wish was for me to continue to nag you.

IRA  
I'm on a new medication. Maybe it hasn't kicked in yet.

MARTIN  
That explains it.

IRA  
Or maybe it has kicked in and this is as good as it gets.



OLIVER  
Look at that skyline! Someday it will all be yours!

IRA  
Look who's positive.

OLIVER  
You'll be living right there!

(HE points into the audience)

MARTIN  
You can't see it from here. Poor thing. The brain's going.

IRA  
You're doing it?

OLIVER  
Of course he's doing it.

IRA  
I can imagine worse scenarios.

OLIVER  
It's a duplex! You won't just have your own room, you'll have your own floor! He'd be stupid not to.

MARTIN  
God knows I'm tired of being stupid.

OLIVER  
Clell will do anything for you.

MARTIN  
Huh. Do you think "anything" includes giving me the keys to the apartment and moving to Iceland?

IRA  
So what are you gonna do with the five hundred?

MARTIN  
If I win.

OLIVER  
What are you gonna do if you don't win?

IRA  
He's gonna win. Listen to your Creative Visualization tapes.

MARTIN  
Ahh, at least I got my act together and took it on the road. At least I can say I performed in the city. And at Moscow. That's something.

IRA  
Damn straight. Good for you.

OLIVER

I was gonna save this for later, but seeing the Statue...  
reach into my bag.

IRA

What do you want? Pills?

OLIVER

The flowers, stupid.

IRA

Oh.

(HE hands a wrapped bouquet to OLIVER,  
who hands it to MARTIN)

OLIVER

You can hold the flowers and stand at the prow of the ferry  
just like Barbra.

MARTIN

"Don't Rain on My Parade" is NOT a part of my act. And  
we're going in the wrong direction. She was headed out to  
sea. Yuck. I'll have to do something from "Yentl."

OLIVER

Details are bullshit.

MARTIN

Thank you anyway.

OLIVER

What number ya gonna do?

MARTIN

"Love Breakdown." It's the showiest.

OLIVER

You may just want to wheel me into a taxi when it's over.

IRA

No, you're staying out. Maybe you'll find a fella.

OLIVER

Yeah, sure. Florenz Nightingale.

IRA

I'll slip a little Jack Daniels into your catheter.

OLIVER

If I wanted to be around a lot of loud, obnoxious, drunken  
behavior... I could've stayed home with Andrea.

IRA

I was planning on using you as a stud magnet.

OLIVER

Excuse me?

IRA

Sure. They look at me and go, "Awww, look at that sensitive guy, bringing his dying friend out for a final spin 'round the dance floor. What a beautiful, unselfish soul."

OLIVER

How could you use me that way?

IRA

You can take it.

(A long pause)

OLIVER

I'm thinking I haven't been on this ferry in over a year. Throw my ashes off the ferry. But make sure we're more than halfway to the City. And make sure the tide is coming in, I don't want to wind up at the Fresh Kills Landfill.

MARTIN

You got it.

OLIVER

That's kinda cool. I could ask you to do anything with my ashes, and you'd have to do it, right?

IRA

Sure. But don't ask Martin, ask me. Guilt works best on me.

OLIVER

Let's see... Put my ashes in thousands of little vials, go to whatever dance place is hottest at the moment on a Saturday night and tell all the boys it's free Special K. Thousands of sweaty muscle boys snorting me. Getting high on me.

(A pause)

IRA

Not many people on board tonight.

MARTIN

Well, it's late. Most people have already gotten to where they're going.

IRA

I guess.

(A long pause)

BLACKOUT

THE PLAY IS OVER.