

LONELY TOO LONG

A Play

by

Chuck Blasius

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#### SYNOPSIS

It's the 1990s and John's been looking for love in all the right places, and still it ain't working. The personals, the bars, the gym; you name it, he's tried it.

LONELY TOO LONG is a series of gay dates from hell, tingling with the sexual tensions and rejections of a constantly encroaching jungle of desire.

LONELY TOO LONG was first produced by Incoact (John Alban Coughlan, Artistic Director) at the Sanford Meisner Theatre in New York City on April 26, 1995. It was directed by the author with set design by Steve Marcus, lighting design by Jeff Fontaine and sound design by Audible Difference. The cast was as follows:

JOHN ..... John Alban Coughlan  
THE WOMEN ..... Sarah Zinsser  
THE MEN ..... Robert Gomes

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOHN, A man in his mid-thirties  
THE WOMEN, A woman in her mid-thirties  
THE MEN, A man in his mid-thirties

TIME

The mid-1990s.

PLACE

Various meeting spots around Manhattan.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: Good Diner  
Scene 2: Splash  
Scene 3: Cafe Elsie  
Scene 4: Viceroy  
Scene 5: Greenwich Avenue  
Scene 6: Smith & Wollensky Grill  
Scene 7: Caffè Dell'Artista  
Scene 8: The Palm Court  
Scene 9: Smith & Wollensky Grill  
POSSIBLE INTERMISSION  
Scene 10: Manatus  
Scene 11: Stardust Diner  
Scene 12: Food Bar  
Scene 13: Big Cup  
Scene 14: Val's Apartment  
Scene 15: Vertical Club  
Scene 16: Cafe Elsie

Scene 1

(GOOD DINER. JOHN and MAN at table. THEY have coffee)

MAN

I let him fuck me. Without a rubber. That's a commitment. I allowed him inside me. I came! That's a big deal. For me, I mean; I don't come for just anybody. I allowed him to see me in that totally naked, totally vulnerable... way. You know what I mean? I told him I loved him, and I saw something happen in his eyes. It changed. Then he started talking about, I don't even know. Work. His office. His co-worker's maternity leave. Barney's semi-annual sale. Chit-chat! And I'm lying there with his come drying in my navel.

(A pause)

The worst part was, he wouldn't return my calls. I mean, I say "I love you" and then I get two weeks of his secretary saying "He's not at his desk right now" or "He's in a meeting and I don't expect him..." Men suck. Present company excepted.

(HE laughs)

What's so tough about picking up a phone? I mean, I had a lot inside of me that he needed to hear. That needed to get out, you know?

(A pause)

My therapist says I'm a lesbian trapped in a gay man's body. That's funny, huh? Is it so weird, is it so sick, so... I don't know, perverted... to want to... connect in some way other than just a quick fuck? To want a little something more from someone that you've opened your soul to? That you've allowed to see the deepest, darkest parts of you?

(A pause)

Anyway, when he wouldn't return my calls at work, I called him at home. The machine. Any hour of the day or night, the machine. I leave messages, numbers. Nothing. Silence. Three A.M. I'm leaving messages on his fucking answering machine. I heard that message so many times I can lip-synch to it. K.C. and the Sunshine Band. "That's The Way I Like It." "Hi, this is Jim and I'm not home right now, but the way I like it (uh-huh, uh-huh) is if you leave me your name **and** your number, and I'll..." Fuck. What an asshole.

(A pause)

So two weeks of messages go by. Finally, I corner him when he comes out of his office. I mean, I make a good living, I have a good job, friends, people who care about me, I'm respected, and I'm taking a half day off of work so I can stand in the lobby of this guy's office building, waiting for him to leave work. It's like overnight I've become this stalker who likes show tunes. "Play 'Gypsy' for Me." So he comes rushing out of the elevator and I go up to him. First, there this look in his eyes like "Who the hell are you?" which really sets me off. Slowly, the dawn of recognition hits. "Oh, hi. Sorry I haven't gotten back to you, but I've been out of town on business."

MAN (CONTINUED)

He says. "When can we get together?" He says. Well, that night's out, 'cause he's got some kind of work thing with people from the office. "But sure, I'll call you. I can't wait to see you again." He says. I mean, it's like I don't exist for him when I'm not standing right in front of him. Is it too much to ask that he think of me maybe once or twice during the day? Hell, the week? The month? Especially since I can't seem to stop thinking about him? I've let him into my heart, into my body, I remember his smell on me, the way he tastes, the feel of his skin, his hair. Could he maybe think about me, calling me, asking me out, without me always having to be the one to come begging for some attention, some consideration? The jerk. The asshole.

JOHN

Um... Wow. So... what was your second date like?

MAN

There wasn't one! That was it. One date. And "Oh, I can't wait to see you again." Actually, that's not true. It was really two dates. My therapist advised me... well, he thought it wasn't such a good idea that I always have sex on the first date. So, our first date was: we met at a party. And we talked and talked and went out for coffee and really connected, or so I thought. And he gave me his number, and then the rest of it was the second date.

JOHN

Oh. Um. Well, it's good you've got your therapist.

MAN

Tell me about it. I don't know how I'd be dealing with this if it wasn't... Jesus, let's get off this already. I'm even boring myself. Tell me about you. So, are you the kind of guy that's not gonna return my calls? Are we gonna go back to your place and I'll let you fuck me and then I'll never hear from you again?

(HE laughs. JOHN laughs, a little uncomfortably)

JOHN

Did you want more coffee? Our waitress is over there.

MAN

Oh, what the hell. I'll be up all night, anyway.  
(HE signals for the waitress, mimes pouring coffee)

I've had a really great time tonight. I hope you have.

(JOHN smiles. The WOMAN, exasperated, comes to the table, pours coffee. Puts a check down)

WOMAN

I'll take that whenever you're ready.

(SHE exits)

I'd really like to see you again.

MAN

JOHN

Um...

(HE smiles)

Uh-huh...

BLACKOUT

Scene 2

(SPLASH BAR. JOHN and WOMAN at table, looking at a common point out front)

Well? JOHN

Well, what? WOMAN

Which one of us is he cruising? JOHN

Me, of course. WOMAN

What makes you so sure? JOHN

I don't know. Maybe he's cruising you. If he is, he's just using you to get to me. WOMAN

God, Val. If I had just one ounce of your... JOHN

Balls. Maybe he's trying to figure out if we're together. (SHE points to JOHN, shakes her head wildly)  
"No, we're not together!" WOMAN

Thanks. I asked you out for support, companionship, commiseration. You throw me over for a gold chain and a hairy chest. JOHN

Yeah, but look at that chest. Oh, mama. And that is the perfect ass. Even with his pants on, you can tell the ass is perfect. WOMAN

I swear to God, Val, you were a gay man in your previous life. JOHN

Huh? WOMAN

None of my women friends talk like you. It's all "Oh, he's so sensitive, what a great listener, he really understood me, such sensitive eyes!" With you, it's "Hey, check the size of that basket, I could ride him like a stallion." JOHN



WOMAN

Well, if that what you wanted, you should've taken me to a tea parlor instead of this meat rack.

JOHN

So, who are you seeing these days?

WOMAN

No one, really.

JOHN

You're not getting laid? I don't believe it.

WOMAN

Oh, no, I'm getting laid, don't be ridiculous.

JOHN

What? Who?

WOMAN

Oh, this client was playing winky-winky with me during a meeting, then he gave me his home phone. So I went over to his place.

JOHN

And?

WOMAN

And? We fucked.

JOHN

So, you're seeing him?

WOMAN

What, you mean like dating? God, no. I'm not ready for that kind of commitment.

(THEY laugh)

I'm not ready to go all the way, for chrissake.

JOHN

Val, if you don't mind me asking, where are your kids while their mom is off being a floozie?

WOMAN

I'm not a floozie.

JOHN

Oh?

WOMAN

No. I'm a trollop.

JOHN

There's a difference?

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WOMAN

Sure. Floozies take what comes their way. Trollops do the choosing. And the kids are with their father, who's in town for his bi-annual visit. Emphasis on the "bi." Which is the only reason I was able to come out tonight. So I've gotta make up six months of fucking in two days. Stay outta my way.

(A pause)

See anything you like?

JOHN

Sure. Him.

WOMAN

Who? Not the one in the "Drink 'Til He's Cute" T-Shirt?

JOHN

No, no. Him.

(HE points, discreetly)

WOMAN

Which one?

JOHN

The one dancing on top of the bar.

WOMAN

Oh, honey. Set your sights a little higher, why dontcha? Isn't there anyone else?

JOHN

No, I pick him.

WOMAN

Oh, come on. His brain is probably a one-celled organism.

JOHN

Brain size isn't a priority for me right now.

WOMAN

He's probably got a serious drug problem.

JOHN

I'll help him through rehab.

WOMAN

He's probably got crabs. The clap. God knows what else.

JOHN

I'll get a flea dip and encase myself in latex.

WOMAN

Isn't there anyone else in the room who would do in a pinch?

JOHN

Um... okay. The bartender.

WOMAN

And in your previous life, you must've been Lord of the Manor. You're always hot for the hired help. Let's see... who do I know who's single?

JOHN

No, Val. Not another blind date.

WOMAN

Why don't I set you up with Jake? He's available.

JOHN

Who's that?

WOMAN

Jake. From work.

JOHN

I don't know who that is.

WOMAN

Sure you do. You've met him.

JOHN

When?

WOMAN

Remember that time you met me for lunch and there was a big group of people from my office at the next table? Remember?

JOHN

No. What's he like?

WOMAN

Oh, he's great. Terrific sense of humor.

JOHN

Uh-oh.

WOMAN

No, really. He's very bright. I think the office job is just... you know, a job. I think he has artistic ambitions.

JOHN

Oh, great. What's he look like?

WOMAN

Oh, he's cute.

(A pause)

WOMAN

Really. Curly brown hair. Glasses. Dresses kind of preppy. He looks kind of like a young Donald O'Connor.

JOHN

Donald O'Connor? What, Durwood Kirby's unavailable?

LONELY TOO LONG 2-8

WOMAN

Oh, come on. What have you got to lose?

JOHN

Same thing I lost on the last blind date you set me up with. Three hours of my life.

WOMAN

This isn't a blind date. You've met him.

JOHN

Like my blind date from last night. His idea of conversation was "Gee, I've been talking for a long time. You talk now." So then I start to talk and he interrupts with "Yeah, I know what you mean," and proceeds to talk about something totally different. Himself. Fun, huh? It was like talking into a wind tunnel.

(MAN, as bartender, comes to them)

MAN

The gentleman across the bar would like to buy you ladies a drink.

WOMAN

Ladies!

JOHN

Oh, great.

MAN

Oh, geez. Sorry.

JOHN

Ladies. Wrong on both counts.

MAN

Lady and gentle... um... Sir and lady... I'm really sorry.

JOHN

And I wonder why I spend my nights watching ice melt.

MAN

The gentleman across the bar would like to buy you a round, but now I wanna buy the drinks.

WOMAN

Do you really think he looks like a woman?

MAN

Oh, no, not at all. I wasn't even looking at him.

JOHN

Thanks. That makes me feel a lot better.

MAN

What can I get you?

JOHN  
Something lady-like. A grasshopper. A pousse-cafe.

WOMAN  
I'll stick to scotch. Only make it Black Label this time.  
On the rocks.

JOHN  
Oooh, that'll teach him. What's the most expensive thing  
you make back there?

MAN  
Um... gee...

JOHN  
I'll have a magnum of champagne, please.

WOMAN  
I thought you weren't drinking.

JOHN  
I'm not, but this guy ain't getting away with a Coke.

MAN  
Some of the cognacs are pretty steep.

JOHN  
Good. I'll have a double one of them. You pick. In a  
snifter. I could use a nice prop to pose with.

(MAN exits)

WOMAN  
See? It was me he was after.

JOHN  
Only you could walk into a gay bar and still score.

(MAN re-enters on the other side of the  
bar)

MAN  
Hi.

JOHN  
Hi.

WOMAN  
Hey, there.

MAN  
I love this song. Wanna dance?

JOHN  
Actually, I'm here with my friend Val. But thanks for  
asking. Any other time, I'd love to.

LONELY TOO LONG 2-10

WOMAN  
(Over the above:) Sure thing.

(SHE and the MAN exit. JOHN's mouth falls open. The MAN re-enters on the other side of the bar, as bartender, with drinks)

MAN  
Here. It's Courvoisier. Very expensive.

JOHN  
Great. Nice snifter.

MAN  
Where's your friend?

JOHN  
Threw me over for a pair of talking deltoids.  
(HE takes money out of his pocket, puts it on the bar)  
Thanks.

MAN  
No, it's okay. He took care of me.

JOHN  
No, I want to.

MAN  
Thanks, man.

(Takes the money. A pause)

JOHN  
Crowded tonight.

MAN  
Sorry?

JOHN  
It's busy tonight, huh?

MAN  
Not too bad. It's early yet.

JOHN  
How late do you work?

MAN  
I'm early man tonight. Only three more hours.

JOHN  
Oh, that's not too bad.

MAN  
No, but I gotta work brunch tomorrow. So I'm here at 1):3).

JOHN  
Oh, that's too bad.

MAN  
And I'm at the gym tomorrow at eight in the A.M.

JOHN  
Wow.  
(A long pause)  
Do you live nearby, at least?

(Something catches the MAN's eye  
offstage)

MAN  
Oh, 'scuse me.

(HE exits. A pause. MAN re-enters on  
the other side of the bar, casually  
approaches JOHN. JOHN looks up)

MAN  
Hi!

JOHN  
(Surprised:) Hi!  
(MAN comes over to JOHN)  
How're ya doin'?

(MAN sees someone offstage)

MAN  
Hi!

(MAN exits. JOHN lights a cigarette. A  
pause. MAN re-enters from the other  
side of the stage. Comes to the bar,  
dancing to the music. JOHN notices him.  
Smiles)

MAN  
God. Donna Summer, huh?

(JOHN laughs. MAN looks away. JOHN  
looks away. MAN looks back at him.  
Looks away. JOHN looks at him. MAN  
looks back. JOHN looks away. MAN  
shrugs, looks away. JOHN looks back)

JOHN  
Remember Donna Summer?

MAN  
Not really. See ya.

(HE exits)

LONELY TOO LONG 2-12

Next? JOHN

(WOMAN re-enters)

Next? WOMAN

What happened? JOHN

Married. WOMAN

You're that picky? JOHN

I don't do it with married men. They always have to go to your place. So what, exactly, are you looking for? WOMAN

Oh... I don't know. Kip Noll. JOHN

Huh? WOMAN

I'm looking for Kip Noll. That's what I'll put in my personal ad. JOHN

What's that? WOMAN

Not what. Who. Kip Noll was a superstar of the all-male adult film world. Really. "Kip Noll: Superstar." Look for it at your local video store. Under "Nostalgia." That's the problem. Kip Noll today would be too young to know who Kip Noll was. JOHN

Was his dick that big? WOMAN

No. Well yes, it was, but no, that wasn't it. Kip was, in my opinion, the best actor in the porno business. JOHN

(WOMAN laughs)

Oh, always one of my highest priorities. WOMAN



JOHN

He always acted as if... he was having a good time. He really got into it, you know, made faces, passionate.

(JOHN makes faces)

He was an expressive kind of guy. Most of the others, the new ones, go at it like it's work. Or talk tough, talk dirty, which just makes me laugh.

WOMAN

Oh, I love that. "Tighten that hole!" "You like that big dick, dontcha?"

JOHN

Val, please. Long dirty blond curly hair. Tall. Thin. Big lips. Kissed a lot. You don't see too much of that anymore. Safe sex is out the window; people are rimming and sucking and fucking and cumming all over the place, but kissing seems to be definitely a risk. Kip kissed. Longingly. Passionately. Where do they go, retired porn stars? Is there a home in Englewood, New Jersey?

WOMAN

Isn't there anyone in here who does it for you?

JOHN

I told you.

WOMAN

I mean a civilian.

JOHN

Oh, geez. Okay.  
(HE looks around)  
Nah. Oh. Okay. Him.

WOMAN

Who?

JOHN

Over there.

WOMAN

Where?

JOHN

What, you want me to point? Against the wall.

WOMAN

White shirt?

JOHN

Uh-huh.

(SHE exits. Returns, dragging the MAN)

WOMAN

Okay, this is my friend John. He thinks you're really cute but he's horribly shy. (To JOHN:) You know where I'll be.

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(SHE exits)

JOHN  
I... um... geez, I'm so... God. I apologize. My friend,  
she... she just got out of the hospital. Escaped.

MAN  
Entschuldigen sie mir, bitte... Ist sie ehren freund? Mein  
Englisch ist nicht sehr gut.

(A long pause)

JOHN  
Perfect.

BLACKOUT

Scene 3

(CAFE ELSIE. JOHN and MAN at table. THEY have coffee)

JOHN

The first time I saw passion I was, I don't know, ten, twelve years old.

MAN

The Sondheim musical?

JOHN

You big queen. No. The feeling, the emotion. Don't interrupt. You always interrupt.

MAN

Do not.

JOHN

Do so. Passion. Like Rod Stewart sang about. Like "Purple Passion" soda. Remember "Purple Passion" soda?

MAN

Ich. Yes. It was just plain old grape soda, but they put it in a groovy-colored can.

JOHN

Yes, yes. So of course I had to have it. Anyway, there was a drugstore in this dinky shopping center where I grew up. While my mother went for groceries, I'd go to the drugstore and look at the paperbacks. There was a big wire rack about twenty feet long, by, I guess, about five feet high. This was the closest thing to a bookstore in Boredom City, Long Island. There was a movie with Charlton Heston in, like, 1969 or '70 called "Number One." It was about a football player, I guess - I don't know, I never saw it. But the novelization appeared in the drugstore one day. Now remember, this was long before you could open any magazine to find a nude male model inviting you to sniff the cologne sample at his crotch. On the cover of this book was Charlton Heston, naked (or I guess naked - he was cut off at the waist and he had no shirt on), lying on top of some naked starlet - Joanna Pettit or Jessica Walter or Camilla Sparv or someone and they were lying in bed, obviously, locked in this passionate, open-mouthed kiss. Charlton's eyes were tightly closed, his arms were up, supporting himself on his elbows and his hands were grabbing this woman on either side of her head while he laid one on her with this intense... hunger. I remember just standing there, staring. Every drop of blood in my body rushed right to my cock. I couldn't take my eyes off it; it mesmerized me. I went back there for days, weeks, probably, just to look at it again. I'd think of any excuse to accompany my mother shopping if it meant copping another look at the cover of "Number One" so I could renew my fantasies for another week. I didn't dare buy it. I knew if I tried the man at the counter would know I only wanted it to sit home jerking off looking at Charlton's naked torso.

JOHN (CONTINUED)

I kept hoping my mother would develop a fondness for novelizations of movies about football, but she didn't. I should've told my Dad I wanted it. He would've thought I was finally developing an interest in something normal and manly. And then one day it was gone. Somebody bought it or the inventory was rotated, but it was gone. I dug through the books looking for it, thinking maybe it was hidden behind another book, but no. Gone. I kept going back, looking for it, or looking for something to replace it. The cover of the novelization of "Rachel, Rachel" had a naked James Olsen on top of a naked Joanne Woodward, but they weren't kissing, they were sort of cheek-to-cheek, staring dreamily off into space, thinking about laundry lists and what they were going to have for lunch at the commissary. There was no passion. That's what I was looking for. Was? Is. Are. Am. Looking for. Some beefy guy, not necessarily Charlton Heston, with his shirt off, grabbing me on either side of the head and planting one right on my lips, mouth open, hungry for me.

MAN

Yeah, and the more you get to know him, you find out he's just plain old grape soda.

(The WOMAN, as Waitress, enters)

WOMAN

Okay, boys, before one of you lapses into another monologue, it's time to order.

MAN

Oh, I haven't looked.

WOMAN

Stop staring dreamily into each others' eyes and pick up the menu. Think food, not dick.

JOHN

Bunny, you are totally disgusting. I have known this man for, what...?

MAN

Fifteen.

JOHN

Fifteen years.

WOMAN

Awww, sweet.

JOHN

We are just friends.

WOMAN

Uh-huh. (To MAN:) You gonna accept that? If my wife were here and I said we were just friends, she'd sock me in the jaw.

JOHN  
Then let's get her here.

WOMAN  
More coffee, fresh?

MAN  
I assume she's calling you fresh, 'cause God knows the coffee ain't.

WOMAN  
Oooh, isn't he feisty? I hate that.

(SHE exits)

MAN  
He's out there. You'll find him.

JOHN  
Yeah, how?

MAN  
Maybe you've just got to look for him in a different way.

JOHN  
Huh?

MAN  
Maybe you're trying too hard. Maybe he's trying to find you, but you just don't want to be found. Maybe he's right in front of your nose.

JOHN  
If you're about to recommend a John Bradshaw book, I'll projectile vomit.

MAN  
Yeah, look who's giving advice on romance. I'm in the same place.

(WOMAN returns with coffee)

WOMAN  
Here. Now you can continue to bore each other.

JOHN  
Thanks, Bunny, for taking time away from writing your advice to the lovelorn column to serve us.

WOMAN  
Sure. You're my lead story.

(SHE exits)

JOHN  
Listen, don't give me that shit about "Oh, I'm in the same place." You have to beat them off with a stick. I've seen you. I've seen your stick.

MAN

You have not.

JOHN

That's true; I haven't. But I have walked into a bar with you. And felt like an ugly stepsister.

MAN

Oh, is that what you want? Five minutes of superficial attention?

(A pause)

JOHN

Uh-huh.

MAN

And I've walked into a bar with you and seen you turn into Gale Sondergaard.

JOHN

What's that supposed to mean?

MAN

You clang down the iron curtain. Anytime anyone comes near you. I expect you to burst in "In Questa Reggia."

JOHN

Huh?

MAN

It's from "Turandot." It's Puccini's version of "These Boots Are Made For Walkin'."

(WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN

John. Kevin. My shift ends in one-half hour. Thirty minutes.

JOHN

And your point is...?

WOMAN

Just thought you'd like to know.

MAN

I'm looking, I'm looking. See?

JOHN

Can you put on some music? It's like Frank Campbell's in here.

WOMAN

Broken.

JOHN

Huh?

WOMAN

The music system. Broken. I'm the only thing in here that works.

(SHE exits)

JOHN

Okay, Kevin. What's your dream man look like?

MAN

I don't know that I have one.

JOHN

Oh, sure.

MAN

Really. Does it sound to candy-assed to say that I have other priorities?

JOHN

Yes, it does. Such as?

MAN

A sense of humor. Sensitivity. A sense of himself. You know, self-confidence. Self-esteem.

JOHN

Okay. Here comes Charlie Callas and he's got a great sense of himself and no co-dependency issues.

MAN

Come on.

JOHN

Here's Ernest Borgnine and he's in touch with his inner child. Kevin, you are so full of shit. Like Justin was really tops in the sensitivity department.

MAN

He had a lot of neat qualities.

JOHN

Too bad you're the only man on earth who saw them. He did have huge pecs and a great ass, though.

MAN

I hope someone cornholes you quick, 'cause you're turning into one nasty bitch.

JOHN

Really, I'm just trying to get a handle on what you like, Kevin. We can help each other. Maybe I'll meet someone who's lousy for me but perfect for you. Tall?

MAN

Doesn't matter.

LONELY TOO LONG 3-20

Thin? Stocky? JOHN

I don't care. MAN

Blond? JOHN

I'm telling you, it doesn't matter. MAN

Okay. I show up at your door. Would you go out on a second date? JOHN

Oh, I see. This is about your self-esteem. MAN

No, it's not. I'm just asking if I'm the kind of man you'd find attractive. JOHN

I've known you for fifteen years. Of course I think you're attractive. MAN

(Pleased) Oh. Well, you're the only one in this room who seems to think so. JOHN

You're a jerk. MAN

And if I meet my twin, I'll send him your way and we'll see how long that lasts. JOHN

I'll do my own shopping, thanks. You seem to think some guy is going to walk through the door and the music's going to swell and he'll come over and whisk you off to the South of France or something... MAN

It could happen. It's like the planets. That's how I feel. We drift into each other's orbit for a moment and then hurtle away from each other, never to be in the same configuration again. Not in this lifetime, anyway. I think my dream guy is somewhere in Alpha Centauri. JOHN

And you're just sitting around. Waiting for his comet to circle Uranus. MAN

(Singing, to the tune of "Venus":) "Oh, Penis... oh, Penis..." JOHN



(WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN  
Please stop that. This is a family restaurant.

JOHN  
For the Manson family, maybe.

WOMAN  
Order. Now.

MAN  
Do you have any specials?

WOMAN  
Oh, for Christ's sake. If you don't eat, you won't have any strength left to fuck.

JOHN  
Would you cut that out? It's really... it's not funny. At all. We have never had sex.

WOMAN  
Fifteen years of foreplay? Whew!

JOHN  
We're not... oh, shut up.

WOMAN  
Oh, honey, cut the denial. Wake up and smell the coffee.

MAN  
You smell it. It's bad enough we have to drink it.

JOHN  
Thank you, Kevin.

WOMAN  
When you want to order, let me know. I'll be in the cryogenics capsule in the back.

(SHE exits)

MAN  
It's not always going to be fireworks at the beginning. It's not always going to be a Beethoven Symphony. You might not even know it's happening. Sometimes it's like the Bolero. It builds slowly to a climax. If something starts loud, it's only going to get quiet. Better to go slow at the beginning.

JOHN

Mine's more like Philip Glass. Endless, non-melodic droning. Listen, talk in musical terms I can relate to, you snob. Can you give me a Motown analogy? Something from the Ronettes? Any one of the five million songs drummed into my head for the past thirty years? All I hear is Three Dog Night's "One." U2's "One." "Lonely Too Long" by The Rascals. "Are You Lonesome Tonight?" "Somebody to Love": Jefferson Airplane and Queen. These are the songs that bubbled in my head when I was sitting in the high school gym, cruising football players and trying to figure out how to have a relationship. No wonder. I was looking through Billboard's book of Top 4) Hits and there it was: the number one song the day I was born was Paul Anka's "Lonely Boy." Where do you go from there? Is there some song that goes:

(Sings)

OH, HE'S NOT SO GREAT  
BUT I'M GONNA LOWER MY STANDARDS  
I DIDN'T REALLY FEEL A THING WHEN WE MET  
BUT NOW HE DOESN'T SEEM SO BAD  
YOU DON'T REALLY THRILL ME  
BUT WE'VE GOT SOME OF THE SAME ISSUES  
SO I GUESS I'LL SETTLE FOR YOU... ?

No, there isn't. Name a year. I'll tell you the song that shaped my consciousness.

MAN

1977.

JOHN

(Sings)

IF I CAN'T HAVE YOU  
I DON'T WANT NOBODY, BABY...

MAN

1967.

JOHN

(Sings)

IT MUST BE HIM  
OH, DEAR GOD  
IT MUST BE HIM  
IT MUST BE HIM  
OR I SHALL DIE...

MAN

1957. Were you born yet?

JOHN

Not yet. But in the womb I heard:

(Sings)

I BEEN SEARCHIN'  
I'M SEARCHIN'  
SEARCHIN' EVERY WHICH WAY...

I'm a walking jukebox of emotional expectation.

MAN

Fleetwood Mac's "Rumours".

JOHN

Huh?

MAN

Reminds me of you. That album was it the first year in college when we met. That's the music I think of when I think of you. "Go Your Own Way", "The Chain", "Don't Stop", "Dreams"...

JOHN

Really?

(A pause)

Yeah, you know, I was in a restaurant the other day and "Dreams" comes over the sound system and this woman, this girl at the next table says, "Oh, listen to this oldie!" I said, "No, honey, 'Good Golly, Miss Molly' is an oldie." I felt three hundred years old. Do you realize the woman in Steely Dan's "Hey, Nineteen" is now, like, thirty-three? "Hey, Thirty-Three." "Sweet Little Sixteen" is now in her fifties, for God's sake!

(HE laughs)

MAN

(Sings)

BUT LISTEN CAREFULLY TO THE SOUND  
OF YOUR LONELINESS  
LIKE A HEARTBEAT  
DRIVES YOU MAD  
IN THE STILLNESS OF REMEMBERING  
WHAT YOU HAD

JOHN

(Sings)

AND WHAT YOU LOST

MAN

(Sings)

WHAT YOU HAD

JOHN

(Sings)

AND WHAT YOU LOST...

(THEY both inhale to continue the song)

BLACKOUT

Scene 4

(VICEROY, a restaurant. JOHN and MAN at table. A long pause)

MAN  
Well, the waitress musta died.

(JOHN laughs)

JOHN  
No, I just saw her. I think she's the only one on the floor.

MAN  
(Overlapping:) This place won't last the season.

(A pause)

JOHN  
So...

MAN  
Sorry, what?

JOHN  
Nothing. I just said "so."

MAN  
Oh.

JOHN  
Um... now, you know Judy how?

MAN  
Work.

JOHN  
You work with her? I didn't know that.

MAN  
(Overlapping:) No, no. She's a client. We do two totally different things.

(HE laughs)

JOHN  
Sorry.  
(MAN laughs. A long pause)  
She's terrific. How long have you known her?

MAN  
She can be a little much sometimes. Oh, there she is.  
Hello? Hello?

(WOMAN comes to the table)

Hi, sorry, guys. WOMAN

Jesus. MAN

We had a rush all of a sudden. Do you know what you'd like? WOMAN

Well, menus would be good. For a start. MAN

Shit, sorry. WOMAN

(SHE exits)

She's a piece of work, that one. MAN

Yeah, it's busy. You ever wait tables? JOHN

(MAN looks at him. A long pause)

No. MAN

It's a horrible job. You don't know until you do it. JOHN

(WOMAN returns with menus)

Thought it was gonna be another half hour before we saw you again. MAN

Sorry, guys. WOMAN

That's okay. JOHN

(SHE starts to exit)

I'd like to... Miss? Miss? We'd like, I'd like a drink, please. MAN

Oh, sure. What can I getcha? WOMAN

What's the house white? MAN

It's ummm... I don't know. I'll find out. WOMAN

LONELY TOO LONG 4-26

MAN  
Please.  
(SHE starts to leave)  
Wait. Did you want something?

JOHN  
Oh, just a Coke.

WOMAN  
Sure.

(She exits)

MAN  
You've been here before?

JOHN  
Only a couple of times, yeah.

MAN  
And you came back?

(HE laughs. A long pause)

JOHN  
It's usually quiet. It's usually empty. This is the  
busiest I've ever seen it.

MAN  
Hmmm...  
(A pause. Eventually, the WOMAN  
returns)  
Have you seen the new...? oh, here we are.

(SHE puts the drinks down)

WOMAN  
The Coke.

JOHN  
No, that's me.

WOMAN  
And white wine.

MAN  
I didn't say I wanted it, I just asked what kind it was.

WOMAN  
Oh, I'm sorry.

MAN  
No, that's fine.

WOMAN  
No, I can...

It's fine, it's fine. MAN

You sure? WOMAN

Well, I know what I want. JOHN You know what you're having?

Haven't looked. So... what's your name? MAN

(A pause)

Sam. WOMAN

So, Sam, what kind is it? MAN

What? Oh. WOMAN

What kind of wine am I about to drink, Sam? MAN

I really don't know. White wine. WOMAN

Do you drink it? MAN

I don't drink. WOMAN

I'm just kidding with you. (To JOHN:) Go ahead, order. MAN

I'm just gonna have... um... oh, yeah. Could I get the...? JOHN

(Overlapping:) Do you have any specials? MAN

Oh, ummm... let me find out. WOMAN

(SHE exits)

No, I know what I want. JOHN

Wait for the specials, they're probably fresher. MAN

LONELY TOO LONG 4-28

JOHN

I always get the same thing when I come here. It's the best thing on the menu.

MAN

Jesus, open your horizons. Don't be compulsive. Not good, buddy-boy.

(JOHN is speechless. The WOMAN returns)

WOMAN

We've got a grilled fresh vegetable...

MAN

(Overlapping:) Sam, are you an actress?

WOMAN

Huh?

MAN

Do you act? Are you an actress?

WOMAN

(Smiles) Well, yeah, I am, actually.

MAN

So how do you memorize lines if you can't even memorize the specials?

(A long pause)

WOMAN

This is my first day here. Cut me a break.

(SHE exits)

MAN

Jeez. The sensitive type. This place was your idea, huh? Next time I pick it.

JOHN

Next time?

BLACKOUT



Scene 5

(GREENWICH AVENUE. The sound of street traffic in the rain. JOHN walks on. To MAN, walking behind him holding an open umbrella)

JOHN

Let's look at this place.

(THEY stand, looking at a menu taped to the window of a restaurant)

MAN

Mmmm... I don't think so.

JOHN

They have a Shepherd's Pie.

MAN

I don't eat red meat.

JOHN

Oh, right. There's a Field Salad.

MAN

It has onions. I can't eat...

JOHN

They could leave them off, I'm sure.

MAN

I'm sort of in the mood for something more than a salad.

JOHN

Oh. Okay...

(A pause while HE desperately studies the menu)

There's... um...

MAN

I don't think this is gonna work.

JOHN

What about the Vegetarian Lasagne?

MAN

I'm lactose intolerant.

JOHN

Oh. Uh-huh. Oh, well, look: they have it in a red sauce...

MAN

No, I'm allergic to broccoli.

LONELY TOO LONG 5-30

JOHN

Oh, okay.

(A pause)

I've never heard of anyone being allergic to broccoli.

MAN

Sorry. Nope. We'll have to keep looking.

JOHN

I think there's a vegetarian place a few blocks... um... this way...

MAN

If you're talking about the one at Seventh and Perry, they use heavy salt in everything. The last time I was there I blew up like a balloon. Is that the one you're talking about?

JOHN

Yeah, that's the one.

MAN

Let's try down here.

JOHN

Wait. Wait a minute. We've been walking for an hour and a half now and still haven't found anything. Where do you usually eat in this neighborhood?

MAN

Hmmm... I don't know that I do. I usually eat at home.

JOHN

Oh. Uh-huh.

(A pause)

MAN

How can people eat at sidewalk cafes in New York? Between the buses and the bums... ugh.

JOHN

I don't know. I'll be right back.

(HE exits. HE returns with a bag of Doritos)

I'm sorry, if I don't eat something soon, I'm gonna get cranky.

(HE eats)

MAN

Lemme think...

JOHN

So what happens to you if you eat broccoli?

MAN

You don't wanna know, it's gross. Not something to share on a first date when you want to make an impression. Lemme see that.

(HE takes the Doritos bag)

Jesus. M.S.G., of course. Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil... Mmmm, Calcium Chloride. Isn't that what they use to melt snow?

(HE takes a handful and eats)

You can actually taste the chemicals.

JOHN

There's cheese in there!

MAN

(Eating:) Seven grams of fat! In a one-ounce serving!

BLACKOUT

Scene 6

(SMITH & WOLLENSKY GRILL. JOHN and WOMAN at table. A noisy, expensive, yuppie hangout)

(A gasp)

WOMAN  
How could you say that to me?

JOHN  
'Cause it's the truth.

WOMAN  
How dare you.

JOHN  
I don't work for you anymore; I can say anything I want.

WOMAN  
You little bitch. I think I liked it better before we were friends, when I could still intimidate you. You wouldn't have had the nerve to say something like that.

JOHN  
Queen of denial.

WOMAN  
Jesus. Faggots are nasty.

JOHN  
How would you know? I'm the only faggot you've got. You work in that ivory tower of closeted starched shirts, pressed suits, little spectator pumps, panty hose... who buys your panty hose for you now that I don't work there anymore?

WOMAN  
Fuck you. Jim, the art director, is gay.

JOHN  
I know he is. But he doesn't. Besides, they all think you're a dyke anyway.

WOMAN  
Oh, shut up.

JOHN  
It's true. They all thought Chris was your beard. What's a beard for a lesbian? An earring? A garter? They thought he was your garter.

WOMAN  
You're the only gay friend I have.

(A long pause)

JOHN

Uh-huh.  
(A long pause)  
Thank you?

WOMAN

What I mean is, you're the only person I can talk to like this. Straight men: forget about it. They're jerks. They just don't get it, you know?

JOHN

Also, the fact that you flirt with all of them doesn't help.

WOMAN

And my women friends... well, it's just not possible to talk without there being some kind of competitiveness...

JOHN

And maybe because you're hostile to anyone who's in a relationship. And insecure with anyone who isn't.

WOMAN

You really think you've got me pegged, don't you, you smug, condescending little... If you see him, get me another red wine.

JOHN

I think he's getting you another red wine. He just hasn't come back to the table with it.

WOMAN

The one I ordered twenty minutes ago?

JOHN

Yeah.

WOMAN

No, this is the one that I ordered twenty minutes ago.

JOHN

No, that's the one that you ordered forty minutes ago when we ordered dinner.

WOMAN

Have we eaten?

JOHN

No, that hasn't come yet.

WOMAN

Jeez. How long we been here?

JOHN

It's been... ooh... Four glasses... an hour and twenty minutes.

WOMAN

What was I saying?

Um... you were... um... JOHN

It was something important. WOMAN

Of course it was. JOHN

No, it was, it was. Was it about you? WOMAN

I doubt it. JOHN

I remember one night, we'd gone to his place, had sex, I fell asleep. I wake up in the middle of the night. Scratch, scratch, scratch. It's like four in the morning. He's not in bed. Scratch, scratch, scratch. I get up. He's in the bathroom, stark naked, re-grouting the tiles. Really. Scraping out old grout with a butter knife. "What are you doing? Scratching away at four in the morning. I thought we had rats," I say. "Dis has gotta be done, goddamnit," he says. "But is four A.M. an appropriate time?" I say. We're both standing there, four A.M., both naked, looking at the bathroom tile. "And with a butter knife?" We both just started laughing. He just made me laugh. I miss that. Did I ever tell you that story. WOMAN

Yeah, you did. I still don't get it. JOHN

What can I say? You had to be there. WOMAN

I guess. Honey, it's been two years. He's living with someone else. It's time to, like, get over it. JOHN

Maybe I don't want to. WOMAN

Obviously. JOHN

Got a suggestion, smartie? WOMAN

Well, I hear they have bars now where straight men go to meet straight women. You could do that. JOHN

Sure, I could do that. Better yet, I could pull my dress up over my head and lie down in the middle of Sixth Avenue during lunch hour. It's just never going to be the way it was with Wally. I'm beginning to understand that. WOMAN

JOHN

All right. It's been two years. It's time I told you. Wally was an asshole. He treated you like shit. He loved to embarrass you, humiliate you, usually in public. He was fucking around all the time you were with him. I hated him, all your friends hated him. And he was dull as dishwater, besides. There. I said it.

WOMAN

But he loved me.

(A pause)

JOHN

I'm speechless.

WOMAN

So what do you do? To meet men?

JOHN

I do... well...

WOMAN

Yeah, see? It's not so easy. Anyway, you're gay. It's easier.

JOHN

Easier? Than what? Quantum physics? I answer personal ads. I place personal ads. I go to bars. I go to dances. I go to the gym. Rallies, meetings, fucking twelve step programs. I do all the stuff they tell you you're supposed to do. It ain't easy, sweetie. When I tell you about all the boring evenings I've spent nodding and smiling while some jerk unloads his thirtysomething years of psychic pain at me, his mother problems, his father problems, his relationship issues, his career issues, his fucking pet cat issues, while I'm sitting there holding back so many yawns I'm afraid I'll swallow my tongue, trying to time it so I can look discreetly at my watch when he's not making eye contact... you think that's easy?

WOMAN

Not that I don't care about your problems, and not that this isn't a really fascinating story, but I've really got to pee.

(SHE exits. JOHN sits there, sort of stunned. The air goes out of him. HE looks around. His eyes start to tear up, HE quickly takes out a cigarette, lights it, inhales deeply. It helps. HE starts to come out of it. Takes another drag. The MAN comes by)

MAN

I'm sorry, sir. You can't smoke here.

Oh. Shit. JOHN

(HE looks around for someplace to put it out)

You can't smoke here unless you gimme a drag. MAN

Huh? JOHN

(The MAN takes the cigarette, inhales deeply)

Don't tell. MAN

Oh. No. JOHN

They don't even let me smoke in the kitchen anymore. One more. MAN

(HE drags)  
Okay, you better put it out before they catch us.

Okay. JOHN

(HE looks around for an ashtray)

Oh, just use your water. I'll bring you a fresh one. What's your name? MAN

What? Um... JOHN

I'm Joey. She your girlfriend? The dame in the john? MAN

(Laughs) Oh, no. No. JOHN

That's good. You work near here? I've never seen you. MAN

Um... no. JOHN

(A pause. The MAN looks at him. Smiles. JOHN is immobile. Looks away)  
I...

Oops, gotta go. Take it easy, buddy. MAN



(HE touches JOHN's shoulder and exits.  
JOHN is completely thrown. HE looks  
after the MAN. Smiles. WOMAN returns)

WOMAN

Sorry. Where were you?

JOHN

Do you think you could spend the rest of dinner in the  
bathroom?

BLACKOUT

Scene 7

(CAFFE DELL'ARTISTA. A table in an Italian cafe. Classical music. Candles. JOHN and MAN at table, looking at each other. A pause. JOHN laughs)

MAN  
Jesus, you've got beautiful eyes.  
(JOHN laughs)  
Really.

JOHN  
Thanks. The better to see you with, my dear.

MAN  
Did we even order? I don't remember.

JOHN  
Do you care? Are you hungry?

MAN  
Not really. You?  
(JOHN, smiling, shakes his head)

JOHN  
Not for food.

MAN  
That leg feels nice.

JOHN  
Which leg? This leg?

MAN  
Yeah. That leg.

JOHN  
How do you know that's my leg?  
(HE laughs)

MAN  
Cut it out.

JOHN  
Sorry. I know you're a good girl and I'll respect you in the morning.

MAN  
I've got such a crush on you right now.

JOHN  
A crush? That's it? Just a crush?

MAN  
Yeah. Don't ruin it. I've got a crush on you today.

JOHN  
You gonna sing that?

MAN  
Jesus. Let's order.

JOHN  
I'm sorry.

MAN  
No, it's okay.

JOHN  
I'm not used to this.

MAN  
You're weird.

JOHN  
I'm weird?

MAN  
Yes. You. You are weird.

JOHN  
Sorry.

MAN  
Jesus. Don't apologize.

JOHN  
I'm not, I... never mind.

(HE looks at the menu. HE looks at the  
MAN)

MAN  
What?

JOHN  
Nothing. You sweet talker, you.

MAN  
Huh?

JOHN  
I just... I guess I'm... I'm not used to... I don't know  
what I'm trying to say.

MAN  
Just relax, honey, relax.

LONELY TOO LONG 7-40

JOHN  
That's hard for me, is what I'm trying to say. I'm not used to being with someone who's so... so... I'm just not used to being with someone, is what I guess I should say.

MAN  
You're funny.

JOHN  
Don't make fun of me.

MAN  
Great smile.

JOHN  
(Overlapping:) I was... what? Thank you.

MAN  
You've got a great smile.

JOHN  
I'm not used to compliments. I don't know what to do with them.

MAN  
Whose problem is that?

JOHN  
Mine. I know. Sorry.

MAN  
Let's just have some fun. That's why I'm so turned on by you. You're fun. I have fun with you. Stay that way.

JOHN  
Okay.

(A pause)

God, that's intimidating. Now I have to be "fun." I should have one of those stuffed pointy hats with bells on the end.

MAN  
Something's happening here I don't like. I don't like the way this feels.

JOHN  
Sorry.  
(HE reaches under the table)  
I like the way this feels.

MAN  
Cool it.

JOHN  
Just trying to get you back. You've gone someplace else.

MAN  
I don't know what to say to you.

JOHN  
Don't say anything. Just sit there.

MAN  
Maybe I should go.

(HE stands)

JOHN  
I guess that's up to you.

(The WOMAN enters)

WOMAN  
'Kay?

MAN  
Am I staying?

JOHN  
I don't know. Are you?

MAN  
I'll have a cappuccino.

WOMAN  
Eh.

MAN  
That's it. Just cappuccino.

WOMAN  
It'sa just?

MAN  
Just cappucino.

WOMAN  
Oh. 'Kay.

JOHN  
Um... a regular American coffee.

WOMAN  
Yah.

MAN  
And an amaretto cheesecake.

WOMAN  
We ow.

JOHN  
I'm sorry, what?

WOMAN  
We ow.

JOHN  
An amaretto cheesecake.

WOMAN  
We ow, ow, ow.

JOHN  
I'm sorry, what? What is she saying? Do you understand what she's saying to me?

WOMAN  
Ow. No. Maw.

MAN  
I think they're out. They don't have any.

JOHN  
Oh, they're out. You're out?

WOMAN  
Yah.

JOHN  
Uhhh... okay... a chocolate cheesecake.

WOMAN  
No cheesecake.

JOHN  
Oh. Well... hrrrrrr... Strawberry cheese... oh, you're out of cheesecake.

WOMAN  
I come back.

JOHN  
No! Wait. Um... Gelato. What flavors do you have?

WOMAN  
Water. Cappy. Yogoo. Timple.

JOHN  
Oh.  
(A pause)  
What's timple?  
(A pause. The WOMAN smiles and nods)  
I'll have the zabaglione.  
(SHE exits)  
I hate zabaglione. It's like a discharge.

MAN  
You're funny. I like you when you're funny.

JOHN  
What about when I'm not? What if I'm, like, crabby? Or, maybe, like...

MAN  
Nasty?

JOHN  
Yeah, maybe.

MAN  
That I don't like. Stay funny. I really wanted to be with you tonight. I've been thinking about it all week.

JOHN  
Yeah, me too.

MAN  
Then you go all weird on me. I just wanna be with you. I wanna be inside you.

JOHN  
Stop that. I won't be able to stand up for an hour.

MAN  
Are we going to my place to fuck after this?

JOHN  
I'm gonna pull you under the table in about a second and we're gonna do it right in front of that faux poetess and her anorexic boyfriend.

(HE takes the MAN's hand)

MAN  
It's good the table's here.

JOHN  
How 'bout we screw the cappuccino and get out of here. We can walk in the rain. Remember that song?

MAN  
I want some of your dessert.

JOHN  
We'll put it in a doggie bag.

MAN  
Don't rush this. I'm taking my time here. And I want you to, as well.

JOHN  
I'm not... what did I say?

MAN  
Forget it.  
(A pause)  
Gimme your hand. Let's go slow.

Fine. Whatever. JOHN

What? MAN

Nothing. JOHN

(A pause)  
You're driving me crazy, you know that?

Me? MAN

(HE laughs. HE lets go of JOHN's hand)

Are you offended that I'm attracted to you? JOHN

Do we have to talk about this? It really kills it. I just don't want to be pushed. MAN

Fine. No talking. JOHN

It's like all or nothing with you. Can we be friends? MAN

Oh, is that it? Let's just be friends? JOHN

That's not what I meant. Jesus. I want to establish a base... you know, a foundation... MAN

Well, I don't see you enough. I want to, too. But we're like seeing each other once a week, I feel like I've got this one chance to blurt this stuff out. If I knew we were going to be seeing each other... JOHN

I don't like to plan. MAN

I know. It makes me nuts. Are we seeing each other? Are we dating? What are we doing here? JOHN

Yes. Tonight we're seeing each other. I'm seeing you, you're seeing me. Tonight. MAN

But you don't understand, I want to... JOHN

No, I do understand. But I want to go slow. MAN



JOHN  
Okay. Slow. I don't know if I can go any slower.  
(A pause)  
Can we have dinner next week?

MAN  
I don't know what next week's gonna be like.

JOHN  
A movie?

MAN  
Come on, cut it out. I can't plan. I don't like to.

JOHN  
I do.

MAN  
Well...

JOHN  
I'm not worth planning for?

MAN  
Don't start that.

JOHN  
This night started really well, didn't it? We always go off track somehow. And I keep wanting to make it your fault. Your fault, my fault, what's it matter? Same old shit, it's just a chemical imbalance. I come to see you with this list of where I want to go, where I want to be, and you won't have any of it. Which is fine. It's fine. But I hear the clock ticking and I see a chance to connect with you, and I want it to work out. But it just won't...

MAN  
I think I love you.

(A pause)

JOHN  
I feel the same for you.

MAN  
Oh, honey, I was kidding.

(A very long pause)

JOHN  
Could we get the check, please?

BLACKOUT

Scene 8

(PALM COURT. Music: violins and piano. MAN and JOHN at table)

MAN  
You're dressed awfully casually.

JOHN  
Well, I thought you meant we were going to meet at the Plaza. I didn't think we were actually going to eat here.  
(A pause. MAN looks at him, then back at his menu)  
I'd really be a little more comfortable somewhere else.

MAN  
Well, I made a reservation here and we've been seated, so it's too late.

(A pause. JOHN looks at him)

JOHN  
We haven't ordered or anything.

(WOMAN comes to the table)

MAN  
Do you want a drink?

JOHN  
Coke.

MAN  
You don't drink?

JOHN  
Yes. I'll drink a Coke.

MAN  
Gin and tonic, please. Tanqueray.

JOHN  
You do drink, I see.

(WOMAN leaves. Silence. SHE returns with the drinks)

MAN  
I'll have the Salade Nicoise. Please hold the anchovies.

JOHN  
A club sandwich.  
(SHE exits. Silence)  
Did you see the movie next door?

MAN  
No.

(Silence. WOMAN returns with food and exits. THEY eat. WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN  
Is everything all right here?

MAN  
Fine.

JOHN  
(Overlapping:) Yes, thank you.

(SHE exits. Silence. SHE re-enters)

WOMAN  
May I take this?

JOHN  
Yes, thank you.

(SHE clears the table and exits.  
Silence. JOHN lights a cigarette)

MAN  
We're in non-smoking.

JOHN  
Sorry.

HE puts the cigarette in his water glass. WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN  
Will there be anything else?

MAN  
No, thank you, that's...

JOHN  
Actually, I'd like some coffee.

WOMAN  
Certainly. Would either of you like to see the dessert cart?

JOHN  
Not me, thank you.

MAN  
I'm fine.

(SHE exits. Silence. SHE returns with coffee)

JOHN  
Thank you.

(SHE exits)

LONELY TOO LONG 8-48

MAN  
Miss? She didn't hear me.  
(JOHN nods. Silence)  
Do you live near here?

JOHN  
No.

(Silence. WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN  
Would you like more coffee?

JOHN  
No, I think we can get a check, when you get a chance. Did you want anything else?

MAN  
No. Did you?

JOHN  
Just the check.

(SHE exits. Silence. SHE returns with the check)

WOMAN  
Thank you, gentlemen.

(SHE exits. JOHN looks at check, takes out wallet, puts down money. MAN takes out his wallet, puts down money. JOHN counts money, looks at bill. Counts money again. Looks at MAN. Takes out his wallet. Stops)

JOHN  
Wait a minute. Your salad was five dollars more than mine, plus you had a drink. You owe another ten dollars.

MAN  
Do I? I thought we'd just split it.

(HE puts down more money. WOMAN re-enters)

WOMAN  
Thank you again, gentlemen. Have a good afternoon.

(SHE exits)

MAN  
I've had a very nice time. I'll call you again next week.

JOHN  
No, I'll call you.

BLACKOUT

Scene 9

(SMITH & WOLLENSKY GRILL. JOHN, back at the noisy yuppie restaurant, alone. HE looks around. The MAN comes to the table. HE's a different waiter, with an accent)

MAN

Can I get you something to drink? While you're waiting?

JOHN

Oh. Um... sure. Just a Coke, please.

MAN

Sure thing.

(HE starts to exit)

JOHN

Excuse me. I was looking for... Is Joey working tonight? Joey, the waiter?

MAN

Oh, Joey's not here anymore.

JOHN

Oh.

(The MAN exits. JOHN deflates. A pause. MAN re-enters with drink)

Do you know where he's working? Joey?

MAN

No idea. Are you waiting for someone, or are you alone?

JOHN

No. I'm alone.

MAN

Do you know what you'd like, or shall I come back?

JOHN

No, I'll order.

(A pause)

I'll have a green salad.

MAN

For dressings we have French, Creamy Italian...

JOHN

(Overlapping:) Roquefort.

BLACKOUT

POSSIBLE INTERMISSION

Scene 10

(MANATUS, a restaurant. JOHN at table. MAN comes over, sits down)

Sorry I'm late. MAN

No, it's my fault by now. I should know you always come ten minutes late. JOHN

Again, I'm sorry. MAN

I ordered you a coffee. JOHN

Thanks. MAN

Valerie says hi. JOHN

Oh, yeah? How's she doing? MAN

Okay, I guess. JOHN

(JOHN signals to WOMAN, who's sitting smoking a cigarette. SHE comes to the table)

Yeah. WOMAN

Go ahead. MAN

No, you go. JOHN

I need a minute. MAN

Okay. I'll have a cheeseburger. JOHN

How you like? WOMAN

Medium rare. JOHN

Deluxe? WOMAN

No, thanks. JOHN

Drink? WOMAN

Yeah, I had asked you for a Coke. JOHN

You? WOMAN

I'll, um... Could I get... MAN

An omelette. JOHN

(Overlapping:) An omelette, uh, western omelette? MAN

Drink? WOMAN

Coffee. MAN

(WOMAN exits)

Yeah, I ordered you a coffee. JOHN

You think you know me so well. MAN

I do. JOHN

Yeah, you do. MAN

(A pause)

What's new? JOHN

Not much. (A pause)  
How's work? MAN

The same. JOHN  
Hmmm... well, 'bye now. (A pause)

How's Kevin? MAN

LONELY TOO LONG 10-52

JOHN

He's fine. He's always fine.

(A pause)

Why is it that when we were living together we always had something to talk about and now it's like we're in some Pinter play?

(A pause)

MAN

(British accent:) You think?

JOHN

This is pathetic. Tell me what's going on with you. Are you seeing anyone?

MAN

No, I'm not getting into that, because then you're gonna expect me to ask you the same question and I don't want to know who you're seeing.

(A pause)

This place is nice.

JOHN

It is?

MAN

Nice atmosphere. Romantic.

JOHN

You take away the candles and the potted plants and it's the Tiffany Diner. Same Greek coffee shop menu, but because the cover has two buffed boys feeding each other strawberries, it's a fag bistro. Any restaurant with a cake carousel in the front isn't going to be making the Zagat Guide.

MAN

You sound bitter.

JOHN

Oh, yeah? Well, you sound depressed.

MAN

I guess I am.

JOHN

No kidding.

MAN

What can I say?

(A pause)



MAN

All the restaurants we used to go to are closed now, do you realize that? The other day I tried to go to... what was the name of that place on Amsterdam and Seventy-Something? The one that you liked with the '6)'s jukebox? It's now some yuppie beerhall.

JOHN

I know.

MAN

The bar where we met is gone now, too. It's a Thai restaurant. I'd love to tell those Jerseyites eating there what went on in that backroom.

JOHN

Those were the days.

MAN

I never thought that place would close. It was an institution.

JOHN

You think this is somehow significant?

MAN

Never mind.

JOHN

It seems like you're mourning something that doesn't deserve it. It was a dumpy bar. Where men probably made other men sick. Everything's different now.

MAN

Stop it. You're making me upset.

JOHN

But it's nothing to be upset about. It didn't mean anything.

MAN

Don't say that.

(A pause)

JOHN

You didn't get your coffee yet.

(HE looks for the WOMAN)

JOHN

Excuse me.

(HE waves)

Excuse me!

(The WOMAN enters, but stays far enough away so that JOHN has to shout)

He wanted coffee!

Yah? WOMAN

Yes, he wanted some coffee. JOHN

Yah. WOMAN

(SHE exits)

What are you so angry about? MAN

What are you so depressed about? JOHN

Have we already reached the point where we should just ask for the check and end the evening? MAN

Sorry. Forget it. JOHN  
(The WOMAN enters with a cup of coffee)  
And I wanted a Coke.

Yah. WOMAN  
(SHE exits. A pause. MAN pours milk into his coffee)

Don't drink that, look, the milk is sour. JOHN

No, it's fine. MAN

No, don't. You'll get sick. Miss? JOHN  
(WOMAN re-enters with Coke)  
Thanks, and excuse me, but this milk is sour. Could you bring a fresh coffee and some recent milk?

(Exasperated:) Yah, yah, yah. WOMAN

(SHE exits. A pause)

Thanks for taking care of me. MAN

You woulda just downed that coffee and not said anything. JOHN

(MAN shrugs. A pause)

How's the cat? MAN

Fine. Fat. JOHN

Does he miss me? MAN

(JOHN shrugs)

Call him and ask. JOHN

You remembering to feed him? MAN

He's a house. JOHN

And change his water? You were always forgetting to change his water. MAN

Yes, I'm remembering, I'm remembering! Let's get off this. JOHN  
(A pause)

Shit. How did we get to be this old?

You're not old. I'm old. MAN

I'm so old they play the songs from my high school graduation on the all-oldies station. JOHN

I was talking to someone the other day who had never heard of Kip Noll. MAN

Please. Stop. JOHN  
(A pause)

Kevin and I had a very depressing talk about oldies the other night.

Oh? Kevin? MAN

Yeah. We had dinner. JOHN

Oh? Dinner? Dinner with Kevin? MAN

Please. He's my oldest friend. JOHN

No, I'm serious. Why don't you date Kevin? MAN

LONELY TOO LONG 10-56

JOHN  
Yeah, why don't you date Ernie?

MAN  
I tried.

JOHN  
Get outta here.

MAN  
No, when we broke up, he was the first person I thought of.  
But it wasn't meant to be... that way. It didn't work.

JOHN  
Well, it's the same thing with Kevin. It wouldn't work.

MAN  
Have you thought about the two of us... again?

JOHN  
No. Well, yes. But definitely no.

MAN  
I was counting on you being the one to be there in my old  
age. You know, scraping the corn off the cob for me.

JOHN  
Don't, I'm getting nauseous. Isn't it better this way?

MAN  
What way? You just said we have nothing to say to each  
other.

JOHN  
Did I say that?

MAN  
Uh-huh.

JOHN  
Well, I said it and I meant it.

(THEY laugh)

MAN  
Let's get the check and go to your apartment. Lemme see the  
cat.

JOHN  
I don't think that's a good idea.

MAN  
For old times' sake.

JOHN

It's a bad idea.

(A pause)

Listen. I haven't had sex in two years. No offense, but I'm not going to break my losing streak with my ex-lover.

MAN

You do what you have to do. When it's over, you know where I'll be.

(A pause)

JOHN

Don't wait up.

BLACKOUT

Scene 11

(STARDUST DINER. Loud '50s rock and roll. JOHN and MAN at table)

MAN  
Isn't it cute in here?

JOHN  
I'm sorry?

MAN  
It's really fun in here, isn't it?

JOHN  
I'm really having trouble hearing you.

MAN  
I said, this place is cute, huh?

JOHN  
Yeah, sure is.

MAN  
I come here a lot.

JOHN  
Uh-huh.  
(A pause)  
I like the jukebox.

MAN  
Yeah!

JOHN  
Got a quarter?

MAN  
Oh, it doesn't work. But it's cool, huh?

JOHN  
Yeah. Do you know what you're getting? How do you know Val?

MAN  
Who?

JOHN  
Valerie. Aren't you friends with Valerie?

MAN  
I don't know who that is.

JOHN  
Oh, I... hmmm...  
(A pause)  
Oh, Linda! You're Linda's friend.

Uh-huh. MAN

I'm sorry. JOHN

Look, you're all red! That's cute. MAN

Sorry. JOHN

I've known Linda... oh, forever. She just said you were on the prowl, so I thought, why not? MAN

On the prowl? JOHN

Am I being vulgar? 'Scuse me. MAN

Big menu. JOHN

(The WOMAN, a sullen drag queen, comes to the table)

You ready? WOMAN

Hey, darlin'. Love the earrings. Isn't Flossie on tonight? MAN

Nope. WOMAN

What, she on the rag? MAN

She musta known you was comin'. WOMAN

Oooh. Ouch. Good one. MAN

I'll come back when you're ready. WOMAN

No, no, wait. Can I get a "Big Cuppa Joe"? You're new, aren't ya? You got a little five o'clock shadow peekin' through. MAN

Don't bust my chops. WOMAN

LONELY TOO LONG 11-60

MAN

What's your name?

(WOMAN points to name-tag)

Whatzit say? Come closer, darlin'.

WOMAN

You may have a boundary problem, but I don't.

MAN

I can't read it. Skunk?

WOMAN

Spunk.

MAN

Huh?

WOMAN

That's "punk" with an "S" in front. (To JOHN:) And for the chatterbox?

JOHN

Oh, I'll just have a Coke.

MAN

No, you have to order what it says on the menu.

JOHN

(Smiling gamely:) I'll have a "I'm a You're a Imogene Coca-Cola."

MAN

If you say that five times fast, you get free refills.

JOHN

(To WOMAN:) If I want a refill, I'll pay for it. Thanks.

MAN

Thanks, Spunk.

(WOMAN exits)

JOHN

I think that's the first time I've ever humiliated myself ordering a drink. Not since the days of "Jack In The Box."

MAN

Huh? What's that?

JOHN

What's what?

MAN

You said you got a jack-in-the-box?

JOHN

No, Jack in The Box was a restaurant.



Yeah?  
MAN

JOHN  
It was like a fast food place, and you, like, had to order by talking to a jack-in-the-box. It was like a drive-thru, and you gave your order into this big puppet.

Oh. Uh-huh.  
MAN

That was their gimmick.  
JOHN

Oh, like "Have It Your Way"?  
MAN

JOHN  
Well, no, that's a slogan, really. More like... oh, I don't know. Well, like this. '5)'s diner food and drag queen waitresses. Food with stupid, pop culture names.

MAN  
Uh-huh. You've got a really nice body. Do you work out a lot?

JOHN  
What? Well, not an inordinate amount, no. I mean, thanks. Thank you.

Really. Nice body.  
MAN

Thank you.  
JOHN  
(A pause)  
What're you getting? Do you know? What's good?

What do you feel like?  
MAN

JOHN  
I really don't know. What's good?

MAN  
You gotta tell me what you're in the mood for.

(A pause)

JOHN  
I'm stumped.

MAN  
Then I can't help you. I love this song. What kind of music do you like?

JOHN  
Oh... music... hmmm...

LONELY TOO LONG 11-62

MAN

It's funny. I only seem to like stuff that's old.

JOHN

Uh-huh. How old are you?

MAN

Twenty-three. You're like thirty?

JOHN

Six. Thirty-six.

MAN

So what kind of stuff do you like?

JOHN

I don't know. Whatever happens to be on the radio.

MAN

You seem kinda tense.

JOHN

Do I? Yeah, I am, I guess. I don't know. Bad day, I guess. Sorry.

MAN

That's okay. You're entitled. I have 'em, too. Today was actually a good one. On my way to work, the subway came just as I hit the platform. And I won twenty-five bucks on a Pick-Six. Usually, I never have any luck. Are you lucky?

JOHN

Lucky? No. I don't think so.

MAN

Yeah, some are and some aren't. I'm getting hungry. Hey, Spunk!

(WOMAN comes to the table)

We're hungry.

WOMAN

So's Ethiopia, but they're being patient.

MAN

Huh?

WOMAN

Isn't it past his bedtime? Listen, how's about you give me a chance to get your drinks and then I'll just run right back here. Or, you can take my dupe pad and put the order in yourself.

(SHE starts to exit)

Or, you can take my dupe pad and stick it up your ass...

(SHE's gone)

MAN  
Spunk's having a bad day, too.  
(A pause)  
You wanna go somewhere else?

JOHN  
No, no. This is fine. Do you?

MAN  
It just seems like you're having a really lousy time.

JOHN  
No, no.

MAN  
Yeah, sure.

JOHN  
No, it's... I don't know. Dating is hard. Blind dates.

MAN  
What's hard?

JOHN  
Meeting someone, making conversation, trying to... I don't know.

MAN  
It's just dinner. It's not a job interview. Better than sitting at home watching re-runs.

JOHN  
I guess.

MAN  
I just try to make the best... well, not that this is a bad thing, but... you know, I can tell I'm not your dream man.

JOHN  
What? Oh...

MAN  
You're not mine, okay? But you're cute. And you've got a nice body, like I said. And I think somewhere in there is a sense of humor.

JOHN  
(Mock offense:) Well!

MAN  
So, you make the best of it. I guess we won't be seeing each other again, but that doesn't mean tonight has to be, like, torment.

JOHN  
No, I'm trying...

LONELY TOO LONG 11-64

MAN

You had checked out about thirty seconds after we sat down. Can't you just have some fun?

JOHN

Fun?

MAN

Sorry, never mind. I'm turning into your therapist. I lose more friends that way. How many dates have you had this month?

JOHN

Oh... I don't know... A lot.

MAN

You're my tenth. And it's only, what, the fourteenth? Six of them were blind. Not literally.

(HE laughs)

Well, I thought that was funny. No, huh? You're not gonna give me a fucking inch, are you?

JOHN

What? No, I...

MAN

Skip it. Anyway, of those ten, I saw one of them a second time. So that means nine of them were... well, not to my liking. Well, not true. One was to my liking. But I guess I wasn't his "Big Cuppa Joe." But that doesn't mean I had nine lousy dates. Jesus, you just try to make the best of it.

JOHN

I don't know what you mean.

(A pause)

I...

MAN

Just be yourself a little bit. I feel like you're sitting up on this cloud, looking down at me. Making notes in your little notebook. Try coming down to my level for two seconds.

JOHN

You're starting to offend me.

MAN

Oh, really? Is that a genuine feeling coming on?

JOHN

I don't even know you.

MAN

And you're not even trying to, so what's the point of this? If you would grant me permission to see just a little part of who you really are...

JOHN

Because who I really am is so angry if I let just a little bit of it out, I'm afraid I'll blow you out of the room onto Fifty-Fifth Street.

MAN

What are you angry about? I haven't done anything except show up.

JOHN

Well, no, I'm not angry at you.

MAN

I hope not.

(A pause)

So? What are you angry about?

JOHN

You're twenty-three. You won't get it.

MAN

Spunk! Eighty-six the drinks!

BLACKOUT

Scene 12

(FOOD BAR. JOHN and MAN at table. A pause)

MAN  
Who are you looking at?

JOHN  
What? No one.

MAN  
Your head keeps spinning around every time some guy passes. I feel like I'm having dinner with Linda Blair.

JOHN  
Actually, I was looking for the waiter.

MAN  
We only just got here.

JOHN  
Really?

MAN  
What does that mean?

JOHN  
I...

MAN  
The service here is notoriously slow. I used to come here a lot with Jimmy, before the son of a bitch moved out. In fact, the last time I was here was with him. That was also the last time I saw him, as a matter of fact.

JOHN  
Well, you came back; you must like it.

MAN  
Like what? Punishing myself, is that what you're saying?

JOHN  
No.

MAN  
What are you saying?

JOHN  
I'm saying...

MAN  
I mean, the fact that of all the restaurants in New York, we wind up here... I think that really says something.

JOHN  
You picked it.

MAN

I know I picked it. Jesus. Don't condescend. I really hate that.

JOHN

What do you think it means?

MAN

What are you, my goddamned shrink? My mother? Do you think I have "unresolved issues"?

JOHN

Well...

MAN

Like you don't. We all have unresolved issues, so don't start in on me. I'm trying to make this place neutral. I'm trying to make this place safe for myself again, okay? I thought by taking someone new here, having a good time, I... well, then I could start to resolve it, okay?!

JOHN

This is how you have a good time?

MAN

I'm sorry. You're right. I'm taking this out on you. It has nothing to do with you.

JOHN

Thank you.

MAN

So, you're gonna completely absolve yourself of all responsibility, just like that?

JOHN

This is our first date! Or, rather, has been our first date. It is also our last date. I don't really know what what's-his-name did or didn't do to you or for you and I don't really want to know. I do know that I'm not about to work through it with you over dinner. Look, buddy, I haven't had sex in two years.

MAN

Is that all this is to you, a possibility for getting your rocks off? Go get a magazine and a jar of Vaseline for chrissake and put me out of my misery.

JOHN

I haven't had a man touch my dick in over two years. Do you know how that makes someone feel? Do you?

MAN

Oh, for God's sake, there!

(HE slaps JOHN on the crotch)

There! Satisfied? Now can we get on with the evening?

JOHN

Why don't we get the check?

MAN

The check? We haven't ordered anything!

(A pause)

Go ahead. Leave. Pick up your stuff and scram.

JOHN

I should. Why shouldn't I. You've been nothing but hostile.

MAN

Who's stopping you? If you wanna make it look like this is all my fault that it didn't work out, go ahead, go. If that's what makes you happy. If you don't even want to look at the fact that you've been in a funk since the minute you sat down, that conversation from my end has been like pulling teeth, that you sit there so smug waiting for me to entertain you, waiting for me to be fascinating, to be passionate, to be exciting and romantic and to turn into your dream man while you sit there like last night's dishes, go ahead. Give me the responsibility for causing this date to be lousy.

JOHN

I'm going now.

MAN

Then go! At least take some action that might cause me to have a little respect for you. Something that might make me think you've got a brain or some feelings.

JOHN

Feelings? Feelings?

(Silence)

You're right. You're absolutely right. I'm numb. I can't do this anymore. I've spent so much time trying to be all things to all people, I've wound up a big fat zero. I'm so intent on trying to figure out who you want me to be, I'm paying no attention to who you are. What I want. What makes me happy. I'm shell-shocked.

(A pause)

MAN

Thank you. Thank you for that. Now I feel like I'm starting to get to know you. And I like what I see. Can we try to start this again?

JOHN

No. Because the one thing I truly feel out of this wasted evening is that you're a real asshole.

BLACKOUT



Scene 13

(BIG CUP. JOHN and MAN at table, with coffee. A long pause)

MAN  
How long has this place been here?

JOHN  
Oh, a few weeks. Two months. Maybe.

MAN  
It seems this is the place to be on Saturday night.

JOHN  
This week's queer watering hole.

(A long pause)

MAN  
You like the movie?

JOHN  
Oh. Um... yeah, I guess. I liked her.

MAN  
She's wonderful. I loved the scene with the... uh...

JOHN  
The nail polish.

MAN  
Exactly! The nail polish! That was fabulous!

JOHN  
Best thing in the movie.

MAN  
(Quoting:) "But he took it!"  
(HE laughs. JOHN smiles. A pause)  
Did you cry at the end?

JOHN  
Not exactly.

MAN  
Oh, I thought it was sweet.

JOHN  
So's maple syrup.

MAN  
Huh?

JOHN  
It was so sappy. Manipulative.

LONELY TOO LONG 13-70

MAN

You're not a romantic?

JOHN

Yes, I'm a romantic. I just thought that movie was corny, schmaltzy trash.

MAN

Oh. Well. I guess that shut me up.

JOHN

No, I... I wasn't really in the mood for...

(A pause)

MAN

What kind of movies do you like?

(JOHN shrugs)

JOHN

Good ones.

(A long pause)

I'm sorry. Maybe this wasn't such a good idea tonight.

MAN

You wanna call it a night?

JOHN

Um... I didn't mean...

MAN

That's okay. Say when.

(A long pause)

JOHN

What?

MAN

I was just going to ask you the same question.

JOHN

Huh?

MAN

You drifted away. Where'd you go?

JOHN

Oh, those men. They were sitting behind us in the movie.

MAN

Oh, yeah.

JOHN

They go to my gym.

Uh-huh. MAN

I saw them last weekend at a restaurant. Holding hands. JOHN

It's a small world. MAN

I don't know. Sometimes I feel like the unicorn standing on the gangplank to Noah's Ark, waiting for a match. JOHN

Hmmm. Well, you've totally disarmed me. I have no idea what to say in response. MAN

Nothing, really. I'm just rambling. I do that. JOHN

(The MAN stands)

I'll be back. MAN

Sorry. JOHN

What for? MAN

It seemed the right thing to say. Never mind. JOHN

Can I get you something? MAN

(JOHN shakes his head. The MAN exits.  
A pause. The WOMAN enters with coffee.  
SHE sits at the MAN's place at the table)

Oh, I'm sorry. Someone's sitting there. JOHN

Oh, I'm sorry. Geez, it's crowded tonight. Standing room only, huh? WOMAN

Yeah, I guess. JOHN

I've been looking for a seat for, like, twenty minutes. My cup was burning a hole in my fingers!  
(SHE laughs)  
It's just nice to be able to put it down for a second. WOMAN

JOHN  
My... um... my friend's just in the bathroom.

WOMAN  
Oh, sure. I think there's a table opening up up front.  
What'd you get? Is that coffee?

JOHN  
Oh. Uh-huh.

WOMAN  
Is it one of those flavored coffees?

JOHN  
No, just a plain old coffee.

WOMAN  
Yeah, me too. But the flavored coffees look interesting.  
Is it strong, like European coffee?

JOHN  
Yeah, it's pretty strong.

WOMAN  
Oh, it's good! It is like European coffee. I like it  
strong.

JOHN  
Uh-huh.

(A pause)

WOMAN  
What are the desserts like here, have you tried them?

JOHN  
No, I haven't.

WOMAN  
Oh. Uh-huh.

(A pause)

JOHN  
They look good, though.

WOMAN  
Yeah, I wonder if they're very sweet. I don't like anything  
too sweet. They have an apple-cinnamon something or other.  
I bet that wouldn't be too sweet.

JOHN  
No. Shouldn't be.

(SHE laughs. HE laughs. A pause)

WOMAN  
Are all the men in here gay, do you think?

JOHN

Hmmm. I think so. I don't know, though.

WOMAN

It's nice in here. It's a little... loud. I like that, though. I'm not complaining.

JOHN

There's a couple over there that looks straight.

(A pause)

WOMAN

I forgot my book. I'm so mad at myself. I set it out on the table right next to the door so I wouldn't forget it and then I went and forgot it. It's a good book, too. They should have some magazines, or... something.

(MAN return to the table. Stands at his chair)

MAN

I...

JOHN

Oh, this is my friend.

WOMAN

Oh, hi. Welcome back. Sorry. I'll see if there's a table up front.

(SHE takes her coffee and exits. MAN sits)

JOHN

She was... she needed a place to sit.

(A long pause)

MAN

God, this song takes me back. Isn't it amazing how music can do that? Just suck you out of the present and plop you back in a Quiana shirt at a college dorm party?

JOHN

(Agreeing) Huh.

MAN

I always feel about ten years retarded when it comes to music, anyway. I always hate what's popular until at least a decade goes by. Then I get all misty and nostalgic and think it's fabulous. Like, right now I have a thing for Grace Jones and Air Supply.

JOHN

Jesus. Try fifteen years retarded.

MAN

Yeah. Exactly. Fuck you. Disco is back, actually. Kind of disconcerting. When I was in high school, there was a Fifties revival. You know, greaser music. It seemed so... distant, so antique. Like Model Ts and hoop skirts. And now all the kids in high school are listening to Donna Summer and Sylvester and... laughing, I guess. Do they look at it as some kind of ancient artifact, I wonder? What do you think?

JOHN

I...

(A long pause)

MAN

Hmmmm. I guess it serves the same purpose. Feels like a time when everything was innocent, fun. When Bill Haley and Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry were singing, there'd been no Kennedy assassination, no Vietnam. And now, they're listening to The Village People and Gloria Gaynor who had no idea then of what they were going to have to survive...

(JOHN laughs)

JOHN

I see those Time/Life record commercials on T.V. "Remember the '80s?" God. That's scary.

MAN

And the funny thing is, it has the same effect on me, and I was there! I hear "Funkytown" or "I Love the Nightlife" and all I think is, oh, wasn't that a time, what fun we had, can't bring those days back again. I forget all the hours I sat forlornly at the bar, cruising men who had no interest in me, the lousy jobs I had, the roach-infested apartment with the noisy neighbors. I forget the budding alcoholic I was, the nights I drank myself to sleep. All I see is half-stripped, sweaty men on the floor at Crisco Disco or Xenon, the mirror-ball spinning 'round.

JOHN

(A little overcome:) Jesus.

MAN

So does this mean in fifteen years I'm gonna hear Ace of Base and get all misty, thinking about this coffeehouse, long after the wrecking ball has turned this into a while-u-wait HIV testing clinic?

(A long pause)

Sorry. You know what I hate? Sampling. Forget colorizing black and white movies. Sampling should be a capital offense. You think you're drifting back in time to an old Loleatta Holloway tune and suddenly there's Marky Mark barking away. You think it's Laura Nyro and it turns into Crystal Waters. It's like standing in a hot shower when someone flushes the toilet.

I'm sorry. JOHN

Huh? MAN

I've been a real jerk tonight. And I'm sorry. I just... I don't know. It's been a bad day. A bad week. I can't snap out of it. And I'm taking it out on you. I hope you won't hold it against me. Next time I won't be such a drip. JOHN

I'm sorry? MAN

You've been really sweet. I've had a really nice time tonight. I'll be in a better mood next time, I promise. JOHN

(Shaking his head:) I... um... Listen... MAN

BLACKOUT

Scene 14

(VAL'S APARTMENT. JOHN and WOMAN at table. JOHN writing)

JOHN

How's this? (Reading:) "Gay white male. Thirty-six years old. But looks younger. Five foot six. But looks taller. Brown hair."

(HE crosses it out)

"Brown/gray hair."

(HE crosses it out)

"Gray/brown hair." Ummm... let's see. (Writes:) HIV Negative, last time I looked. Cancer. Birth sign, I mean. Likes to kiss. A lot. Haven't had sex in two years. Wants to make up for lost time. Feel sorry for me? Good. Call me up and get to work.

WOMAN

That sounds a little desperate. You want some coffee?

JOHN

You mean I'm not? (Writes:)

WOMAN

Sorry it had to be here. My ex is back to being bi-coastal; emphasis on the... I couldn't get a babysitter.

JOHN

No, I prefer it, actually. I feel like I've spent every night this week in some uncomfortable restaurant. I've got a permanent rattan pattern on my ass.

WOMAN

When did you see Jack?

JOHN

Wednesday. Sorry, Tuesday night.

WOMAN

And?

JOHN

And what?

WOMAN

Did you like him?

JOHN

In a word? No. No, Val, I didn't like him.

WOMAN

Okay. Fine. Did you call Henry?

JOHN

Not yet.



Are you going to? WOMAN

Probably not. JOHN

He said he liked you. WOMAN

That's nice. JOHN

Okay. Fine. What about Eric? Have you seen him yet? WOMAN

I called, left a message. He returned my call, left a message. I returned his return, got his machine. The ball's in his court. JOHN

I'm running out of people, honey. WOMAN

Please, Val, you've gone above and beyond. I think I want to cool it for a while, anyway. JOHN

Okay. Fine. I met somebody at the office you might like. WOMAN

Please. JOHN

He's in the market. Can I give him your number? WOMAN

Really, I don't think so. If I have to sit through another dinner listening to two hours, three hours of someone's life story, I'll... JOHN

You'll what? WOMAN

Puke. Die. Explode. Shit. I'll shit and puke until I explode and die. JOHN

Yeah, and then ask to see the dessert menu. You see, here's your mistake: dinner. This can all be dealt with over coffee. Fifteen minutes, tops. Make a date for coffee next time. WOMAN

I'm retiring. JOHN

WOMAN

Besides, if Henry or Jack or Eric had turned you on, you'd have been begging for more. Ooooh, one more story about your dysfunctional parents! These tales of your high school gym class embarrassments are making me hot!

(A pause. JOHN tries to defend himself, gives up)

JOHN

Shut up.

WOMAN

Listen, honey, I don't care if you join a monastery, it just seems like you're unhappy.

JOHN

Yeah? What's your point? This way I can be unhappy with someone else in the room?

WOMAN

Try slipping on my mules for a moment. Do you know what it's like to start to feel something for someone, only to have him evaporate when he finds out there's two kids in the next room?

JOHN

But those kids are there for you, Val. They give you something to get up for. Something to come home to. Something that needs your existence in this world. I think sometimes that would be... I don't know... nice.

WOMAN

Nice? Jesus, get a cat.

JOHN

I act like I'm surprised. All the music I grew up with told me love sucked. They love you, they dump you, you pine your life away. You sit around waiting for the right one, who never shows up. The right one shows up and treats you like shit. All the songs. "Lonely Boy." "Mr. Lonely." "Mr. Blue." "I'm Blue." "Love is Blue."

WOMAN

But that's art, honey.

JOHN

"Love is Blue" is art?

WOMAN

It's about conflict. Ain't too many songs about people just sitting around, yakking and living. Don't base the failure of your love life on some Top 4) pop tune. Okay. Let's look at the possibilities. The office.

JOHN

I had an office affair. It sucked.

WOMAN

That gym you go to. Surely there must be somebody there.

JOHN

You'd think being in a place with a lot of men in varying stages of undress would make it somewhat easier, wouldn't you?

SEGUE

Scene 15

(WOMAN gets up from table, moves to the side. Scene transitions to VERTICAL CLUB. Disco music up)

I sit at the juice bar, sweating, dressed provocatively, or as provocative as I'm capable of getting, nursing my protein shake. And I sit.

(MAN enters. A bodybuilder. It takes awhile for them to make eye contact. Finally, THEY do)

Hi. JOHN

Hey, man. How ya doin'? MAN

I'm good. How 'bout you? JOHN

Good. Good. MAN  
(A pause. JOHN is a little in awe)  
Check ya later.

(HE exits)

Well, what did you just sit there for? WOMAN

He wasn't interested. JOHN

He was too. You dropped the ball. WOMAN

Next? JOHN  
(MAN enters, approaches the table.  
Looks at JOHN)

Hi, how're ya doin'?  
(MAN looks at him, looks down, looks around, exits)  
Wasn't that nice?

Some people have attitude. You don't need that. WOMAN

Not only that, his pecs were for shit. JOHN

This one, this one. WOMAN

(MAN re-enters)

JOHN  
I've had a crush on him since the day I joined. He's straight.

WOMAN  
In that outfit? How do you know?

JOHN  
I'm always looking at him. He rarely looks back.

WOMAN  
Maybe he thinks you're disgusting.

JOHN  
That's helpful, thanks.

WOMAN  
Maybe he's just a shy jerk like you.

JOHN  
He's too young.

WOMAN  
Oh, he is not. He's... at least eighteen.

JOHN  
He's probably taken.

WOMAN  
Won't know 'til you ask.

JOHN  
Hello, are you taken?

WOMAN  
He's looking at you. Say hi.

JOHN  
Hi.

MAN  
Hi, buddy.

JOHN  
How're you...? Haven't I seen...? I haven't seen...

(HE laughs)

WOMAN  
Smooth.

MAN  
Looks like you've been working hard.

Oh, yeah. (A pause)  
Stairmaster.  
(A pause)

That'll work up a sweat.  
(A pause)

Yeah.  
(A pause)

Well, have a good rest of your workout.

Say something, dope.

Haven't seen you in a while.

Oh, yeah. Been away. Vacation.

Nice tan.

Subtle. Ask to see his tan line.

Yeah, thanks.

Where'd you go?

Oh, Florida. Where else?

Come on, feel him out.

Where in Florida?

Key West.

Bingo.

JOHN

MAN

JOHN

MAN

WOMAN

JOHN

MAN

JOHN

WOMAN

MAN

JOHN

MAN

WOMAN

JOHN

MAN

WOMAN

Oh, I love Key West. JOHN

My first time. MAN

Where'd you stay? JOHN

Good, good. WOMAN

With some friends. MAN

They live there? JOHN

Yeah. Actually, the parents of a friend of mine. MAN

A close friend? WOMAN

Gimme a break. Did you... hmmm... Is the Copa still there? JOHN

The disco? MAN

Very good. WOMAN

Oh, sure. MAN

It's fun there. Did you go? JOHN

Oh, yeah. MAN

Move in for the kill. WOMAN

I kept getting cruised. But it made my girlfriend uneasy. MAN

(A long pause)

Oooops. WOMAN

That's a problem. JOHN

LONELY TOO LONG 15-84

WOMAN  
What kind of straight man goes to a gay disco?

JOHN  
Well, good seeing you.

MAN  
Yeah, you too.

WOMAN  
He gets into being cruised. He's in total denial.

JOHN  
Welcome back.

MAN  
Yeah, thanks.

WOMAN  
So what's he still standing here for? He wants you and can't deal with it.

JOHN  
Well, see you around.

MAN  
Take care.

(The MAN exits)

WOMAN  
You're well rid of him. He's nuts.  
(A pause)  
I wonder if it's a serious relationship.

JOHN  
We're here for me, Val. Cut it out.  
(MAN re-enters)  
Oh, no.

WOMAN  
What's the matter?

JOHN  
Time to focus on the ceiling tile. I wonder if those are plastic or fiberboard?

MAN  
Hey, there.

JOHN  
Hi.

MAN  
How are you? I haven't seen you in a couple of days.

JOHN  
Fine.



He's kinda cute. WOMAN

Oh, please. JOHN

He is. Nice eyes. WOMAN

Just wait. JOHN

I was here Tuesday. Were you here Tuesday? MAN

Nope. JOHN

They were having a problem with the showers. No hot water. And no soap. I said something. You pay all this money, you should get hot water and soap. Am I right or am I right? MAN

Uh-huh. JOHN

Oh, for Christ's sake, he's trying. WOMAN

Is that a protein shake? MAN

Uh-huh. JOHN

Jesus. Can you be ruder? WOMAN

They're ripping people off. Four-fifty for some protein powder and water. You can get a whole carton of the stuff for twenty bucks, which is also outrageous, but you can get at least twenty shakes out of it, so that's like a hundred percent mark-up they're giving you. You should say something. I bring mine from home. I've got a little Tupperware container and I just measure in the right amount and then I fill it up with water from one of the water fountains. MAN

(WOMAN and JOHN talk over the MAN)

I think I get your point. WOMAN

So, is this the best I can hope for? JOHN

MAN

And it's stronger than the watered-down stuff you get here. Have you seen the sauna today? It's disgusting.

WOMAN

Shoot him.

JOHN

Am I always going to be turned on by men who aren't interested? Or straight? And I sit here, waiting for jerks like this one to come on to me, and I could be anyone, I could be an inflatable love doll for all he cares about what I have to say...

MAN

There's mildew on the walls that looks like it's been there for weeks. There's this slime on the floor that if you're barefoot, you could slip and break your neck. I hope someone does slip - they'll have a lawsuit on their hands. I'm not going to say anything. That'll teach them.

WOMAN

God. Scream fire. Anything.

JOHN

So, this is my life now. And I don't know what to do about it.

WOMAN

Well, you're no porno star, but I know you can do better than this.

JOHN

Well, there's an answer. I can stay home with my ever-increasing collection of porno stars.

MAN

Of course, I would never go anywhere in this gym barefoot. You never know what you'll pick up. I always wear a pair of sandals in the shower or the steam room or the whirlpool or the sauna. One time I left them at home and I got this fungal infection all over the bottoms of my feet. It took me almost two months to get rid of it, plus a hundred dollar doctor visit, and the medication alone cost thirty-nine ninety-five for a half-ounce tube. Luckily, my insurance covered it, or they'd have had a lawsuit on their hands. Definitely.

WOMAN

Okay, you've made your point. (To MAN:) Okay, we're going back to my apartment now. Thank you.

SEGUE

Scene 15

(SHE pushes him offstage as  
Scene transitions back to VAL'S  
APARTMENT)

Okay, the gym is out. Bars?

JOHN

I don't drink.

WOMAN

So?

JOHN

If you go to a bar and don't drink, you sit there becoming  
more and more convinced that you should be drinking.

WOMAN

Personal ads.

JOHN

I thought that's why I came here tonight.

WOMAN

Oh, yeah. Well, let's get back to work on that. Where were  
we?

JOHN

I was saying that I hadn't had sex in two years. Actually,  
I think it's more.

WOMAN

You have to ask for what you want.  
(SHE picks up the pen and notepad)  
What do you want?

JOHN

Kip Noll.

WOMAN

Who?

JOHN

Never mind. I want a Kip Noll who's into Broadway musicals.  
Stephen Sondheim with a gym body and a huge cock. Tom  
Berenger with a passion for '70's disco music.

WOMAN

Now you were working on something here. Smart...

JOHN

But unassuming.

WOMAN

Gorgeous...

LONELY TOO LONG 15-88

But not pretty.	JOHN
Hot...	WOMAN
But I'm enough for you.	JOHN
Knows how to communicate...	WOMAN
But not self-indulgent.	JOHN
Knows how to listen...	WOMAN
But isn't judgmental.	JOHN
Confident...	WOMAN
But not arrogant.	JOHN
Contemplative...	WOMAN
But not depressed.	JOHN
Joyous...	WOMAN
But not nauseating.	JOHN
Up...	WOMAN
But not hyper.	JOHN
Sensitive...	WOMAN
But not whiny.	JOHN
Takes charge...	WOMAN
But not a bully.	JOHN

Opinionated... WOMAN

Not stubborn. JOHN

What else? WOMAN

I don't know. Taller than me. Older than me. Richer than me. JOHN

You're asking for a lot, aren't you? WOMAN

Hell, who knows? Who cares? JOHN  
(HE grabs the pen and paper away from her and writes, furiously:)  
Wears pants. Is breathing. Has a penis.  
(A pause)  
I should have a man friend.

Well, that's what we're working on. WOMAN

No, I should be talking about this with a man. Like Kevin. JOHN

Gee, thanks. WOMAN

No, Val, I mean, why can I only talk about this with you? With a woman? JOHN

What would Kevin say that I haven't said? WOMAN

Um... I don't know. Get over yourself? JOHN

Get over yourself. WOMAN

Thanks. Feel better now. JOHN

What about your friend Kevin? WOMAN

He doesn't know anyone. I've asked him. JOHN

No, I mean what about dating him? He's beautiful. WOMAN

LONELY TOO LONG 15-90

No. JOHN

He's available, right? WOMAN

Well, he's not seeing anyone, but no. JOHN

You obviously get along. WOMAN

Yeah, but no. JOHN

He cares about you. WOMAN

It's just... no. JOHN

The perfect man, right under your nose, and you don't even see it. WOMAN

SEQUE

Scene 16

(SHE brings the MAN on from offstage, sits him down as the scene transitions to CAFE ELSIE)

WOMAN

Listen, I'm sorry to shoo you out, but the world continues to spin on its axis while you search for a date and I have to bathe the kids and put them to bed, so...

(SHE exits)

JOHN

Kevin.

MAN

Hey.

(THEY kiss)  
Am I late? Sorry.

JOHN

Oh, please.

(The WOMAN re-enters as waitress, with menus and glass for JOHN)

WOMAN

Oh, there you are. So, he finally decided to show up. He was so worried.

MAN

Were you?

JOHN

No.

WOMAN

Oh, sure, deny that you were crying on my shoulder not five minutes ago. "He doesn't love me, he's not coming..." So what are you drinking, Johnny-Come-Lately?

MAN

Hmmm.. what have you got there?

JOHN

Cranberry juice.

MAN

That sounds good.

(HE sits)

WOMAN

And I won't keep you waiting half as long.

JOHN

Hey, Bunny, can we get some music?

WOMAN

Sure.

(SHE exits, singing)  
MAKE YOUR OWN KIND OF MUSIC  
SING YOUR OWN SPECIAL SONG...

(SHE's gone. A pause)

JOHN

God. It's so quiet in here.

MAN

It's nice.

JOHN

It makes it... I feel like I should whisper.

(A pause)

So... perhaps you're wondering why I asked you here tonight.

MAN

Other than dinner?

JOHN

Well, no, we'll have dinner.

MAN

This sounds ominous. Are you okay?

JOHN

Yeah, I'm fine. I just wanted... to... ask you out. For a date.

MAN

Yeah.

(A pause)

And?

JOHN

No, I mean a date. A date date.

MAN

Oh, a date date.

JOHN

Yeah.

MAN

Why now?

JOHN

Well, I don't know. I never thought I was your type.

MAN

I'm not Charleton Heston. I'm not even Kip Noll.

JOHN

No, no...



MAN

We've known each other a long time...

JOHN

Well, when I first met you, you were still in the closet. Then, you were out and I was with someone. And then you were with someone. And ten years went by. It just never seemed like a possibility. But I sit around thinking about what it is that I want, what I need, what I like, what turns me on, what makes me feel good, who I love, who I like to spend time with, all that stuff. And it's all you.

(A long pause)

You're like an old song to me. A favorite song. You listen to it a thousand times, you take it for granted. But then you sit down and really listen to it. You remember why you fell in love with it in the first place. You feel the rhythm of it deep inside you, like your own heartbeat. And sometimes you hear things you never heard before. Harmonies, dissonances. But you recognize what it stirs inside you. And you're in love all over again.

(A pause)

You're too quiet. Are you about to vomit?

MAN

Should we go to my place? See if we can do this without laughing?

JOHN

Why did this take us so long?

MAN

I've been sending my signal out into the wilderness. You never tuned in to my station.

(JOHN stands. The MAN stands)

JOHN

Wait. What if it doesn't work? What if, we not only don't work as lovers, but we lose our friendship, too? What then?

MAN

Well? Is it worth it?

JOHN

What do you think?

(HE takes JOHN's head in his hands and kisses him passionately on the mouth.  
The WOMAN comes to the table)

WOMAN

Guess he was worth waiting for, huh, cookie?

(SHE drops the check)

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY.