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LYTTON, JOHN H. A Production of Mart Crowley's The Boys in the Band.
(1973)
Directed by: Herman Middleton. Pp. 176.

The purpose of this thesis is to study the background surrounding the playwright and the play itself in preparation for a production of the play, and then present a critical evaluation of the production.

The first chapter contains: (1) the external influences upon the production, that is, the biographical information on the playwright, and information on the literary climate in the United States at the time the play was written; (2) the internal influences, that is, an analysis of the style of the production, a plot analysis, a character analysis, and a set description and analysis; and (3) the director's justification of his choice of script and of his interpretation of that script.

The second chapter is the director's prompt book of The Boys in the Band, performed in Aycock Auditorium of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, at eight-thirty the evenings of March 2 through 4, 1972. Included are notations relevant to movement, picturization, and stage business. Floor plans and pictures provide additional material to aid in the understanding of the director's approach to the production.

The final chapter consists of a critical evaluation of the production. This chapter contains four sections: (1) Goal-Accomplishment Relationships; (2) Actor-Director Relationships; (3) Audience Response; and (4) Personal Observations.

A PRODUCTION OF MART CROWLEY'S

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THE BOYS IN THE BAND

by

John H. Lytton

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE PLAY	1
External Influences	2
Internal Influences	4
Character Analysis	16
Michael	17
Donald	17
Emory	17
Hank	18
Larry	18
Bernard	19
Cowboy	19
Alan McCarthy	19
Harold	20
Set Description and Analysis	21
Director's Justification	22
II. PROMPT BOOK	24
Act I	24
Act II	85
III. CRITICAL EVALUATION	165
Goal-Accomolishment Relationships	165
Actor-Director Relationships	167
Audience Reaction	171
Personal Observations	174
BIBLIOGRAPHY	175

448240

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1.	25
2.	26
3.	63
4.	109
5.	117
6.	125
7.	157
8.	161

CHAPTER I

THE PLAYWRIGHT AND THE PLAY

In this age of social awareness one finds many self-styled critics and experts in all areas of life. Homosexuality is no exception from the norm in this regard. To discuss the history of homosexuality has been as useless as to point out famous homosexual persons since homosexuality has been acknowledged for many centuries. To discuss the prejudices, effects and fears of homosexuality does have validity in regard to the thesis production of Mart Crowley's The Boys in the Band. The intrinsic values of the play lie in the area of social awareness.

To produce The Boys in the Band as a vehicle simply to educate people about the life of the homosexual would be a mistake. To produce The Boys in the Band in order to create an atmosphere engendering empathy would be a triumph. The power of the play lies not in a diatribe proselytizing persons toward homosexuality. The play conveys a universality. The feelings and emotions and prejudices of homosexuality expressed in the play are not so different from those experienced by heterosexual people in everyday life. The playwright treats the theme of his play with the same frankness one would use to treat a heterosexual theme. As such frank treatment is used, there is not a great disparity in the characters of the play and a heterosexual drama, that is one dealing with a heterosexual theme, such as Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe. The only difference is that the characters of The Boys

in the Band are homosexuals. The first section of this thesis deals with the external influences in the script: Crowley's background and the social conditions surrounding homosexuality in the United States today. The second section deals with an internal analysis of the style, the script, the theme, the plot, the characters and their relationships, and the functions and mood of the setting. The third section is the director's justification, the approach to the play, and the changes the director uses within the acting edition of the script.

External Influences

At the age of thirty-two, Mart Crowley considered himself a total flop. He had written many screenplays and had lost many options and contracts when suddenly his play, The Boys in the Band, was selected for a production at Richard Barr's Playwright's Unit Workshop. That production was a success, and as a result, Crowley's play was moved to Theatre Four, an off-Broadway playhouse, for a long run which awarded Crowley with success and prominence as a young playwright.

Success? Yes, in that it's the first thing that has happened to me that isn't depressing. I was panic stricken about becoming a career flop at thirty-two. But when you've reached that age and never had a successful relationship with anyone, it's not just panic-making, you feel simply, like you're 132.¹

Born in Vicksburg, Mississippi, Crowley escaped the piety of everyday life in a Southern town through motion pictures. At the age of seventeen, he ran away from home and headed for Hollywood. Later, he attended Catholic University in Washington, D. C., then the University of California at Los Angeles, only to return to Catholic University. His

¹Mel Gussow, "New Playwrights," Newsweek, May 20, 1968, p. 115.

interest was in the field of theatre and he tried to be a scenic designer. He wrote ". . . abortively scripts for television shows and movies, stealing a thousand old plots from a thousand old movies and pasting them together."² He worked as Natalie Woods' secretary in order to sustain himself. He became a friend of many movie personalities including actress Diana Lynn. Miss Lynn lent him her Beverly Hills house in the summer of 1967. The result of the privacy he enjoyed there was the script for The Boys in the Band. When Crowley permitted his script to be read, the reactions of the readers were not encouraging. His agent's reaction was: "Maybe in five years, but not today. If I sent this script around they would think I was out of my mind."³ Through Crowley's persistence, the play was finally given a production.

Crowley was influenced in writing his play by the climate in America of the day. In 1967 when he wrote the script, standards on subject matter were becoming more lax and less critical of such off-beat ideas as sexual deviations as subjects for discussion and literature. Critic and author Wilfrid Sheed said: "The Boys in the Band makes the most of the recent thaw and calls a fag a fag"⁴

Basing the characters of his play upon people he knew, Crowley supported his comment: "Any fool knows you have to live through something to write about it."⁵ He implies a knowledge of homosexuality and

²Anthony West, "Vogue's Spotlight Theatre," Vogue, August 1, 1968, p. 76.

³Gussow, "Playwrights," p. 115.

⁴Wilfrid Sheed, "Gay Life Gets a Sharp Going Over," Life, May 24, 1968, p. 18.

⁵Gussow, "Playwrights," p. 115.

the climate of its existence in contemporary society, a society ignorant of homosexuality and often intolerant perhaps because of its lack of understanding and perception. "As any experienced observer of life already knows, homosexuals are little different from most of us except for their deviation."⁶ In the January 24, 1972 issue of the Los Angeles Times, therapist George Weinberg was quoted as saying, "I would never consider a person healthy unless he had overcome his prejudices against homosexuality."⁷ Perhaps Crowley had a therapy session in mind when he wrote The Boys in the Band. "Although the characters at first seem to have been deliberately chosen as types, they become human beings long before the evening is over, and their lines are never interchangeable."⁸

Internal Influences

The director has an intense interest in social awareness and the exploration of the causal elements involved within realistic relationships between people. A realistic play embodies such elements. Through a careful analysis of several realistic plays, the director settled upon Mart Crowley's The Boys in the Band as his vehicle for exploration. Mart Crowley has provided the director with a play affording an awareness of the life struggle of the homosexual as well as a creative challenge in directing a realistic play.

Crowley seems to be a realistic person in all respects, not simply playwriting. Confrontation with the question of whether or not

⁶Theophilus Lewis, "The Boys in the Band," America, May 11, 1968, p. 234.

⁷Editorial, Los Angeles Times, Jan. 24, 1972, p. 8.

⁸Edith Oliver, "Happy Birthday," New Yorker, April 27, 1968, p. 85.

The Boys in the Band is autobiographical yields the following expansion of an earlier footnote:

Any fool knows you have to live through something to write about it. It has some foundation in my experience, but the play is not autobiographical. It says something about living with people, living with oneself. It's a play about self-destruction, about one's own worst enemy. For my own survival I had to write it. One has so little time. There's no point in wasting it on lying.⁹

From Crowley's own statement, the director assumes that the playwright has lived his play, and is therefore a well informed participant in the milieu of his venture. The playwright has created a play from his own social awareness of the life style surrounding himself. The play is an attempt to present a realistic view of some of the problems confronting homosexuals within a homosexual environment.

Realism, as a mode of style presents many problems for the director. Just how realistic a production does a director attempt to mold for his audience through the framework provided by the playwright? According to a lecture by Dr. David Batcheller, realism does not attempt to state life, but rather to create the illusion of life, of actuality. It is the intent of realism to expose the drama inherent in the materials of life through a concentration on the ordinary.¹⁰

Actual illusions are of course, rare; but they are the extreme and most tangible manifestation of the fact that as a rule in a given cultural context the familiar style of pictorial representation is not perceived at all--the image looks simply like a faithful reproduction of the object itself. In our civiliza-

⁹Gussow, "Playwrights," p. 115.

¹⁰Lecture by Dr. David Batcheller, Director of Theater, the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Dec. 14, 1971.

zation this is true for "realistic" works; they look "just like nature" to many persons who are unaware of their highly complicated and specific style.¹¹

Realism seeks an emotional union of the audience and the actor. Through conventions of the theatre, the audience sees actors imitate life in the Aristotelian sense. That is, the actor seeks to become through imitation his real life counterpart and to create for the audience the illusions of the real on a stage.

John Gassner states:

If the stage became so important in the opinion of the public and drew into its orbit intellectual leaders who encouraged the pioneering dramatic companies, the reason is that the theatre became, for better or worse a sort of forum. . . . there are actions in life that require "assumptions into which are packed whole histories, mythologies, philosophies." An idea underlying an action could be "of far more startling import, of far more searing terror, than the individual action itself."¹²

The Boys in the Band is a realistic play without an obvious social objective. It is first and foremost about a human being, not about an idea: a human being composed of mystery, malevolence, evil, and at the same time overwhelming charm and fascination. Certainly, as a dramatic portrait of a complex and ambivalent character, the play has few rivals; and yet, the social preoccupation, the critique of society, is nevertheless present in the play, provided one probes beneath the surface. It is a penetrating exploration of the position of the homosexual in society without ever removing the homosexual from the confines of a closed environment. It is then an attack on social convention and conformist respectability. The fusion of the two elements of character portrayal and social comment is so completely successful in the

¹¹Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Perception (Los Angeles: University of California Press), p. 117.

¹²John Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre and Drama (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.), p. 83.

play that the central character is the social comment; and the social comment consists in the character of Michael. Such an integration of an abstract content and concrete human reality must be regarded as an aspiration of any dramatist, its achievement his ultimate goal. Since the social comment is so completely integrated in the character of the central figure, the play should remain fresh and vital until its treatise no longer exists and homosexuality becomes as acceptable as heterosexuality not only to homosexuals, but to heterosexuals also.

According to Gassner:

. . . the nuances of characterization and the tangled threads of human motivation constitute the dramatic texture (in realistic plays). But it is an explicit issue or argument that gives these works their particular direction or flow of action. And in the drama, indeed, the movement is the form to an even greater degree than is the formal structure.¹³

Unless the playwright has botched his job, the work will have clear outlines, point-by-point development, instantly recognizable norms of character, and action set in a clearly indicated environment. It would seem that realistic theatre has been preserved in our century not merely out of inertia, but as a result of the unwillingness of the age to abandon a mirror in which it sees its reflections of whatever sanity it still retains. The mirror may be somewhat cracked and flyblown, but there are still recognizable images in it.¹⁴

"Its world is one of objectivity, reason, order, and responsibility-- the responsibility of the individual to his fellow men and the responsibility of the artist to his society."¹⁵ According to Gassner's requirements, Crowley has fulfilled himself as a playwright with The Boys in the Band; the director must attempt to fulfill his responsi-

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 85-86.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 86.

bility as artist. According to the philosophy of Pirandello expressed in his plays such as Six Characters in Search of an Author and Right You Are If You Think You Are, each person's illusions are his reality. He has transformed our attitude of human personality and the whole concept of reality in human relations by showing that the personality is not a fixed and static entity, but an infinitely fluid, blurred, and relative concept. The director sets as a goal to show in production that the character of Michael, the central figure, is fluid, blurred, and relative within the framework provided by the playwright.

The comic elements of The Boys in the Band heighten the realistic impact of the play. Brockett states? "The action of comedy is based on some deviation from the normality in incident, character, or thought. The deviation must not pose a serious threat to the well-being of normal persons, and a comic (or 'in fun') mood must be maintained."¹⁶ The Boys in the Band fulfills this requirement of comedy. Homosexuality is viewed as abnormal in the heterosexual society of today. Through the party motif, the play manages to maintain a semblance of a fun mood within the production of this director. Brockett furthermore states; "... an audience cannot be objective about all elements of a comedy, for sympathy must be aroused for the normal. Part of the comic comes from witnessing the eventual triumph of the normal over a threat of the abnormal."¹⁷ If the homosexual character of Michael is regarded as abnormal, and the heterosexual character of Alan as normal, then

¹⁶ Oscar G. Brockett, The Theatre an Introduction (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston), p. 40.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 41.

The Boys in the Band fulfills yet another requirement of comedy because within the context of the play, Alan wins Michael's lethal party game. The comedy as expressed through wit and character types provides a contrast of humor with despair. This humor is often viciously cruel and leads one to laugh at remarks which would be terrifying in a real-life gathering.

. . . (vice), when comic, is associated with persons, it none the less retains a simple, independent existence, it remains the central character, present though invisible, to which the characters in flesh and blood on the stage are attached. At times it delights in dragging them down with its own weight and making them share in its tumbles. . . . to realize this more fully, it need only be noted that a comic character is generally comic in proportion to his ignorance of himself. The comic person is unconscious.¹⁸

Bergson goes on to say that if society suggests the image of disguising itself, then it is comic. The society of The Boys in the Band evidenced in the first act of the play offers what may be termed a disguise for people who are unfamiliar with homosexual "camp" and wit; however, the second act creates a familiarity, a rapport between the audience and the characters of the act. Act one contains some of the most dazzling and imaginatively cruel bitching that has been written for the theatre. It shows a homosexual group gathering in the mood of assertive defiance to celebrate the birthday of one of the members. Act two shows the collapse of pretenses through the presence of a heterosexual guest. Through his presence and a party game, Crowley creates a great deal of emotion in which an audience may establish an identity. It is no longer funny because ". . . laughter is incompatible with emotion."¹⁹ The

¹⁸ Henri Bergson, "The Comic Element," in Barrett H. Clark's European Theories of the Drama, ed. by Henry Popkin (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 387.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 391.

comedy of the play also contains a dichotomy in the person of the main character. He fits Begson's description:

. . . the individual waver between offensive frankness and delusive politeness, this duel between two opposing feelings will not even then be comic, rather it will appear the essence of seriousness if these two feelings through their very distinction complete each other, develop side by side, and make up between them a composite mental condition, adopting, in short, a modus vivendi which merely gives us the complex impression of life.

Michael is both a comic and a serious character at the same time. The clue-sentence in the inventory of Michael's characteristics is his optimistic fantasies are at odds with his sense of realism. It is a truism that comedy springs from a disparity of one kind or another provided it is large enough. The joke of Michael and the play is that he approaches the extremity of self-contradiction. For him, the dream, and its inevitable corollary, the deflationary truth, co-exist in one and the same moment; but, not being a fool, he needs but a glimpse of the resulting inconsistency to be in full retreat towards sarcasm or any fancy that will serve to cover up something he does not like. The kernel of the joke is the dichotomy between optimism and pessimism. The lines of the play contain not only the contradiction, but also determine what the voice does in enforcing the lines.

A goal of the director's production then becomes one of line interpretation. An example is Michael's line: "Well, one thing you can say for masturbation--you certainly don't have to look your best."²¹ If the line is interpreted vocally in the wrong spirit, the humor is lost. The line is not humorous in itself. It is a shocking statement; how-

²⁰ Ibid., p. 389.

²¹ Mart Crowley, The Boys in the Band I, 8-9.

ever, the voice can change a shockingly unfunny line into a humorous bit of wit.

To synthesize reality, which strives to create the illusion of reality, with comedy, which seeks to create laughter, a unique situation is required. The Boys in the Band presents such a situation because the subject matter (homosexuality) is an alien topic for most theatre goers and can be laughed at even when presented realistically upon a stage where the ultimate goal becomes "being through acting."²²

The theme or impact of the play is that the essence of homosexuality is depression and pain. Its subject is not homosexuality, but the intense suffering experienced by the kind of homosexual who cannot live easily with the fact of his being what he is, and who would rather be a heterosexual. Because of its theme and subject, the play is dated and not necessarily a true representation of homosexual thinking today. The Gay Liberation Front and the Mattachine Society, two homosexual organizations, have encouraged homosexuals to speak out and not to be ashamed of their "condition." The result is closely aligned with a similar campaign in the Black America of today. Organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Neo-Black Movement have encouraged black Americans not to have a desire to be white, but to be proud of being black. As a result, the attitudes of black Americans have changed and black people are finding places in the higher echelons of society. The homosexual counter-part campaign is also achieving a similar goal. The Northern Chapter of

²²Arnheim, Perception, p. 365.

Americans for Democratic Action has adopted a resolution to be presented to the national A. D. A. convention in Washington in April 1972 for consideration as the organizations' national policy. The resolution calls for an end to discrimination in government employment, the military, immigration, housing, and insurance. What seems to be stressed is that homosexuals are no different from heterosexuals except in their sexual deviation. Furthermore, homosexuals are no more susceptible to false values than heterosexuals, and therefore, homosexuals should demand to be treated with the same considerations.

Act I of The Boys in the Band creates a setting for the action. The act explores the character types of homosexuals as viewed by heterosexual society. The act opens with a glimpse of the main character Michael, and shows his meticulous nature as he provides the finishing touches for the party he will give. His lover Donald arrives and a rapid dialogue is set to explore the reason for the party and to offer an exposition of the characters of Michael and Donald. A telephone call from Alan, one of Michael's old college chums, introduces the catalyst or anti-catalyst or whatever you would call some one who makes everything fall apart. Michael becomes worried because Alan has cried over the telephone and more of Michael's character is revealed. He becomes tense and jerky over the slightest noise. A buzz from the door-bell reveals Michael's nerves as well as three new characters: Emory, Hank, and Larry. With the entrance of these characters a style for the evening becomes clear. The bitchy dialogue of the play will develop a strong rhythm pattern as evidenced in the ensuing conversation. The arrival of Bernard leads to the addition of racial humor. A second

telephone call from Alan relaxes Michael and his friends, who have been prepared to present themselves as heterosexual for the uninvited guest. Alan is not coming. When the doorbell rings again, it is to announce the arrival of Cowboy, Emory's present for the guest of honor Harold. Cowboy has been instructed to kiss the first person who comes to the door. His arrival and Michael's reactions pave the way for more witty dialogue among the members of the band who have already arrived. The mood changes, and a record is played. A dance begins only to be interrupted by the buzzer and the boy from the bakery. A second dance, an exciting line dance, then occurs. This is the setting for the unexpected arrival of Alan, who has decided to drop by despite his second telephone call. With the arrival of Alan, the main tension of the play begins to build. Michael becomes jumpy and on edge. Alan is also tense because he realizes the homosexuality of the guests and engages in a physical fight with Emory. The fight is the setting for the arrival of the final character Harold. The fight also signifies the conclusion of the first act.

The second act opens with Harold's laughing and Michael's drinking his first liquor of the evening. The play evolves from the fun of the first act to a constant repartee between Michael and his guests. Dinner is eaten, and Harold opens his gifts. The scene is then ready for Michael's crafty party game which is called "affairs of the heart," a game derived from one of Harold's early lines. The game is simple. Each guest must call on the telephone the one person he has really loved. The game serves as a device to reveal the feelings and emotions of the minor characters, and to create a unity

between them and the audience. Through the game the audience is shown that homosexuals have the same feelings and emotions regarding love as do heterosexuals. Bernard and Emory bare their inner selves through the device of the game. Hank and Larry, the lovers, reconcile their differences and go to the bedroom for the remainder of the play. The game also serves as the vehicle for the climax of the play. When Alan is forced to call the one person he has loved, he calls his wife. Michael, thinking that Alan is talking with Justin Stuart, Alan's college roommate, grabs the receiver of the telephone from Alan to congratulate Justin and heighten his attack upon Alan. However, Alan has called his wife Fran, a woman Michael had dated during his college years. Herein lies the climax. Michael, thinking Justin on the telephone, has offered his congratulations without allowing the party on the other end to speak. When he realizes what he has done with Fran listening, he begins to dissolve from his aggressive stance into a whimpering mound. Alan leaves the party, and succeeding his exit, the other guests rapidly depart. Harold, Michael's guest of honor, lashes Michael with his bitchy departing speech and leaves with his gifts which include Cowboy. Since Bernard has become extremely drunk, Emory volunteers to take him home. Hank and Larry are then left in the bedroom, and Michael and Donald are left in the living room. Michael collapses and progresses through a scene of hysteria, but he finally pulls himself together again. He decides to go to Mass, leaving Donald in the apartment to finish a bottle of brandy. This concludes the action of the play.

Through realism, the play presents a minority as seen by the playwright for the viewing of an audience. The audience is allowed to watch as one after another, the characters of the play reveal their own troubles. The characters also discover that their own troubles, which of course tend to preoccupy them, are not the only ones at hand. Others have troubles too. In his final rounding out of things, Crowley (whose play seems secular) comes fairly close to combining two apparently contradictory phrases of St. Paul: "Let each one bear his own burden,"²³ and "Bear ye one anothers burdens."²⁴ Crowley is a realist who knows that the loving acceptance of defects in one's self and in others is part of what it means to be a realist. Crowley solves difficult character problems in an almost moving-picture fashion by combining moral good will with gentle doses of psychoanalysis. He has too much taste however to do this crudely, but avails himself of the showman's license to foreshorten his benign therapeutics by the sympathetic reticence of his nonetheless pointed statements.

Beneath the bitchy, lancing wit of the verbal byplay, Playwright Mart Crowley keeps a dead-level eye on the desolating aspects of homosexual life. He records the loveless, brief encounters, the guilt-ridden, blackout reliance on alcohol, the endless courtship rat race of the gay bar with its inevitable quota of rejection, humiliation and loneliness. Crowley underscores the fact while the homosexual may pose as a bacchanal of nonconformist pagan delights, he frequently drinks a hemlock bitter cup of despair.²⁵

The play is certainly sentimental in a way that prevents it from taking

²³Galatians, the Bible. VI. 4.

²⁴Ibid. VI. 2.

²⁵"The Boys in the Band," Time, April 26, 1968, p. 56.

a more significant place in the realm of that creative realism in which Ibsen was supreme, and into which a few other American playwrights have stepped more courageously though often less surefootedly.

This director's approach to the play, then, is realism. He intends to present typical homosexual types having a good time. By employing the stereotypes and using them, the hope is that the comic elements will be heightened and the audience will feel free to laugh as they would laugh at anything alien to them which is humorous. In the second act, the director intends to strip away the veneer of the unfamiliar, and to present the characters of the play as human beings capable of being hurt and of tears, showing that the gulf between the homosexual and the heterosexual is not a vast expanse--that a human being is still a human being despite his sexual preferences. In as much as the playwright exposes the feelings of his characters, the director will pursue them as far as his directorial judgement will allow.

Character Analysis

The boys in the band are one entity. They are a group of characters which compliment one another psychologically. They represent a spectre of society, and do not appear unbelievable. They are all real people, observable in all walks of society to the keen eye, and, as such, compose a funny and yet moving portrait of pastel shades: that is, their characters are revealed only partially, and no really razor sharp lines define their boundaries. While speaking about character, an analysis of each is appropriate.

Michael

Michael, the principal character, is the most complex and possibly the most complete portrait. He is an only child of an overly protective mother and an incompetent father. He is a failure as a playwright, and tends to vent his pent-up emotions and hostilities on others in order to establish a superiority. He conducts his sado-masochistic personality rather freely and is matched only by Harold, his best friend, during sarcastic attempts to control others. Michael can destroy and mutilate others through his remarks, but only Harold can destroy Michael outside of Michael's own seemingly masochistic desire to destroy himself. He is brittle as a piece of porcelain. He fluctuates constantly from mood to mood and approaches schizophrenia. His mood changes are sudden and sometimes occur within a single line or thought.

Donald

As Michael's lover, Donald is an intellectual. He reads constantly and is capable of much affection. He is quite capable of asserting his personality; however, he realizes Michael's need to control others, and he always yields to Michael's needs. He is a failure in conventional terms in that he dropped out of college and is satisfied to perform janitorial jobs for a career. He is resigned to failure by his own admission. He creates the perfect foil for Michael.

Emory

Emory is an outrageously effeminate interior decorator. He represents the stereotype of the homosexual most often thought of by

people who have little knowledge of the homosexual minority group. He is witty and charming. He is highly capable of sensitivity in his relationships with others, and is capable of winning the audience through his inner warmth projected in his Dr. Delbert Botts speeches. The role is an easy role to develop because Emory does personify what many people regard as a homosexual. He is flighty, swishy, and simply a character who exaggerates the most feminine qualities of a woman into his being. Emory feels a great deal of self-pity because of himself. He resents himself and can only feel superior to Bernard, his best friend who is black.

Hank

Hank is a math professor. He is relatively conservative in his dress and in his manner. He is a divorcee with two children whom he dearly loves. He is tolerant in his relationship with his lover Larry, a man for whom he left his wife and children. He is capable of great intensity in his relationship with his lover. Proof of the intensity is offered in the script with the dialogues between the two. His main objective in life seems to be to find a security in a love he desires.

Larry

Larry, Hank's lover, is a fashion photographer with a whorish tendency. He is physically attractive, and he has a flair for dress. As a bit of a fashion plate himself, he has been conditioned to being pursued by others for sexual reasons. He is unfaithful to Hank, in that he has frequent sexual relationships with people other than Hank. He is also faithful in that he desires the security of the relationship with Hank. He has even had sex with Donald, Michael's lover. Larry loves

Hank, he simply cannot remain faithful to one person as far as sexual relations are concerned.

Bernard

Bernard is the black homosexual fondly referred to as the "queen of spades." He is employed by the New York Public Library which should serve as some indication of his educational background. He is by no means illiterate. He prefers wine as a beverage. He is Emory's best friend, and permits Emory to degrade him, because he knows he is better off than Emory and that Emory needs to be able to feel superior to someone. Because of his compassion for Emory, he is revealed as a warm and sincere character, though capable of quick anger as evidenced in a repartee with Michael.

Cowboy

As a gift, Cowboy is almost a non-entity. He represents the male whore. He is gifted with a beautiful male body which he sells as a sex object to anyone with the money. He is dumb and might parallel the "dumb blonde" image of certain heterosexual plays. Apparently the only thing he understands is the combination of money and sex.

Alan McCarthy

Alan McCarthy is Michael's heterosexual friend from Washington, D. C. He is the only character with a last name given. He is also the only heterosexual character. He is a sophisticated lawyer who has left his wife and come to New York City for a visit. He is very tense on the subject of homosexuality. Because he possesses a violent and mysterious outlook on homosexuality within the context of the play, one is easily lead to believe that Alan is a latent homosexual

who is searching for a homosexual relationship, and who therefore feels a great deal of guilt because of his background. The homosexuality aspect of Alan's character is never clarified, and this mysterious man leaves the party to return to his wife.

Harold

Harold is Michael's best friend for whom the party is being given. He is a former ice skating performer, and as such, he is graceful and precise, two qualities which enhance his homosexuality. Facially, he is ugly and pock-marked, and his psyche is affected by a desire to be beautiful; in fact, one might say that Harold's only flaw is his desire for beauty. As a Jew, he rounds out the cast of three minority groups: homosexuals, blacks, and Jews. Harold is a nihilist, and the only person who can control Michael's biting sarcasm. When Michael's remarks get out of hand, Harold uses his own quick wit and scathing criticisms to subdue Michael. The extent of the relationship between Harold and Michael is not clearly defined within the script. The picture Michael gives Harold for a birthday present, though never seen by the audience, leaves some doubt in the relationship: they may possibly be former lovers who became too close to one another and settled for friendship in order to preserve their sanities. A support for this theory is that Michael says he and Donald are not lovers any more, that they got to know each other too fast. Perhaps the same thing happened between Harold and Michael or perhaps they were both too strong willed to sustain a relationship. The idea of any relationship other than their present one is pure speculation.

Set Description and Analysis

When defining the concept within any production, the director must maintain the same concept throughout all aspects of the production, sets and costumes must provide a corollary with the chosen style of the production.

Hopefully, the director has established that The Boys in the Band is a realistic play, and as such, demands a realistic setting. The set is the apartment of Michael, and it should reflect his character. Stark contrasts are necessary to accomplish the reflection, because Michael is a person in which contrasts and contradictions are embodied. The colors of the setting should be opposites in order to create a starkness. Furniture should reflect the lines of the set offering a unity between the two. The lines of the set should reflect the character of Michael, and not the spirit of the play which is a synthesis of comedy and drama. What lines could be more stark than straight lines; therefore, the setting should employ the straight line as much as possible. The artworks and accessories of the set should reflect the good taste of one familiar with the arts, and also reflect the dichotomy of the owner's character as well as that of the decorator Emory.

The costumes should reflect the positions and attitudes of the characters. The costumes need to maintain an individuality for the characters, and yet they must not overpower the characters or the setting. In short, the purpose of the production is the play, and all elements of the production must work together to enhance the play.

Director's Justification

Though the play is dated, it fulfills the director's aim of creating a social awareness of homosexuality today. It offers a universality of certain emotions which heterosexuals and homosexuals share and may empathize together.

The director wants to create a tasteful production of a play dealing with a subject which is repulsive to many and with language which is sometimes less than polite. Acts of overt sexual activity will definitely have no place in the production. The profanity of the script will be played in the context in which it is intended, and no attempts will be made to shock an audience for the sake of shock. Certain lines of the script will be changed for clarity since the play's action will be set in 1972. Because certain lines of the script involve slang, and because of the temporal nature of slang, the slang is being updated. Cowboy's line: ". . . when I'm not high on pot or up on acid,"²⁶ provides an example. The newly revised line reads: ". . . when I'm not stoned or tripping." "Backstage 'New Moon'"²⁷ is being changed to "Backstage No No Nanette" because of the similarity of the two, and the fact that most people today have never heard of "New Moon," a 1920's operetta of Sigmund Romberg; however, No No Nanette, a contemporary of "New Moon," is enjoying a revival currently on Broadway and is more familiar to audiences.

²⁶Crowley, Boys II.58.

²⁷Ibid. I.14.

In conclusion, this chapter has been composed of the external and internal analysis of The Boys in the Band by Mart Crowley. In addition, the director has dealt with his justification for the selection of the script and any changes he has felt necessary, and his approach to the play.

CHAPTER II

PROMPT BOOK

ACT I

(WHEN THE HOUSE OPENS, THE HOUSE LIGHTS ARE UP FULL, AND THE STAGE IS DARK. AT EIGHT-FIFTEEN, THE HOUSE LIGHTS DIM TO ONE HALF INTENSITY. AT EIGHT-THIRTY, ON A CUE FROM THE HOUSE MANAGER, THE STAGE MANAGER SIGNALS FOR THE LIGHTS FOR THE HOUSE TO FADE COMPLETELY AND THE PRESHOW MUSIC, MABEL MERCER'S RECORDING OF THE "BALLAD OF THE SAD YOUNG MEN," TO BEGIN. THE MUSIC AND THE LIGHTS ARE TIMED SO THAT THE RECORDING ENDS AS THE LIGHTS COMPLETE THEIR FADE. IN THE BLACKOUT, MICHAEL CROSSES TO THE CENTER OF THE BUFFET PLATFORM AND FREEZES.) (FIGURE 2.) (A RECORDING OF MICHEL LEGRAND'S "SUMMER OF '42" BEGINS, AND THE STAGE LIGHTS OVER THE BUFFET PLATFORM GO UP TO HALF. MICHAEL IS STANDING IN A FIXED POSITION DIRECTLY UNDER THE LIGHTS, AND ON A PRESET CUE WITH THE MUSIC, MICHAEL, HOLDING A VASE WITH A SINGLE RED ROSE IN IT, COMES TO LIFE, AND THE STAGE LIGHTS GO TO FULL INTENSITY. THE PURPOSE OF THE FREEZE AND THE HALF INTENSITY PERIOD IS TO PERMIT THE AUDIENCE TO ADJUST TO THE INTENSE AND STARK COLOR QUALITY OF THE SET. MICHAEL, WEARING A ROBE, CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR. HE PLACES THE VASE ON THE BAR, TURNS, AND CROSSES CENTER TO SURVEY THE ROOM. HE TURNS UPSTAGE AND EXITS UP CENTER INTO THE KITCHEN.) (FIGURE 2.) (AFTER FIVE BEATS, HE RETURNS THROUGH THE UP CENTER ENTRANCE CARRYING TWO TRAYS OF CRACKED CRAB. HE CROSSES LEFT AND PLACES ONE TRAY ON THE BUFFET TABLE, TABLE L; AND THEN, HE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AROUND SOFA C TO THE COFFEE TABLE K, WHERE HE DEPOSITS THE SECOND TRAY.) (SEE FIGURE 2 FOR FURNITURE LETTERINGS.) (HE AGAIN SURVEYS THE ROOM. HE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B TO ARRANGE PILLOWS. WITH THE PILLOWS ARRANGED, HE CROSSES LEFT BY THE UP CENTER AREA TO THE BAR DOWN LEFT TO PICK UP A PICTURE FRAME, A BOX, SOME RIBBON, AND WRAPPING PAPER. HE PROCEEDS DOWN RIGHT TO THE DOWN LEFT SIDE OF SOFA D. HE SITS AND BEGINS TO WRAP THE PICTURE FRAME WHEN THE DOOR BUZZER SOUNDS. HE STOPS WRAPPING THE PACKAGE AND CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE STEREO LOCATED BEHIND THE BAR.) (FIGURE 2.) (HE TURNS THE STEREO OFF, AND THE OPENING MUSIC STOPS. HE CROSSES RIGHT TO THE DOOR OF THE APARTMENT, AND OPENS IT TO REVEAL DONALD.)

MICHAEL

Donald! You're about a day and a half early!

DONALD

(CROSSING INTO APARTMENT DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B AND PUTTING BAG DOWN ONTO FLOOR.) The doctor cancelled!

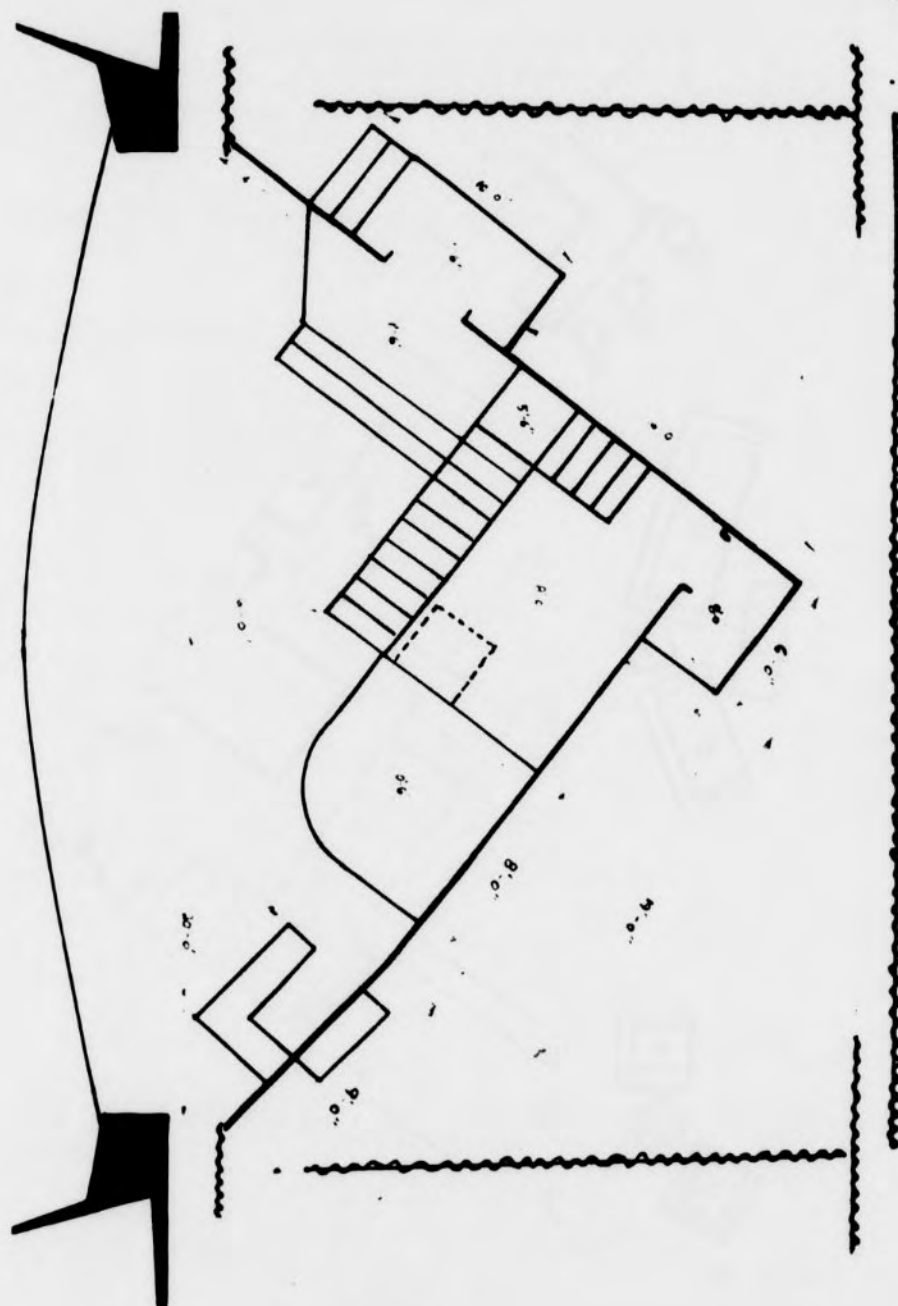
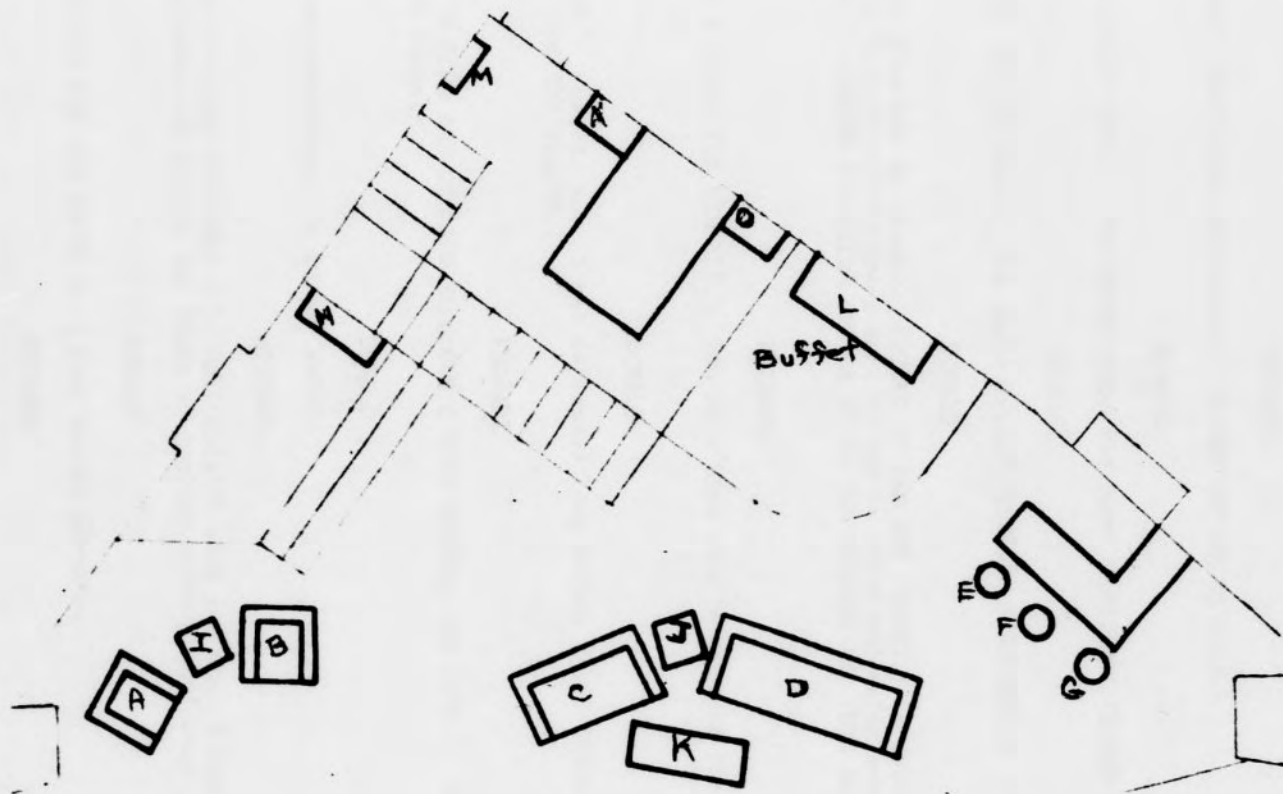


FIGURE I

FIGURE II



MICHAEL

Cancelled! How'd you get inside? (LOOKS OUT FRONT DOOR.)

DONALD

(TAKING JACKET OFF.) The street door was open. (MICHAEL CLOSSES DOOR.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TO BAR.) You wanna drink? (DONALD STRETCHES.)

DONALD

Not until I've had my shower. (PICKS UP BAG AND JACKET.) I want something to work-out today--I want to try to relax and enjoy something. (CROSSES UP CENTER TO STAIRS AND ON UP TO THE BEDROOM AND PUTS BAG ON BED.)

MICHAEL

(POURING A DRINK FOR HIMSELF.) You in a blue funk because of the doctor?

DONALD

(SHOUTING.) Christ, no. I was depressed long before I got there. (STARTS DOWN THE STAIRS.)

MICHAEL

(DONALD IS DOWN AND CROSSES TO COUCH C DOWN CENTER, AND SITS.) Why'd the prick cancel?

DONALD

A virus or something. He looked awful.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING UP RIGHT TO TABLE H.) Well this'll pick you up. I went shopping today and bought all kinds of goodies.--Sandalwood soap . . .

DONALD

(REMOVING HIS SOCKS AND SHOES.) I feel better already.

MICHAEL

(OPEN BAG AND BEGIN PLACING ARTICLES ON TABLE H.) Your very own tooth-brush because I'm sick to death of your using mine.

DONALD

How do you think I feel.

MICHAEL

You've had worse things in your mouth! And also for you . . . (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER TOWARD DONALD CARRYING A CYLINDRICAL CAN.) something called "Control." Notice nowhere on the can is it called hair spray--just simply, "Control." And the words, "For Men," are written about thirty-seven times all over the goddam can!

DONALD

(PLACING FEET ON TABLE K.) It's called Butch assurance.

MICHAEL

Well, it's still hair spray--no matter if they call it "Balls"! (CROSSES UP RIGHT TO TABLE H AND GATHERS ITEMS.) It's all going on your very own shelf which is to be labeled: Donald's Saturday Night Douche Kit. (MICHAEL CROSSES TO STEPS AND SHOUTS OVER HIS SHOULDER AS HE ASCENDS TO SECOND LEVEL AND EXITS INTO THE BATHROOM.) (FIGURE 2.) By the way, are you spending the night?

DONALD

(SHOUTING IN DIRECTION OF UP RIGHT.) Nope. I'm driving back. I still get very itchy when I'm in this town too long. I'm not that well yet.

MICHAEL

(FROM BATHROOM. SHOUTING.) That's what you say every week end.

DONALD

Maybe after about ten more years of analysis I'll be able to stay one night.

MICHAEL

(SPEAKING SOFTLY. DESCENDING STEPS AND SITTING ON LANDING.) Maybe after about ten more years of analysis you'll be able to move back to town permanently.

DONALD

(TWIST LEFT TO LOOK AT MICHAEL.) If I live that long. (SWING FEET ONTO COUCH.)

MICHAEL

You will. If you don't kill yourself on the Long Island Expressway some early Sunday morning. I'll never know how you can tank-up on martinis and make it back to the Hamptons in one piece.

DONALD

Believe me, it's easier than getting here. Ever had an anxiety attack at sixty miles an hour? (SWINGS BODY AROUND TOWARD AUDIENCE.) Well, today I was beside myself to get to the doctor--and just as I finally make it, rush in, (PICKS UP SHOES AND SOCKS.) throw myself on the couch (SPRAWLS BACK ONTO THE COUCH.) and vomit-out how depressed I am, he says, (RISES.) Donald, I have to cancel tonight--I'm just too sick. (CROSSES TO STAIRS UP RIGHT, AND ASCENDS, PASSING MICHAEL WHO IS STILL SEATED.)

MICHAEL

Why didn't you tell him you're sicker than he is.

DONALD

He already knows that.

MICHAEL

Why didn't the prick call you and cancel? Suppose you'd driven all this way for nothing.

DONALD

(AT TOP OF STAIRS.) He already knows that I have a friend. (CROSSES UP LEFT CENTER TO BED AND PLACES SHOES AND SOCKS.) Why do you keep calling him a prick? (CROSSES UP RIGHT INTO BATHROOM WHERE HE REMOVES SHIRT.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING UPSTAIRS AND DOWN LEFT IN THE BEDROOM, HE SITS ON THE DOWN LEFT CORNER OF THE BED.) Whoever heard of an analyst having a session with a patient for two hours on Saturday evening.

DONALD

(FROM BATHROOM.) He simply prefers to take Mondays off.

MICHAEL

Work late on Saturday and take Monday off--what is he, a psychiatrist or a hairdresser?

DONALD

(CROSSING FROM BATHROOM DOWN RIGHT TO CORNER OF BED.) Actually, he's both. He shrinks my head and combs me out. (SITS DOWN RIGHT ON BED.) Besides, I had to come in town to a birthday party anyway. Right?

MICHAEL

You had to remind me. (RISES AND CROSSES RIGHT AND UP RIGHT TO BATHROOM, AND EXIT.) If there's one thing I'm not ready for, it's five screaming queens singing Happy Birthday.

DONALD

Who's coming?

MICHAEL

(REMOVING ROBE AND PUTTING ON TROUSERS IN BATHROOM.) They're really all Harold's friends. It's his birthday and I want everything to be just the way he'd want it. I don't want to have to listen to him kvetch about how nobody ever does anything for anybody but himself.

DONALD

Himself. (MICHAEL STICKS HIS HEAD OUT FOR A GLARING LOOK TO DONALD.)

MICHAEL

I think you know everybody anyway--they're the same old tired fairies you've seen around since the day one. (CROSSING FROM BATHROOM INTO BEDROOM RIGHT TO MIRROR ON RIGHT WALL.) (FIGURE 2.) Actually, there'll be seven counting Harold and you and me.

DONALD

(STANDING.) Are you calling me a screaming queen or a tired fairy?

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT TOWARD DONALD.) Oh, I beg your pardon--six tired screaming fairy queens and one anxious queer.

DONALD

(CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT CORNER OF ROOM AND PLAYS WITH THE CORD OF THE DRAPERY.) You don't think Harold'll mind my being here, do you? Technically, I'm your friend, not his.

MICHAEL

If she doesn't like it she can twirl on it. (CROSS UP RIGHT TO MIRROR AND BEGIN TO COMB HAIR.) Listen, I'll be out of your way in just a second. I've only got one more thing to do.

DONALD

Surgery, so early in the evening?

MICHAEL

(TURNS TO DONALD.) Sunt! That's French with a cedilla. I've just got to comb my hair for the thirty-seventh time. Hair--that's singular. My hair, without exaggeration, is clearly falling on the floor baby. And fast!

DONALD

You're totally paranoid. You've got plenty of hair.

MICHAEL

What you see before you is a masterpiece of deception. My hairline starts about here. (PULLS HAIR UP, AND INDICATES CROWN.) All this is just tortured forward.

DONALD

Well, I hope for your sake, no strong wind comes up.

MICHAEL

(PULLING HAIR OVER TO ONE SIDE.) If one does, I'll be in terrible trouble. I will then have a bald head and shoulder-length fringe. (HE RUNS HIS FINGERS THROUGH HIS HAIR, HOLDS IT AWAY FROM HIS SCALP, DIPS THE TOP OF HIS HEAD SO THAT DONALD CAN SEE. DONALD IS SILENT.) Not so good, huh?

DONALD

Not the greatest.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING BACK TO MIRROR AND LOOKING AT IT.) It's called, "getting old"--Ah, life is such a grand design. Spring, Summer, Winter, Fall, death. Whoever could have thought it up?

DONALD

No one we know that's for sure.

MICHAEL

Well, one thing you can say for masturbation--you certainly don't have to look your best. (LOOKS DIRECTLY TO DONALD. PAUSE. DONALD LAUGHS, AND EXITS UP RIGHT TO THE BATHROOM. MICHAEL CROSSES AROUND BED AND UP LEFT TO CHEST N WHERE HE TAKES A SWEATER FROM THE DRAWER, AND PULLS IT ON.) What are you so depressed about? I mean, other than the usual everything.

DONALD

(SHOUTING RELUCTANTLY FROM THE BATHROOM.) Michael, I really don't want to get into it.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING AROUND BED, AND UP RIGHT TO PRIMP IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR.) Well, if you're not going to tell me how can we have a conversation in depth--a warm, rewarding, meaningful friendship?

DONALD

(SHOUTS FROM BATHROOM.) Up yours! (ENTERS BEDROOM WEARING ONLY A ROBE AND HOLDING A GLASS OF WATER. HE CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO THE BED AND BEGINS TO SEARCH HIS BAG.)

MICHAEL

(SOUTHER ACCENT.) Why, Cap'n Butler, how you talk! (PATS DONALD ON THE BACKSIDE AS DONALD IS BENDING OVER THE BED.)

DONALD

It's just that today I finally realized that I was raised to be a failure. I was groomed for it. (TAKES A PILL FROM A BOTTLE IN THE BAG, AND SWALLOWS IT.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT, SITTING ON BED, AND PUTTING SOCKS ON.) You know, there was a time when you could have said that to me and I wouldn't have known what the hell you were talking about.

DONALD

(STANDING UP RIGHT OF MICHAEL.) Naturally, it all goes back to Evelyn and Walt.

MICHAEL

Naturally. When doesn't it go back to Mom and Pop. Unfortunately, we all had an Evelyn and a Walt. The Crumbs! Don't you love that word

crumb? Oh, I love it! It's a real Barbara Stanwyck word. (HE RISES AND SPEAKS A LA STANWYCK'S FROZEN-LIPPED BROOKLYN ACCENT.) "Cau'll me a keab, you kr-rumm."

DONALD

Well, I see all vestiges of sanity for this evening are now officially shot-to-hell.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES UP RIGHT TO DONALD.) Oh, Donald, you're so serious tonight! You're fun-starved, baby, and I'm eating for two! (PATS DONALD'S CHEEK. BENDS LEFT AND PICKS UP A SHOE TO USE AS A MICROPHONE AND BEGINS TO DANCE AROUND AND SING LIKE JUDY GARLAND.) "Forget your troubles, c'mon get happy! You better chase all your blues away. Shout, 'Hallelujah!' c'mon get happy . . ." (SEES DONALD ISN'T BUYING IT. CROSSES LEFT TO BED AND SITS WITH SHOE IN HAND.) What's more boring than a queen doing a Judy Garland imitation?

DONALD

A queen doing a Bette Davis imitation.

MICHAEL

Meanwhile--back at the Evelyn and Walt Syndrome.

DONALD

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO MICHAEL'S SIDE.) America's Square Peg and America's Round Hole.

MICHAEL

Christ, how sick analysts must get of hearing how mommy and daddy made their darlin' into a fairy.

DONALD

(CROSSING UP RIGHT TO MIRROR.) It's beyond just that now. (TURNS ABRUPTLY TO MICHAEL AND BEGINS TO CROSS BACK DOWN LEFT TOWARD MICHAEL.) Today I finally began to see how some of the other pieces of the puzzle relate to them.--Like why I never finished anything I started in my life . . . my neurotic compulsion to not succeed. I've realized it was always when I failed that Evelyn loved me the most--because it displeased Walt who wanted perfection. (CROSSING UP RIGHT.) And when I fell short of the mark she was only too happy to make up for it with her love. (CROSSES TO MIRROR, AND LEANS ON TABLE IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR.) So I began to identify failing with winning my mother's love. And I began to fail on purpose to get it. (TURNS BACK TOWARD MICHAEL.)

I didn't finish Cornell--I couldn't keep a job in this town. I simply retreated to a room over a garage and scrubbing floors in order to keep alive. Failure is the only thing with which I feel at home. Because it is what I was taught at home.

MICHAEL

Killer whales. Killer whales is what they are. (MOOD CHANGE.) How many whales could a killer whale kill?

DONALD

A lot especially if they get them when they are babies. (PAUSE. MICHAEL SUDDENLY TEARS OFF HIS SWEATER, THROWS IT IN THE AIR, LETTING IT LAND WHERE IT MAY, GOES LEFT AND UP TO CHEST N, AND WHIPS OUT ANOTHER SWEATER. HE PULLS IT ON, AND STARTS CROSSING AROUND THE BED, RIGHT TO THE STAIRS, DOWN THE STAIRS, CROSSES LEFT, AND GOES TO THE BAR. DONALD CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO THE RAILING OF THE BEDROOM.) Hey! Where're you going?

MICHAEL

(ADJUSTING HIS SWEATER ON WAY TO THE BAR.) To make drinks! I think we need about thirty-seven!

DONALD

Hey where'd you get that sweater?

MICHAEL

(CROSSES FROM BEHIND BAR CENTER AND TWIRLS.) This cleaver little shop on the right bank called Hermes.

DONALD

I work my ass off for forty-five lousy dollars a week scrubbing floors and you waltz around throwing cashmere sweaters on them.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING TO BAR TO MAKE DRINKS.) The one on the floor in the bedroom is vicuna.

DONALD

I beg your pardon. (CROSSES TO BED TO REMOVE CLOTHES FOR EVENING FROM THE BAG.)

MICHAEL

(MAKING DRINKS.) You could get a job doing something else. Nobody holds a gun to your head to be a char-woman. That is, how you say, your neurosis.

DONALD

(CROSSING BACK TO RAIL.) Gee, and I thought it's why I was born.

MICHAEL

Besides, (SIPS DRINK, AND CROSSES UP RIGHT TO TABLE H.) just because I wear expensive clothes doesn't necessarily mean they're paid for.

DONALD

That is how you say, your neurosis.

MICHAEL

I'm a spoiled brat so what do I know about being mature. (CROSSING DOWN LEFT CENTER TO SOFA D AND SITTING.) The only thing mature means to me is Victor Mature who was in all those pictures with Betty Grable.

DONALD

How did I manage to miss these momentous events in the American Cinema? (CROSSING DOWN STEPS TO LANDING, WHERE HE STANDS.) I can understand people having an affinity for stage--but movies are such garbage, who can take them seriously?

MICHAEL

Well, I'm sorry if your sense of art is offended. (BEGINS WRAPPING PACKAGE WHICH HAS BEEN LEFT ON SOFA D.) Odd as it may seem there was no Shubert Theatre in Hot Coffee, Mississippi!

DONALD

However--thanks to the silver screen, you neurosis has got style. (SITS ON LANDING.) It takes a certain flair to squander one's unemployment check at Pavillion.

MICHAEL

What's so snappy about being head over heels in debt. The only thing smart about it is the ingenious ways I dodge the bill collectors.

DONALD

Yeah. Come to think of it, you're the type that gives faggots a bad name. (MICHAEL LOOKS UP TOWARD DONALD.)

MICHAEL

And you, Donald, you are a credit to the homosexual. (MICHAEL BEGIN WRAPPING AGAIN.) A reliable, hard-working, floor-scrubbing, bill-paying fag who don't owe nothin' to nobody.

DONALD

(STANDS.) I am a model fairy.

MICHAEL

(FINISHES WRAPPING PACKAGE, AND BEGINS TO MAKE THE BOW.) You think it's just nifty how I've always flitted from Beverly Hills to Rome to Acapulco to Amsterdam-- (STOP MAKING BOW, AND LOOK OFF IN THOUGHT.) picking up a lot of one-night stands and a lot of custom-made duds along the trail, but I'm here to tell you that the only place in all those miles--the only place I've ever been happy--was on the goddamn plane. (START MAKING BOW AGAIN.) Bored with Scandinavia, try Greece. Fed up with dark meat, try light. Hate tequila, what about slivovitz? Tired of boys, what about girls?--or how about boys and girls mixed and in what combination? (DONALD LAUGHS AND SITS ON THE BACK OF SOFA D.) And if you're sick of people, what about poppers? Or pot or pills or the hard stuff. (MICHAEL HAS FINISHED MAKING THE BOW, AND PUNCTUATES THE PRECEEDING LINE BY SLAPPING IT ONTO THE PACKAGE.) And can you think of anything else the bad baby would like to indulge his spoiled-rotten, stupid empty, boring, selfish, self-centered self in? (LOOKING AT DONALD FOR NEXT TWO LINES.) Is that what you think has style, Donald? Huh? Is that what you think you've missed out on-- (STANDING.) my hysterical escapes from country to country, party to party, bar to bar, bed to bed, hangover to hangover, and all of it hand to mouth! (MICHAEL CROSSES DOWN RIGHT SLOWLY, AND STOPS AT SOFA C DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) Run, charge, run, buy borrow, make, spend, run, squander, beg, run, run, run, waste, waste, waste! And why? And why?

DONALD

Why, Michael? Why?

MICHAEL

I really don't want to get into it.

DONALD

Then how can we have a conversation in depth?

MICHAEL

(TURNS TO DONALD AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO THE DOWN STAGE END OF THE BAR.) Oh, you know it all by heart anyway. Same song, second verse. Because my Evelyn refused to let me grow up. She was determined to keep me a child forever and she did one helluva job of it. And my Walt stood by and let her do it. (A BEAT.) What you see before you is a thirty-year-old infant. And it was all done in the name of love--what she labeled love and probably sincerely believed to be love, when what she was really doing was feeding her own need-satisfying her own loneliness. (ARRANGES BOTTLES ON DOWN LEFT END OF THE BAR.) She bathed me in the

same tub with her until I grew too big for the two of us to fit and she made sleep in the same bed with her until I was fourteen years old--until I finally flatly refused to spend one more night there. And do you know until this day she still says, "I don't care if you're seventy years old, you'll always be my baby." (CROSSES TO DOWN LEFT CORNER OF SOFA D.) And can I tell you how that drives me mad! Will that bitch never understand that what I'll always be is her son--but that I haven't been her baby for twenty-five years! (CROSSES UP LEFT AROUND SOFA D, AND LEFT BEHIND THE BAR.) And don't get me wrong. I know it's easy to cop out and blame Evelyn and Walt and say it was their fault. That we were simply the helpless put-upon victims. But I've dropped enough dough on the couch to know that in the end, you are responsible for yourself. (DONALD CROSSES TO MICHAEL ON THE NEXT LINE AND PLACES HIS HANDS ON MICHAEL'S SHOULDERS.) And I guess--I'm not sure--but I want to believe it--that in their own pathetic, dangerous way, they just loved us too much. (A BEAT.) Finis. Applause. (DONALD PUTS HIS ARMS AROUND HIM AND HOLDS HIM. IT IS A TOTALLY WARM AND CARING GESTURE.) There's nothing quite as good as feeling sorry for yourself, is there?

DONALD

(BREAKS THE EMBRACE.) Nothing.

MICHAEL

(A LA BETTE DAVIS.) I adore cheap sentiment. Okay, I'm taking orders for drinks. What'll it be?

DONALD

(CROSSING RIGHT TO STAIRS AND ON UP IN THE BEDROOM.) An extra-dry-gin-martini-on-the-rocks-with-a-twist.

MICHAEL

(DONALD CROSSES UP AND EXITS INTO THE BATHROOM.) Coming up. (MICHAEL NOTICES THERE IS NO ICE, SO CROSSES RIGHT TO THE UP CENTER KITCHEN EXIT AND GOES IN TO GET ICE. IMMEDIATELY AFTER HIS EXIT, THE TELEPHONE RINGS ON AN EMPTY STAGE. MOMENTARILY, MICHAEL RETURNS, CARRYING AN ICE BUCKET. HOLDING THE TUCKET, HE ANSWERS THE TELEPHONE ON THE KITCHEN WALL WHILE STANDING ON THE UP CENTER BUFFET PLATFORM.) Backstage, "No No Nanette." (A BEAT.) Alan? Alan! My God, I don't believe it. How are you? Where are you? In town! Great! When'd you get in? Is Fran with you? Oh. What? No. (CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR WITH THE PHONE AND ICE, SETS ICE ON THE BAR.) No I'm tied-up tonight. No, tonight's no good for me. You mean now? (CROSSES BACK ONTO THE BUFFET PLATFORM UP CENTER.) Well, Alan, ole boy, it's a friend's birthday and I'm having a few people. No, you wouldn't exactly call it a birthday party--well, yes, actually I guess you would. I mean, what else would you call it? A wake, maybe. I'm sorry I can't ask you to join us--but--well, kiddo, it just wouldn't work out. No, it's not place cards or anything. It's just that--well, I'd hate to just see you for ten minutes and . . . Alan? Alan? What's the matter? Are you--are you crying?--Oh, Alan, what's wrong?--Alan, listen, come

on over. No, no it's perfectly all right. Well, just hurry up. I mean, come on by and have a drink, okay? Alan . . . are you all right? Okay. Yeah. Same old address. Yeah. Bye. (CROSSES TO THE BAR LEFT, AFTER HANGING UP THE TELEPHONE. STARES BLANKLY INTO SPACE.)

DONALD

(APPEARS, CROSSES TO THE LANDING. HE IS BATHED AND CHANGED. HE STRIKES A POSE ON THE LANDING.) Well. Am I stunning?

MICHAEL

(LOOKS UP. TONELESSLY.) You're absolutely stunning. You look like shit, but I'm absolutely stunned.

DONALD

Your grapes are, how you say, sour.

MICHAEL

Listen you won't believe what just happened.

DONALD

(COMING DOWN STEPS, CROSS LEFT TO BAR, GET CIGARETTE FROM HOLDER ON BAR. LIGHT CIGARETTE.) Where's my drink?

MICHAEL

I didn't make it--I've been on the phone. (DONALD MAKES HIMSELF A MARTINI.) My old roommate from Georgetown just called.

DONALD

Alan what's-his-name?

MICHAEL

McCarthy. He's up here from Washington on business or something and he's on his way over here.

DONALD

(LEANS ON BAR.) Well I hope he knows the lyrics to Happy Birthday.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT AROUND SOFA D, THEN RIGHT TO DOWN CENTER BEHIND THE COFFEE TABLE, TABLE K, TO CHECK THINGS FOR THE PARTY.) Listen, asshole, what am I going to do? He's straight. And Square City! (USES "TOP DRAWER" ACCENT THROUGH CLENCHED TEETH.) I mean he's rally vury proper. Auffully good family.

DONALD

(SAME ACCENT.) That's so important. (CROSS AROUND BAR, DOWN LEFT TO STOOL F.)

MICHAEL

(REGULAR SPEECH.) I mean his family looks down on people in the theatre. So what do you think he'll feel about the freak show we've got booked for dinner?

DONALD

(SIPPING HIS DRINK.) Christ, is that good.

MICHAEL

(MOTIONS TO TRAY ON TABLE K.) Want some cracked crab?

DONALD

(SITS ON STOOL F.) Not just yet. Why'd you invite him over?

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT AROUND SOFAS AND UP LEFT TO THE BAR. STOPS RIGHT SIDE OF DONALD.) I didn't. He invited himself. He said he had to see me tonight. Immediately. He absolutely lost his spring on the phone--started crying.

DONALD

Maybe he's feeling sorry for himself too.

MICHAEL

Great heaves and sobs. Really boo-hoo-hoo time--and that's not his style at all. I mean he's so pulled-together he wouldn't show any emotion if he were in a plane crash. What am I going to do? (GETS A GLASS AND ICE FROM BAR.)

DONALD

What the hell do you care what he thinks?

MICHAEL

Well, I don't really.

DONALD

Or are you suddenly ashamed of your friends?

MICHAEL

Donald, you are the only person I know of whom I am truly ashamed. Some people do have different standards from yours and mine, you know. And if we don't acknowledge them, we're just as narrow-minded and backward as we think they are.

DONALD

You know what you are, Michael? You're a real person.

MICHAEL

Thank you and fuck you. (POINTS TO THE CRAB.) Want some?

DONALD

No thanks. (MICHAEL CROSSES BEHIND BAR AND OPENS BOTTLE OF CLUB SODA.) How could you ever have been friends with a bore like that?

MICHAEL

Believe it or not there was a time in my life when I didn't go around announcing that I was a faggot.

DONALD

That must have been before speech replaced sign language.

MICHAEL

Don't give me any static on that score. (CROSS AROUND BAR AND DOWN RIGHT TO SOFA D AND SIT WITH DRINK IN HAND.) I didn't come out until I left college.

DONALD

(CROSSES RIGHT TO SOFA D BEHIND MICHAEL AND SITS, ONE LEG UP, ON THE BACK OF THE SOFA.) It seems to me that the first time we tricked we met in a gay bar on Third Avenue during your junior year.

MICHAEL

Cunt.

DONALD

I thought you'd never say it.

MICHAEL

Sure you don't want any cracked crab?

DONALD

Not yet! If you don't mind!

MICHAEL

Well, it can only be getting colder. (PUTS GLASS ON COFFEE TABLE AND PICKS UP CRAB AND THEN PUTS IT BACK ON TABLE. CHECKS WATCH AND NOTICES THAT HE DOES'NT HAVE IT ON.) What time is it?

DONALD

I don't know. Early.

MICHAEL

Where the hell is Alan? (BIG PAUSE.)

DONALD

Do you want some more club soda? (RISES.)

MICHAEL

What?

DONALD

There's nothing but club soda in that glass. (MOTIONS TO MICHAEL'S GLASS.) It's not gin--like mine. (CROSSING BEHIND BAR.) You want some more?

MICHAEL

No.

DONALD

(FIXING A DRINK.) I've been watching you for several Saturdays now. You've actually stopped drinking, haven't you?

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN CENTER AROUND SOFAS, AND UP RIGHT TO TABLE H WHERE HE OPEN TWO PACKS OF CIGARETTES. And smoking too.

DONALD

And smoking too. How long's it been?

MICHAEL

Five weeks.

DONALD

That's amazing.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TOWARD BAR WITH CIGARETTES.) I've found God.

DONALD

It is amazing for you.

MICHAEL

Yes thank God. (PLACES CIGARETTES INTO HOLDER ON THE UP LEFT END OF THE BAR.) Or is God dead?

DONALD

Yes, thank God. And don't get panicky because I'm paying you a compliment. I can tell the difference.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT, AND RIGHT TO SOFA D.) You always said that I held my liquor better than anybody else you ever saw. (SITS.)

DONALD

I could always tell when you were gettin high--one way.

MICHAEL

I'd get hostile.

DONALD

You seem happier or something now--and that shows.

MICHAEL

(QUIETLY.) Thanks. (SLAMS FIST ONTO LEFT ARM OF SOFA D, RISES, AND CROSSES LEFT, AROUND SOFAS, AND UP CENTER TO KITCHEN.)

DONALD

What made you stop--the analyst? (CROSSES RIGHT TO STEPS TO BEDROOM AND SITS ON THIRD STEP.)

MICHAEL

(OFFSTAGE.) He certainly had a lot to do with it. (RETURNS FROM THE

KITCHEN THROUGH THE UP CENTER ENTRANCE AND CROSSES LEFT BEHIND THE BAR WITH A TUB OF BEER.) Mainly, I just didn't think I could survive another hangover, that's all. I don't think I could get through that morning-after ick attack.

DONALD

Morning-after what?

MICHAEL

(FILLS GLASS WITH CLUB SODA.) Icks! Anxiety! Guilt! Unfathomable guilt--either real or imagined--from that split second your eyes pop open and you say, "Oh, my God, what did I do last night!" and ZAP, Total Recall!

DONALD

Tell me about it!

MICHAEL

(CROSSES AROUND BAR WITH GLASS IN HAND, AND RIGHT, TOWARD DONALD.) Then the coffee, aspirin, alka-seltzer, darvon, deprisal, and a quick call to I. A.--Ick's Anonymous.

DONALD

"Good morning, I. A.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES IN TOWARD DONALD.) "Hi! Was I too bad last night? Did I do anything wrong? I didn't do anything terrible, did I?"

DONALD

(LAUGHING.) How many times! How many times!

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AROUND SOFAS TO DOWN LEFT SIDE OF TABLE K.) And from then on, that struggle to love til lunch when you have a double Bloody Mary--that is, if you've waited until lunch--and then you're half-pissed again and useless for the rest of the afternoon. And then only sure cure is to go to bed for about thirty-seven hours but who ever does that. Instead, you hang on til cocktail time, and by then you're ready for what the night holds--which hopefully is another party where the whole goddam cycle starts over! (PACES LEFT.) Well, I've been on that merry-go-round long enough (PACES RIGHT, TO DOWN LEFT CORNER OF SOFA D.) and I either had to get off or die of centrifugal force.

DONALD

And just how does a clear head stack up with the dull fog of alcohol?

MICHAEL

(STANDING STATIONARY.) Well, all those things you've always heard are true. Nothing can compare with the experience of one's faculties functioning at their maximum natural capacity. The only thing is . . . I'd kill for a drink. (BUZZER SOUNDS IMMEDIATELY AFTER "DRINK," AND MICHAEL JUMPS.)

DONALD

Joe College has finally arrived.

MICHAEL

Suddenly I have such an ick! Now listen, Donald . . .

DONALD

(RISES. RETORTS QUICKLY.) Michael, don't insult me by giving me any lecture on acceptable social behavior. I promise to sit with my legs spread apart and keep my voice in a deep register.

MICHAEL

(PUTS GLASS ON TABLE K, AND CROSSES RIGHT, AND UP RIGHT TO FRONT DOOR.) Donald, you are a real card-carrying cunt. (ON THE WORD "CUNT," THE BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN. MICHAEL OPENS THE DOOR.)

EMORY

(AS MICHAEL OPEN THE DOOR, EMORY SCREAMS.) ALL RIGHT THIS IS A RAID! EVERYBODY'S UNDER ARREST! (EMORY HANDS MICHAEL A LASAGNE DISH, THEN HE THROWS HIS ARMS AROUND MICHAEL NECK AND GIVES HIM A HUG. HE IS WEARING A RED VELVET KNICKER SUIT WITH KNEE BOOTS.) Hello, darlin'! Connie Casserole. Oh, Mary, don't ask.

MICHAEL

(SHOVES THE DISH BACK TO EMORY.) Hello, Emory. Put it in the kitchen.

EMORY

(SPOTS DONALD STANDING ON THE STEPS, AND CROSSES LEFT AND UP CENTER.) Who is this exotic woman over here? (HANK AND LARRY ENTER THE APARTMENT AND STAND ON THE LANDING NEXT TO MICHAEL. HANK HAS ON A SUIT AND

TIE, AND LARRY HAS ON A DESIGNER SHIRT WITH A SPORTS JACKET AND PANTS. THEY BOTH CARRY BIRTHDAY GIFTS.)

MICHAEL

Hi, Hank. Larry. (THEY SAY "HI," SHAKE HANDS, AND HANK CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO SOFA D AND STANDS WHILE LARRY STAYS ON THE LANDING AND LOOKS OVER TO DONALD.)

DONALD

Hi, Emory.

EMORY

My dear, I thought you had perished! Where have you been hiding your classically chiseled features?

DONALD

(TO EMORY.) I don't live in the city anymore.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES TO TABLE K, DOWN LEFT, TO GET HANK'S GIFT.) Here, I'll take that, Where's yours, Emory? (CROSS BACK UP RIGHT TO GET LARRY'S.)

EMORY

It's arriving later. (EMORY EXITS TO KITCHEN UP CENTER. LARRY AND DONALD'S EYES HAVE MET. HANK HAS HANDED MICHAEL HIS GIFT. LARRY IS TOO PREOCCUPIED.)

HANK

Larry! Larry!

LARRY

What!

HANK

Give Michael the gift!

LARRY

Oh. Here. (LARRY GIVES GIFT TO MICHAEL. MICHAEL CROSSES AWAY UP LEFT TO BUFFET TO DEPOSIT GIFTS. LARRY CROSSING TO HANK DOWN LEFT.) Louder. So my mother in Philadelphia can hear you.

HANK

Well, you were just standing there in a trance.

MICHAEL

(TO LARRY AND HANK.) You both know Donald, don't you? (HANK CROSSES RIGHT AROUND SOFA C. HE CROSSES UP RIGHT CENTER TO DONALD.)

DONALD

(DONALD LOOKS TOWARD LARRY.) Sure. Nice to see you. (TO HANK.) Hi.

HANK

(SHAKING DONALD'S HAND.) Nice to meet you.

MICHAEL

Oh, I thought you'd met.

DONALD

Well . . .

LARRY

We haven't exactly met but we've . . . Hi.

DONALD

Hi.

HANK

(DONALD CROSSES RIGHT TO BAR STOOL F.) But you've what?

LARRY

. . . Seen . . . each other before.

MICHAEL

Well, that sounds murky. (CROSS DOWN CENTER TO PLATFORM EDGE.)

HANK

You've never met but you've seen each other.

LARRY

(EMORY RE-ENTERS UP CENTER FROM THE KITCHEN, CROSSING TO MICHAEL AT CENTER.) What was wrong with the way I said it.

HANK

Where?

EMORY

(LOUD ASIDE TO MICHAEL.) I think they're going to have their first fight.

LARRY

(CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO RIGHT ARM OF SOFA C AND SITS.) The first one since we got out of the taxi.

MICHAEL

(RE: EMORY. CROSS DOWN TO LARRY WHO LOOKS UP TO EMORY.) Where'd you find this trash?

LARRY

Downstairs leaning against a lamppost. (HANK CROSSES LEFT, AND DOWN LEFT AND SITS ON SOFA D.)

EMORY

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER BEHIND SOFA D.) With an orchid behind my ear and big wet lips painted over the lipline.

MICHAEL

Just like Maria Montez.

DONALD

Oh, please!

EMORY

(CROSSING TO DONALD LEFT.) What have you got against Maria?--she was a good woman.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TO THE CENTER OF THE SOFAS.) Listen, everybody, this old college friend of mine is in town and he's stopping by for a fast drink on his way to dinner somewhere. But, listen, he's straight.

LARRY

(MICHAEL CROSSES BACK TO STAGE LEFT SIDE OF SOFA C.) Straight! If it's the one I met he's about as straight as the Yellow Brick Road.

MICHAEL

No, you met Justin Stuart. (EMORY CROSSES UP CENTER TO BUFFET TABLE L.)

HANK

I don't remember meeting anybody named Justin Stuart.

LARRY

Of course you don't, dope. I met him.

MICHAEL

Well, this is someone else.

DONALD

Alan McCarthy. A very close total stranger.

MICHAEL

(EMORY CROSSES RIGHT TO STAIRS AND GOES UP.) It's not that I care what he would think of me, really--it's just that he's not ready for it. And he never will be. You understand that, don't you, Hank?

HANK

Oh, sure.

LARRY

You honestly think he doesn't know about you?

MICHAEL

If there's the slightest suspicion, he's never let-on one bit.

EMORY

(FROM TOP OF STAIRS.) What's he had, a lobotomy? (CROSSES UP, EXITS TO BATHROOM.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING STAGE RIGHT CENTER.) I was super careful when I was in college and I still am whenever I see him. I don't know why, but I am.

DONALD

Tilt.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TO THE BAR.) You may think it was a crock of shit, Donald, but to him I'm sure we were close friends. The closest. To pop that balloon now just wouldn't be fair to him. Isn't that right?

LARRY

Whatever's fair. (LARRY LOOKS DIRECTLY TO HANK.)

MICHAEL

Well, of course. And if that's phony of me, Donald, then that's phony of me and make something of it.

DONALD

I pass.

MICHAEL

(CROSS RIGHT BEHIND SOFA D AND STOP AT THE CENTER OF THE BACK.) Well, even you have to admit it's much simpler to deal with the world according to its rules and then go right ahead and do what you damn well please. You do understand that, don't you?

DONALD

Now that you've put it in layman's terms.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT AROUND SOFA D AND SITS ON LEFT SIDE.) I was just like Alan when I was in college. Very large in the dating department. Wore nothing but those constipated Ivy League clothes and those ten-pound cordovan shoes. (TO HANK.) No offense.

HANK

(CROSSES LEGS AWAY FROM MICHAEL.) Quite all right. (EMORY ENTER FROM BATHROOM, STOPS AT MIRROR ON RIGHT WALL, CROSSES DOWN TO STEPS AND DOWN TO LANDING.) I butchered-it-up quite a bit. And I didn't think I was lying to myself. I really thought I was straight.

EMORY

(ON LANDING.) Who do you have to fuck to get a drink around here?

MICHAEL

(IN AN EDGY TONE.) Will you light somewhere? (EMORY SITS ON LANDING.) Or I thought I thought I was straight. I know I didn't come out til after I'd graduated.

DONALD

What about all those week ends up from school?

MICHAEL

I still wasn't out. I was still in the "Christ-Was-I-Drunk-Last-Night Syndrome."

LARRY

The what?

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B DOWN RIGHT SIDE.) The Christ-Was-I-Drunk-Last-Night Syndrome. You know, when you made it with some guy in school and the next day when you had to face each other there was always a lot of ship-kicking crap about, "Man, was I drunk last night! Christ, I don't remember a thing!"

DONALD

You were just guilty because you were Catholic, that's all.

MICHAEL

That's not true. (CROSSING LEFT TOWARDS LARRY. LOOKING AT DONALD.) The Christ-Was-I-Drunk-Last-Night Syndrome knows no religion. It has to do with immaturity. Although I will admit there's a high percentage of it among Mormons.

EMORY

Trollop.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING BEHIND SOFA C TO CENTER STAGE BEHIND TABLE J.) Somehow, we all managed to justify out actions in those days. I later found out that even Justin Stuart, my closest friend--

DONALD

Other than Alan McCarthy.

MICHAEL

(NASTY GLARE TO DONALD.) --was doing the same thing. Only Justin was going to Boston on week ends.

LARRY

(TO HANK.) Sound familiar? (MOTIONS TO HANK FOR A CIGARETTE.)

MICHAEL

Yes, long before Justin or I or God-only-donws how many others came out, we used to get drunk and "horse-around" a bit. (CROSSING RIGHT AND STANDING BEHIND SOFA D.) You see in the Christ-Was-I-Drunk-Last-Night Syndrome, you really are drunk. That part of it is true. It's just that you also do remember everything. Oh God, I use to have to get loaded to go in a gay bar!

DONALD

Well, times certainly have changed. (CROSS LEGS.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT AROUND SOFA D TO SIT LEFT END.) They have. Lately I've gotten to despise the bars. Everybody standing around and standing around--its like one eternal intermission.

HANK

(TO LARRY.) Sound familiar? (CROSS LEGS.)

EMORY

I can't stand the bars either. All that cat-and-mouse business--you hang around staring at each other all night and wind-up going home alone.

MICHAEL

And pissed.

LARRY

A lot of guys have to get loaded to have sex. (QUICK LOOK TO HANK WHO IS UNAMUSED. CROSS LEGS.) So I've been told.

MICHAEL

If you remember, Donald, the first time we made it I was so drunk I could hardly stand up.

DONALD

You were so drunk you could hardly get-it-up.

MICHAEL

(MOCK INNOCENCE.) Christ, I was so drunk I don't remember.

DONALD

Bullshit, you remember.

MICHAEL

(SINGS TO DONALD.) "Just friends, lovers no more . . ."

EMORY

You may as well be. Everybody thinks you are anyway.

DONALD

We never were--really.

MICHAEL

We didn't have time to be--we got to know each other too fast. (THE DOOR BUZZER SOUNDS AT WHICH TIME EVERYONE WHO HAS CROSSED LEGS, UNCROSSES THEM, MICHAEL GASPS AS HE CROSSES TO THE DOOR.) Now, please everybody, do me a favor and cool-it for the few minutes he's here.

EMORY

(RISES, CROSSES UP RIGHT TO THE BAR.) Anything for a sis, Mary.

MICHAEL

That's exactly what I'm talking about, Emory. No Camping!

EMORY

Sorry. (DEEP, DEEP VOICE TO DONALD.) Think the Giants are gonna win the pennant this year?

DONALD

(SITS STRAIGHT UP, WITH A DEEP, DEEP VOICE.) Fuckin' A, Mac. (MICHAEL OPENS THE DOOR TO REVEAL BERNARD, DRESSED IN A TURTLE NECK SWEATER AND A BROOKS BROTHERS JACKET. HE CARRIES A BIRTHDAY GIFT AND TWO BOTTLES OF RED WINE.)

EMORY

(BIG SCREAM. RUNNING DOWN RIGHT TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR, AND POSING WITH A CAMPY GESTURE.) Oh, it's only another queen!

BERNARD

(CROSSING DOWN TO FLOOR LEVEL.) And it ain't the Red one, either.

EMORY

It's the queen of spades! (MICHAEL LOOKS OUT IN THE HALL.)

MICHAEL

(CLOSING THE FRONT DOOR.) Bernard, is the downstairs door open?

BERNARD

It was, but I closed it.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN TO BERNARD.) Good. (RE: THE TWO BOTTLES OF RED WINE.) I'll take those. You can put your present with the others. (BERNARD HANDS HIM THE WINE, AND THE PHONE RINGS AT THE SAME TIME.)

BERNARD

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT BEHIND SOFA C) Hi, Larry. Hi, Hank.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT TO BAR WHEN PHONE RINGS.) Christ of the Andes! Donald, will you bartend, please? (CROSSES TO WALL PHONE OF THE KITCHEN, AND STANDS ON THE BUFFET PLATFORM, PUTTING THE WINE ON THE BUFFET TABLE.)

BERNARD

(CROSSING UP LEFT TO DONALD.) Hello, Donald. Good to see you. (THIS LINE STARTS A SEQUENCE OF LINES WHICH MUST FALL EXACTLY, AND QUICKLY. MICHAEL IS ON THE TELEPHONE, AS LARRY SOON WILL BE, AND THE REGULAR FLOW OF CONVERSATION MUST ALWAYS BE MAINTAINED.)

MICHAEL

(INTO PHONE.) Hello?

DONALD

(CROSSING RIGHT TO MEET BERNARD BEHIND SOFA D.) Bernard.

MICHAEL

Alan?

EMORY

(CROSSING UP LEFT CENTER BETWEEN BERNARD AND DONALD, AND PUTS HAND ON BERNARD.) Hi, Bernardette. Anybody ever tell you you'd look divine in a hammock, surrounded by louvres and ceiling fans and lots and lots of lush tropical ferns?

BERNARD

(TO EMORY.) You're such a fag. You take the cake.

EMORY

Oh, what about the cake--whose job was that?

LARRY

Mine. I ordered one to be delivered.

EMORY

How many candles did you say put on it--eighty?

MICHAEL

. . . What? Wait a minute. There's too much noise. Let me go to another phone. (CROSSES UP STEPS TO BEDROOM AFTER HANGING UP THE TELEPHONE DOWNSTAIRS.)

LARRY

(TWISTS IN SOFA TOWARD MICHAEL, WHO IS CROSSING UP STAIRS.) Michael, did the cake come?

MICHAEL

No.

DONALD

(TO MICHAEL.) What's up?

MICHAEL

Do I know?

LARRY

Jesus, I'd better call. (STANDS. TO MICHAEL.) Okay if I use the private line?

MICHAEL

(GOING ON UP STAIRS.) Sure. Go ahead. (STOPS DEAD ON STAIRS, TURNS.) Listen, everybody, there's some cracked crab on the table. Help yourselves. (RUNS ON UP STAIRS TO BED AND GETS PHONE FROM THE RIGHT TABLE. LARRY CROSSES UP TO THE KITCHEN TELEPHONE. HE PRESSES THE FREE LINE BUTTON, PICKS UP THE RECEIVER, AND DIALS INFORMATION.)

DONALD

(SHAKES HIS HEAD, CROSSES UP LEFT BEHIND THE BAR.) Is everybody ready for a drink?

EMORY

(FRIPPING UP HIS SWEATER, CROSSING UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET TABLE PLATFORM.) Ready! I'll be your topless cocktail waitress.

BERNARD

(CROSSING LEFT TO BAR STOOL F.) Please spare us the sight of your sagging tits.

EMORY

(TO HANK AND LARRY.) What're you having, kids?

MICHAEL

(HAVING PICKED UP THE RECEIVER UP STAIRS.) Yes, Alan . . .

LARRY

Vodka and tonic. (INTO PHONE.) Could I have the number for the Marseilles Bakery in Manhattan.

EMORY

(CROSSING COWN LEFT CENTER TO HANK.) A vod and ton and a . . .

HANK

Is there any beer?

EMORY

Beer! Who drinks beer before dinner?

BERNARD

Beer drinkers.

DONALD

That's telling him.

MICHAEL

. . . No, Alan, don't be silly. What's there to apologize for?

EMORY

Truck drivers do. Or . . . or wall-paperers. Not school teachers. They have sherry.

HANK

This one has beer.

EMORY

(CROSSING LEFT TO BAR.) Well, maybe school teachers in public schools.

EMORY

(CROSSING LEFT TO BAR.) Well, maybe school teachers in public schools.
(LOOKING RIGHT TO LARRY WHO IS HOLDING ON THE TELEPHONE.) How can a
sensitive artist like you live with an insensitive bull like that?

LARRY

(HANGING UP THE PHONE AND RE-DIALING.) I can't.

BERNARD

Emory, you'd live with Hank in a minute, if he'd ask you. In fifty-eight
seconds. Lord knows, you're sssensitive.

EMORY

(CROSSING LEFT TO BERNARD.) Why don't you have a piece of watermelon
and hush-up.

MICHAEL

. . . Alan, don't be ridiculous.

DONALD

(CROSSING WITH A BEER AROUND BAR AND DOWN CENTER TO HANK.) Here we go,
Hank.

HANK

(RISES.) Thanks. (DONALD CROSSES BACK BEHIND THE BAR TO MAKE ANOTHER
DRINK.)

LARRY

Shit. They don't answer.

DONALD

(GIVING BERNARD'S DRINK TO EMORY, WHO GIVES IT TO BERNARD.) What're
you haveing, Emory? (HANK CROSSES TO PICTURES ON THE STAGE LEFT WALL,
HE LOOKS AT THEM AND GRADUALLY WORKS HIS WAY AROUND THE ROOM LOOKING
AT EACH PICTURE.)

BERNARD

A Pink Lady.

EMORY

A vodka martini on-the-rocks, please. (SLAPS BERNARD'S HAND.)

LARRY

(HANGS UP.) Well, let's just hope.

MICHAEL

Lunch tomorrow will be great. (DONALD CROSSING UP CENTER TO LARRY WITH A DRINK AND BACK TO THE BAR TO MAKE EMORY'S.) One o'clock at the Oak Room at the Plaza okay? Fine.

BERNARD

(TO DONALD.) Donald, read any new libraries lately?

DONALD

One or three. I did the complete works of Doris Lessing this week. I've been depressed.

MICHAEL

Alan, forget it, will you? Bye, bye. (MICHAEL HANGS UP. RIPS SWEATER OFF AND DROPS IT ONTO THE BED. CROSSES TO THE BUREAU UP LEFT AND GETS ANOTHER SWEATER. CROSSES DOWN TO STEPS PULLING IT ON. CROSSES ON DOWN TO LANDING.)

DONALD

You must not work in Circulation any more.

BERNARD

Oh, I'm still there--every day.

DONALD

Well, since I moved, I only come in on Saturday evenings.

HANK

Looks like you stock-up for the week. (HE MOTIONS TO THE STACK OF BOOKS ON THE BAR AS HE CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO SOFA D AND SITS.)

BERNARD

(MICHAEL HAS STOPPED ON THE LANDING.) Are you kidding?--that'll last him two days.

EMORY

It would last me two years. I still haven't finished "Atlas Shrugged" which I started in 1912.

MICHAEL

(SITTING ON LANDING. TO DONALD.) Well, he's not coming.

DONALD

It's just as well now.

BERNARD

Some people eat, some people drink, and some take dope.

DONALD

I read.

MICHAEL

And read and read and read. It's a wonder your eyes don't turn back in your head at the sight of a dust jacket.

HANK

Well, at least, he's a constructive escapist.

MICHAEL

Yeah, what do I do? (CROSSING DOWN STEPS AND DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B.) --take planes. No, I don't do that any more. Because I don't have the money to do that any more. I go to the baths. That's about it.

EMORY

(CROSSING BEHIND SOFA D AND SITTING ON THE BACK.) I'm about to do both. I'm flying to the West Coast--

BERNARD

You still have that act with the donkey in Tijuana?

EMORY

(RISES.) I'm going to San Francisco on a well-earned vacation.

LARRY

(CROSSING TO SOFA C SITTING ON LEFT ARM.) No shopping.

EMORY

(CROSSING AROUND UP CENTER AREA TOWARD BED ROOM STAIRS.) Oh, I'll look for a few things for a couple of clients but I've been so busy

lately, I really couldn't care less if I never saw another piece of fabric or another stick of furniture as long as I live. (CROSSES UP TO THE THIRD STEP FOR NEXT LINE.) I'm going to the Club Baths and I'm not coming out til they announce the departure of TWA one week later.

BERNARD

(TO EMORY.) You'll never learn to stay out of the baths, will you. The last time Emily was taking the vapors, this big hairy number strolled in. Emory said, "I'm just resting," and the big hairy number said, "I'm just arresting!" It was the vice!

EMORY

(CROSSING DOWN LEFT TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF SOFA C AND SITTING.) You have to tell everything, don't you.

DONALD

(CROSSING RIGHT CENTER TO EMORY. LEANS IN ON STAGE LEFT SIDE ARM OF SOFA AS EMORY TURNS AROUND.) Here you go, Emory.

EMORY

Thanks, sonny. You live with your parents?

DONALD

Yeah. But it's all right--they're gay. (EMORY ROARS, SLAPS HAND ON THE KNEE. HANK GETS UP AND CROSSES IN FRONT OF EMORY DOWN LEFT AROUND SOFA D TO THE RECORD BEHIND THE BAR UP LEFT.) What happened to Alan?

MICHAEL

He suddenly got terrible icks about having broken down over the phone. Kept apologizing over and over. Did a big about-face and reverted to the old Alan right before my very eyes.

DONALD

Ears.

MICHAEL

Ears. Well, (RISES.) the cracked crab obviously did not work out. (CROSSES DOWN LEFT TOWARD THE TABLE K TO PICK UP THE TRAY OF CRACKED CRAB.)

EMORY

Just put that down if you don't want your hand slapped. I'm about to have some.

MICHAEL

(LEAVING TRAY.) It's really very good. (GIVES DONALD A LOOK.) I don't know why everyone has such an aversion to it. (PICKS UP HIS GLASS FROM TABLE K.)

DONALD

Sometimes you remind me of the Chinese water torture. I take that back. Sometimes you remind me of the relentless Chinese water torture. (HANK TURNS ON THE RECORD PLAYER AND A RECORDING OF THE "THEME FROM SHAFT" BEGINS TO PLAY.)

MICHAEL

Bitch.

BERNARD

(CROSSING BEHIND TABLE J, UP LEFT CENTER.) Yeah, baby, let's hear that sound.

EMORY

A drum beat and their eyes sparkle like Cartier's.

MICHAEL

Come on Bernard, let's dance. (MICHAEL CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER TO THE DANCE AREA. BERNARD STARTS TO SNAP HIS FINGERS AND MOVE TO THE RHYTHM OF THE MUSIC. HE CROSSES TOWARD MICHAEL.)

HANK

Michael, I wonder where Harold is?

EMORY

Yeah, where is the frozen fruit? (HANK CROSSES UP RIGHT TO BUFFET PLATFORM.)

MICHAEL

(TO DONALD.) Emory refers to Harold as the frozen fruit because of his former profession as an ice skater. (LARRY RISES AND CROSSES TO THE DANCE AREA.)

EMORY

She used to be Vera Hrubá Ralston of the Borscht Circuit.

BERNARD

(MICHAEL AND BERNARD HAVE BEGUN DANCING. LARRY IS DANCING ALONE. TO MICHAEL.) If your mother could see you now she'd have a stroke.

MICHAEL

Got a camera on you? (DOOR BUZZER. AT THE SOUND OF THE BUZZER, EMORY STANDS ON THE SEAT OF SOFA D AND LETS OUT A YELP.)

EMORY

Oh my God, it's Lilly Law! Everybody three feet apart! (MICHAEL CROSSES UP RIGHT TO THE FRONT DOOR AND HANK CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO THE STEREO. MICHAEL OPENS THE DOOR AND LOOKS OUT. HANK TURNS OFF THE PHONOGRAPH. EMORY QUICKLY SITS ON THE BACK OF THE SOFA WITH HIS FEET ON THE SEAT. LARRY QUICKLY SITS ON THE STAIRS TO THE BEDROOM.)

BERNARD

It's probably Harold now.

MICHAEL

(HE LEANS BACK INTO THE ROOM.) No, it's the delivery boy from the bakery.

LARRY

Thank God. (MICHAEL GOES OUT INTO THE HALL.)

EMORY

(LOUDLY, RISING WITH HIS REAR POINTED UP AND MOTIONING TO IT.) Ask him if he's got any hot cross buns!

HANK

(TO EMORY.) Come on Emory, knock it off.

BERNARD

You can take her anywhere but out.

EMORY

(TO HANK.) You remind me of an old maid school teacher.

HANK

You remind me of a chicken wing.

EMORY

I'm sure you meant that as a compliment. (EMORY SITS CORRECTLY ON SOFA.)

MICHAEL

(IN HALL.) Thank you, good night. (HANK TURNS THE STEREO ON AGAIN, THIS TIME IT IS DONNIE ELBERT'S RECORDING OF "WHERE DID OUR LOVE GO." MICHAEL CLOSES THE DOOR OF THE APARTMENT AND CROSSES TO THE KITCHEN WITH THE CAKE BOX.)

LARRY

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER TOWARD BERNARD.) Hey, Bernard, you remember that thing we used to do on Fire Island? (LARRY STARTS TO DO A KIND OF LINE DANCE.)

BERNARD

That was "in" so far back I think I've forgotten. (HE STARTS TO IMPROVISE WITH LARRY.)

EMORY

I remember. (CROSSES RIGHT TO CENTER OF LARRY AND BERNARD AND STARTS STEPS. BERNARD AND LARRY FOLLOW.)

LARRY

Well, show us.

MICHAEL

(HE ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN UP CENTER. CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER, AND FALLS IN LINE WITH THEM.) Well, if it isn't the Geriatrics Rockettes. (NOW ALL ARE DOING PRACTICALLY A PRECISION ROUTINE. DONALD CROSSES DOWN RIGHT WITH A DRINK TO SOFA D AND SITS ON THE ARM LEFT CENTER AND WATCHES. HANK CROSSES UP RIGHT TO THE BAR FOR A BEER. HE SITS ON STOOL E. AT A POINT IN THE DANCE THE DOOR BUZZER SOUNDS. NO ONE SEEMS TO HEAR IT. HANK TURNS TOWARD THE DOOR, HESITATES. HE LOOKS TOWARD MICHAEL WHO IS NOW DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE INTRICACIES OF THE DANCE. NO ONE, IT SEEMS, HAS HEARD IT BUT HANK. HE CROSSES UP RIGHT TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT TO REVEAL ALAN, DRESSED IN A BLACK TIE. HANK RAPIDLY CROSSES TO THE STEREO UP LEFT AND TURNS IT OFF. HE THEN CROSSES TO SOFA D TO THE DOWN LEFT ARM. THE DANCERS CONTINUE, TURNING AND SLAPPING THEIR KNEES AND LAUGHING WITH ABANDON. SUDDENLY MICHAEL LOOKS UP, STOPS DEAD. DONALD STANDS, BERNARD CROSSES DOWN TO CHAIR B AND SITS, MICHAEL AND THE OTHERS FREEZE WHERE THEY ARE. MICHAEL THEN CROSSES TO ALAN ON THE LANDING AND CLOSES THE DOOR.) I thought you said you weren't coming. (SEE FIGURE 3.)

ALAN

I . . . well, I'm sorry . . .

MICHAEL

(FORCED LIGHTLY.) We were just--acting silly . . .

FIGURE III



ALAN

Actually, when I called I was in phone booth around the corner. My dinner party is not far from here. And . . .

MICHAEL

Emory was just showing us this silly . . . dance.

ALAN

. . . well, then I walked past and your downstairs door was open and . . .

MICHAEL

(HOLDING ALAN'S ARM WHILE STILL ON THE LANDING.) This is Emory. (EMORY CURTSIES. MICHAEL GLARES AT HIM.) Everybody, this is Alan McCarthy. Counterclockwise, Alan: Larry, Emory, Bernard, Donald, and Hank. (ALL MUMBLE "HELLO," "HI.")

HANK

Nice to meet you.

ALAN

Good to meet you.

MICHAEL

Would you like a drink?

ALAN

Thanks, no. (HANK STANDS, LARRY CROSSES UP LEFT TO STAIRS AND SITS, EMORY CROSSES TO THE BUFFET AREA UP LEFT.) I . . . I can't stay . . . long . . . really.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING UP LEFT TO THE BAR.) Well, you're here now, so stay. What would you like?

ALAN

Do you have any rye?

MICHAEL

I'm afraid I don't drink it any more. You'll have to settle for gin or scotch or vodka.

DONALD

Or beer.

ALAN

Scotch, please.

DONALD

(CROSSING UP LEFT AROUND THE BAR. MICHAEL CROSSING DOWN RIGHT BEHIND SOFA C.) I'll get it.

HANK

Guess I'm the only beer drinker.

ALAN

(LOOKING AROUND THE GROUP.) Whose . . . birthday . . . is it?

LARRY

Harold's.

ALAN

(LOOKING FROM FACE TO FACE.) Harold?

BERNARD

He's not here yet.

EMORY

She's never been on time-- (MICHAEL SHOOTS EMORY A WITHERING GLANCE.)
He's never been on time in his--

MICHAEL

(CROSSES RIGHT TO ALAN AND PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HIM.) Alan's from Washington. We went to college together. Georgetown.

EMORY

Well, isn't that fascinating?

DONALD

(CROSSES RIGHT TO ALAN WITH DRINK.) If that's too strong, I'll put some water in it.

ALAN

It looks fine. Thanks. (DONALD CROSSES LEFT BACK TO THE BAR.)

HANK

Are you in the government? (ALAN CROSSES DOWN LEFT CENTER TO HANK AND STANDS BY SOFA C.)

ALAN

No. I'm a lawyer. What . . . what do you do?

HANK

I teach school.

ALAN

Oh. I would have taken you for an athlete of some sort. You look like you might play sports . . . of some sort.

HANK

Well, I'm no professional but I was on the basketball team in college and I play quite a bit of tennis.

ALAN

I play tennis too.

HANK

Great game. (A BEAT. SILENCE AS LARRY GETS CIGARETTE OUT OF POCKET, AND BERNARD AND EMORY LOOK BORED.) What . . . do you teach?

HANK

Math.

ALAN

Math?

HANK

Yes. (LARRY LIGHTS CIGARETTE.)

ALAN

Math. Well.

EMORY

Kinda makes you want to rush out and buy a slide rule, doesn't it.

MICHAEL

(PULLING EMORY AND BOTH HEAD UP CENTER FOR THE KITCHEN.) Emory. I'm going to need some help with dinner and you're elected.

EMORY

I'm always elected.

BERNARD

You're a natural born domestic.

EMORY

Said the African queen! You come too-- (BERNARD STARTS UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN EXIT TOO.) you can fan me while I make the salad dressing.

MICHAEL

(GLARING PHONY SMILE.) RIGHT THIS WAY, EMORY! (MICHAEL PUSHES EMORY AND BERNARD TO KITCHEN. THEY EXIT AND HE FOLLOWS. THE MUFFLED SOUND OF MICHAEL'S VOICE CAN BE HEARD.) You son-of-a-bitch!

EMORY

(OFFSTAGE.) What the hell do you want from me?

HANK

Why don't we all sit down? (CROSSES UP LEFT AROUND SOFA D AND SITS.)

ALAN

Sure. (SITS RIGHT END OF SOFA C. DONALD CROSSES UP RIGHT TO LARRY ON THE STEPS.)

LARRY

Hi.

DONALD

Hi.

ALAN

I really feel terrible---barging in on you fellows this way.

LARRY

(TO DONALD.) How've you been?

DONALD

Fine, thanks.

HANK

(TO ALAN.) Oh, that's okay.

DONALD

(TO LARRY.) And you?

LARRY

Oh . . . just fine.

ALAN

(TO HANK.) You're married?

HANK

What?

ALAN

I see you're married. (HE POINTS TO THE WEDDING BAND ON HANK'S HAND.)

HANK

Oh. (MICHAEL ENTERS UP CENTER AND STANDS ON THE BUFFET PLATFORM.)

MICHAEL

Yes. Hank's married.

ALAN

You have any kids?

HANK

Yes. Two. A boy nine, and a girl seven. You should see my boy play tennis--really puts his dad to shame. (HANK LOOKS TOWARD DONALD.)

DONALD

I better get some ice. (HE EXITS TO KITCHEN UP CENTER.)

ALAN

(TO HANK.) I have two kids too. Both girls.

HANK

Great.

MICHAEL

How are the girls, Alan?

ALAN

Oh, just sensational. (SHAKES HEAD.) They're something, those kids. God, I'm nuts about them.

HANK

How long have you been married?

ALAN

Nine years. (LARRY RISES.) Can you believe it, Mickey?

MICHAEL

No.

ALAN

Mickey used to go with my wife when we were all in school.

MICHAEL

Can you believe that? (EVERYONE LOOKS DOWN AS IF EMBARRASSED.)

ALAN

(TO HANK.) You live in the city?

LARRY

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO SOFA D ON THE LINE.) Yes, we do.

ALAN

Oh.

HANK

I'm in the process of getting a divorce. Larry and I are--roommates.

MICHAEL

Yes.

ALAN

Oh. I'm sorry. Oh, I mean--

HANK

I understand.

ALAN

(GETS UP.) I . . . I . . . I think I'd like another drink . . . if I may.

MICHAEL

Of course. (CROSSING DOWN CENTER.) What was it?

ALAN

I'll do it . . . if I may. (HE CROSSES LEFT WITH HIS GLASS TOWARD THE BAR. SUDDENLY, THERE IS A LOUD OFFSTAGE CRASH. ALAN JUMPS, LOOKS TOWARD THE KITCHEN.) What was that? (DONALD ENTERS UP CENTER WITH AN ICE BUCKET.)

MICHAEL

Excuse me. Testy temperament out in the kitch! (CROSSES UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN ENTRANCE. ALAN CROSSES BEHIND THE BAR, NERVOUSLY PICKING UP THE BOTTLES SEARCHING FOR THE SCOTCH. MICHAEL ENTERS THE KITCHEN.)

HANK

(TO LARRY.) Larry, where do you know that guy from?

LARRY

What guy? (DONALD CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR.)

DONALD

Can I help you, Alan?

ALAN

I . . . I can't seem to find the scotch.

DONALD

You've got it in your hand.

ALAN

Oh. Of course. How . . . stupid of me. (DONALD WATCHES ALAN FUMBLE WITH THE SCOTCH BOTTLE AND GLASS.)

DONALD

Why don't you let me do that?

ALAN

(GRATEFULLY HANDS HIM BOTH.) Thanks. (ALAN CROSSES BEHIND DONALD TO THE UP LEFT EDGE OF THE BAR.)

DONALD

Was it water or soda?

ALAN

Just make it straight--over ice.

MICHAEL

(ENTERS CROSSING LEFT TOWARD ALAN.) You see, Alan, I told you it wasn't a good time to talk. But we--

ALAN

It doesn't matter. I'll just finish this and go. (DONALD GIVES ALAN HIS DRINK. HE TAKES A LONG SWALLOW.)

LARRY

(CROSSING TO THE RIGHT END OF SOFA C AND SITTING.) Where can Harold be?

MICHAEL

Oh, he's always late. You know how neurotic he is about going out in public. It takes him hours to get ready.

LARRY

Why is that?

EMORY

(BREEZING IN FROM THE KITCHEN UP CENTER, CARRYING A STACK OF PLATES WHICH HE PLACES ON THE BUFFET TABLE UP CENTER.) Why is what?

LARRY

Why does Harold spend hours gettin ready before he can go out?

EMORY

Because she's a sick lady, that's why. (EXITS UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN.)

MICHAEL

Alan, as I was about to say, we can go in the bedroom and talk.

ALAN

(FINISHING HIS DRINK.) It really doesn't matter.

MICHAEL

Come on. Bring you drink.

ALAN

I . . . I've finished it.

MICHAEL

Well, make another one and come on. (CROSSES RIGHT TOWARD STAIRS. DONALD PICKS UP THE SCOTCH BOTTLE AND POURS INTO THE GLASS ALAN HAS IN HIS HAND.)

ALAN

(TO DONALD.) Thanks.

DONALD

Don't mention it.

ALAN

(TO HANK.) Excuse us. We'll be down in a minute. (CROSSES RIGHT TO STAIRS AND GOES UP.)

HANK

Sure. Sure.

LARRY

Oh, he'll still be here. (DONALD CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AROUND BAR TO STOOL F AND SITS.)

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL INDICATES STEPS TO ALAN.) Go ahead, Alan. I'll be right there. (MICHAEL CROSSES UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN AND EXITS. ALAN CROSSES INTO THE BEDROOM.)

HANK

(TO LARRY.) What was that supposed to mean?

LARRY

What was what supposed to mean?

HANK

You know.

LARRY

You want another beer?

HANK

No. You're jealous, aren't you? (HANK STARTS TO LAUGH. LARRY DOESN'T LIKE IT. MICHAEL ENTERS UP CENTER, AND CROSSES TO STAIRS AND ON UP TO THE BEDROOM WHERE ALAN IS SITTING ON THE BED. MICHAEL CROSSES UP RIGHT TO THE MIRROR AREA.)

LARRY

I'm Larry--You're jealous. (HANK CROSSES UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN.) Hey Donald, where've you been hanging out these days? (LARRY CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR.) I haven't seen you in a long time. (HANK EXITS.)

ALAN

(TO MICHAEL IN THE BEDROOM.) This is a marvelous apartment.

MICHAEL

It's too expensive. I work to pay rent.

ALAN

What are you doing these days?

MICHAEL

Nothing.

ALAN

Aren't you writing any more?

MICHAEL

I haven't looked at a typewriter since I sold the very very wonderful, very very marvelous screenplay that never got produced. (ALAN RISES, PRODUCES AND LIGHTS A CIGARETTE.)

ALAN

(CROSSING LEFT TO MICHAEL.) That's right, the last time I saw you, you were on your way to California. Or was it Europe?

MICHAEL

Hollywood. Which is not in Europe nor does it have anything whatsoever to do with California.

ALAN

(CROSSING TO DOWN LEFT CORNER OF THE BEDROOM.) I've never been there but I would imagine it's awful. Everyone must be terribly cheap.

MICHAEL

No, not everyone. Alan, I want to try to explain this evening . . .

ALAN

What's there to explain? Sometimes you just can't invite everybody to every party and some people take it personally. But I'm not one of them. I should apologize to you for inviting myself.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT TO MIRROR TO LOOK AT HIMSELF.) That's not exactly what I meant.

ALAN

Your friends all seem like very nice guys. That Hank is a very attractive fellow.

MICHAEL

. . . Yes. He is.

ALAN

We have a lot in common. What's his roommate's name?

MICHAEL

Larry.

ALAN

. . . What does he do?

MICHAEL

He's a commercial artist.

ALAN

I liked Donald too. (MICHAEL TURNS AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO ALAN.) The only one I didn't care too much for was--what's his name--Emory?

MICHAEL

Yes. Emory.

ALAN

(PUTS DRINK ON FLOOR, BY DOWN LEFT CORNER OF THE BED.) I just can't stand that kind of talk. It just grates on me.

MICHAEL

What kind of talk, Alan?

ALAN

Oh, you know. (MICHAEL SITS RIGHT ON BED.) His brand of humor, I guess.

MICHAEL

He can be really quite funny sometimes.

ALAN

I suppose so. If you find that sort of thing amusing. He just seems like such a goddamn little pansy. (SILENCE. A PAUSE. HE TURNS AWAY.) I'm sorry I said that. I didn't mean to say that. That's such an awful thing to say about anyone. But you know what I mean, Michael--you have to admit he is effeminate.

MICHAEL

He is a bit.

ALAN

A bit! He's like a . . . a butterfly in heat! I mean there's no wonder he was trying to teach you all a dance. He probably wanted to dance with you! (CROSSES OVER TO THE BED WHERE MICHAEL IS SITTING. HE SITS ON THE BED NEXT TO MICHAEL.) Oh, come on, man, you know me--you know how I feel--your private life is your own affair. (ON "AFFAIR," ALAN PUTS HIS HAND ON MICHAEL'S KNEE.)

MICHAEL

(ICY. HE RISES AS ALAN'S HAND GOES ONTO HIS KNEE.) No. I don't know that about you.

ALAN

I couldn't care less what people do--as long as they don't do it in public--or--or try to force their ways on the whole damned world.

MICHAEL

Alan, what was it you were crying about on the telephone?

ALAN

Oh, I feel like such a fool about that. I could shoot myself for letting myself act that way. I'm so embarrassed I could die.

MICHAEL

But Alan, if you were genuinely upset--that's nothing to be embarrassed about.

ALAN

All I can say is--please accept my apology for making such an ass of myself.

MICHAEL

You must have been upset or you wouldn't have said you were and that you wanted to see me--had to see me and had to talk to me.

ALAN

Can you forget it? Just pretend it never happened. I know I have. Okay?

MICHAEL

Is something wrong between you and Fran?

ALAN

(RISES AND CROSSES RIGHT TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.) Listen, I've got to go.

MICHAEL

(ALSO AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS BLOCKING ALAN'S DEPARTURE.) Why are you in New York?

ALAN

I'm dreadfully late for dinner.

MICHAEL

Whose dinner? Where are you going?

ALAN

(POINTS TO THE BATHROOM.) Is this the loo?

MICHAEL

Yes.

ALAN

Excuse me. (HE RAPIDLY CROSSES UP RIGHT AND INTO THE BATHROOM. MICHAEL REMAINS SILENT, STARES INTO SPACE. CROSSES LEFT AND SITS ON THE BED. DOWNSTAIRS, EMORY POPS IN FROM THE KITCHEN TO DISCOVER DONALD AND LARRY IN QUIET, INTIMATE CONVERSATION.)

EMORY

What's-going-on-in-here-on-Mary-don't-ask! (HE PUTS THE NAPKIN HOLDER ON THE BUFFET TABLE UP CENTER. HANK ENTERS WITH HIS SHIRT SLEEVES ROLLED UP CARRYING A CORKSCREW. AND GOES TO THE BUFFET. HE LOOKS TOWARD LARRY AND DONALD. DONALD SEES HIM.)

DONALD

Hank, why don't you come and join us?

HANK

That's an interesting suggestion. Whose idea is that?

DONALD

Mine.

LARRY

(TO HANK.) He means in conversation. (BERNARD ENTER UP CENTER FROM THE KITCHEN CARRYING TWO WINE GLASSES TO THE BUFFET TABLE. HE IS ALSO WITH-OUT A COAT.)

EMORY

(TO BERNARD.) Where're the rest of the wine glasses?

BERNARD

Ahz workin' as fas' as ah can! (A LA BUTTERFLY MCQUEEN.)

EMORY

They have to be told everything. Can't let 'em out of your sight.
(HE EXITS WITH BERNARD UP CENTER TO KITCHEN. DONALD CROSSES DOWN LEFT
TO SOFA D AND SITS LEFT. MICHAEL COMES DOWN STAIRS AND CROSSES DOWN
RIGHT CENTER BEHIND SOFA C. HANK OPENS THE WINE BOTTLE ON THE BUFFET.)

HANK

I thought maybe you were abiding by the agreement.

LARRY

We have no agreement.

HANK

We did.

LARRY

You did. I never agreed to anything!

DONALD

(LOOKS UP TO SEE MICHAEL, AND RAISES A CRAB CLAW TOWARD HIM.) To your health.

MICHAEL

Up yours.

DONALD

Up my health?

BERNARD

(ENTERS UP CENTER.) Where's the gent? (STEPS TO THE DOWN STAGE EDGE
OF THE BUFFET PLATFORM.)

MICHAEL

In the gents' room. If you can all hang on about five more minutes,
he's about to leave. (THE DOOR BUZZER SOUNDS, MICHAEL CROSSES UP RIGHT
TO IT.)

LARRY

Well, at last! (MICHAEL OPENS THE DOOR TO REVEAL A MUSCLE-BOUND
YOUNG MAN, WEARING BOOTS, TIGHT LEVIS, AND A COWBOY HAT. AROUND HIS
WRIST THERE IS A LARGE CARD TIED WITH A STRING.)

COWBOY

(SINGING FAST AS EMORY ENTERS UP CENTER FROM KITCHEN.)

"Happy birthday to you.

Happy birthday to you,

Happy birthday to you,

Happy birthday, dear Harold.

Happy birthday to you."

(WITH THE END OF THE SONG, HE GIVES MICHAEL A BIG KISS ON THE LIPS.)

MICHAEL

Who the hell are you?

EMORY

(CROSSES RIGHT TO COWBOY.) She's Harold's present from me and she's early! (QUICK TO COWBOY.) And that's not even Harold, you idiot!

COWBOY

You said whoever answered the door.

EMORY

(PULLING COWBOY DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) But not until midnight! (QUICKLY TO THE GROUP.) He's supposed to be a midnight cowboy!

DONALD

He is a midnight cowboy.

MICHAEL

He looks right out of a William Inge play to me.

EMORY

(TO COWBOY.) . . . Not until midnight and you're supposed to sing to the right person, for Chrissake! I told you Harold has very, very, tight, tight, black curly hair. (REFERRING TO MICHAEL.) This number's practically bald!

MICHAEL

Thank you and fuck you. (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B AND SITS.)

BERNARD

It's a good thing I didn't open the door.

EMORY

Not that tight and not that black.

COWBOY

I forgot. Besides, I wanted to get to the bars by midnight.

MICHAEL

He's a class act all the way around.

EMORY

What do you mean--get to the bars.! Sweetie, I paid you for the whole night, remember?

COWBOY

I hurt my back doing my exercises and I wanted to get to bed early tonight.

BERNARD

Are you ready for this one?

LARRY

(TO COWBOY.) That's too bad, what happened?

COWBOY

I lost my grip doing my chin-ups and I fell on my heels and twisted my back.

EMORY

You shouldn't wear heels when you do chin-ups.

COWBOY

(OBLIVIOUS.) I shouldn't do chin-ups--I got a weak grip to begin with.

EMORY

A weak grip. In my day it used to be called a limp wrist.

BERNARD

Who can remember that far back?

MICHAEL

(TO LARRY.) Who was it that always used to say, "You show me Oscar Wilde in a cowboy suit, and I'll show you a gay caballero."

DONALD

I don't know. Who was it who always used to say that?

MICHAEL

I don't know. Somebody.

LARRY

(CROSSING TO COWBOY.) What does your card say?

COWBOY

(HOLDING UP HIS WRIST AND CROSSING TO LARRY TO MEET BEHIND SOFA C.)
Here. You read it.

LARRY

(READING CARD.) "Dear Harold, bang, bang, you're alive. But roll-over and play dead. Happy Birthday, Emory." (ALAN ENTERS THE BEDROOM FROM THE BATH UPSTAIRS UP RIGHT AND CROSSES DOWN TO THE STAIRS.)

BERNARD

Ah, sheer poetry, Emory.

LARRY

And in your usual good taste.

MICHAEL

Yes, so conservative of you to resist a sign in Times Square.

EMORY

(GLANCING TOWARD THE STAIRS. ALAN IS NOW COMING DOWN THE STEPS.)
Cheese it! Here comes the socialite nun.

MICHAEL

Goddammit, Emory! (MICHAEL CROSSES TO THE BOTTOM OF THE STAIRS UP CENTER.)

ALAN

(ON THE BOTTOM STEP.) Well, I'm off. . . . Thanks, Michael, for the drink.

MICHAEL

You're entirely welcome, Alan. See you tomorrow?

ALAN

. . . No. No, I think I'm going to be awfully busy. I may even go back to Washington.

EMORY

Got a heavy date in La Fayette Square?

ALAN

What?

HANK

Emory.

EMORY

Forget it.

ALAN

(SEES COWBOY.) Are you . . . Harold?

EMORY

No, he's not Harold. (CROSSING TOWARD ALAN ON THE LINE.) He's for Harold. (SILENCE. ALAN LETS IT PASS. HE TURNS TO HANK. MICHAEL GLARES AT EMORY.)

ALAN

Goodbye, Hank. (HANK CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO ALAN.) It was nice to meet you.

HANK

Same here. (THEY SHAKE HANDS.)

ALAN

If you're ever in Washington--I'd like you to meet my wife.

HANK

Good.

LARRY

That'd be fun, wouldn't it, Hank?

EMORY

Yeah, they'd love to meet him--her. I have such a problem with pronouns.

ALAN

(QUICKLY TO EMORY.) How many esses are there in the word pronoun?
(HE CROSSES LEFT TO EMORY.)

EMORY

How'd you like to kiss my ass--that's got two or more essessss in it!

ALAN

How'd you like to blow me?

EMORY

What's the matter with your wife, she got lockjaw?

ALAN

(LASHING OUT.) Faggot. Fairy, pansy . . . (HE LUNGES AT EMORY. EMORY FALLS ON THE FLOOR. ALAN ATTACKS HIM FIERCELY.) queer, cocksucker! I'll kill you, you goddamn little mincing, swish! You goddamn freak! FREAK! FREAK! (PANDEMONIUM! EVERYONE OVERLAPS WORDS. ALAN HAS QUICKLY BEATEN EMORY TO THE FLOOR BEFORE ANYONE HAS RECOVERED FROM THE SURPRISE, AND REACTED TO MOVE.)

EMORY

Oh, my God, somebody help me! Bernard! He's killing me! (BERNARD CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO EMORY TO HELP. HANK RUSHES FORWARD AND PULLS ALAN OFF OF EMORY AND DOWN TOWARD THE AUDIENCE. HE DRAGS HIM LEFT TO THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF SOFA D. EMORY IS SCREAMING. DONALD RISES AND CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR.)

HANK

Alan! Alan! ALAN!

EMORY

Get him off me! Get him off me! Oh, my God, he's broken my nose! I'm BLEEDING TO DEATH! (BERNARD QUICKLY BENDS OVER EMORY, PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HIM AND LIFTS HIM TO THE DOWN RIGHT WHERE EMORY FALLS TO THE FLOOR.)

BERNARD

Somebody get some ice! And a cloth! (LARRY CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR AND GETS THE ICE BUCKET AND RETURNS. BERNARD QUICKLY WRAPS SOME ICE IN THE TOWEL, HOLDS IT TO EMORY'S MOUTH.)

EMORY

Oh, my face!

BERNARD

He busted you lip, that's all. It'll be all right. (MICHAEL IS STANDING IMMOBILE AS THE EVENTS HAPPEN. HANK GETS ALAN OVER TO THE POSITION IN FRONT OF THE SOFA AS THE BUZZER SOUNDS.)

DONALD

(TO COWBOY.) Would you mind waiting over there with the gifts? (COWBOY CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET AREA WHERE THE GIFTS ARE. THE BUZZER SOUNDS AGAIN. DONALD CROSSES RIGHT TO THE FRONT DOOR AND OPENS IT TO REVEAL HAROLD DRESSED IN A PANTS SUIT AND WITH SUNGLASSES. HAROLD ENTERS ONTO THE LANDING.) Well, Harold! Happy Birthday. You're just in time for the floor show which, as you see, is on the floor. (TO COWBOY.) Hey, you, this is Harold! (DONALD CLOSSES THE FRONT DOOR. HAROLD LOOKS AT COWBOY. COWBOY CROSSES RIGHT TO HAROLD AND SINGS.

COWBOY

(DURING THE SONG TO HAROLD, DONALD CROSSES LEFT TO THE STEREO AND TURNS IT ON. THE RECORD IS MICHEL LEGRAND'S "SUMMER OF '42.")
 "Happy birthday to you,
 Happy birthday to you,
 Happy birthday, dear Harold.
 Happy birthday to you."
 (COWBOY CONCLUDES THE SONG BY GIVING HAROLD A BIG KISS ON THE LIPS. HAROLD READS THE CARD AS DONALD TURNS THE MUSIC UP IN VOLUME. MICHAEL SURVEYS THE ROOM AND CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR AND POURS A DRINK. HAROLD BEGINS TO LAUGH AFTER READING THE CARD WHILE MICHAEL IS DRINKING. THE LIGHTS DIM AS ALL FREEZE AND SPOTS ON HAROLD AND MICHAEL HOLDING A REAL DRINK IN HIS HAND ARE THE LAST TO DIM. THIS CREATES A UNIFORMITY WITH THE OPENING AND ALSO POINTS UP MICHAEL'S DRINK. THE STAGE GOES DARK AND ALL ACTORS EXIT TO ASSIGNED EXITS. AFTER A FIVE SECOND BLACKOUT, THE HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP TO FULL FOR A TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION.)

ACT II

(ACT TWO OPENS EXACTLY AS ACT ONE OPENED. AS THE ACT OPENS, THE SPOTS ON HAROLD, WHO IS STILL LAUGHING, AND MICHAEL, WHO IS STILL DRINKING, COME UP FIRST FOLLOWED BY A FIVE SECOND DELAY AND THEN THE REMAINDER OF THE STAGE LIGHTS. THE RECORD IS STILL PLAYING AND ALL ACTORS ARE IN THE EXACT POSITIONS THEY WERE IN AT THE CLOSE OF ACT ONE. MICHAEL LOWERS HIS GLASS AND MOTIONS FOR DONALD TO CUT THE STEREO WHICH DONALD DOES.)

MICHAEL

(DONALD CROSSES RIGHT TO WALL BY THE STAIRS AND THE UP CENTER EXIT.)
What's so fucking funny?

HAROLD

(UNINTIMIDATED.) Life. Life is a god-damn laff-riot. You remember life. (HAROLD LIGHTS WHAT APPEARS TO BE A CIGARETTE.)

MICHAEL

You're stoned. It shows in your arm.

LARRY

Happy Birthday, Harold.

MICHAEL

(TO HAROLD.) You're stoned and you're late! You were supposed to arrive at this location at approximately eight-thirty dash nine o'clock!

HAROLD

What I am, Michael, is a thirty-two year old, ugly, pock-marked Jew Fairy--and if it takes me a while to pull myself together and if I smoke a little grass before I can get up the nerve to show my face to the world, it's nobody's god-damn business but my own. (INSTANT SWITCH TO A CHATTY TONE. CROSSING DOWN CENTER TOWARD BERNARD AND EMORY WHO ARE ON THE FLOOR.) And how are you this evening? (BERNARD AND EMORY RISE. HANK LIFTS ALAN TO SOFA D AND BOTH SIT. MICHAEL TURNS AWAY FROM HAROLD, AND POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK. DONALD WATCHES.)

EMORY

Happy Birthday, Hallie. (NOW WEARING A BLOODY SWEATER.)

HAROLD

What happened to you?

EMORY

(GROANS.) Don't ask!

HAROLD

Your lips are turning blue--you look like you've been rimming a snowman.

EMORY

(INDICATING ALAN. BERNARD HELPS EMORY UP FROM THE FLOOR.) That piss-elegant kooze hit me! (HAROLD LOOKS TOWARD THE SOFA. ALAN HAS SLUMPED FORWARD WITH HANDS OVER HIS EARS.)

MICHAEL

Careful, Emory, that kind of talk just makes him s'nervous.

HAROLD

(BERNARD AND EMORY CROSS TO SEATS A AND B DOWN RIGHT. HAROLD CROSSES LEFT NEARER TO SOFA C RIGHT END.) Who is she? Who was she? Who does she hope to be?

EMORY

Who knows, who cares!

HANK

His name is Alan McCarthy.

MICHAEL

Do forgive me for not formally introducing you.

HAROLD

(SARCASTICALLY TO MICHAEL.) Not the famous college chum. (DONALD CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO THE ICE BUCKET, THEN CROSSES UP LEFT BACK TO THE BAR.)

MICHAEL

(TOSSING AN ICE CUBE FROM HIS GLASS TO HAROLD.) Do a figure eight on that.

HAROLD

Well, well, well. (CROSSING UP AND LEFT BEHIND SOFA D OVER ALAN.) I finally get to meet dear ole Alan after all these years. And in black-tie too. Is this my surprise from you, Michael?

LARRY

I think Alan is the one who got the surprise.

DONALD

And, if you'll notice, he's absolutely speechless. (LARRY CROSSES UP TO THE STAIRS TO THE BEDROOM.)

EMORY

I hope she's in shock! She's a beast!

COWBOY

(INDICATING ALAN.) Is it his birthday too?

EMORY

(INDICATES COWBOY TO HAROLD. RISES AND CROSSES UP RIGHT BY THE LANDING TO COWBOY.) That's you surprise.

LARRY

Speaking of beasts.

EMORY

From me to you, darlin'. How do you like it?

HAROLD

(CROSSING RIGHT TO EMORY AND COWBOY.) Oh, I suppose he has an interesting face and body--but it turns me right off because he can't talk intelligently about art.

EMORY

Yeah, ain't it a shame?

HAROLD

I could never love anyone like that.

EMORY

Never. Who could?

HAROLD

I could and you could, that's who could! Oh, Mary, she's gorgeous! (HE CARESSES COWBOY'S HEAD.)

EMORY

She may be dumb, but she's all yours!

HAROLD

In affairs of the heart there are no rules! Where'd you ever find him?

EMORY

Rae knew where.

MICHAEL

(TO DONALD. MICHAEL LEANS TOWARD DONALD.) Rae is Rae Clark. That's R. A. E. She's Emory's dike friend who sings at a place in the Village. She wears pin-striped suits and bills herself, "Miss Rae Clark--Songs Tailored To Your Taste." (DONALD CROSSES RIGHT TO WALL CORNER BETWEEN THE STAIRS AND THE KITCHEN. COWBOY PICKS UP THE TRAY OF CRAB MEAT ON THE BUFFET TABLE AND INVESTIGATES.)

EMORY

Rae's a fabulous chanteuse. I adore the way she does "Down In The Depths On The Ninetieth Floor."

MICHAEL

The faggot national anthem. (HE EXITS RIGHT AND UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN WITH HIS GLASS.)

HAROLD

(TO EMORY. CROSSING CENTER STAGE.) All I can say is thank God for Miss Rae Clark. I think my present is a super surprise! I'm so thrilled to get it I'd kiss you but I don't want to get blood all over me!

EMORY

Ohhh, look at my top!

HAROLD

Wait'll you see your face.

BERNARD

Come on Emory, let's clean you up. (CROSSES RIGHT TO EMORY AND BOTH CROSS UP TO THE STAIRS AND START UP THE STEPS.) Happy Birthday, Harold.

HAROLD

(SMILES.) Thanks, love.

EMORY

My top's ruined!

MICHAEL

(FROM THE KITCHEN.) Take one of my sweaters in the bedroom.

DONALD

The one on the floor is vicuna.

BERNARD

(ON LANDING. TO EMORY.) You'll feel better after I bathe your face.
(BERNARD AND EMORY CONTINUE UP AND EXIT UP RIGHT INTO THE BATHROOM.)

HAROLD

Just another birthday party with the folks. (MICHAEL ENTERS UP CENTER FROM THE KITCHEN.)

MICHAEL

(HE IS HOLDING A WINE BOTTLE AND A GREEN CRYSTAL WHITE WINE GLASS. CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO HAROLD'S STAGE RIGHT SIDE.) Here's a cold bottle of Pully-Fuisse I bought especially for you, kiddo. (POURS A GLASS.)

HAROLD

Pussycat, all is forgiven. You can stay. (TAKES THE GLASS.) No. You can stay, but not all is forgiven. Cheers. (HAROLD BEGINS TO DRINK THE WINE.)

MICHAEL

I didn't want it this way, Hallie. (CROSSES UP CENTER AND PUTS THE WINE BOTTLE ON THE BUFFET TABLE.)

HAROLD

(INDICATING ALAN.) Who asked Mr. Right to celebrate my birthday?
(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO IN FRONT OF CHAIR B.)

DONALD

There are no accidents.

HAROLD

(REFERRING TO DONALD.) And who asked him?

MICHAEL

Guilty again.

HAROLD

Always got to have your crutch, haven't you. (HAROLD SITS CHAIR B.)

DONALD

I'm not leaving. (CROSSES TO THE BAR, LEFT, AND MAKES A DRINK.)

HAROLD

Nobody ever thinks completely of somebody else. They always please themselves, they always cheat, if only a little bit.

LARRY

(REFERRING TO ALAN.) Why is he sitting there with his hands over his ears?

DONALD

I think he has an ick. (DONALD LOOKS AT MICHAEL--MICHAEL RETURNS IT, STEELY.)

HANK

(TO ALAN.) Can I get you a drink?

LARRY

How can he hear you, dummy, with his hands over his ears? (DONALD LIGHTS A CIGARETTE FROM THE BAR.)

HAROLD

He can hear every word. In fact, he wouldn't miss a word if it killed him. (ALAN REMOVES HIS HANDS FROM HIS EARS.) What'd I tell you?

ALAN

I . . . I . . . feel sick. I think . . . I'm going to . . . throw up.
(HANK SUPPORTS ALAN AS THEY CROSS DOWN RIGHT AND UP TO THE STAIRS.
LARRY RISES, THEN SITS AGAIN AFTER THEY PASS ON UP THE STAIRS.)

HAROLD

Say that again and I won't have to take my appetite depressant.

BERNARD

(BERNARD AND EMORY COME OUT OF THE BATHROOM UP RIGHT IN THE BEDROOM. EMORY CROSSES RIGHT TO THE MIRROR ON THE WALL.) There. Feel better?

EMORY

Oh, Mary, what would I do without you? (EMORY LOOKS AT HIMSELF IN THE MIRROR.) I am not ready for my close-up, Mr. De Mille. Nor will I be for the next two weeks. (BERNARD CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO MICHAEL'S SWEATER AND PICKS IT UP.)

ALAN

(ON THE LANDING.) I'm going to throw up! Let me go! Let me go! (HE TEARS LOOSE OF HANK, BOLTS UP THE REMAINDER OF THE STAIRS TO THE BATHROOM. HANK FOLLOWS. EMORY LETS OUT A SCREAM AS ALAN RUSHES TOWARD HIM.)

EMORY

Oh, my God, he's after me again! (EMORY JUMPS LEFT ONTO THE BED.)

HANK

(IN BEDROOM.) He's sick.

BERNARD

Yeah, sick in the head. (CROSSES UP RIGHT TO SIDE OF BED WITH SWEATER.) Here, Emory, put this on.

EMORY

(GETS OFF THE BED ON THE RIGHT SIDE.) Oh, Mary, take me home. My nerves can't stand any more of this tonight. (BERNARD AND EMORY CLUTCH. EMORY TAKES THE SWEATER FROM BERNARD AND PUTS IT ON.)

HAROLD

(DOWNSTAIRS AT THE SAME TIME, HAROLD FLAMBOYANTLY TAKES OUT A CIGARETTE, TAKES A MATCH FROM A STRIKER.) TURNING ON! (WITH THAT. HE STRIKES THE MATCH AND LIGHTS UP. THROUGH A STRAINED THROAT.) Anybody care to join me? (HE WAVES THE CIGARETTE IN A SLOW PASS. LARRY CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO HAROLD. HE TAKES A PUFF.)

MICHAEL

Many thanks, no.

DONALD

No, thank you.

HAROLD

(TO COWBOY.) How about you, Tex?

COWBOY

Yeah. (HE CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO HAROLD AND SITS ON THE FLOOR ON THE STAGE LEFT SIDE OF HAROLD.)

MICHAEL

I find the sound of the ritual alone, utterly humiliating. (HE TURNS AWAY. EMORY AND BERNARD START DOWNSTAIRS, AND MICHAEL CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR TO FIX A DRINK.)

LARRY

I hate the smell jay's leave on your fingers.

HAROLD

Why don't you wash your hands? (LARRY CROSSES LEFT TO SOFA C AND SITS ON THE RIGHT ARM.)

EMORY

(ON THE BOTTOM STEP, WITH BERNARD ON THE LANDING.) Michael, I left the casserole in the oven. You can take it out any time.

MICHAEL

You're not going. (PICKS UP GIN AND POURS.)

EMORY

I couldn't eat now anyway.

HAROLD

Well, I'm absolutely ravenous. I'm going to eat until I have a fat attack.

MICHAEL

(TO EMORY. CROSSING RIGHT TO STAIRS.) I said, you're not going.

HAROLD

(TO MICHAEL.) Having a cocktail this evening, are we? In my honor? (BERNARD CROSSES ON DOWN THE STAIRS AND AROUND EMORY AND UP TO THE KITCHEN EXIT TO GET THE COATS.)

EMORY

(JUMPS OFF THE BOTTOM STEP AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TOWARD HAROLD.)
It's your favorite dinner, Hallie. I made it myself.

BERNARD

(STANDING AT THE KITCHEN EXIT.) Who fixed the casserole?

EMORY

Well, I made the sauce!

BERNARD

Well, I made the salad!

LARRY

Girls, please.

MICHAEL

Please what!

HAROLD

Beware the hostile fag. When he's sober he's dangerous, when he drinks, he's lethal.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN TOWARD LARRY BUT BEHIND SOFA C. REFERRING TO HAROLD.)
Attention must not be paid.

HAROLD

I'm starved, Em. I'm ready for some of your Alice B. Toklas's onion baked Lasagna.

EMORY

Are you really? Oh, that makes me so pleased maybe I'll just serve it before I leave. (EMORY EXITS UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN.)

MICHAEL

(TO EMORY.) You're not leaving.

BERNARD

I'll help. (EXITS INTO THE KITCHEN.)

LARRY

(RISES.) I better help too. We don't want nose-bleed in the lasagna.
(LARRY EXITS UP CENTER INTO THE KITCHEN AS BERNARD STICKS HIS HEAD OUT.)

BERNARD

When the sauce is on it you wouldn't know difference anyway. (EXITS.)

MICHAEL

(PROCLAMATION.) Nobody's going anywhere!

HAROLD

You are going to have schmerz tomorrow you wouldn't believe.

COWBOY

What are you two talking about? I don't understand. (HANK ENTERS FROM THE BATHROOM AND CROSSES DOWN TO THE BANISTER.)

DONALD

He's working through his Oedipus Complex, sugar. With a machete.

COWBOY

Huh?

HANK

Michael, is there any air spray? (HE IS LEANING OVER THE BANISTER.)

HAROLD

Hair spray! You're supposed to be holding his head, not doing his hair.

HANK

Air spray, not hair spray.

MICHAEL

There's a can of floral spray right on top of the john.

HANK

Thanks. (HANK CROSSES UP RIGHT AND INTO THE BATHROOM.)

HAROLD

(TO MICHAEL.) Aren't you going to say, "If it was a snake, it would have bitten you."

MICHAEL

(INDICATING COWBOY.) That is something only your friend would say.

HAROLD

(TO MICHAEL.) I am turning-on and you are just turning. (MICHAEL AND HAROLD LOOK AT EACH OTHER FOR A BEAT. MICHAEL DECIDES TO BREAK AND CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET WHILE LIGHTING A CIGARETTE.) I keep my grass in the medicine cabinet. In a Band-Aid box. Somebody told me it's the safest place. If the cops arrive you can always lock your self in the bathroom and flush it down the john. (HAROLD REMOVES HIS GLASSES AND PLACES THEM IN HIS POCKET.)

DONALD

Very cagey.

HAROLD

It makes more sense than where I was keeping it--in an oregano jar in the spice rack. I kept forgetting and accidentally turning my hateful mother on with the salad. (A BEAT.) But I think she liked it. No matter what meal she comes over for--even if it's breakfast--she says, "Let's have a salad!" (HAROLD LOOKS TO MICHAEL AS COWBOY SPEAKS.)

COWBOY

(TO MICHAEL.) Why do you say, I would say, "If it was a snake it would have bitten you"? I think that's what I would have said.

MICHAEL

Of course you would have, baby. That's the kind of remark your pint-size brain thinks of. (BEGINS CROSSING DOWN RIGHT TO COWBOY, AND STOPS RIGHT IN FRONT OF HIM.) You are definitely the type who still moves his lips when he reads and who sits in a steam room and says things like, "Hot enough for you?"

COWBOY

I never use the steam room when I go to the gym. It's bad after a workout. It flattens you down.

MICHAEL

Just after you've broken your back to blow yourself up like a poisoned dog.

COWBOY

Yeah.

MICHAEL

(MICHAEL BEGINS MOVING ABOUT IN AN ARC PATTERN UP STAGE AND ENDING UP ON THE STAGE RIGHT SIDE OF SOFA D WITH HIS BACK TO HAROLD.) You're right, Harold. Not only can he not talk intelligently about art, he can't even follow from one sentence to the next.

HAROLD

But he's beautiful. He has unnatural, natural beauty. Not that that means anything.

MICHAEL

It doesn't mean everything.

HAROLD

Keep telling yourself that as your hair drops out by the handfuls. Not that it's not natural for one's hair to recede as one reaches seniority. Not that those wonderful lines that have begun creasing our countenances don't make all the difference in the world because they add so much character.

MICHAEL

Faggots are worse than women about their age. They think their lives are over at thirty. Physical beauty is not that god-damned important!

HAROLD

Of course not. How could it be?--it's only in the eye of the beholder.

MICHAEL

(ABRUPTLY TURNING AND CROSSING RIGHT TOWARD HAROLD TO RIGHT CENTER.) And it's only skin deep--don't forget that one.

HAROLD

(RISES.) Oh, no, I haven't forgotten that one at all. (CROSSING LEFT TOWARD MICHAEL SO HE IS CENTERED BETWEEN COWBOY, SITTING ON THE FLOOR, AND MICHAEL.) It's only skin deep and it's transitory too. It's terribly transitory. I mean, how long does it last?--thirty or forty or fifty years at the most--depending on how well you take care of yourself. And not counting, of course, that you might die before it runs out anyway. Yes, it's too bad about this poor boy's face. (HE TAKES COWBOY'S HEAD IN HIS HANDS.) It's tragic. He's absolutely cursed! How can his beauty ever compare with my soul? And although I have never seen my soul, I understand from my mother's rabbi that it's a knock-out. I, however, cannot seem to locate it for a gander.

And if I could, I'd sell it in a flash for some skin-deep, transitory, meaningless beauty! (ALAN COMES OUT OF THE BATHROOM AND CROSSES LEFT AND SITS ON THE BED. LARRY COMES OUT FROM THE KITCHEN, UP CENTER, AND PUTS PLATES ON THE BUFFET TABLE.)

MICHAEL

(MAKES THE SIGN OF THE CROSS WITH HIS DRINK IN HAND.) Forgive him, Father, for he know not what he do. (HE DRINKS. HANK COMES INTO THE BEDROOM UPSTAIRS, AND TURNS OUT THE LIGHT WITH THE SWITCH OVER THE BED. ALAN LIES ON THE BED, AND HANK CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.)

HAROLD

Michael, you kill me. You don't know what side of the fence you're on. If somebody says something pro-religion, you're against them. If somebody denies God, you're against them. (CROSSING RIGHT TO CHAIR B.) One might say that you have some problem in that area. You can't live with it (SITS.) and you can't live without it!

EMORY

(ENTERS FROM KITCHEN VIA UP CENTER CARRYING THE HOT CASSEROLE WITH POT HOLDERS, AND CROSSES LEFT TO THE BUGGET.) Hot stuff! Comin' through!

MICHAEL

(TO EMORY.) One could murder you with very little effort.

HAROLD

(TO MICHAEL.) You hang onto that great insurance policy called The Church.

MICHAEL

That's right. I believe in God and if it turns out that there really isn't one, okay. Nothing lost. But if it turns out that there is--I'm covered. (BERNARD ENTERS UP CENTER CARRYING A SALAD BOWL AND CROSSES LEFT TO THE BUFFET WHERE HE PLACES IT. EMORY AND BERNARD MOVE THE TABLE OUT FROM THE WALL AND PUT THE PRESENTS ON THE FLOOR UNDERNEATH. BERNARD LIGHTS THE CANDLES ON THE TABLE.)

EMORY

(TO MICHAEL.) Harriet Hypocrite, that's who you are.

MICHAEL

Right. (CROSSING UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET TOWARD EMORY.) I'm one of those truly rotten Catholics who gets drunk, sins all night and goes to Mass the next morning.

EMORY

Gilda Guilt. It depends on what you think sin is.

MICHAEL

Would you just shut-up your god-damn minty mouth and get back in the god-damn kitchen!

EMORY

Say anything you want--just don't hit me! (HE EXITS INTO THE KITCHEN UP CENTER WITH HIS POT HOLDERS.)

MICHAEL

Actually, I suppose Emory has a point--I only go to confession before I get on a plane.

BERNARD

Do you think God's power exists only at thirty thousand feet?

MICHAEL

It must. On the ground I am God. In the air, I'm just one more scared son-of-a-bitch. (HANK STARTS DOWN THE STAIRS.)

COWBOY

Me too. That is, when I'm not stoned or tripping.

LARRY

(TO HANK. BERNARD POURS THE WINE.) Well, is it bigger than a bread-stick?

HANK

(IGNORES LAST REMARK; TO MICHAEL.) He's lying down for a minute. (HE STOPS ON THE BOTTOM STEP.)

HAROLD

How does the bathroom smell?

HANK

Better.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TO BAR AND POURING GIN.) Before it smelled like somebody puked. Now it smells like somebody puked in a gardenia patch. (EMORY ENTER UP CENTER WITH ROLLS GOING LEFT TO THE BUFFET TABLE.)

LARRY

And how does the big hero feel?

HANK

Lay off, will you.

EMORY

Dinner is served!

HAROLD

(CROSSING UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET.) Emory, it looks absolutely fabulous. (HE PUTS DOWN THE WINE GLASS AND PICKS UP A PLATE AND A FORK AND NAPKIN.)

EMORY

I'd make somebody a good wife. (EMORY AND BERNARD START SERVING. EMORY SERVES THE PASTA, BERNARD SERVES THE SALAD.) I could cook and do an apartment and entertain . . . (MICHAEL CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO SOFA D AND SITS WHILE EMORY GRABS A ROSE FROM AN ARRANGEMENT ON THE TABLE, CLENCHES IT BETWEEN HIS TEETH, SNAPS HIS FINGERS, AND STRIKES A POSE.) Kiss me quick, I'm Carmen! (HAROLD JUST LOOKS AT HIM BLANKLY AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B AGAIN AND SITS. EMORY TAKES THE FLOWER OUT OF HIS MOUTH.) One really needs castanets for that sort of thing.

MICHAEL

And a getaway car. (HANK CROSSES LEFT TO THE BUFFET.)

EMORY

What would you like, big boy?

LARRY

Alan McCarthy, and don't hold the mayo.

EMORY

I can't keep up with you two-- (INDICATES HANK, THEN LARRY.) I thought you were mad at him--now he's bitchin' you. What gives? (HANK TAKES HIS FOOD AND WINE AND CROSSES TO SOFA C AND SITS DOWN RIGHT.)

LARRY

Never mind. (EMORY MOTIONS COWBOY OVER WHO CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET.)

COWBOY

What is it?

LARRY

Lasagna. (CROSSING UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET.)

COWBOY

It looks like spaghetti and meatballs sorta flattened out.

DONALD

It's been in the steam room.

COWBOY

It has?

MICHAEL

(CONTEMPTUOUSLY.) It looks like spaghetti and meatballs sorta flattened out. Ah, yes, Harold--truly enviable.

HAROLD

As opposed to you who knows so much about haute cuisine. Raconteur, gourmet, troll. (LARRY CROSSES LEFT BEHIND SOFA D AND LEANS ON THE BACK OF IT.)

COWBOY

It's good. (CROSSING TO CHAIR A DOWN RIGHT AND SITTING.)

HAROLD

(QUICKLY.) You like it, eat it.

MICHAEL

Stuff your mouth so that you can't say anything. (DONALD CROSSES RIGHT AND TAKES A PLATE.)

HAROLD

(MICHAEL CROSSES RIGHT TO FRONT DOOR LANDING, THEN DOWN TO THE STEPS AND SITS.) Turning.

BERNARD

(TO DONALD.) Wine?

DONALD

No thanks. (BERNARD HANDS EMORY A PLATE, WHICH EMORY PUTS FOOD ON.)

MICHAEL

Aw, go on, kiddo, force yourself. Have a little vin ordinaire to wash down all that depressed pasta. (DONALD CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR GLANCING TOWARD MICHAEL.)

HAROLD

Somelier, connoisseur, pig.

BERNARD

(EMORY HANDS BERNARD A PLATE HE HAS SERVED WITH FOOD. TO EMORY.) Aren't you going to have any?

EMORY

No. My lip hurts too much to eat.

MICHAEL

(RISES AND CROSSES LEFT TOWARD BERNARD AND STOPS AT DOWN CENTER ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF SOFA C.) I hear if you puts a knife under de bed it cuts de pain.

HAROLD

(TO MICHAEL.) I hear if you put a knife under your chin it cuts your throat.

EMORY

Anybody going to take a plate up to Alan?

MICHAEL

The punching bag has now dissolved into Flo Nightingale.

LARRY

Hank?

HANK

I don't think he'd have any appetite. (ALAN MOVES DOWN TO THE TOP OF THE STAIRS.)

MICHAEL

Ladies and gentlemen (MICHAEL CROSSES UP CENTER TO STAIRS AND STANDS ON THE THIRD STEP.) Correction? Ladies and ladies, (BERNARD CROSSES RIGHT TO FRONT LANDING AND SITS.) I would like to announce that you have just eaten Sebastian Veneble.

COWBOY

Just eaten what?

MICHAEL

Not what, stupid, who. A character in a play. A fairy who was eaten alive. I mean the chop-chop variety.

COWBOY

Jesus. (HE PUTS HIS PLATE ON THE FLOOR.)

HANK

Did Edward Albee write that play?

MICHAEL

No. Tennessee Williams. (LEANS ON THE WALL OF THE STAIRS.)

HANK

Oh, yeah.

MICHAEL

Albee wrote "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe?"

LARRY

Dummy.

HANK

I know that. I just thought maybe he wrote that other one too.

LARRY

(TURNING FROM HANK.) Well, you made a mistake.

HANK

What's the difference? You can't add. (LARRY CROSSES LEFT AND DOWN AROUND SOFA D AND SITS. BERNARD LAUGHS.)

COWBOY

Edward who?

MICHAEL

(TO EMORY.) How much did you pay for him?

EMORY

He was a steal.

MICHAEL

He's a ham sandwich--fifty cents any time of the day or night. (HE DRINKS WHILE DONALD CROSSES UP RIGHT TO THE BUFFET TABLE WITH HIS PLATE.)

HAROLD

King of the Pig People. (MICHAEL LOOKS STRAIGHT TO HAROLD.)

EMORY

(TO DONALD.) Would you like some more?

DONALD

No, thank you, Emory. It was very good.

EMORY

Did you like it?

COWBOY

I'm not a steal. I cost twenty dollars. (DONALD RETURNS DOWN LEFT TO STOOL E. BERNARD RISES AND CROSSES LEFT TO THE BUFFET WITH HIS PLATE.)

EMORY

More?

BERNARD

(NODS NEGATIVELY.) It was delicious--even if I did make it myself.

EMORY

Isn't anybody having seconds? (HE BENDS OVER TO WHISPER CAKE TO BERNARD.)

HAROLD

(EMORY GOES TO THE KITCHEN UP CENTER AS HAROLD CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET.) I'm going to have seconds and thirds and maybe even fifths. I'm absolutely desperate to keep the weight up.

MICHAEL

(PARODYING HAROLD.) You're absolutely paranoid about absolutely everything. (BERNARD CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO COWBOY AND THEY CROSS TOGETHER TO THE KITCHEN, LEFT AND UP CENTER. THEY EXIT.)

HAROLD

Oh, yeah, well, why don't you not tell me about it? (TURNS AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B AGAIN.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN ABOVE SOFA C.) You starve yourself all day, living on coffee and cottage cheese so that you can gorge yourself at one meal. Then you feel guilty and moan and groan about how fat you are and how ugly you are when the truth is you're no fatter or thinner than you ever are.

EMORY

(ENTERS UP CENTER FROM KITCHEN.) Polly Paranoia. (EMORY MOVES DOWN RIGHT CENTER, AND AROUND SOFA C TO TABLE K TO TAKE HANK'S PLATE.)

HANK

Just great, Emory. Thanks.

EMORY

Connie Casserole, no-trouble-at-all-oh-Mary, D. A. (HE CROSSES LEFT TO LARRY FOR HIS PLATE AND CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING UP TOWARD STAIRS WHILE TALKING TO HAROLD.) . . . And this pathological lateness. It's downright crazy.

HAROLD

(WITHOUT EVEN LOOKING TO MICHAEL.) Turning.

MICHAEL

(EMORY EXITS TO KITCHEN WITH THE DIRTY DISHES AS MICHAEL CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO THE RIGHT SIDE OF SOFA C AND STARES DIRECTLY AT HAROLD.) Standing before a bathroom mirror for hours and hours before you can

walk out on the street. And looking no different after Christ knows how many applications of Christ knows how many ointments and salves and creams and masks.

HAROLD

I've got bad skin, what can I tell you? (LARRY CROSSES DOWN CENTER TO HANK AND TAPS HIS SHOULDER TO GET HIM TO HELP PUT THE BUFFET TABLE BACK AGAINST THE WALL.)

MICHAEL

Who wouldn't after they deliberately take a pair of tweezers and deliberately mutilate their pores--no wonder you've got holes in your face after the hack-job you've done on yourself year in and year out! (HANK RISES WITH HIS WINE GLASS AND CROSSES AROUND SOFA AND UP TO THE BUFFET TO HELP LARRY.)

HAROLD

(COOLLY BUT DEFINITELY.) You hateful sow. (LARRY AND HANK MOVE THE TABLE TO THE WALL AND PUT THE PRESENTS ONTO THE TABLE AGAIN. LARRY THEN CROSSES RIGHT TO STAIRS AND SITS AS HANK FOLLOWS AND LEANS ON THE CORNER BETWEEN THE KITCHEN AND THE STAIRS.)

MICHAEL

Yes, you've got scars on your face--but they're not that bad and if you'd leave yourself alone you wouldn't have any more than you've already awarded yourself.

HAROLD

You'd really like me to compliment you now for being so honest, wouldn't you? For being my best friend who will tell me what even my best friends won't tell me. Slut!

MICHAEL

And the pills! (ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE GROUP. CROSSING LEFT TO BEHIND SOFA D STAGE LEFT END.) Harold has been gathering, saving and storing up barbiturates for the last year like a god-damn squirrel. Hundreds of nembutals, hundreds of seconals. All in preparation for and anticipation of the long winter of his death. (TURNS TO HAROLD.) But I tell you right now, Harold. When the time comes, you'll never have the guts. It's not always like it happens in plays, not all faggots bump themselves off at the end of the story. (CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR FOR ANOTHER DRINK.)

HAROLD

(RISES AND TAKING PLATE, CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET.) What you say may be true. Time will undoubtedly tell. But, in the meantime, you've

left out one detail-- (CROSSING LEFT TO THE EDGE OF THE BUFFET PLATFORM WITH NAPKIN IN HAND.) the cosmetics and astringents are paid for, the bathroom is paid for, the tweezers are paid for, and the pills are paid for! (THROWS NAPKIN ON THE FLOOR. EMORY ENTERS UP CENTER AND DARTS RIGHT TO THE LIGHT SWITCH AT THE FRONT DOOR. BERNARD ENTERS AND STANDS BY THE LIGHT SWITCH BY THE KITCHEN DOOR. THEY HIT THEM TOGETHER PLUNGING THE ROOM INTO DARKNESS EXCEPT FOR THE TAPERS ON THE BUFFET. COWBOY ENTERS FROM THE KITCHEN CARRYING THE LIGHTED BIRTHDAY CAKE AND CROSSES DOWN LEFT AND RIGHT TO THE TABLE K. EVERYONE BEGINS TO SING "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO YOU" TO HAROLD EXCEPT MICHAEL. BERNARD CROSSES LEFT AND GETS HAROLD AND CROSSES WITH HIM DOWN LEFT TO SOFA D WHERE HAROLD SITS AND BERNARD STANDS. EVERYONE, EXCEPT MICHAEL, GIVES A ROUND OF APPLAUSE AS HAROLD SITS. COWBOY THEN SITS IN FRONT OF HAROLD ON THE FLOOR.)

EMORY

Blow out your candles, Mary, and make a wish!

MICHAEL

Blow out your candles, Laura. (COWBOY STICKS THE CAKE OVER IN FRONT OF HAROLD. HE BLOWS OUT THE CANDLES AND MORE APPLAUSE IS HEARD.)

EMORY

Awww, she's thirty-two years young! (MICHAEL CROSSES RIGHT AND SITS ON THE FRONT DOOR LANDING. HE LIGHTS A CIGARETTE. EMORY SITS RIGHT OF HAROLD.)

HAROLD

Oh, my God! (DONALD CROSSES RIGHT TO SOFA D, LEFT SIDE AND STANDS. LARRY CROSSES RIGHT TO THE DOOR SWITCH AND TURNS IT ON AS HANK CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM AND TURNS THAT SWITCH ON TOO. HE THEN PICKS UP A GIFT AND CROSSES DOWN TO STAND BEHIND SOFA D. LARRY CROSSES LEFT AND GETS ALL THE OTHER GIFTS AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT AROUND SOFA C AND PUTS ALL THE GIFTS ON THE TABLE K.)

HANK

(HANDING HIS GIFT TO HAROLD.) Now you have to open your gifts.

HAROLD

Oh, do I have to open them here?

LARRY

(HANDING HIS GIFT TO HAROLD.) Open this one first. (HE TAKES HANK'S GIFT FROM HAROLD, AND SITS ON SOFA C CLOSE TO HAROLD.)

EMORY

Of course you've got to open them here. Were does she think she's gonna open them? (HE SEES THE CARD HAS FALLEN ON THE FLOOR BY TABLE K AND RETRIEVES IT.)

HAROLD

(BEGINS TO RIP THE PAPER FROM THE POSTER GIFT.) Where's the card?

EMORY

Here. (HANDS THE CARD TO HAROLD.)

HAROLD

Oh. From Larry. (ALL GROAN "AAHHH" AS HAROLD FINISHES TEARING OFF THE TISSUE PAPER. WHILE HAROLD IS TEARING THE PAPER MICHAEL PUTS OUT ONE CIGARETTE AND LIGHTS ANOTHER.) It's just heaven! I just love it, Larry.

COWBOY

What is it?

HAROLD

It's the deed to Boardwald. (HAROLD HOLDS UP A GRAPHIC DESIGN: A LARGE-SCALE "DEED TO BOARDWALD," LIKE THOSE USED IN A MONOPOLY GAME. LARRY PUTS THE RIPPED TISSUE FROM THE GIFT UNDER TABLE K.)

EMORY

Oh, gay pop art!

DONALD

(TO LARRY.) It's sensational. Did you do it?

LARRY

Yes.

HAROLD

Oh, it's super, Larry. It goes up the minute I get home. (HE LEANS RIGHT AND KISSES LARRY ON THE CHEEK. HE HANDS THE GIFT TO LARRY, WHO PUTS IT ON THE FLOOR NEXT TO SOFA C.)

COWBOY

(TO HAROLD.) I don't get it--you cruise Atlantic City or something?

MICHAEL

Will somebody get him out of here! (HE PUTS HIS CIGARETTE OUT IN HIS DRINK.)

HAROLD

(OPENS ANOTHER GIFT, TAKES THE CARD FROM INSIDE. THE GIFT IS A SWEATER. HANK CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET BECAUSE OF EMBARRASSMENT.) Oh, what a nifty sweater! Thank you, Hank.

HANK

You can take it back and pick out another one if you want to.

HAROLD

I think this one is just nifty. (HE GIVES THE SWEATER TO LARRY WITH A LOOK MEANING "UGLY" AS LARRY GIVES HIM THE PAD BOX AND LARRY PUTS THE SWEATER BOX ON THE FLOOR.)

BERNARD

Who wants cake? (DONALD CROSSES UP TO BARSTOOL F AND SITS.)

EMORY

Everybody? (RISES AND TAKES THE CAKE TO THE BUFFET TABLE UP LEFT.)

DONALD

(AS EMORY PASSES.) None for me.

MICHAEL

I'd just like to sleep on mine, thank you.

HAROLD

(HE HAS OPENED ANOTHER GIFT, SUDDENLY LAUGHS ALOUD.) Oh, Bernard! How divine! Look, everybody! Bejewelled knee-pads! (HE HOLDS UP A PAIR OF BASKETBALL KNEE-PADS WITH SEQUIN INITIALS.)

BERNARD

Monogrammed!

EMORY

(CROSSING DOWN CENTER BEHIND SOFA D AND LEANING.) Bernard, you're such a camp! Let me see. (FIGURE 4.) (HAROLD HANDS PADS TO EMORY. HAROLD GIVES THE PAD BOX TO LARRY AND LARRY GIVES HIM MICHAEL'S GIFT.)

FIGURE IV



MICHAEL

Y'all heard of Gloria De Haven and Billy De Wolfe, well, dis here is Rosemary De Camp!

BERNARD

Who?

EMORY

I never miss a Rosemary De Camp picture.

HANK

I never heard of her.

COWBOY

Me neither.

HANK

Not all of us spent their childhood in a movie house, Michael. Some of us played baseball.

DONALD

And mowed the lawn.

EMORY

Well, I know who Rosemary De Camp is.

MICHAEL

You would. It's a cinch you wouldn't recognize a baseball or a lawnmower.

HAROLD

(HE HAS OPENED HIS LAST GIFT. HE IS SILENT. HE RISES AND LOOKS AT MICHAEL.) Thank you, Michael.

MICHAEL

What? (TURNS AND SEES THE GIFT.) Oh. (RISES, GOES LEFT TO THE BAR WITH HIS OLD GLASS.) You're welcome. (GETS ANOTHER DRINK IN A FRESH GLASS.)

LARRY

What is it, Harold?

HAROLD

It's a photograph of him in a silver frame. And there's an inscription engraved and the date.

BERNARD

What's it say?

HAROLD

Just . . . something personal. (GIVES LARRY THE GIFT CLOSED IN THE BOX. LARRY WADS ALL THE PAPER TOGETHER AND CROSSES RIGHT AROUND SOFA C AND UP CENTER TO THE KITCHEN TO THROW IT AWAY. WHEN HE RE-ENTERS HANK MOTIONS HIM TO MOVE THE BUFFET TABLE BACK AGAINST THE WALL.)

MICHAEL

(TURNS ROUND FROM THE BAR.) Well, Bernard, what do you say we have a little music to liven things up!

BERNARD

Okay. (GOES UP LEFT TO THE PHONOGRAPH.)

EMORY

Yeah, I feel like dancing.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES RIGHT ABOVE SOFA D AS ALAN STARTS DOWN RIGHT FROM THE BED AND TO THE STEPS.) How about something ethnic, Emory?--one of your specialties like a military toe-tap with sparklers.

EMORY

(CROSSING LEFT AROUND SOFA D AND CENTER TO PUT ALL THE GIFTS ON TABLE K.) I don't do that at birthdays--only on the Fourth of July. (BERNARD PUTS ON RECORDING OF BARBARA STREISAND'S "ONE LESS BELL." HE THEN PICKS UP HAROLD'S NAPKIN ON THE FLOOR BY THE BAR. HAROLD LIGHTS A POT CIGARETTE.)

LARRY

(CROSSING DOWN RIGHT CENTER TO THE DANCE AREA.) Come on, Michael.

MICHAEL

(JOINING HIM DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) I can only lead. (DONALD CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.)

LARRY

I can follow. (HANK CROSSES DOWN TO THE CORNER BETWEEN THE STAIRS AND THE KITCHEN AND STANDS. LARRY AND MICHAEL START TO DANCE. EMORY CROSSES UP LEFT TO BERNARD, AND BOTH CROSS TO CENTER BEHIND THE SOFAS AND START TO DANCE. EMORY GETS THE POT CIGARETTE FROM HAROLD WHILE STILL DANCING AND SHARES IT WITH BERNARD.)

HAROLD

(RISES AND TAKES COWBOY'S HAND.) Come on, Tex, you're on. (COWBOY GETS TO HIS FEET, BUT HE IS A WASHOUT AS A DANCING PARTNER. HE JUST STANDS STILL. HAROLD EVEN TRIES TO LET HIM LEAD. COWBOY CANNOT DANCE, SO HAROLD GIVES UP.) Later. (COWBOY SITS ON SOFA D WHERE HAROLD WAS. HAROLD TAKES OUT ANOTHER MATCH AND ANOTHER JOINT AND CROSSES RIGHT WITH IT WHEN HE SEES SOMEONE OVER ON THE STAIRS. HE WALKS UP TO ALAN AND STRIKES A MATCH.) Wanna dance? (LIGHTS HIS JOINT.)

EMORY

(SEES ALAN AND PRONOUNCES THE FOLLOWING NAME: "E-VON.") Uh-oh. Ivan the terrible is back.

MICHAEL

(TURNS TO ALAN.) Oh, hello. Alan. (ALAN IS CROSSING TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR OF THE APARTMENT.) Feel better? This is where you came in isn't it? (MICHAEL BREAKS AWAY FROM LARRY.) Excuse me, Larry. (ALAN HAS REACHED THE TOP OF THE FRONT DOOR LANDING AS MICHAEL QUICKLY CROSSES RIGHT TO THE DOOR AHEAD OF HIM. AS ALAN OPENS THE DOOR, MICHAEL SLAMS IT SHUT.) As they say in the Deep South, don't rush off in the heat of the day.

HAROLD

Revolution complete.

MICHAEL

(HE PUTS HIS ARM AROUND ALAN, AND GUIDES HIM TO THE EDGE OF THE LANDING AND BACK INTO THE ROOM.) . . . You missed the cake--and you missed the opening of the gifts--but you're still in luck. You're just in time for a party game. . . . Hey, everybody! Game time. (MICHAEL INDICATES TO BERNARD TO TURN THE STEREO OFF, WHICH HE DOES.)

HAROLD

(MICHAEL AND ALAN CROSS SLOWLY LEFT TO THE BAR.) Why don't you just let him go, Michael?

MICHAEL

He can go if he wants to--but not before we play a game. (ALAN STARTS TO MOVE AWAY RIGHT, BUT MICHAEL CATCHES HIM GENTLY BY THE SLEEVE AND TUGS HIM BACK LEFT TO THE BAR.)

EMORY

What's it going to be--movie star gin?

MICHAEL

That's too faggy for Alan to play--he wouldn't be any good at it.

BERNARD

What about Likes and Dislikes? (MICHAEL PUTS ALAN ON BAR STOOL E.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT BEHIND SOFA C.) It's too much trouble to find enough pencils, and besides, Emory always puts down the same thing. (EMORY CROSSES DOWN AND LEFT AND SITS ON SOFA D ON THE RIGHT SIDE.) He dislikes artificial fruit and flowers and coffee grinder made into lamps--and he likes Mabel Mercer, poodles, and "All about Eve"--the screenplay of which he will then recite verbatim.

EMORY

I put down other things sometimes.

MICHAEL

Like a tan out of season?

EMORY

I just always put down little "Chi-Chi" because I adore her so much.

MICHAEL

If one is of the masculine gender, a poodle is the insignia of one's deviation. (CROSSES RIGHT TO TABLE H FOR A PAD AND PENCIL.)

BERNARD

(CROSSING DOWN AND RIGHT AND SITTING ON SOFA C ON THE LEFT SIDE.) You know why old ladies like poodles--because they go down on them.

EMORY

They do not.

LARRY

We could play B For Botticelli. (CROSSES UP CENTER TO STAIRS AND SITS ON THE FIFTH ONE.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER.) We could play Spin The Botticelli, but we're not going to.

HAROLD

What would you like to play, Michael--The Truth Game? (HE CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR STOOL G AND SITS.)

MICHAEL

(HE CHUCKLES TO HIMSELF.) Cute, Hallie.

HAROLD

Or do you want to play Murder? You all remember that one, don't you?

MICHAEL

(TO HAROLD.) Very, very cute.

DONALD

(CROSSES RIGHT TO STAIRS ON RIGHT SIDE OF LARRY AND LEANS WITH ELBOW ON STEP SIX.) As I recall, they're quite similar. The rules are the same in both--you kill somebody.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING UP AND LEFT TO HAROLD, BUT BY ALAN.) In affairs of the heart, there are no rules. Isn't that right, Harold?

HAROLD

That's what I always say.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING BACK RIGHT TO CENTER STAGE.) Well, that's the name of the game. The Affairs Of The Heart.

COWBOY

I've never heard of that one.

MICHAEL

(TO COWBOY.) Of course you've never heard of it--I just made it up, baby doll. (TO ALL.) Affairs Of The Heart is a combination of both the Truth Game and Murder--with a new twist. (ALAN RISES AND CROSSES RIGHT TO THE STEPS OF THE FRONT LANDING.)

HAROLD

I can hardly wait to find out what that is.

ALAN

(TURNING TO MICHAEL AT CENTER.) Mickey, I'm leaving.

MICHAEL

(FIRMLY, FLATLY.) Stay where you are. (ALAN STOPS DEAD STILL.)

HAROLD

Michael, let him go.

MICHAEL

He really doesn't want to. If he did, he'd have left a long time ago--or he wouldn't have come here in the first place.

ALAN

(HOLDING HIS FOREHEAD.) . . . Mickey, I don't feel well!

MICHAEL

(LOW TONE BUT DISTINCTLY ARTICULATE. CROSSING RIGHT UP TOWARD THE STAIRS IN FRONT OF DONALD AND LARRY IN A CIRCULAR PATTERN.) My name is Michael. I am called Michael. You must never call anyone called Michael, Mickey. Those of us who are named Michael are very nervous about it. If you don't believe it--try it.

ALAN

I'm sorry. I can't think. (STARTS TO GO, CROSSING RIGHT TO THE DOOR.)

MICHAEL

You can think. What you can't do--is leave. It's like watching an accident on the highway--you can't look at it and you can't look away.

ALAN

I . . . feel . . . weak . . .

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT TO BOTTOM OF THE FRONT LANDING.) You are weak. Much weaker than I think you realize. (ALAN CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO CHAIR B, AND SITS AS EVERYONE WATCHES IN SILENCE.) Now! Who's going to play with Alan and me? Everyone?

HAROLD

I have no intention of playing. (MOTIONS COWBOY TO COME OVER LEFT TO HIM. COWBOY DOES AND SITS ON THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF HAROLD. HAROLD LIGHTS UP AGAIN.) (FIGURE 5.)

DONALD

Nor do I. (CROSSES LEFT TO BEHIND THE BAR.)

MICHAEL

Well, not everyone is a participant in life. There are always those who stand on the sidelines and watch.

LARRY

What's the game.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TO BEHIND TABLE J AT CENTER.) Simply this: We all have to call on the telephone the one person we truly believed we have loved. (PICKS UP THE TELEPHONE OFF TABLE J AND HOLD IT UP.)

HANK

I'm not playing.

LARRY

Oh, yes you are. (HANK LOOKS TO LARRY. LARRY STAND AND LEANS AGAINST THE WALL.)

HANK

You'd like for me to play, wouldn't you?

LARRY

You bet I would. I'd like to know who you'd call after all the fancy speeches I've heard lately. Who would you call? Would you call me?

MICHAEL

(TO BERNARD.) Sounds like there's, how you say, trouble in paradise.



FIGURE V

HAROLD

If ther isn't, I think you'll be able to stir up some.

HANK

and who would you call? (STEPS TOWARD LARRY.) Don't think for one minute it would be me. Or that one call would do it. You'd have to make several, wouldn't you? About three long distance and God-only-knows how many locals. (CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET AND LEANS AGAINST IT.)

COWBOY

I'm glad I don't have to pay the bill.

HAROLD

(TO COWBOY.) Oh, don't worry, Michael won't pay it either.

MICHAEL

Quiet! Now, here's how it works.

LARRY

I thought you said there were no rules.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES UP TO LARRY CARRYING THE TELEPHONE IN HIS HAND.) That's right. In Affairs Of The Heart, there are no rules. This is the god-damn point system! (CROSSES BACK TO CENTER WITH THE TELEPHONE. LARRY SITS.) If you make the call, you get one point. If the person you are calling answers, you get two more points--if somebody else answers, you get only one. If there's no answer at all, you're screwed.

DONALD

You're screwed if you make the call. (MICHAEL PUTS THE PHONE DOWN ON TABLE J.)

HAROLD

You're a fool--if you screw yourself.

MICHAEL

(BEGINS A CIRCULAR MOVEMENT PATTERN ABOUT THE ROOM. RIGHT TO ALAN, THEN LEFT TO BERNARD AND UP TO LARRY, THEN CENTER AGAIN, ALL DURING THE NEXT THREE SPEECHES.) When you get the person whom you are calling on the line--if you tell them that you love them--you get a bonus of five more points!

HAROLD

Hateful.

MICHAEL

Therefore you can get as many as ten points and as few as one.

HAROLD

You can get as few as none--if you know how to work it.

MICHAEL

The one with the highest score wins.

ALAN

Hank. Let's get out of here.

EMORY

Well, now. Did you hear that!

MICHAEL

(TURNS TO ALAN.) Just the two of you together. The pals . . . the guys . . . the buddie-buddies . . . the he-men.

EMORY

I think Larry might have something to say about that. (CROSS LEGS.)

BERNARD

Emory.

MICHAEL

(RE: LAST REMARK.) The duenna speaks. (CROSS TO CENTER.) So who's playing? Excluding Cowboy, who as a gift, is neuter. And of course, la voyeurs. Emory? (A BEAT.) Bernard?

BERNARD

I don't think this game is fun. (TURNS HIS FACE RIGHT AWAY FROM MICHAEL, AND STARES.)

MICHAEL

Why, Bernard! Where's your fun-loving spirit?

BERNARD

I don't think I want to play.

HAROLD

It's absolutely hateful.

ALAN

(RISES.) Hank, leave with me.

HANK

You don't understand, Alan. I can't. You can . . . but I can't.

ALAN

Why, Hank? Why can't you?

LARRY

(TO HANK.) If he doesn't understand, why don't you explain it to him?

MICHAEL

I'll explain it.

HAROLD

I had a feeling you might.

MICHAEL

Although I doubt that it'll make any difference. (CROSSING TO ALAN DOWN RIGHT.) That type refuses to understand that which they do not wish to accept. They reject certain facts. And Alan is decidedly from the Ostrich School of Reality. (A BEAT.) Alan . . . Larry and Hank are lovers. Not just roommates, bed-mates. Lovers.

ALAN

Michael! (TURNS AWAY.)

MICHAEL

No man's got a roommate when he's over thirty years old. If they're not lovers, they're sisters. (ALAN SITS.)

LARRY

Hank is the one who's over thirty.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING TO CENTER.) Well, you're pushing it!

ALAN

. . . Hank?

HANK

(TURNS TO ALAN AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO THE EDGE OF THE PLATFORM.)
Yes, Alan. Larry is my lover.

ALAN

But you're married. (MICHAEL, LARRY, EMORY, AND THE COWBOY ARE SENT
INTO INSTANT GALES OF LAUGHTER.)

HAROLD

I think you said the wrong thing.

MICHAEL

Don't you love that quaint little idea?--if a man is married, then he
is automatically heterosexual. (ALAN TAKES A CIGARETTE OUT AND LIGHTS
IT.) Alan--Hank swings both ways--with a decided preference.
(A BEAT.) Now. Who makes the first call? Emory?

EMORY

You go, Bernard

BERNARD

I don't want to.

EMORY

I don't want to either. I don't want to at all.

DONALD

(TO HIMSELF.) There are no accidents.

MICHAEL

Then, may I say, on your way home I hope you will yourself over an
embankment. (DONALD LIGHTS A CIGARETTE.)

EMORY

(PLACES HIS HAND ON BERNARD'S KNEE.) Go on. Call up Peter Dahlbeck. That's who you like to call, isn't it?

MICHAEL

(CROSSES LEFT TO EMORY ABOVE SOFA.) Who is Peter Dahlbeck?

EMORY

The boy in Detroit whose family Bernard's mother has been a laundress for since he was a pickaninny.

BERNARD

I worked for them too--after school and every summer.

EMORY

It's always been a large order of Hero Worship.

BERNARD

I think I've loved him all my life. But he never knew I was alive. Besides, he's straight.

COWBOY

So nothing ever happened between you?

EMORY

Oh, they finally made it--in the pool house one night after a drunken swimming party.

LARRY

With the right wine and the right music there're damn few that aren't curious.

MICHAEL

(TO DONALD.) Sounds like there's a lot of Lady Chatterley in Mr. Dahlbeck, wouldn't you say, Donald?

DONALD

I've never been an O'Hara fan myself.

BERNARD

. . . And afterwards, we went swimming in the nude in the dark with only the moon reflecting on the water.

DONALD

Nor Thomas Merton.

BERNARD

It was beautiful.

MICHAEL

How romantic. And then the next morning you took him his coffee and alka-seltzer on a tray.

BERNARD

It was in the afternoon. I remember I was worried sick all morning about having to face him. But he pretended like nothing at all had happened.

MICHAEL

(LOOKS AT DONALD.) Christ, he must have been so drunk he didn't remember a thing.

BERNARD

Yeah. I was sure relieved.

MICHAEL

Odd how that works. (LOOKS TO ALAN, THEN BACK TO BERNARD AND PICKS UP THE TELEPHONE.) And now, for ten points, get that liar on the phone. (A BEAT. BERNARD TAKES THE PHONE THAT MICHAEL HAS PUSHED INTO HIS FACE AND DIALS.)

LARRY

You know the number?

BERNARD

Sure. He's back in Grosse Pointe, living at home. He just got separated from his third wife. (ALL WATCH BERNARD AS HE PUTS THE RECEIVER TO HIS EAR AND WAITS. A BEAT. HE HANGS UP QUICKLY. HE STANDS.)

EMORY

D. A. or B. Y.?

COWBOY

What?

EMORY

D. A. or B. Y. That's operator lingo. It means--"Doesn't Answer" or "Busy."

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT TO BACK OF SOFA C BEHIND BERNARD.) He didn't even give it time to find out. (COAXING.) Go ahead, Bernard. Pick up the phone and dial. You'll think of something--you know you want to call him. You know that, don't you? Well,--go ahead. (BERNARD STARTS DIALING.) Your curiosity has got the best of you now. So . . . go on, call him. (BERNARD LETS IT RING THIS TIME.)

HAROLD

Hateful.

BERNARD

. . . Hello?

MICHAEL

One point. (HE EFFICIENTLY TAKES NOTE ON THE PAD.)

BERNARD

Who's speaking? Oh . . . Mrs. Dahlbeck.

MICHAEL

(TAKING NOTE.) One point.

BERNARD

. . . It's Bernard. Francine's boy.

EMORY

Son, not boy. (BERNARD HUSHES HIM.) (FIGURE 6.)

BERNARD

. . . How are you?--Good. Good. Oh, just fine, thank you.--Mrs. Dahlbeck, is . . . Peter--at home?--Oh. Oh, I see.

MICHAEL

(PACES RIGHT AND BACK TO BERNARD.) Shhhhhiiii . . .

FIGURE VI



BERNARD

. . . Oh, no. No, it's nothing important. I just wanted to . . . to tell him . . . that . . . to tell him I . . .

MICHAEL

(PROMPTING FLATLY.) I love him. That I've always loved him.

BERNARD

. . . that I was sorry to hear about him and his wife.

MICHAEL

No points! (CROSSES CENTER ABOVE BERNARD.)

BERNARD

. . . My mother wrote me.--Yes. It is. It really is.--Well. Would you just tell him I called and said . . . that I was--just--very, very sorry to hear and I . . . hope--they can get everything straightened out.--Yes. Yes. Well, good night.--(HANGS UP THE PHONE.) Goodbye. (MICHAEL DRAWS A DEFINITE LINE ACROSS HIS PAD, MAKES A DEFINITE PERIOD.)

MICHAEL,

Two points total. Terrible. Next! (HE TAKES THE PHONE FROM BERNARD AND PUSHES IT IN EMORY'S FACE. BERNARD RISES AND CROSSES DOWN RIGHT CENTER AND STANDS.)

EMORY

Are you all right, Bernard?

BERNARD

(ALMOST TO HIMSELF.) Why did I call? Why did I do that?

LARRY

(TO BERNARD.) Where was he?

BERNARD

Out on a date. (CROSSES UP LEFT BEHIND SOFA C AND LEANS WITH HIS BACK TO THE AUDIENCE.)

MICHAEL

(MOVES BACK FROM EMORY SO EMORY CAN BEGIN DIALING.) Come on, Emory. Punch in.

EMORY

Could I have the number, please--in the Bronx--for a Delbert Botts.

LARRY

A Delbert Botts! How many could there be?

BERNARD

Oh, I wish I hadn't called now.

EMORY

. . . No, the residence number, please. (HE TAKES A PENCIL FROM TABLE J AND WRITES ON THE WHITE PHONE CASE. INTO THE PHONE.) . . . Thank you. (HE INDIGNANTLY SLAMS DOWN THE RECEIVER.) I do wish information would stop calling me, "Ma'am"!

MICHAEL

By all means, scribble all over the telephone. (BERNARD CROSSES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET TABLE AND GETS A BOTTLE OF WINE.)

EMORY

It comes off with a little spit. (PICKS UP HIS DRINK FROM TABLE K.)

MICHAEL

(TO ALAN.) Like a lot of things.

LARRY

Who the hell is Delbert Botts?

EMORY

The one person I have always loved. (TO MICHAEL.) That's who you said to call, isn't it?

MICHAEL

That's right, Emory board.

LARRY

How could you love anybody with a name like that?

MICHAEL

Yes, Emory, you couldn't love anybody with a name like that. It wouldn't look good on a place card. (CROSSES DOWN RIGHT TO ALAN AND SLAPS HIM ON THE BACK.) Isn't that right, Alan? (ALAN IS SILENT.)

EMORY

I admit his name is not so good--but he is absolutely beautiful.--At least, he was when I was in high school. Of course, I haven't seen him since and he was about seven years older than I even then.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES LEFT AND GOES TO THE BAR FOR A DRINK.) Christ, you better call him quick before he dies.

EMORY

I've loved him ever since the first day I laid eyes on him which was when I was in the fifth grade and he was a senior.--Then, he went away to college and by the time he got out I was in high school, and he had become a dentist.

MICHAEL

(WITH INCREDULOUS DISGUST.) A dentist! (CROSSES ABOVE SOFAS RIGHT WITH A DRINK, LEAVING THE PAD AND PENCIL ON THE BAR, AND STOPS CENTER.)

EMORY

Yes. Delbert Botts, D. D. S. And he opened his office in a bank building. (DONALD POURS A GLASS OF WATER AT THE BAR.)

HAROLD

And you went and had every tooth in your head pulled out, right?

EMORY

No. I just had my teeth cleaned, that's all. (DONALD ADDS SCOTCH TO THE WATER, FOR ALAN.)

BERNARD

(TO HIMSELF.) Oh, I shouldn't have called.

MICHAEL

(TURNING TO BERNARD.) Will you shut-up, Bernard! And take your boring, sleep-making icks somewhere else. Go! (BERNARD PAUSES A BEAT, THEN CROSSES RIGHT TO THE FRONT STEPS WITH HIS RED WINE BOTTLE AND A WINE GLASS. HE SITS.)

EMORY

I remember I looked right into his eyes the whole time and I kept wanting to bite his fingers. (DONALD CROSSES RIGHT AND DOWN RIGHT TO ALAN WITH THE DRINK, AND BACK TO THE STAIRS BY LARRY.)

HAROLD

Well, it's absolutely mind boggling.

MICHAEL

Phyllis Phallic.

HAROLD

It absolutely boggles the mind.

MICHAEL

(RE: DONALD'S ACTION.) Sara Samaritan.

EMORY

. . . I told him I was having my teeth cleaned for the Junior-Senior Prom for which I was in charge of decorations. I told him it was a celestial theme and I was cutting stars out of tin foil and making clouds out of chicken wire and angel's hair. (A BEAT.) He couldn't have been less impressed. (DONALD CROSSES LEFT BACK TO THE BAR TO MAKE HIMSELF ANOTHER DRINK.)

COWBOY

I got angel's hair down my shit once at Christmastime. Gosh, did it itch!

EMORY

. . . I told him I was going to burn incense in pots so that a white fog would hover over the dance floor and it would look like heaven--just like I'd seen in a Rita Hayworth movie.--I can't remember the title.

MICHAEL

The picture was called "Down To Earth." Any kid knows that.

COWBOY

. . . And it made little tiny cuts in the creases of my fingers. Man, did they sting! It would be terrible if you got that stuff in your . . . (HE SEES MICHAEL LOOKING AT HIM.) I'll be quiet. (MICHAEL GOES LEFT TO THE BAR AND LEAVES HIS GLASS AND PICKS UP THE PAD AND PENCIL.)

EMORY

He was engaged to this stupid-ass girl named Loraine whose mother was truly Supercunt.

MICHAEL

Don't digress. (CROSSES ABOVE SOFA D, RIGHT.)

EMORY

Well, anyway, I was a wreck. I mean a total mess. I couldn't eat, sleep, stand up, sit down, nothing. I could hardly cut out silver stars or finish the clouds for the Prom. So I called him on the telephone and asked if I could see him alone.

HAROLD

Clearly not the coolest of moves.

EMORY

He said okay and told me to come by his house.--I was so nervous this time--my hands were shaking and my voice was unsteady. I couldn't look at him--I just stared straight in space and blurted out why I'd come. I told him . . . I wanted him to be my friend. I said that I never knew anyone who I could talk to and tell everything to and trust. I asked him if he would be my friend.

COWBOY

You poor bastard.

MICHAEL

SHHHHHH!

BERNARD

What'd he say?

EMORY

He said he would be glad to be my friend. And anytime I ever wanted to see him or call him--to just call him and he'd see me. And he shook my trembling wet hand and I left on a cloud.

MICHAEL

One of the ones you made yourself. (HE CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET AREA.)

EMORY

And the next day I went out and bought him a gold-plated cigarette lighter and had his initials monogrammed on it and wrote a card that said, "From your friend, Emory."

HAROLD

Seventeen years old and already big with the gifts. (HE TAKES OUT A JOINT AND LIGHTS UP.)

COWBOY

Yeah. And cards too.

EMORY

. . . And then the night of the Prom I found out.

BERNARD

Found out what?

EMORY

I heard two girls I knew giggling together. They were standing behind some god-damn corrugated cardboard Greek columns I had borrowed from a department store and draped with yards and yards of god-damn cheesecloth. Oh, Mary, it takes a fairy to make something pretty.

MICHAEL

Don't digress.

EMORY

This girl who was telling the story said she had heard it from her mother--and her mother had heard it from Loraine's mother. You see, Loraine and her mother were not beside the point. Obviously, Del had told Loraine about my calling and about the gift. (A BEAT.) Pretty soon everybody at the dance had heard about it and they were all laughing and making jokes. Everybody knew I had a crush on Doctor Delbert Botts and that I had asked him to be my friend. (A BEAT.) What they didn't know was that I loved him. And that I would go on loving him years after they had all forgotten my funny secret. (PAUSE.)

HAROLD

(INHALE ON JOINT BEFORE SPEAKING, AND SPEAK WITH CLENCHED TEETH.) Well. I for one, need an insulin injection.

MICHAEL

Call him.

BERNARD

Don't, Emory.

MICHAEL

Since when are you telling him what to do! (MICHAEL BEGINS A CROSS
RIGHT TO BERNARD AND STOPS RIGHT CENTER BETWEEN EMORY AND BERNARD.)

EMORY

(TO BERNARD.) What do I care--I'm pissed! I'll do anything three
times.

BERNARD

Don't. Please!

MICHAEL

I said call him.

BERNARD

Don't! You'll be sorry. Take my word for it. (HE RISES AND CROSSES
TOWARD EMORY.)

EMORY

What have I got to lose?

BERNARD

Your dignity. That's what you've got to lose.

MICHAEL

Well, that's a knee-slapper! I love your telling him about dignity when
you allow him to degrade you constantly by Uncle Tom-ing you to death.

BERNARD

(CROSSING IN TO MICHAEL.) He can do it, Michael. I can do it. But
you can't do it.

MICHAEL

Isn't that discrimination?

BERNARD

I don't like it from him and I don't like it from me--but I do it to
myself and I let him do it. I let him do it because it's the only
thing that, to him, makes him my equal. We both got the short end of
the stick--but I got a hell of a lot more than he did and he knows it.
So, I let him Uncle Tom me just so he can tell himself he's not a
complete loser.

MICHAEL

How very considerate.

BERNARD

It's his defense. You have your defense, Michael. But it's indescribable. (EMORY QUIETLY LICKS HIS FINGER AND BEGINS TO RUB THE NUMBER OFF THE TELEPHONE CASE.)

MICHAEL

(TO BERNARD.) Y'all want to hear a little polite parlor jest from the liberal Deep South? (HE PUTS HIS ARM AROUND BERNARD.) Do you know why Nigras have such big lips? Because they're always going, "p-p-n-n-a-a-a-h!" (BERNARD BREAKS AWAY FROM MICHAEL AND STARTS TO SLUG HIM. HANK RAPIDLY CROSSES DOWN TO THEM AND BREAKS IT, TAKING BERNARD BACK TO THE LANDING, AND SITTING WITH HIM.)

DONALD

Christ, Michael!

MICHAEL

I can do without your god-damn spit all over my telephone. you nellie coward. (HE GRABS THE PHONE FROM EMORY, BUT EMORY MANAGES TO KEEP IT IN THE TUG OF WAR.)

EMORY

I may be nellie, but I'm no coward. (MICHAEL LETS GO OF THE PHONE, AND GOES UP LEFT TO THE BUFFET TO COMPOSE HIMSELF. EMORY STARTS TO DIAL.) Bernard, forgive me. I'm sorry. I won't ever say those things about you again. B. Y.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES DOWN ABOVE SOFA.) It's busy?

EMORY

(NODS.) Loraine is probably talking to her mother. Oh, yes, Delbert married Loraine.

MICHAEL

(GRABS THE PHONE AND CROSSES UP RIGHT TO LARRY WITH IT.) I'm sorry, you'll have to forfeit your turn. We can't wait. (LARRY BEGINS TO DIAL.)

HAROLD

(TO LARRY.) Well, you're not wasting any time.

HANK

Who are you calling?

LARRY

Charlie. (EMORY CROSSES UP TO LARRY AND JERKS THE PHONE OUT OF LARRY'S HANDS, AND CROSSES BACK DOWN.)

EMORY

I refuse to forfeit my turn! It's my turn and I'm taking it! (EMORY STUMBLES, AND SPRAWLS ONTO THE FLOOR DOWN RIGHT CENTER.)

MICHAEL

That's the spirit, Emory! Hit that iceberg--don't miss it! Hit it! God-damnit! I want a smash of a finale!

EMORY

Oh, God, I'm drunk.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING CENTER STAGE.) A falling-down-drunk-nellie-queen.

HAROLD

Well, that's the pot calling the kettle beige!

MICHAEL

(SNAPPING TO HAROLD.) I am not drunk! You cannot tell that I am drunk! Donald! I'm not drunk! Am I!

DONALD

I'm drunk.

EMORY

So am I. I am a major drunk.

MICHAEL

(TO EMORY.) Shut up and dial!

EMORY

(DIALING.) I am a major drunk of this or any other season.

DONALD

(TO MICHAEL.) Don't you mean, shut up and deal?

EMORY

. . . It's ringing. It is no longer B. Y. Hello?

MICHAEL

(TAKING NOTE.) One point.

EMORY

. . . Who's speaking? . . . Who? . . . Doctor Delbert Botts?

MICHAEL

Two points.

EMORY

Oh, Del, is this really you?--Oh, nobody. You don't know me. You wouldn't remember me. I'm . . . just a friend. A falling-down drunken friend. Hello? Hello? Hello? (HE LOWERS THE RECEIVER.) He hung up. (EMORY HANGS UP THE TELEPHONE.)

MICHAEL

Three points total. You're winning.

EMORY

He said I must have the wrong party. (BERNARD CROSSES LEFT TO KITCHEN AND EXITS UP CENTER.)

HAROLD

He's right. We have the wrong party. We should be somewhere else.

EMORY

(RISES FROM THE FLOOR AND CROSSES DOWN TO SOFA C AND SITS RIGHT.) It's your party, Harold. Aren't you having a good time?

HAROLD

Simply fabulous. And what about you? Are you having a good time. Emory? Are you having as good a time as you thought you would? (LARRY CROSSES DOWN TO THE PHONE.)

MICHAEL

If you're bored, Harold, we could sing Happy Birthday again--to the tune of Havah Nagelah.

HAROLD

Not for all the tea in Mexico. (LARRY STARTS TO DIAL.)

HANK

(CROSSING BEHIND SOFA D TO LARRY.) It's my turn now.

LARRY

It's my turn to call Charlie.

HANK

No. Let me.

LARRY

Are you going to call Charlie?

MICHAEL

(CROSSES TO THE RIGHT OF THE STAIRS TO THE BEDROOM.) The score is three to two. Emory's favor.

ALAN

Don't Hank. (HE STANDS.) Don't you see--Bernard was right.

HANK

(FIRMLY TO ALAN.) I want to. (HE HOLDS OUT HIS HAND FOR THE PHONE.) Larry?

LARRY

(GIVES HIM THE PHONE.) Be my eager guest.

COWBOY

(TO LARRY.) Is he going to call Charlie for you? (HANK STARTS TO DIAL.)

LARRY

Charlie is all the people I cheat on Hank with.

DONALD

With whom I cheat on Hank.

MICHAEL

The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker.

LARRY

Right! (CROSSES BACK UP TO STAIRS AND SITS. MICHAEL COUNTDERS ABOVE HIM TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.) I love 'em all. And what Hank refuses to understand--is that I've got to have 'em all. I am not the marrying kind, and I never will be.

HAROLD

Gypsy feet.

LARRY

(CROSSES DOWN TO HANK AND GRABS THE RECEIVER WHICH HANK PULLS BACK FROM HIM.) Who are you calling?

MICHAEL

Jealous?

LARRY

Curious as hell!

MICHAEL

And a little jealous too.

LARRY

Who are you calling?

MICHAEL

Did it ever occur to you that Hank might be doing the same thing behind your back that you do behind his?

LARRY

I wish to Christ he would. It'd make life a hell of a lot easier. Who are you calling?

HAROLD

Whoever it is, they're not sitting on top of the telephone.

HANK

Hello?

COWBOY

They must have been in the tub.

MICHAEL

(SNAPS AT COWBOY.) Eighty-six! (CROSSING LEFT ABOVE SOFA D, WHILE BERNARD ENTERS UP CENTER WITH A NEW BOTTLE OF WINE AND CROSSES BACK TO THE LANDING AT THE FRONT DOOR.) One point.

HANK

. . . I'd like to leave a message. (ALAN RISES AND MOVES LEFT TOWARD HANK.)

MICHAEL

Not in. One point. (CROSSES BACK UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.)

HANK

Would you say that Hank called.--Yes, it is. Oh, good evening, how are you?

LARRY

Who the hell is that? (GRABS THE PHONE, BUT HANK KEEPS IT AND TRANSFERS IT TO HIS OTHER EAR.)

HANK

. . . Yes, that's right--the message is for my roommate, Larry. Just say that I called and . . .

LARRY

It's our answering service! (CROSSES BACK UP TO STAIRS AND LIGHTS A CIGARETTE, THEN SITS.)

HANK

. . . and said . . . I love you.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES RIGHT TO THE RIGHT END OF SOFA C.) Five points! You said it! You get five god-damn points for saying it!

ALAN

Hank! . . . Are you crazy?

HANK

(INTO THE TELEPHONE.) . . . No. You didn't hear me incorrectly. That's what I said. The message is for Larry and it's from me, Hank, and it is just as I said--I . . . love . . . you. Thanks. (HE HANGS UP.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSES LEFT TO HANK AND GETS THE PHONE AND CARRIES IT UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM AND PUTS IT ON THE BUFFET TABLE.) Seven points total! Hank, you're ahead, baby. You're way, way ahead of everybody!

ALAN

Why, Hank? Why did you do that?

HANK

Because I do love him. And I don't care who knows it.

ALAN

Don't say that.

HANK

Why not? It's the truth.

ALAN

I can't believe you.

HANK

(CROSSING RIGHT TO ALAN.) I left my wife and family for Larry.

ALAN

I'm really not interested in hearing about it. (TURNS HIS BACK TO HANK.)

MICHAEL

Sure you are. Go ahead, Hankola, tell him about it.

ALAN

No! I don't want to hear it. It's disgusting! (SITS IN CHAIR B.)

HANK

Some men do it for another woman. (CROSSING RIGHT TO ALAN.)

ALAN

Well, I could understand that. That's normal.

HANK

It just doesn't always work out that way. No matter how you might want it to. And God know, Alan, nobody ever wanted it to more than I did. I really and truly felt that I was in love with my wife when I married her. It wasn't altogether my trying to prove something to myself. I did love her and she loved me. But . . . there was always that something there.

DONALD

You mean your attraction to your own sex.

HANK

Yes. (MOVES LEFT TOWARD BUFFET AREA.)

ALAN

Always?

HANK

I don't know. I suppose so. (STOPS AT THE RIGHT END OF SOFA C WITH HAND ON THE BACK.)

EMORY

I've known what I was since I was four years old.

MICHAEL

Everybody's always known it about you, Emory.

DONALD

I've always known it about myself too.

HANK

(CROSSING LEFT TO SOFA D BEHIND IT.) I don't know when it was that I started admitting it to myself. For so long I either labeled it something else or denied it completely.

MICHAEL

Christ-was-I-drunk-last-night.

HANK

(TURNING TO ALAN.) And then there came a time when I just couldn't lie to myself any more . . . I thought about it but I never did anything

about it.--I think the first time was during my wife's last pregnancy. We lived near Hartford--in the country. She and the kids still live there. (LOOKS DOWN TO AVOID ALAN'S LOOK.) Well, anyway, there was a teachers' meeting here in New York. She didn't feel up to the trip and I came alone. And that day on the train (LEANS ON THE BACK OF SOFA D.) I began to think about it and think about it and think about it. I thought about nothing else the whole trip. And within fifteen minutes after I had arrived I had picked up a guy in the men's room of Grand Central Station.

ALAN

(QUIETLY.) Jesus.

HANK

(LOOKS UP.) I'd never done anything like that in my life and I was scared to death. But he turned out to be a nice fellow. I've never seen him again and it's funny I can't even remember his name any more. (A BEAT.) Anyway. (STANDS UP FROM LEANING POSITION.) After that, it got easier.

HAROLD

Practice makes perfect.

HANK

And then . . . sometime later . . . not very long after, Larry was in Hartford and we met at a party my wife and I had gone in town for.

EMORY

And your real troubles began.

HANK

That was two years ago. (HE SITS ON THE BACK OF SOFA D LOOKING TOWARD LARRY.)

LARRY

(RISES.) Why am I always the god-damn villain in the piece! If I'm not thought of as a happy home wrecker, I'm an impossible son-of-a-bitch to live with!

HAROLD

Guilt turns to hostility. Isn't that right, Michael?

MICHAEL

Go stick your tweezers in your cheek.

LARRY

I'm fed up to the teeth with everybody feeling so god-damn sorry for poor shat-upon Hank. (CROSSES DOWN TO BEHIND EMORY WHO IS SEATED ON SOFA C.)

EMORY

Aw, Larry, everybody knows you're Frida Fickle.

LARRY

I've never made any promises and I never intend to. It's my right to lead my sex life without answering to anybody--Hank included! (CROSSES UP RIGHT TO TABLE H.) And if those terms are not acceptable, then we must not live together. Numerous relations is a part of the way I am. (MICHAEL CROSSES TO CENTER STAGE BETWEEN SOFAS.)

EMORY

You don't have to be gay to be a wanton.

LARRY

By the way I am, I don't mean being gay--I mean my sexual appetite. And I don't think of myself as a wanton. Emory, you are the most promiscuous person I know.

EMORY

I am not promiscuous at all!

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT TO EMORY BACK OF SOFA C.) Not by choice, by design. Why would anybody want to go to bed with a flaming little sissy like you?

BERNARD

Michael!

MICHAEL

(TO EMORY.) Who'd make a pass at you? I'll tell you who--nobody. Except maybe some fugitive from the Braille Institute.

BERNARD

(TO EMORY.) Why do you let him talk to you that way? (MICHAEL CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.)

HAROLD

Physical beauty is not everything.

MICHAEL

Thank you, Quasimodo.

LARRY

What do you think it's like living with the god-damn gestapo! I can't breathe without getting the third degree!

MICHAEL

Larry, it's your turn to call.

LARRY

(STEPS TO THE LEFT.) I can't take all that let's-be-faithful-and-never-look-at-another-person-routine. (CROSSING LEFT TO HANK.) It just doesn't work. If you want to promise that, fine. Then do it and stick to it. But if you have to promise it--as far as I'm concerned--nothing finishes a relationship faster.

HAROLD

Give me librium or give me meth.

BERNARD

(INTOXICATED NOW.) Yeah, freedom, baby! Freedom!

LARRY

(CROSSES CENTER.) You gotta have it! It can't work any other way. And the ones who swear their undying fidelity are lying, most of them anyway--ninty percent of them. They cheat on each other constantly and lie through their teeth. I'm sorry, I can't be like that and it drives Hank up the wall.

HANK

There is that ten percent. (TURNS TO LARRY.)

LARRY

The only way it stands a chance is with some sort of an understanding.

HANK

I've tried to go along with that.

LARRY

Aw, come on!

I agreed to an agreement.

HANK

LARRY

Your agreement.

MICHAEL

What Agreement?

LARRY

A menage.

HAROLD

The lover's agreement.

LARRY

Look, I know a lot of people think it's the answer. They don't consider it cheating. But it's not my style.

HANK

Well, I certainly didn't want it.

LARRY

Then who suggested it?

HANK

It was a compromise.

LARRY

Exactly.

HANK

And you agreed.

LARRY

I didn't agree to anything. You agreed to your won proposal and informed me that I agreed.

COWBOY

I don't understand. What's a me . . . menaa . . .

MICHAEL

(CROSSES LEFT TO COWBOY.) A menage a trois, baby. Two's company--three's a menage.

HANK

Well, it works for some.

LARRY

Well, I'm not one for group therapy. I'm sorry. I can't relate to anyone or anything that way. I'm old-fashioned--I like 'em all, but I like 'em one at a time!

MICHAEL

(TO LARRY.) Did you like Donald as a single side attraction? (PAUSE.)

LARRY

Yes, I did.

DONALD

So did I, Larry.

LARRY

(TO DONALD RE: MICHAEL.) Did you tell him?

DONALD

No.

MICHAEL

It was perfectly obvious from the moment you walked in the door. What was this big song and dance about having seen each other but never having met?

DONALD

It was true. We saw each other in the baths, and went to bed together but we never spoke a word and never knew each other's names.

EMORY

You had better luck than I do. If I don't get arrested, my trick announces upon departure that he's been exposed to hepatitis!

MICHAEL

In spring a young man's fancy turns to a fancy young man.

LARRY

(CROSSES TO HANK, LEFT.) Don't look at me like that. You've been playing footsie with the Blue Book all night.

DONALD

I think he only wanted to show you what's good for the gander is good for the gander.

HANK

That's right.

LARRY

(TO HANK.) I suppose you'd like the three of us to have a go at it.

HANK

At least it'd be together.

LARRY

That point eludes me. (CROSSES RIGHT OF STEPS.)

HANK

What kind of an understanding do you want!

LARRY

(CROSSING LEFT TO HANK.) Respect--for each other's freedom. With no need to lie or pretend. In my own way, Hank, I love you, but you've got to understand that even though I do want to go on living with you, sometimes there may be others. I don't want to flaunt it in your face. If it happens I know I'll never mention it. But if you ask me, I'll tell you. I don't want to hurt you but I won't lie to you if you want to know anything about me.

BERNARD

He gets points.

MICHAEL

What?

BERNARD

He said it--he said, "I love you," to Hank--he gets the bonus.

MICHAEL

He didn't call him. (CROSS DOWN RIGHT TO BERNARD.

DONALD

He called him. He just didn't use the telephone.

MICHAEL

(TO DONALD.) Then he doesn't get any points.

BERNARD

He gets five points!

MICHAEL

(TO BERNARD.) He didn't use the telephone--he doesn't get a god-damn thing!

LARRY

(CROSSES UP CENTER TO THE TELEPHONE ON THE BUFFET TABLE, PICKS UP THE RECEIVER, LOOKS AT THE NUMBER OF THE SECOND LINE, AND DIALS. A BEAT. THE PHONE RINGS.) It's for you, Hank. Why don't you take it upstairs?

HANK

(THE PHONE CONTINUES TO RING. HANK GETS UP AND CROSSES RIGHT TO THE STAIRS AND UP TO THE BEDROOM. PAUSE. HE CROSSES UP TO THE TELEPHONE BESIDE THE BED. HE PRESSES THE SECOND LINE BUTTON, PICKS UP THE RECEIVER. EVERYONE DOWNSTAIRS IS SILENT.) Hello?

BERNARD

One point.

LARRY

Hello, Hank.

BERNARD

Two points.

LARRY

. . . This is Larry.

BERNARD

Two more points!

LARRY

. . . For what it's worth, I love you.

BERNARD

Five points bonus!

HANK

I'll . . . I'll try.

LARRY

I will too. (HE HANGS UP. HANK HOLDS THE RECEIVER IN HIS HAND AND LOOKS OFF WITH AN EXPRESSION OF INTENSITY.)

BERNARD

(EMORY CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.) That's ten points total!

EMORY

Larry's the winner!

HAROLD

Well, that wasn't as much fun as I thought it would be. (ALAN RISES AND CROSSES RIGHT TO THE BAR TO FIX ANOTHER DRINK.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSES RIGHT TO THE BAR.) THE GAME ISN'T OVER YET! (EMORY STEPS DOWN FROM THE BUFFET TO CUT MICHAEL OFF, BUT MICHAEL PUSHES HIM UP CENTER AND CROSSES TO THE PHONE ON THE BUFFET TABLE AND CROSSES TO THE BAR, LEFT AND SLAMS IT ON THE BAR. TO ALAN.) PICK UP THE PHONE BUSTER! (HE GRABS ALAN'S ARM.)

EMORY

(CROSSES LEFT TO MICHAEL.) Michael, don't!

MICHAEL

STAY OUT OF THIS! (PUSHES EMORY RIGHT.)

EMORY

You don't have to, Alan. You don't have to.

ALAN

(CROSSING TOWARD EMORY TO THE STAGE RIGHT SIDE OF SOFA C.) Emory . . . I'm sorry for what I did before. (A BEAT.)

EMORY

. . . Oh, forget it.

MICHAEL

Forgive us our trespasses. Christ, now you're both joined at the god-damn hip! You can decorate his home, Emory--and he can get you out of jail the next time you're arrested on a morals charge. (MICHAEL TURNS TO ALAN AS ALAN TURNS UPSTAGE.) Who are you going to call, Alan? (NO RESPONSE.) Can't remember anyone? Well, maybe you need a minute to think. Is that it? (NO RESPONSE.)

HAROLD

I believe this will be the final round. (TAKES OUT A JOINT AND LIGHTS UP.)

COWBOY

Michael, aren't you going to call anyone?

HAROLD

How could he?--He's never loved anyone.

MICHAEL

(SINGS THE CLASSIC VAUDEVILLE WALK-OFF TO HAROLD, CROSSING RIGHT.)
 "No matter how you figger,
 It's tough to be a nigger,
 But it's tougher
 To be a Jeeew-ooooo-oo!"

DONALD

My God, Michael, you're a charming host.

HAROLD

Michael doesn't have charm, Donald. Michael has counter-charm. (LARRY CROSSES TO THE STAIRS. HANK HANGS UP THE RECEIVER. PONDER'S. SITS ON THE BED. RISES. CROSSES TO THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS. STOPS. CROSSES TO THE STAGE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BED AND SITS.)

MICHAEL

(TO LARRY.) Going somewhere? (CROSSES RIGHT TO THE STAIRS.)

LARRY

(STOPS AND TURNS TO MICHAEL.) Yes. Excuse me.

MICHAEL

You're going to miss the end of the game.

LARRY

You can tell me how it comes out. (LARRY STARTS UP THE STAIRS AGAIN.)

MICHAEL

I never reveal an ending. And no one will be re-seated during the climatic revelation.

LARRY

(PAUSES AND TURNS TO MICHAEL.) With any luck I won't be back until it's all over. (HE TURNS AND STARTS UP THE STAIRS AGAIN. IN THE BEDROOM HE CROSSES TO HANK, LEFT. HE PLACES HIS HAND ON HANK'S SHOULDER. HE REMOVES HIS HAND AND CROSSES AROUND THE BED LEFT TO THE DRAPERY CORD AND LOWERS IT. THE DIALOGUE RESUMES DOWNSTAIRS. HE THEN CROSSES RIGHT AND SITS ON THE BED AND BEGINS TO MASSAGE HANK'S BACK, THEY EMBRACE, AND LIE ON THE BED FACING ONE ANOTHER.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSES LEFT TO ALAN.) What do you suppose is going on up there? Hmmm, Alan? (BERNARD RISES AND CROSSES DOWN TO CHAIR B AND SITS.) What do you imagine Larry and Hank are doing? Hmmm? Shooting marbles?

EMORY

Whatever they're doing, they're not hurting anyone.

HAROLD

And they're minding their own business.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES LEFT TOWARD HAROLD, STOPS AT CENTER STAGE.) And you mind yours, Harold. I'm warning you!

HAROLD

(A BEAT, THEN COOLY.) Are you now? Are you warning me? Me? (RISES.) I'm Harold. I'm the one person you don't warn, Michael. Because you and I are a match.--And we tread ver)softly with each other because we both play each other's game too well. Oh, I know this game you're playing. I know it very well. And I play it very well.--You play

it very well too. But you know what? I'm the only one that's better at it than you are. I can beat you at it. So don't push me. I'm warning you.

MICHAEL

(A BEAT. MICHAEL STARTS TO LAUGH.) You're funny, Hallie. A laff-riot. Isn't he funny, Alan? (HAROLD SITS.) Or, as you might say, isn't he amusing? He's an amusing faggot, isn't he? Or, as you might say, freak. --That's what you called Emory, wasn't it? A freak? (ALAN CROSSES RIGHT TO THE LANDING OF THE FRONT DOOR.) A pansy? My what an antiquated vocabulary you have. (MICHAEL CROSSES RIGHT BEHIND ALAN, AND BEHIND AND AROUND HIM.) I'm surprised you didn't say sodomite or pedarist. (A BEAT.) You'd better let me bring you up to date.--Now it's not so new but it might be new to you-- (A BEAT.) Have you heard the term, "closet queen"? Do you know what that means? Do you know what it means to be "in the closet"?

EMORY

Don't, Michael. It won't help anything to explain what it means.

MICHAEL

(CROSSES RIGHT TO EMORY.) He already knows. He knows very, very well what a closet queen is. Don't you, Alan?

ALAN

(TURNING TO MICHAEL.) Michael, if you are insinuating that I am homosexual, I can only say that you are mistaken.

MICHAEL

Am I? (A BEAT.) What about Justin Stuart?

ALAN

(CROSSES DOWN LEFT TO THE RIGHT ARM OF SOFA C AND SITS.) . . . What about . . . Justin Stuart?

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT THREE STEPS INTO ALAN.) You were in love with him, that's what about him. And that is who you are going to call. (CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR AND PICKS UP THE PHONE AND CROSSES BACK RIGHT TO CENTER AND PLACES THE PHONE ON TABLE J.)

ALAN

Justin and I were very good friends. That is all. Unfortunately, we had a parting of the ways and that was the end of the friendship. We have

not spoken for years. I most certainly will not call him now. (HE RISES AND CROSSES UP RIGHT WITH HIS BACK TO MICHAEL. HE STOPS.)

MICHAEL

(CROSSING RIGHT.) According to Justin, the friendship was quite passionate.

ALAN

(TURNS.) What do you mean?

MICHAEL

(IN PURSUIT.) I mean that you slept with him in college. Several times.

ALAN

(QUITE NERVOUS, ALAN BEGINS TO BACK AROUND TO SOFA C IN A DOWN STAGE ARC.) That's not true!

MICHAEL

Several times. (HE FOLLOWS ALAN SLOWLY AS A CAT STALKING A PREY.) Once that's youth. Twice, a phase, maybe. Several times, you like it!

ALAN

That's NOT TRUE!

MICHAEL

Yes, it is true. Because Justin Stuart is homosexual. He comes to New York on occasion. He calls me. I've taken him to parties. Larry's "had" him once. (CROSSING DOWN STAGE FARTHER.) I have slept with Justin. And he has told me all about you.

ALAN

(HAVING REACHED SOFA C, HE TURNS AND POUNDS HIS FIST ON THE ARMS OF SOFA C.) Then he told you a lie.

MICHAEL

(MORE RAPID.) You were obsessed with Justin. That's all you talked about morning, noon, and night. You started doing it about Hank upstairs tonight.--What an attractive fellow he is and all that transparent crap.

ALAN

(TURNS TO MICHAEL.) He is an attractive fellow. What's wrong with saying so?

MICHAEL

Would you like to join him and Larry right now?

ALAN

I said he was attractive. That's all.

MICHAEL

How many times do you have to say it? (CROSSES UP RIGHT AND IN A CIRCLE PATTERN.) How many times did you have to say it about Justin?--what a good tennis player he was--what a good dancer he was--what a good body he had--what good taste he had--how bright he was--how amusing he was--how the girls were all mad for him-- (ABRUPT TURN TO ALAN.) what close friends you were.

ALAN

We were very close . . . very good friends. (SITS ON ARM OF SOFA C.) That's all!

MICHAEL

It was obvious--and when you did it around Fran it was downright embarrassing. Even she must have had her doubts about you.

ALAN

(BACKING OFF SOFA ARM AND LEFT IN FRONT OF FURNITURE, BUT BEHIND TABLE K.) If he told you that, he lied. It is a lie. A vicious lie. He'd say anything about me now to get even. He could never get over the fact that I dropped him. But I had to. I had to because he told me about himself . . . he told me that he wanted me to be his lover. and I told him that he made me sick . . . I told him I pitied him.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING LEFT TO THE ARM OF SOFA C, AND LEANING ON ARM ON "YOURSELF.") You ended the friendship, Alan, because you couldn't face the truth about yourself. You could go along, sleeping with Justin as long as he lied to himself and you lied to yourself and you both dated girls and labeled yourselves men and called yourselves just fond friends. But Justin finally had to be honest about the truth, and you couldn't take it. You couldn't take it and so you destroyed the friendship and your friend along with it.

ALAN

Not

MICHAEL

(CLOSING IN.) Justin could never understand what he'd done wrong to make you drop him. He blamed himself.

ALAN

NO! (EDGING SLOWLY BACKWARD.)

MICHAEL

(CLOSING IN.) He did until he eventually found out who he was and what he was.

ALAN

(TURNS TO MICHAEL.) NO!

MICHAEL

But to this day, he still remembers the treatment--the scars he got from you.

ALAN

NO! (ALAN FALLS ONTO SOFA D IN TEARS.)

MICHAEL

Pick up the phone and call Justin. (MICHAEL GRABS THE PHONE ON TABLE J.) Call him and apologize and tell him what you should have told him twelve years ago.

ALAN

NO! HE LIED! NOT A WORD IS TRUE!

MICHAEL

Call him! (ALAN WILL NOT TAKE THE PHONE.) All right then, I'll dial! (AS HE DIALS, MICHAEL CROSSES AROUND SOFA C AND LEFT TO BEHIND ALAN ON SOFA D.)

ALAN

Give it to me. (MICHAEL HANGS UP AND GIVE THE PHONE TO ALAN. ALAN TAKES IT, PICKS UP THE RECEIVER, AND STARTS TO DIAL. EVERYONE IS WATCHING IN SILENT ATTENTION. MICHAEL CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM TO WAIT. ALAN FINISHES DIALING, AND LIFTS THE RECEIVER TO HIS EAR.)
... Hello?

MICHAEL

One point.

ALAN

. . . It's . . . it's Alan.

MICHAEL

Two points.

ALAN

. . . Yes, yes, it's me.

MICHAEL

Is it Justin?

ALAN

. . . You sound surprised.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN TO THE EDGE OF THE BUFFET PLATFORM.) I should hope to think so--after twelve years! Two more points.

ALAN

No, I'm in New York. Yes. I won't explain now . . . I . . . I just called to tell you . . .

MICHAEL

THAT I LOVE YOU, GOD-DAMNIT! I LOVE YOU!

ALAN

I love you.

MICHAEL

FIVE POINTS BONUS. TEN POINTS TOTAL! JACKPOT!

ALAN

I love you and I beg you to forgive me.

MICHAEL

(CROSSING DOWN TO ALAN AND GRABBING THE PHONE FROM HIS HANDS.) Give me that! Justin! Did you hear what that son-of-a-bitch said! (A BEAT. MICHAEL IS SPEECHLESS FOR A MOMENT.) Fran. (A BEAT.) Fran, of course, I expected it to be you! How are you? . . . Me too . . . yes, he told me everything . . . Oh, don't thank me, please! I'll put him back on. My love to the kids. (MICHAEL LOWERS HIS HAND WITH THE RECEIVER AND ALAN TAKES THE RECEIVER AS MICHAEL STARES FRONT, AND BEGINS TO SAG AND CROSS LEFT AROUND SOFA D TO ALAN'S POSITION.) (FIGURE 7.)

ALAN

. . . Darling? I'll take the first plane I can get.--Yes. I'm sorry too. Yes . . . I love you very much. (HANGS UP AND CROSSES TO THE FRONT DOOR, RIGHT. HE TURNS ON THE LANDING, SURVEYS THE GROUP.) Thank you, Michael. (HE OPENS THE DOOR AND EXITS. SILENCE. MICHAEL SITS, AND BRINGS HIS HANDS TO THE SIDES OF HIS FACE. DONALD FIXES A DRINK.)

COWBOY

Who won?

DONALD

(CROSSING UP RIGHT TO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.) It was a tie.

HAROLD

(CROSSES RIGHT TO MICHAEL, BUT BEHIND HIM. CALMLY, COOLY, CLINICALLY.) Now it is my turn. And ready or not, Michael, here goes. (A BEAT.) You are a sad and pathetic man. You're a homosexual and you don't want to be. But there is nothing you can do to change it.--Not all your prayers to your God, not all the analysis you can buy in all the years you've got left to live. You may very well one day be able to know a heterosexual life if you want it desperately enough--if you pursue it with the fervor with which you annihilate--but you will always be homosexual as well. Always, Michael. Always. Until the day you die. (HE TURNS TO CROSS AROUND SOFA D, LEFT, TO GATHER UP THE GIFTS. HE GETS THEM AND WALKS PAST MICHAEL AND TO THE LANDING, RIGHT. HE TURNS TO EMORY.) Oh, friends, thanks for the nifty party and the super gift. (HE LOOKS TOWARD COWBOY.) It's just what I needed. (EMORY SMILES. HAROLD SPOTS BERNARD WITH HIS HEAD BOWED.) Bernard, thank you. (NO RESPONSE. TO EMORY.) Will you get him home?

EMORY

Don't worry about her. I'll take care of everything. (HAROLD SMILES.)



FIGURE VII

HAROLD

Donald, good to see you.

DONALD

Good night, Harold. See you again sometime.

HAROLD

Yeah. How about a year from Shevuoth? Come on Tex. Let's go to my place. (COWBOY RISES AND CROSSES RIGHT IN FRONT OF MICHAEL AND TO HAROLD. HAROLD HANDS HIM THE GIFTS.) Are you good in bed?

COWBOY

Well . . . (COWBOY OPENS THE DOOR AND HAROLD EXITS WITH COWBOY FOLLOWING AND FINISHING HIS SPEECH.) I'm not like the average hustler you'd meet. I try to show a little affection--it keeps me from feeling like such a whore.

HAROLD

(ONCE OUTSIDE, HE TURNS AND CROSSES BACK INTO THE DOORWAY.) Oh, Michael . . . thanks for the laughs. Call you tomorrow. (NO RESPONSE. HAROLD EXITS.)

EMORY

(CROSSING TO BERNARD.) Come on, Bernard. Time to go home. (EMORY, FRAIL AS HE IS, MANAGES TO PULL BERNARD TO HIS FEET AND WITH BERNARD'S ARM AROUND HIS NECK, THEY BEGIN TO MOVE TOWARD THE LANDING.)

BERNARD

(PRACTICALLY INAUDIBLE.) Why did I call? Why? (DONALD CROSSES RIGHT TO THE KITCHEN AND GETS BERNARD'S COAT, AND CROSSES TO THE LANDING, RIGHT.)

EMORY

Oh, Mary, you're a heavy mother. (TAKES BERNARD UP THE STEPS.) Thank you, Michael. Good night, Donald. (DONALD PUTS THE COAT OVER EMORY'S ARM.)

DONALD

Goodbye, Emory.

BERNARD

(DONALD OPENS THE DOOR.) Why . . . (EMORY AND BERNARD EXIT WITH EMORY STILL TALKING.)

EMORY

It's all right, Bernard. Everything's all right. I'm going to make you some coffee and everything's going to be all right. (DONALD CLOSES THE DOOR.)

MICHAEL

(IN DESPERATE PANIC.) Donald! Donald! DONALD! DONALD! (DONALD PUTS DOWN HIS DRINK AND RUSHES TO MICHAEL, DOWN LEFT. MICHAEL IS NOT WHITE WITH FEAR AND TEARS ARE BURSTING FROM HIS EYES. HE BEGINS TO GASP HIS WORDS.) Oh, no! No! What have I done! Oh, my God, what have I done! (DONALD GRABS MICHAEL AS MICHAEL STARTS TO WRITHE. DONALD CRADLES HIM IN HIS ARMS.)

DONALD

Michael! Michael!

MICHAEL

(TEARS POURING FORTH.) Oh, no! NO! It's beginning! The anxiety! OH. NO! NO! I feel it! I know it's going to happen, Donald! Donald! Don't leave. Please! Please! Oh, my God, what have I done! Oh, Jesus. I can't handle it. I won't make it!

DONALD

(PHYSICALLY SUBDUING HIM.) Michael! Michael! Stop it! Stop it! I'll give you a Valium--I've got some in my pocket!

MICHAEL

(HYSTERICAL.) No! No! Pills and alcohol--I'll die!

DONALD

I'm not going to give you the whole bottle! Come on, let go of me!

MICHAEL

(CLUTCHING HIM.) NO!

DONALD

Let go of me long enough for me to get my hand in my pocket!

MICHAEL

Don't leave! (AS HE LOOSENS HIS GRIP HE CRUMBLES TO THE FLOOR. HE QUIETS A BIT, AS DONALD GETS A PILL FROM HIS POCKET.)

DONALD

Here. (PUTTING THE PILL IN MICHAEL'S HAND AS HE PULLS MICHAEL'S HEAD AND ARMS UP FROM THE FLOOR.)

MICHAEL

(SOBBING.) I don't have any water to swallow it with!

DONALD

Well, if you'll wait one god-damn minute, I'll get you some! (HE CROSSES LEFT TO THE BAR, GETS A GLASS, AND POURS WATER FROM THE PITCHER ON THE BAR. HE RETURNS, RIGHT, WITH THE WATER.) Your water, Your Majesty. (A BEAT. DONALD PUTS THE GLASS IN MICHAEL'S HAND AS HE PULLS MICHAEL'S HEAD UP.) Michael, stop that god-damn crying and take this pill! (MICHAEL PUTS THE PILL INTO HIS MOUTH AMID CHOKING SOBS, TAKES THE WATER, AND SWALLOWS THE PILL. DONALD PICKS MICHAEL UP AND SEATS HIM ON THE COUCH. DONALD THEN CROSSES LEFT AROUND THE SOFA TO BEHIND MICHAEL AND BEGINS TO MASSAGE MICHAEL'S SHOULDERS.) (FIGURE 8.)

MICHAEL

(SITTING ON THE SOFA.) I'm like Ole Man River--tired of livin' and scared o' dyin'.

DONALD

Shhhh. Shhhh. Michael. Shhhh. Michael. Michael. (DONALD ROCKS HIM BACK AND FORTH.)

MICHAEL

. . . If we . . . if we could just . . . learn not to hate ourselves so much. That's it you know. If we could just not hate ourselves quite so very very much.

DONALD

Yes, I know. I know. (A BEAT.) Inconceivable as it may be, you used to be worse than you are now. Maybe with a lot more work you can help yourself some more--if you try.

MICHAEL

(STRAIGHTENS UP, AND DRIES HIS EYES WITH HIS HANDKERCHIEF.) Who was it that used to always say, "You show me a happy homosexual, and I'll show you a gay corpse."

FIGURE VIII



DONALD

I don't know. Who was it who always used to say that?

MICHAEL

(PULLS AWAY SO DONALD'S ARM IS FREE FROM HIM.) And how dare you come on with that holier-than-thou attitude with me!-- (MICHAEL STANDS AND BEGINS CROSSING LEFT SEVERAL STEPS.) "A lot more work," "if I try," indeed! You've got a long row to hoe before you're perfect, you know.

DONALD

I never said I didn't.

MICHAEL

And while we're on the subject--I think your analyst is a quack. (MICHAEL BLOWS HIS NOSE.)

DONALD

Earlier you said he was a orick.

MICHAEL

That's right. He's a prick quack. Or a quack prick, whichever you prefer.

DONALD

(HEAVING A SIGH. CROSSING RIGHT BEHIND SOFA C.) Harold was right. You'll never change.

MICHAEL

Come back, Donald. Come back, Shane. (CATCHES HIMSELF AT A MOVIE IMITATION.)

DONALD

I'll come back when you have another anxiety attack.

MICHAEL

I need you. Just like Mickey Mouse needs Minnie Mouse--just like Donald Duck needs . . . Minnie Duck--Mickey needs Donnie.

DONALD

My name is Donald. I am called Donald. You must never call anyone named Donald, Donnie. (DONALD SITS ON THE BACK OF SOFA C.)

MICHAEL

(GRABS HIS HEAD, MOANS AND TURNS UPSTAGE AND GRABS BAR.) Ohhhh . . . icks! Icks! Terrible icks! (TURNS TO DONALD.) Tomorrow is going to be "Bad Day at Black Rock." A day of nerves, nerves, and more nerves! (MICHAEL SURVEYS THE ROOM, AND CROSSING RIGHT, HE PICKS UP THE GLASS OF WATER FROM THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF SOFA D.) Do you suppose there's any possibility of just burning this room? (CROSSES UP TO THE BUFFET TABLE WITH THE GLASS WHICH HE PLACES ON THE TABLE.)

DONALD

(CROSSING RIGHT AROUND SOFA C AND LEFT TO TABLE K FOR A MAGAZINE, AND THEN SITTING ON SOFA C.) Why do you think he stayed, Michael? Why do you think he took all of that from you?

MICHAEL

There are no accidents. He was begging to get killed. He begged for somebody to let him have it and he got what he wanted.

DONALD

He could have been telling the truth--Justin could have lied.

MICHAEL

Who knows? What time is it?

DONALD

It seems like it's day after tomorrow.

MICHAEL

It's probably early. (CROSSES LEFT TO THE STEREO AND TURNS IT ON. MICHEL LEGRAND'S "SUMMER OF '42" BEGINS TO PLAY.)

DONALD

What does life hold? Where're you going?

MICHAEL

(CROSSING UP RIGHT TO GET A COAT FROM THE KITCHEN.) The bedroom is occupied and I don't want to go to sleep anyway until I try to walk-off some of this booze. If I went to sleep like this, when I wake up they'd have to put me in a padded cell-not that that's where I don't belong. (A BEAT. HE GRABS COAT FROM KITCHEN, AND CROSSES ONTO THE BUFFET PLATFORM.) And there's a midnight mass at St. Malachy's that all the

show people go to. I think I'll walk over there and catch it. (HE PUTS HIS COAT ON AS HE BEGINS TO CROSS RIGHT TO THE FRONT LANDING.)

DONALD

(CROSSES TO THE BAR.) Well, pray for me.

MICHAEL

(INDICATES BEDROOM.) Maybe they'll be gone by the time I get back.

DONALD

(CROSSING TO SOFA D AND SITTING.) Well, I will be--just as soon as I knock off this bottle of brandy. (POURS BRANDY INTO SNIFTER.)

MICHAEL

Will I see you next Saturday?

DONALD

Unless you have other plans. (MICHAEL SHAKES HIS HEAD "NO" AND CROSSES UP THE STEPS TO THE DOOR AND PUTS HIS HAND ON THE KNOB.) Michael, did he ever tell you why he was crying on the phone--what it was that he had to tell you?

MICHAEL

(TURNS TO DONALD.) No. It must have been that he'd left Fran.-- Or maybe it was something else and he changed his mind.

DONALD

Maybe so. (A BEAT.) I wonder why he left her.

MICHAEL

(WEARILY.) . . . As my father said to me when he died in my arms, "I don't understand any of it. I never did." (A BEAT. MICHAEL OPENS THE DOOR.) Turn out the lights when you leave, will you? (MICHAEL FREEZES IN THE OPEN DOOR AS THE LIGHTS FADE. THE SPOT ON HIM IS THE LAST LIGHT TO DIM. THE MUSIC SWELLS FOR A PRESET CURTAIN CALL IN WHICH ALL MEMBERS OF THE CAST ASSEMBLE DURING THE BLACKOUT. ALL THE STAGE LIGHTS COME UP AND THE CAST BOWS ONCE. THE LIGHTS FADE, AND THE CAST EXITS THE STAGE DURING A FIVE SECOND BLACKOUT. THE HOUSE LIGHTS COME UP.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL EVALUATION

This chapter is devoted to the director's critical evaluation of The Boys in the Band. This evaluation will deal with four aspects of the production. They are: (1) Goal-Accomplishment Relationships; (2) Actor-Director Relationships; (3) Audience Response; (4) Personal Observations.

Goal-Accomplishment Relationships

Using the premise that a man is a human being inspite of any sexual preferences as the interpretation for the production, this director feels that he was successful. The interpretation followed the principles of realistic theatre already stated in this thesis. Through a realistic approach in directing and acting styles, each actor was able to provide for an audience, a glimpse into his character as the script allowed and the direction suggested. Through these glimpses, each actor was directed to develop his character as a total human being rather than as a human being restricted by his homosexuality. By generally avoiding stereotyped caricatures associated with homosexuality such as the limp wrist, swish, and a general quality of sweetness, the characters were able to grasp an audience rather than allienate one through a creation of a mockery of the material and the interpretation. Through a humane approach, the production presented characters and situations which could be recognizable by any audience member as

natural possibilities of character. Tony Bengel, The Greensboro Record Staff Writer said:

As a sometimes serious comedy about homosexuality, Crowley's play makes mordant mock of society's image of its "gay" contingent, while simultaneously suggesting that pain and emptiness observe no sexual categories.²⁸

In keeping with the interpretation, the director choose to ignore all stage directions furnished by the playwright in the script with the exception of entrances, exits, and descriptive passages. The director was seeking a symbolic unity in the movement and blocking of each character in each situation of the drama. The symbolic unity technique strengthened the production by heightening the identity of the characters. Each character was blocked with a regard for his personality and attitude. Larry, with his superior attitude was placed on the highest step level during intervals of long speeches and little movement. Long crosses were avoided with the exception of Emory, who needed them to enforce his feminine nature. Posed positions were used for Hank to assert his innate masculinity.

An example of the symbolic movement in a scene is found in the climax of the play. Michael forces Alan to participate in a party game which involves telephoning the one person the player has really loved. Alan accepts Michael's challenge. At the point when Alan begins to play, Michael feels that he has successfully shattered Alan's defenses revealing Alan's true identity in society as a homosexual. Michael is certain that Alan will telephone an old school chum and thereby satiate Michael's desire to control the game by presupposing the ending.

²⁸Tony Bengel, "'Boys' Is Seriously Funny," The Greensboro Record, March 3, 1972, sec. A, p. 14.

During Michael's attack on Alan, the scene was blocked with Michael making large swift cat-like movements of a linear nature as if stalking a prey. Whenever levels were possible, Michael was given height over Alan. When there were no levels available, Michael was given the upstage position. Michael's positions and levels on stage were determined by whether or not he was attacking someone, being attacked, or being complacent. Michael, through a circular pattern of blocking, backed Alan into the sofa and presented the telephone. Alan's movements at the same time were timid, and with the exception of few rebuttals of strong movement, small and confined to a narrow circle ending in the cervix of the sofa where Michael guided him. The telephone call then reversed the movements. As Michael realized that Fran, Alan's wife, was the person Alan had elected to telephone, Michael began to move in a small circular pattern which eventually placed him at the cervix of the sofa in a seated position. Alan, on the other hand, strengthened by a sudden burst of courage assumed Michael's former movement pattern. Alan became direct and with no superfluous movements concluded the scene speaking his last line from the raised landing of the apartment entrance, and exited from the stage.

Through the symbolic approach to movement, the realistic attitude toward the script, the changes in script directions, and some minor word changes, the director believes he accomplished his interpretation as detailed in Chapter I.

Actor-Director Relationships

The director was concerned with the reactions his actors might have to their roles when casting the play. In dealing with student

actors, the director was afraid that the level of professionalism required to portray homosexual characters might not be instilled in each of those auditioning. The basis for the fear was that some student actors might be afraid to portray a homosexual character as well as would be expected because of a fear of incrimination. The actors cast had to understand that the personality or the wanton nature of the character portrayal would not necessarily reflect that of the actor. The director wanted no one in his cast to be hindered by such ungrounded fears. He explained at auditions for the production that if any auditionee was concerned about such possibilities, he should discuss the matter with the director privately, the purpose of such a conference being to decide whether the actor's attitude would present an obstacle to the proper character delineation.

The director also confronted another problem in the area of casting. The theatre program had undertaken a good season which demanded a number of good actors. Because of the over-lapping of rehearsal schedules of the productions for the Spring of 1972, it was important that actors of the productions should not be overworked; therefore, the directors had to work out their casting lists together through a conference in order to stabilize the productions by balancing actors of various abilities among the many roles.

Aware of these two areas of concern, the director selected a cast which he felt could carry the production as well as create a learning experience for those concerned. The result was a cast of many dedicated young artists working together, the togetherness being a very important premise for the director.

During rehearsals, the director noticed many problems in the actors themselves. Many of these problems would be common to any production. Together, the director and the cast overcame obstacles such as: (1) a fear of portraying excessive emotions on stage; (2) understanding the director's approach and working together within that framework; and (3) character development. There were also three problems of larger scope. Within the cast there was an actor who did not feel his presence always necessary for the rehearsals. If the director had been allowed more time for rehearsal after the problem manifested itself, the actor would have been immediately replaced; however, because of the time element, the actor was kept, but he was made aware of the director's concern. The situation, although not alleviated, became less of an obstacle.

Another major concern of the director was that in casting, some actors with little or no experience were selected. The reason for such casting being the extensiveness of the production season as well as the realization that a goal of educational theatre is to teach. These actors were like ugly ducklings. They were willing to work with the director, and were themselves concerned with their development. The results were definitely encouraging. The actors developed a good sense of professionalism, learning to mask their errors in performance without disrupting the production, and thereby maintaining the flow of plot, characterization, and rhythm. The director feels the experience with these actors was one which was quite rewarding.

The third problem was one which became apparent during casting and continued into rehearsals. Certain actors were hindering their

performances because they did not wish to appear homosexual. They were creating characters which appeared to be the actors' acting, rather than creating personalities with enough dimension to encourage an audience to "suspend its disbelief" and to believe in them. The director explained such basic acting premises as that of Charles McGaw: "Acting is believing." The director tried to help each actor realize that the individual must accept the character he is portraying and understand him in order to approach him. The problem was resolved.

The director must thank his advisor who was willing to listen to these problems and offer suggestions in dealing with them without ever interceding directly, and because of this method, the problems of the actors became a growing process for the director as well as the cast members. Because of the growth process of his actors and himself, the director is confident the production was successful.

As the director encouraged the cast in positive motivating influences for the characters and the situations in which the characters were involved, he suggested a method of observation and recall. The cast was asked to observe people. The director did not say to observe homosexuals. The premise being that the characters of the play were people with the same emotions and problems in their lives as any other people. If, through the observation approach, the actor witnessed habits or gestures appropriate for his character, he was encouraged to develop the observations into a character trait; however, the director maintained the authority of rejecting certain observations. The result of the rehearsal period was a cast which functioned much like an ensemble. Lee B. Renfield, The Carolinian Staff Writer, noted:

Lytton drew from his cast members an understanding and deep feeling for the characters, which enabled them to be at ease in their roles and make the production truly a memorable experience.²⁹

Audience Reaction

Audience reaction to the production was greatly varied. Whether the audience was drawn by the general high quality of the productions at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, or if it was drawn by the nature of the play or the publicity or simple curiosity, the director was not aware. The houses were full each night of the production, and the reasons for that may have been a combination of all four factors. The director does feel that the quality of the production was an important factor in the feelings the audience carried with them from the production. Mr. Bengel wrote:

Though Crowley's subject and language are certainly not for everyone, "The Boys in the Band" just as certainly offers a fine blend of entertainment and enlightenment. In the first act we can enjoy the fun even if we have little time to feel much empathy with the characters. In the second act, after pretensions have been peeled away and emotions bared,³⁰ we have, hopefully, gained some sympathy and understanding.

A major concern involved with the audience reaction was acceptability. As strange as it may seem, despite carefully developed publicity, many audience members were unaware of the homosexual aspect of the production. The director was made aware of such comments as: "I thought it was a musical," or "Why is it not recommended for children." Despite an ignorance of the subject matter, the audience was able to

²⁹Lee B. Renfield, "Boys in the Band Reviewed," The Carolinian, March 6, 1972, p. 5.

³⁰Bengel, p. 14.

accept the production through the excellence of the set design and execution, the performances, the direction, and the nature of the play.

The playwright invested his script with many good tension breakers. The director, following the playwright's example, chose to direct the opening scene at a rapid pace in order to use the script's inherent devices to their fullest impact. At first, several humorous lines and bits of action were not picked up by the audience because of what might delve into a psychological area: because of an awareness of the alien nature of the material, and a fear of possibly humiliating a minority group through laughing at alien ideas and cliches expressed in the production, the audience seemed to restrain itself. The reverent approach then seemed to be the result of a fear of laughing at homosexuals or homosexual humor as it evolved during the early stages of the play. The audience members were not functioning as a group, but as individuals, each concerned with what someone else would think of his laughter. Soon this problem resolved itself. The first hint of a general reaction was centered around the line: "You've had worse things in your mouth."³¹ The situation seemed to be that the audience wanted to laugh, but it needed a little prodding from its individual members. On each night of production, the line which completely relaxed the audience was Emory's. Entering from the bedroom and crossing to the upper landing of the stairs, Emory said: "Who do you have to fuck to get a drink around here."³² Another example of a device

³¹Crowley. Boys I.6.

³²Ibid. 22.

used to make the audience comfortable was the line dance sequence. The director choreographed the sequence so that it contained an air of professionalism. The four dancers were positioned in a square and equidistant from one another. They revolved the entire dance remaining in their squared positions bringing the audience into an ovation, and thereby allowing the audience to find a secure mood of acceptance and enthusiasm.

The director, though not identifying himself, chose to associate with his audience at intermission and after the production each night in order to personally check the opinions the audience held regarding the production. Many compliments were heard. Perhaps one of the outstanding comments offered concerned the actors: "I just can't believe those boys up there aren't all fags." An attractive young lady chose to retort: "Oh they aren't, I've dated two of them and I can assure you that they aren't."

The production also had tense moments with the audience. One unidentified woman sitting in the second row walked out repeating over and over again: "This is the most disgusting thing I have ever seen." The director was pleased that the woman was of a small minority. Very few negative comments were heard.

Perhaps one of the greatest compliments came from local newscaster Barbara Bell. Miss Bell, via Mrs. Phyllis Whytcell, one of the Department of Drama and Speech secretaries, sent the director a note expressing her opinion of the production. The note dated March 6, 1972 said:

Barbara Bell, WQMG, asks that I tell you that Boys in the Band was the "best thing" she has ever seen

here--please give her congratulations to both the director and the cast.³³

Tony Bengel stated: "If Mart Crowley's 'The Boys in the Band' were a musical, the UNC-G Theatre production would contain only a few sour notes."³⁴

Joe Knox, The Greensboro Daily News Staff Writer stated:

There are plenty of laughs, especially during the first act as the novelty of discovering that each of the handsome young men is a sexual deviate is played out.

The dialogue is rich and juicy with innuendoes and brawling crudities.

Somehow the initial shock wears off rapidly and thereafter filthy words, dirty sex jokes, and whatall flow quite freely and are entirely acceptable.

They are neither forced or contrived, and they seem essential to the conversation and banter of the young men.³⁵

The director feels the comments and criticisms of critics and audience were appropriate.

Personal Observations

The most important result of the production was growth. The director feels he matured as both a director and an actor. Because the actors were dealing with roles of an uncommon nature in the area of a character's personal anxieties, and because the resulting production was so successful, the director feels qualified in saying that his actors developed their talents and expanded their scopes as actors.

³³Barbara Bell. personal note.

³⁴Bengel, p. 14.

³⁵Joe Knox, "Boys of UNC-G Theater Make a Gay Thing Good," The Greensboro Daily News, March 3, 1972, sec. B, p. 7.

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