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Mark Madoff's Heasure: The Director's Role in a Work-in-Progress

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MARK MEDOFF'S HEALURE: THE DIRECTOR'S
ROLE IN A WORK-IN-PROGRESS

David W. Hoover



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the Graduate School of Lindenwood College in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
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COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: HODGE ANALYSIS.1
CHAPTER II: PROCESS TO PRODUCTION. 25
CHAPTER III: DIRECTOR/PLAYWRIGHT RELATIONSHIP . . 40
CHAPTER IV: VICTIM PENITENT (First Version). . . 46
CHAPTER V: HEALURE (Production Version).106
APPENDIX 1: PROGRAM.164
APPENDIX 2 : REVIEW #1.165
APPENDIX 3 : REVIEW #2.166

CHAPTER I

HEALURE ANALYSIS

Hodge Analysis Outline

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts

1. Geographical Location
2. Date
3. Economic Environment
4. Political Environment
5. Social Environment
6. Religious Environment

B. Previous Action

C. Polar Attitudes

II. Dialogue

A. Word Choice

B. Sentence Structure

C. Images

D. Dialect

III. Dramatic Action

A. Title of Units

IV Character

A. Desire

B. Will

C. Moral Stance

D. Decorum

V. Idea

A. Meaning of Title

B. Philosophical Statements

VI. Tempos

HODGE ANALYSIS

This Hodge analysis was done for the first version of the play, Victim Penitent (Chapter IV), and changed with the new versions. I will refer to the scenes as merely One and Two. The page numbers referred to are the given page numbers of Victim Penitent.

I. Given Circumstances

A. Environmental Facts

- 1) Geographical Location: None is given for One, so we made an arbitrary decision and chose Johns Hopkins in Baltimore. Two takes place in Manhattan in a loft apartment.
- 2) Date: One is October 31, Fall, at night. In Two, Bobby says, "Ten years older" (Chapter 4, page 39). Two is 1985, therefore One must be 1975. There is a contradiction on page 3 ". . . What is this, nineteen eighty something. . ." We changed it to "seventy something." Bobby enters in Two wearing a knit cap and hunting jacket, so it might be winter climate. It is morning in Two.
- 3) Economic Environment: One doesn't give much sense of economic environment. There is a line however about "designer fatigues" which suggests that Madeline came from some old Jewish money. Two is rich New York loft. Grace has reached a level of "stardom" which infers a level of "wealth." Other references to Madeline's money are on page 36 of the script Victim Penitent.
- 4) Political Environment: This played a stronger role in the first version of the play and eventually became a topic

I wanted to discuss with the playwright. In One, Bobby's problems seem to stem from his anti-Semitism. Bobby doesn't agree with the Israelis on the war against Palestine. He sees Israel's position as hypocritical. What's happening in Israel seems to be weighing heavily on him. Madeline comes from a Jewish background and supports Israel's position. There is definitely conflict that arises from these beliefs. This political/religious problem is personal and not inherent in the geographical locale they are presently in.

5) Social Environment: One takes place during a medical school Halloween party. In Two, Grace's "Social" consists of cocktail parties which become, we find out, part of her mental breakdown.

6) Religious Environment: Political and religious are fairly synonymous here. Grace is apolitical and not religious: ". . . I'm between religions now" (page 30). If Grace is Madeline, her religious background becomes important to Bobby.

B) Previous Action: These are facts from the play which occurred prior to the present action of the play:

SCENE ONE

-Madeline is going to be a pediatrician

-Bobby is carrying some kind of pain

-Bobby was supposed to come as Donald Duck to the Halloween party

-Both have had conversations about the conflict in Israel

-Madeline's grandparents and uncles died in the concentration camps

- Madeline has vacationed in Israel
- The other medical students refer to Madeline as Saint Nosenberg the nurto-maniac (nurturing)

SCENE TWO

- Grace runs Flight Gourmet which provides food for airlines
- Grace was ". . . driven to academic excellence. . unpopular among her peers. . endured years of psychotherapy"
- Grace used to do ads for Saint-Just beauty products
- Grace is engaged to her business partner
- Grace is a reformed alcoholic
- Grace eats out a lot
- Bobby is no longer an anti-Semite
- Madeline sang The Star Spangled Banner in a duck voice at the Halloween party
- Grace's fiancé is named Neil
- Grace met Neil at a cocktail party
- Bobby is a plastic surgeon
- Bobby worked in the kitchen at the med school to defray expenses, and spit in the food--he says he was having sex with Madeline "saliva to saliva."
- Bobby built collages out of extracted bone and cartilage
- Bobby went to Israel looking for Madeline to apologize to her
- Bobby did plastic surgery on his own nose when it was smashed in the Palestinian war
- Madeline disappeared from a hospital in the Golan Heights eight-and-a-half years ago

- Grace was on The Tonight Show twenty-two months ago where she passed out from being drunk
- Grace has a child that's institutionalized because of brain damage due to an aberration in her or her baby's father
- Bobby slept with Madeline the night before they graduated from medical school
- Grace's real name is Harriet Naismith
- Grace has had her teeth fixed and a nose-job
- Grace "loved" the photographer that shot the pictures of each of her body parts
- Bobby worked with a Latvian doctor in Israel
- Grace was on Good Morning, America last week
- Grace sees a therapist
- Bobby worked on a seven year old burn victim that died
- Bobby did computer surgery on Grace's face to see if it's possible that she is Madeline

C. Polar Attitudes

Bobby starts by being an anti-Semite. This is odd because he is Jewish. He is carrying a great deal of pain in the form of the Israeli war and a woman he cares about but can't admit it. Bobby can't accept the fact that Madeline cares about him so much. He rejects these feelings by putting her and her accomplishments down. By the end of the play Bobby has softened his outlook on past mistakes and decides a livable compromise can be found, and that this compromise is not self-sacrificing.

This compromise takes the form of exposing some of that vulnerability that he felt compelled to hide with Madeline, and allowing himself to be close to someone.

Grace has supposedly found that same compromise, but in the process, has closed the door on her past, including a child. By the end of the play she has discovered that some skeletons can be packed away in the closet but others can't, they have to be dealt with. We are lead to believe that Grace will undergo some re-examining of the situation of her child and of her current relationship with Neil.

II. DIALOGUE

Part of the great joy of doing a Medoff play is working with the words of the script. One of Medoff's great strengths as a playwright is his command of the English language. It is a joy to be reminded of the excitement and challenge that language presents us in our field.

A. Word Choice

Word choice can be a great indicator of many things: intelligence, background, ethnicity, and character relationship to name a few. Here are some sample lines showing the characters' levels of intelligence through their word choices:

Grace . . . fabricate a habitable self-image. . .
(page 6)

. . . subliminal baby-you-know-you-want-it
Freudian slip. . . (page 12)

Bobby . . . assiduously rejected. . . (page 3)

. . . subcutaneous and passionate in-
accessibility. . . (page 41)

. . . Healure. . .end of conflict, restoration of humanity, reconciliation. (page 52)

. . .great hormonal insurrection of our teens. . . (page 53)

. . .seismographic sensitivity. . . (page 54)

. . .But the atrocities that are perpetrated against us are perpetrated because we invest our tormentors with the power to savage us. (page 54)

. . .Your passions are going to atrophy, petrify, and finally die. (page 57)

Here are some words showing background, specifically Hector's background. The conversational style indicates a sub-standard vocabulary.

"knockers" (page 10)

"helluva" (page 10)

"ding-dong" (page 12)

"forked over" (page 14)

Bobby's and Madeline's ethnicality is evident in their Hebrew vocabulary:

"kibbutz" (page 4)

"shabbus" (page 30)

"Goniff" (page 3)

The way Medoff uses the proper name "Bobby" in Madeline's lines gives her that quality of a mother talking to her son. This could also be a cause of Bobby's resentment towards Madeline. These quotes are clear indicators of character relationship.

You can be very unkind, Bobby (page 1)

Why do you think, Bobby? (page 1)

I don't understand you all that well,
Bobby. (page 2)

We've had this conversation before, Bobby.
(page 3)

B. Sentence Structure

Medoff's sentence structure is most evident in his ability to turn the comedic phrase, as in the following quotes:

I hate anger. It really pisses me off. (page 12)

HECTOR

That's your ass, for chrissake.

GRACE

They're going to be stored.

HECTOR

Can I have 'em? (page 18)

HECTOR

There are those who say ya went into seclusion with relatives in Paraguay.

GRACE

I don't have relatives in Paraguay.

HECTOR

I thought that story smelled pretty fishy myself. (page 38)

. . .the threat of rape and dismemberment has pretty well passed. Unless of course you say something I don't like. (page 45)

If I'd known it was going to turn into this

kind of hostage situation I'd have at least brought a pocket Webster's. (page 47)

Look, I already see a therapist and I have a lot of friends who do a lot of free lance meddling on the side. (page 53)

I'm not dressed for a kidnapping. I'm dressed for a hostage-taking in my own apartment.

As well as turning a comic phrase, there is a built-in recovery mechanism for Bobby inherent in the structure of many of his lines. Bobby is convinced that Grace is Madeline and in frustration, pressures Grace for the answer he is looking for. Out of this frustration he pushes himself to the point of needing a recovery. This structure gives flow to the dramatic action and gives Bobby the quality of being on the edge. Here are some examples of this mechanism:

GRACE

I knew I shouldn't have said that.

HECTOR

I wonder why ya did.

GRACE

It's the subliminal baby-you-know-you-want-it Freudian slip. I'm asking for it, right?

HECTOR

Where do the breadcrumbs go? (page 12)

HECTOR

Do it! You can't be available when you're pushin' perfume on TV and not available when some guy shows up to collect.

(a beat)

I'll never forget that one commercial where you came walkin' out of a lotta fog and the announcer said, "The American Dream Girl" lives. She is Miss Grace. . ." (page 17)

GRACE
Pubis.

HECTOR
Didn't catch it.

GRACE
Pubis.

HECTOR
Nice word for it. How bout some coffee?
(page 19)

GRACE
Grace Rice is just an image---

HECTOR
For which you are not responsible? Shovin' all that perfection down our throats. Yeah. Maybe I'm talkin about the American Dream Girl--that face and body a hers invadin' everybody's life. . . And then again, maybe I ain't talkin about that.

(a beat)

Maybe. . . maybe I don't know what the hell I'm. . .

(He seems confounded. He hooks onto the cup of coffee)

You wanna take a shot a that. (page 21)

HECTOR
You're Madeline Rosenberg, goddamn it! Admit it! Say it! My name is Madeline Rosenberg. . . Admit it! Say it!

GRACE
My name is Madeline Rosenberg.

HECTOR
I had a nose job, a boob job, and a name job.

GRACE

I had a nose job, a boob job, and a name job.
(a beat)

HECTOR

Oh Jesus, I'm sorry. Okay, okay, sshh,
sshh. Ya Okay? Huh? Ya okay? (page 27)

HECTOR

He used to insist it was because you drove
him nuts with your professed affection for
him. Me, I think it was something else.

GRACE

What?

HECTOR

Nice lookin herb. Whudduya got there?
(page 36)

GRACE

I'm past all that now.

HECTOR

No--never. Drink it down, Maddy. Drink
it all down.

(a beat)

No. Don't.

(a quick beat)

What am I doing? I guess I figured. . .
(page 39)

C. Images

What would a play be without the proverbial "image?" Webster defines an image as a mental picture, conception, idea, or impression. The images in Victim Penitent seem to fall into two groups: humorous visual images, and symbols or metaphors. I will list some of the humorous images first:

Why would anyone come to a medical school Halloween party dressed like Daisy Duck? As Louis Pasteur or a penicillin mold or a syringe, okay; but Daisy Duck? Rhonda

dressed as an enema bag--that's how you
come to a medical school Halloween party.
(page 2)

I knew a girl once like to coat herself
with horseradish, pretend she was a brisket.
(page 13)

I have these shipped in special from Cairo.
What makes 'em unique is just a toucha
camel shit in each one. Distinctive taste.
(page 15)

Ole Shit Creek. Have a boat moored there
myself. (page 23)

So, what brand a religion does someone
named Grace Rice smoke, Maddy? (page 30)

Talk about tits; she had tits coulda kept
the Titanic afloat. You should see 'em
now after three kids--stretch-marked and
battling for airspace with her knee. . ."
(page 33)

Next are the images that are symbolic or metaphoric:

The American Dream Girl is Bobby's image of something
plastic and false. Something that only has exterior qualities
and even those are fading. (References to this are scattered
throughout the second scene).

The body part photos are a metaphor for the violation of
Grace's past. Nudity, in this case, represents something cold
and unattractive. (page 17)

This next quote shows how the boxes in Grace's apartment

represent all of the past she has neatly tucked away:

BOBBY

Tell me how you took your big nose and flat chest and all the humiliation of your childhood and shoved it in boxes like all this crap all over the place.

GRACE

I took a big chance.

BOBBY

You must have. But is a woman with all these beautifully packed crates aware still how tenuous the accomplishment is, how easily they can be tipped, upended, the contents strewn all over the floor for anyone who happens to know how to pick a lock to see?
(page 46)

Bobby spitting in the food is a strong sexual image which he himself suggests in this next quote:

HECTOR

. . .Sex.

GRACE

What sex?

HECTOR

The spitting in your food. I think it was sexual. Very unconscious, ya know. I think he was havin sex with you, saliva to saliva, that he wouldn't permit himself to have with ya body to body. I think he loved you.

D. Dialect

There are two dialects represented in the play: Spanish and New York. Hector, who is Bobby in disguise, has a Spanish accent which is suggested in the script with such lines as "el telephone" and "Ya lo creo." Bobby then drops the Hispanic accent and says he is the assistant manager of the grocery store. Medoff indicates that when he drops the Spanish accent he should have a New York accent. This is not specifically

written into the lines, but the colloquialisms give a clear separation between Hector, the grocery store manager, and Bobby, the plastic surgeon.

In addition to the two dialects, several impersonations are also called for in the script. Medoff has not written these per se but has suggested specific personalities for certain lines. The first is Kennedy (page 8), the second in Humphrey Bogart (page 10), and the last one is W.C. Fields (page 23).

III. Dramatic Action

I have divided the script into units which I have numbered and titled with an appropriate line from the unit. The units are marked in the Victim Penitent script in Chapter IV.

A. Title of Units

ONE

1. I didn't invite you out here.
(page 1)
2. Pediatricians know everything about children. . .so explain me to me anyway. (page 2)
3. We're not a couple, Madeline.
(page 3)
4. I should go to Israel with you, right?
(page 4)
5. Insensitive people could hurt someone as rare as you. (page 5)

TWO

1. No--no, I'm not Manuel. (page 7)

2. . . .don't blame ya for bein cautious.
these are some days we live in. . .
(page 8)
3. Those your knockers? (page 10)
4. . . .I don't have anything to hide
from anybody. (page 14)
5. . . .word is you're very smart.
(page 15)
6. . . .I'm not going to fall apart.
(page 16)
7. What are ya, just a piece a meat?
(page 18)
8. Grace Rice is just an image--" (page 21)
9. Gotta have dreams. (page 23)
10. To be so humiliated. (page 24)
11. People aren't allowed to do this!
(page 27)
12. I'm on the goddamn wire!" (page 29)
13. I feel calm. (page 31)
14. Thief of affection and trust and time.
(page 32)
15. Would you like to play in some mud?
(page 34)
16. I hope you didn't spit in the goddamn
peanuts. (page 36)
17. I don't know the truth!! (page 38)
18. You would be Robert Bergstein. (page 39)
19. I've felt a strange kinship with you. . .
(page 41)
20. Play a little Scrabble? (page 44)
21. Not that crazy about adults. (page 46)
22. I took a big chance. (page 47)

23. Fard. . .to put on make-up to minimize a fault. (page 48)
24. Doctor, heal thyself! (page 49)
25. . . .in search of magic. (page 50)
26. . . .Healure. . .End of conflict, restoration of humanity, reconciliation. (page 51)
27. . . .my own tangled vision. . . (page 53)
28. I'm not terminal! (page 57)
29. I miss zeal. (page 58)
30. . . .thanks for a nice morning (page 59)

IV. Characters

I will discuss the three characters in the following categories: Desire, Will, Moral Stance, and Decorum. After each section, I will include quotes describing their character.

Madeline

A. Desire: Madeline desires acceptance from her medical school peers, but more importantly from Bobby, for whom she has strong feelings. She desires to love and be loved.

I care about you, Bobby, I wish you peace.
I love you. (page 5)

B. Will: Madeline's capacity for loving is very great, which is the very flaw that opens her up to Bobby's sardonic put-downs. She says to Bobby:

I know your pain bothers me but I don't know what to do about it anymore. (page 2)

C. Moral stance: "Saint Nosenberg" is a good clue as to Madeline's moral stance. She wants to see the best in people, and is, herself, the personification of that ideal.

The way she puts up with Bobby's cruelty shows great patience.

An example of this humanity is when Bobby says about Madeline:

You're the only one among us who's actually becoming a doctor for the right reasons-- because you care, because you want to make people well, to restore, heal. (page 5)

She does, however, sleep with Bobby at the end of medical school without being married to him or having hope of marriage. The fact that she does this indicates her love for Bobby.

D. Decorum: Madeline is described as a "Jewish Princess" by Bobby. In Scene One she is in a Daisy Duck costume. Reference is made to her nose throughout the play. Though Madeline must appear Jewish and somewhat unattractive, she should be, by no means, ugly. Ultimately, her inner beauty must shine through or there's no reason to finish the play. This inner beauty is the very essence of Bobby's attraction to Madeline and what brings him back looking for her ten years later. An indication of her physical appearance is evident in Bobby's line: "Go inside, stick your nose in the punch bowl and drain it." (page 5)

Grace

A. Desire: Grace's driving desire is to get on with her life. She's gone through a troubled and hectic past and packed it away so she, in her mind, can get her life under way. She thinks she has found that compromise between dreams and fears. The dream of being a model and the fears of having a child with brain damage:

My mother told me when I married the first time that there are three arenas in which

we play out our lives. In the first we dream of all that can be; in the second we are staggered by the realization of all that can't be; and in the third we compromise on something sensible between our dreams and our fears. (page 57)

B. Will: Grace's will is strong. She has managed to tuck her past away, that is, until Bobby enters the picture. We assume that if he hadn't shown up, her life would have continued on its newly planned path.

Now, I know a lot of people in this kind of situation fall apart. Yes, well, I'm not going to fall apart.
(page 16)

C. Moral Stance: Most of Grace's past problems stem from her degenerated moral stance. This degeneration takes the form of alcohol and drug abuse as well as sexual promiscuity. When the play begins she has overcome and eliminated her drug and alcohol abuse:

Those photographs. . .I was drinking a quart of vodka every two days and sucking my way through a gram of cocaine every single day. I got a photographer who'd been clawing at me since I did my first Vogue cover to shoot each of my perfect parts for my sagging and wrinkled old age. Then we smoked a pipe of hash and screwed all over twenty yards of red butcher paper. And believe me, he wasn't the first guy I blithely banged just because he craved me. (page 51)

D. Decorum: We start out by seeing Grace in work-out clothes and later in a bathrobe. Grace has made her living on her looks which can only suggest one thing: she is stunning. There are only two references to this beauty fading in any way: ". . .laugh lines starting to show" (page 42), and "Rumor around

my neighborhood was you was gettin too old so they hadda turn ya out to pasture." (page 9)

Here is a quote of Grace's showing the trouble she has gone through to give herself physical beauty:

And so she had her nose done and her teeth yanked and sawed and capped and she had the hair on her head straightened and ironed and colored across the spectrum of the rainbow in search of magic so she might someday attract men like you who decide the life and death issues for little monsters like Harriet Naismith and Madeline Rosenberg. And whuddya know, she was finally acceptable. Hell, she was goddamn perfect.
(page 50)

Bobby

A. Desire: Bobby desires to love and be loved. However simplistic this may seem it is a universal theme in many characters, and for good reason. This conflict of loving too hard or not enough is the basis of great dramatic action. Madeline loves too hard, Bobby not enough:

We're not a couple, Madeline, or a team. We are neither a couple nor a team. You have an inexplicable, I say perverse, attraction to me which I have for four years assiduously rejected, yet you persist as if my lack of interest offends you in no way whatsoever. (page 3)

B. Will: Will, strength, courage is exactly why this love cannot be. Bobby's lack of will is the whole basis for the second scene and the main force of the dramatic action. In Scene One, Bobby is unwilling to admit how much he cares about Madeline. He says the following line just after Madeline has exited: "People could hurt someone like you." (page 5)

C. Moral Stance: To add to the lack of stability in Bobby's will are some bad moral choices. He drinks heavily, as we see in Scene One. In Scene Two we discover he's had a bout with alcoholism. He's on the comeback trail like Grace. They recognize this similar characteristic in each other which has a great deal to do with their mutual attraction. Another bad moral choice was sleeping with Madeline at the end of medical school. This plants the seed of guilt, making Bobby think that Grace's child may be his as well. Grace says: "You treated her so badly that you slept with her as penance or what?" (page 49)

D. Decorum: In Scene One, Bobby is dressed as a "Terrorist Rabbi" for the Halloween party. In Two we find him wearing dark glasses, a knit cap that covers his head, an old hunting jacket, dungarees and hiking boots. He appears to be thirty or thirty-five in Scene Two. Eventually the hat, wig, mustache, contacts, and glasses come off to reveal Bobby. No mention is made that he did his own nose and that he looks ten years older than the photograph of the medical school Halloween party. I don't perceive him as great-looking just because of his objections to the trappings of physical beauty:

And I was sick of people like me, who--
no matter how seemingly compassionate--
didn't know dogshit about what life
looked like from the inside of someone
grotesque in this society that rewards
first and foremost the physically attractive.
(page 53)

V. IDEA

A. Meaning of title

During the course of the pre-rehearsal work, the title changed from Victim Penitent to Healure. I will include a paragraph on the new title as I feel it is important to the play.

"Penitent" is defined as someone who is repentant. "Repentant" is defined by Webster: to feel pain or sorrow for something done or left undone. I think this title suggests two things. Firstly, I think Grace represents the literal victim in the play, the person who is actually held hostage in her own apartment. Secondly, Bobby is a victim of his past actions and the consequences of those actions. Bobby is feeling sorrow or pain for things undone; specifically, not telling Madeline he loved her. The title on a more ethereal level suggests that we can all be victims of our pasts that have elements in them that are done or undone. People carry this repentance or "baggage" with them their entire life. Dealing with this "baggage" becomes the conflict of the dramatic action. I think this suggests a metaphor: Bobby and Grace carrying too much "baggage" for things done or undone. This becomes the nature of the compromise.

The name of the play was changed to Healure for two reasons. Firstly, Medoff felt that Healure represented the meaning of the play more accurately and secondly, Victim Penitent isn't a title that grabs you. From my personal point of view, Healure doesn't grab you either.

Healure is an invented word which, as Medoff describes in the play, means ". . .end of conflict, restoration of humanity,

reconciliation. An act of mercy and compassion between people." (page 52) Bobby is looking for this restoration of humanity. He is also looking for an act of mercy and compassion between people. "Between" is underlined in this quote merely because Madeline had this compassion and Bobby didn't so the key is between: equal reciprocation.

B. Philosophical Statements

There are many lines in the play which give us a deeper understanding of the play. One, naturally, is the word "healure." Here are some other statements which convey ideas not mentioned above. These quotes give depth to the overall meaning of the play:

. . .everybody's gotta hate somebody
because we mostly hate our own guts. . .
(page 29)

. . .but is a woman with all of these
beautifully packed crates, aware still
how tenuous the accomplishment is, how
easily they can be tipped, upended,
the contents strewn all over the floor
for anyone who knows how to pick a
lock to see? (page 47)

. . .The distance between something
that seems to be true and something
that is true is often very great.
(page 49)

The slickest plastic surgeon in the
world can't completely obliterate
the tiniest scar. Fifty years later
there will still be a little white
line. (page 54)

VI. Tempos

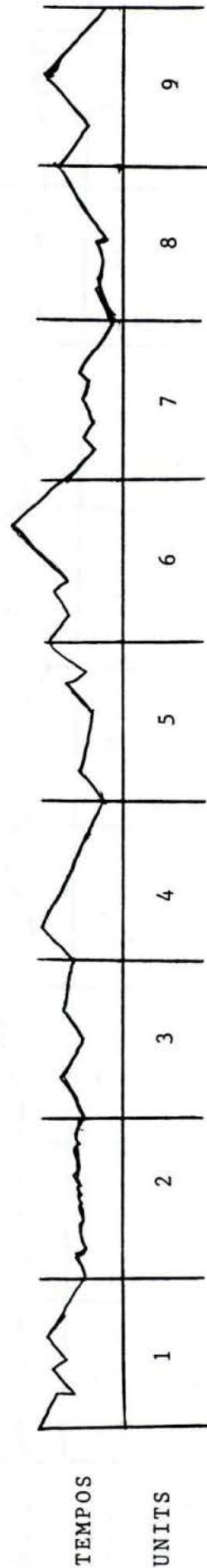
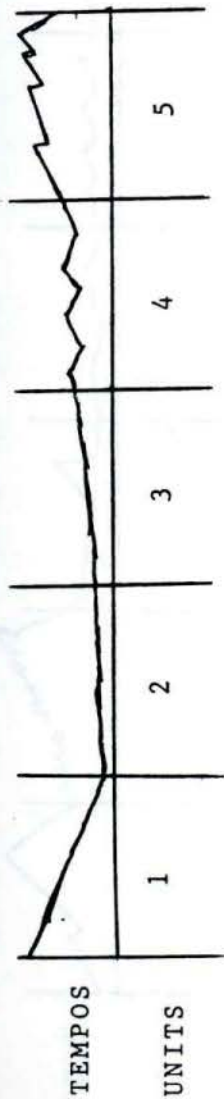
The following graph represents visually the pacing and rhythm of the different units. For example:

quick repartee-- *~~~~~*

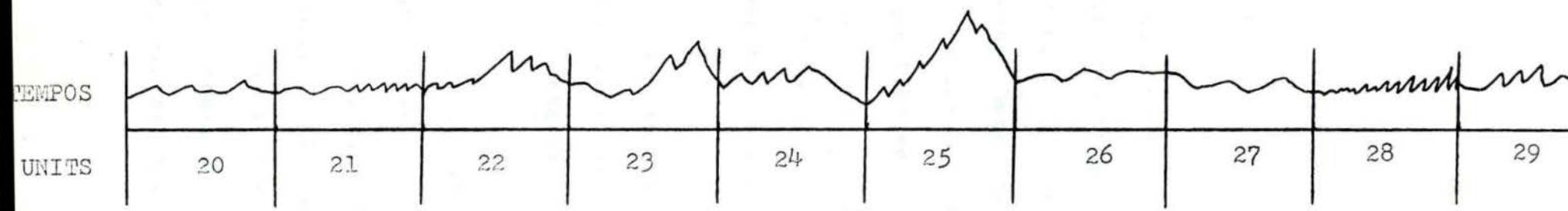
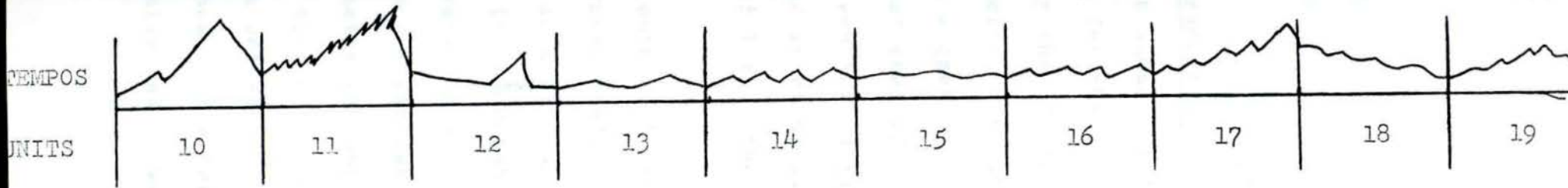
conversation-- *~~~~~*

quickenning of pace-- */ *

slowing of pace-- */ *



Scene Two continued



CHAPTER II

PROCESS TO PRODUCTION

Introduction

Last summer, I directed a production of Noel Coward's Hay Fever for the American Southwest Theatre Company. A few days after the closing of the production, I was having an informal meeting with the Artistic Director, Mark Medoff. I kiddingly suggested that he write a piece for my thesis. He said he had shelved a play that he would like me to look at. The play was titled Victim Penitent. I liked it. I'm not sure if I liked it right away just because it was a Mark Medoff play or if I felt the play had some merit. It was a little of both!

As soon as I determined that Mark was serious, I contacted my department head, Bruce Longworth, to see if we could slot the play in a studio space and call it my thesis. He agreed and gave it the October slot.

Several things went through my mind, that when I look back, had a great deal to do with what I learned: never turn down a challenge just because you're scared. I was scared to death to accept this challenge. Not only was it an unproduced play by a well-known playwright, but it was a play by a friend. The responsibility for a new script is a heavy one.

I also had to weigh this project against the option of

directing The Importance of Being Earnest, which the faculty had chosen as my thesis production. I had already done the show as an actor and done some of the research while working on Noel Coward. It was basically a pat project with simple research and thousands of productions to study. I soon realized what a fool I would be if I didn't take the Medoff project. One of the most exciting areas of the modern theatre is that "animal" called the new script. This "animal" is something I've experienced as a stage manager a great deal and now I had a chance to work first hand as a director.

Win, lose, or draw I knew I was in for an amazing experience.

Pre-Rehearsal

I felt like I had to make some decisions early-on affecting the space. One of these decisions was a scenic decision. The play takes place in a realistic setting, with a kitchen. The studio scenery consists of a set of black flats. I had to decide either to use these flats or attempt to give myself a realistic setting. I opted for the realistic setting for several reasons: a major playwright was coming in and he wasn't getting professional actors or director. In addition, there are so many hand props in the show which are used directly in the action that I didn't want to mix real props with non-real scenery. I felt it would have been visually awkward to have Grace, for instance, putting the mushrooms into a box instead of a real stove.

The other pre-rehearsal question was whether to use one or two women to play the roles of Madeline and Grace. This

was discussed a great deal not only with the playwright but with faculty advisors as well. The debate, basically, stemmed from the question of Grace's real identity. Do you have an actress play both roles and risk the danger that the audience is going to assume they are the same person? Or do you cast two actresses and risk the danger that the audience is going to assume they are not the same person? How important is it that the audience believe that Grace could in fact be Madeline? Either way you're imposing an answer to the question. I made the decision to go with two actresses. I tried to cast two women who looked enough alike that it could be believed that one had had surgery done to change her appearance. This decision let me use two actresses in the process. But it leaned the audience towards not thinking Grace was Madeline. (At the time, this seemed the lesser of two evils). In hindsight, I think I would use one woman simply because there was an element of intrigue missing that was inherent in the reading of the script. The idea of wondering if it is really she is a forward moving idea for the audience that was missing in the production. Also, it gives the actress the added incentive of convincing the audience, as well as Bobby, that she is not Madeline.

A couple of weeks into the semester Mark sent me a revised version of the script with a new title: Healure. The title was the main change. I have included a discussion of the title in Chapter I because I feel it's important to the meaning of the play. When I talked to Mark on the phone about the title he asked me what I thought. I told him I thought it

was a much better title in terms of the meaning of the script but I didn't like it from the point of view of an audience. What would an audience perceive this play to be about? Or is that even important?

Casting

I have always considered casting one of my strong points as a director. There's a joke about good directing being 90% casting and 10% luck. To a certain extent I believe this but this particular show presented a challenge which I had never before come across.

In my early conversations with Mark he suggested that the actors playing Bobby and Grace must have a great sense of vulnerability. His other comment was that Grace had to be stunning. Her character is based on coverup by means of physical beauty.

I ended up casting Lisa Albert as Madeline, Bill Lengfelder as Bobby, and Nora Lisa Faidi as Grace. Lisa and Nora Lisa did indeed look as if surgery could be done to change one to the other. Nora Lisa read very well in the audition process. She had a great sense of European elegance, she was also a smoker. Smoking is a pet peeve of mine as a director. I've never seen anybody in educational theatre that convinced me they were a smoker when they weren't. Smoking is integral to the script because it acts as a substitute for Grace's past vices as well as a recovery from fear. My original choice for Grace was Cindy Huse. She had the maturity to play the role. There were problems with this choice, however. Cindy

is no longer a student at Lindenwood and she is a non-smoker. I knew, in terms of the department, I was going to take some heat no matter what the decision was. If I used Cindy Huse I would have the women down my throat for using a non-student. If I used Nora Lisa I would be accused of casting on physical appearance alone. My decision was simplified because Bruce strongly advised against casting outside the department. I was not at all unhappy with my two other choices. in Bill Lengfelder and Lisa Albert. Lisa Albert was visually perfect for Madeline, and Bill has that strength but also that vulnerability which is the attractive part of Bobby.

Rehearsal

The first phase of rehearsal was hindered slightly because I was cast in Round and Round the Garden and the first part of the rehearsal process took place during the last few performances of that show. Fortunately, Bill took the lead for me and met with Nora Lisa and started running lines for meaning and interpretation.

Nora Lisa's first language is French. Because of the language problem, I tried to make it painfully clear that whenever she didn't know what I was saying or was confused about a direction, she needed to let me know right away so I could make it clear. This became a major problem. It took me awhile to realize she was not asking any questions and she did not know what I was trying to do with the play. Unfortunately I was getting this all second hand from Jannell

Robinson, her roommate.

My own sense of egotism is what kept me using Nora Lisa far too long. I kept telling myself that eventually I would break through to her and things would start clicking. You go through this in many plays, so it didn't seem that unnatural to go through it with this play.

About two weeks into rehearsal, I realized that things were not only not clicking, they were never going to click. This was the point at which a major decision had to be made. It was probably the hardest decision I've ever made. We were not only getting close to the arrival of Medoff, we were getting close to opening night.

After a run-through on Wednesday, October 16, I finally got it through my head that a change had to occur. I knew I was going to have to replace Nora Lisa as Grace and my question was how to do this as smoothly as possible. After the rehearsal I came home, rather upset, and called Bruce for advice on how to go about making this change. He suggested that the acting teacher see a run-through to make a further assessment. The next day, Thursday the 17th, Suzanne Mills, the acting teacher, came in to see a run-through at 4:30. It was bad. I met with Suzanne and Bruce after the run-through, at which time I decided to replace Nora Lisa with Jannell Robinson. I chose Jannell for several reasons: Jannell was Nora Lisa's roommate and had already spent time helping her memorize lines, so she was familiar with the script; Jannell also had the age and experience to come in at the last

minute and put it together. I immediately contacted Jannell and Nora Lisa. I tried to make it clear to Nora Lisa that the problem was mine because I was asking her to do too much too soon. The pressure would have been great for an experienced actress, not to mention someone completely inexperienced. Handsight tells me she was more relieved than angry. After this was settled I went home at 6:30 and called Medoff. I told him the situation and gave him the option of cancelling the weekend. Mark could tell that I was a bit distraught over the events that had taken place and assured me that it was no big deal and we would have some fun. I told him I planned to spend the day on Friday blocking Jannell into the show. The blocking did not take long and I was already feeling a great sense of relief having Jannell in the role.

I picked up Mark on Friday afternoon the 18th for a lecture/discussion with the department. He then saw a run-through that evening while I was involved in Round and Round the Garden. On Saturday I blocked out time from 8:00am to 6:00pm and the same on Sunday. We ultimately didn't use all of the time but I wanted to have enough.

Saturday morning I met Mark early and we talked about what I saw as the problems of the script. There were three major ones.

The first was that Bobby's problems seemed to stem from the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as opposed to his relationship problem with Madeline. This runs the risk of making the pain he's going through only recognizable to a

specific political/religious group: the Jewish community. If, however, his pain is caused by the way he's mistreated someone for whom he cared, it becomes universal. The focus of his pain should be one thing, not two.

My second problem was that we didn't see enough of Madeline to get to know why this person is special. What is it about Madeline that brings this man back ten years later wanting to tell her that he's sorry for the way he's treated her? I'd like to see more of Madeline as Madeline before she starts dealing with Bobby's problems so quickly in the first scene.

My third problem with the script was the ending. In the first version (Victim Penitent) it ends with Grace saying "Don't go." which leads you to believe that Bobby stays and they get together either intellectually or physically. The second version, the first Healure version, ends with Grace saying "Bobby." and they look at each other and there's a blackout. I suggested that if she says "Don't go" it makes the ending too pat. It wraps everything up too neatly, especially considering the complexity of what we've just witnessed. I felt there should be a sense of "hope" for both of them. But I wanted the audience to decide what form this "hope" would take: would they get together, would they go off their separate ways with new outlooks, would Grace dump Neil and take the child back?

Saturday morning we met and started with a basic read-through. We were, for the most part, never "on our feet"

for the entire weekend. We read, we talked, we argued and rewrote. One of the nice things about the process was the collaboration of actors, director, and playwright. We were never made to feel we were in the presence of a great artist. Mark consulted with me on every change and some fights I won and some I lost.

It became even more evident that the decision to replace Nora Lisa was the correct thing to do. Jannell was able to provide the essential input of an experienced actress into the new play process.

During this first rewrite day I made an interesting observation. Medoff, who knows nothing of Francis Hodge, writes in perfect beats. He is completely unaware of this structural tool we study as young directors. This instinctive quality made me very much aware of being in the presence of a true professional.

Sunday continued in the same fashion. We pushed through and finished rewriting the script from beginning to end. By this point in the weekend we had made major revisions, some of which addressed my original concerns: the ending of the script and the political/religious implications of Bobby's pain. Bobby's infatuation with Madeline turned into love as opposed to admiration. It became a need to love this woman instead of putting her on a pedestal. This was more apparent in the second scene than in the first. I would still like to see a little more of this hidden love for Madeline in the first scene.

The ending was changed so that as Bobby exits he leaves his business card. The play closes with Grace looking at the card. I like this ending because it has that feeling of hope for which I was looking and yet it is not too pat.

After the weekend, I was mentally drained. It was one of the most intense work sessions I had ever been through. My job was now to take the rewrites and put them up as if they were a new play, which, indeed, they were.

I ran into a couple of problems. One was a scenic problem. I had made a commitment to go with a realistic setting and I found myself far behind in accomplishing what I had originally set out to accomplish. I had planned to paint the black flats for my walls. The graduate body voted to build new flats. I had to build these new flats. This added much more time to my build weekend of October 26 than I had set aside. Unfortunately I got this piece of information too late for me to add another build weekend. As we all know, everything used in the studio has to be done by the graduate students themselves. These few days put me into tech and dress week..

Tech/Dress week was tough; not only was I trying to get a new script on its feet with an actress who had only been with us a few days, but I was trying to accomplish more scenically than I had bargained for.

Looking back, I may have done it differently. I anticipated heavy rewrites, but I couldn't have anticipated any problems with the actress or the set.

Bill had problems dealing with the new rewrites because they were vastly different from what he had built his character on. Whenever you work on a new script, you do rewrites constantly, so actors who are used to working on new scripts are very accustomed to being given a new scene without much notice. To compound this, I was stretched even thinner that last week and did not give him the kind of time he needed from me as a director to help him see the rewrites as a benefit rather than a hindrance. But this was Bill's first "new script" experience. Even though he had a great deal of work to do, he worked with a great deal of grace (no pun intended).

Jannell did not have this problem. She was new to the process, so the old script did not mean that much. What she was doing during rewrite weekend was creating a character to which she could relate. This was an interesting observation I made. In educational theater is it better not to be too familiar with a character in a new play, if you have a chance to workshop it? Maybe there is more insight if you are not completely submerged in the role before rewrites.

This wasn't a problem with Lisa either simply because she had more experience and her scene was so short.

Ultimately, the rewrites hindered the performance of the play because I always felt like we were all still trying to find our way. Bill and I, in particular, were still trying to find the highs and lows of the piece. I do believe though that the script we came up with was better than the script we started with, which ultimately is progress. That is truly the aim of the workshop of a new play.

There were some parts of Bill's character which became too emotional for the actor. This is where, again, I fell short as a director. Part of the problem was that when Mark saw the run-through he felt Bill was playing the character too broadly, which was how I had directed him to play it. He told Bill during the weekend that he should play the role like he was playing to a TV camera. Bill took this direction and ran with it. The problem from my point of view was that it became too personal and too isolated, so that all of the great emotion he was feeling never left the stage. Again, this was a director problem and not an actor problem. It is something that I should have foreseen and helped him to solve.

Another trouble spot for Bill, of which I was unaware, was the fact that Medoff writes with a very sardonic wit, which has to be played on a fine line such as Teddy in When You Comin Back, Red Ryder? This is a person that you would like to hate, because of his cruelty, but can't, simply because he is funny. There is a great deal of humor in the piece that Bill missed. One of the pitfalls of taking something that is supposedly "heavy" is to make it so heavy that by the end of the play, we don't care what happens to the characters. I've always felt that any "heavy" piece should be 90% humor and 10% "heavy." Humor is what draws us into people and endears us to them. In the case of Bobby it acts as a recovery mechanism. For Grace it is an outlet of fear.

Basically, we tried to accomplish two major things in the last ten days of rehearsal: trying to get a sense

of flow to the piece, and moving from moment to moment with the least amount of harsh transition as possible. I think we accomplished this. I think some of the moments were not as sharply defined as they could have been, especially the end of the play, but I feel we made progress with some very difficult material.

Performance

During the performance phase, my role as director took on a different meaning. In educational theatre the role of the director normally is to stay with the show and take notes. In professional theatre the director is usually contracted through opening night and the stage manager is in charge of the upkeep of the show. During the performances of Healure, I was taking notes on the show but I was taking note of the audience reaction as well. This is important to a new play because it tells you if they are interested and, even more importantly, if they are following the storyline. Because of the minimal attendance we had on this show, it made it difficult to get a handle on the audience reaction. It was evident in performance that the humor of the piece was getting lost. In a few spots, however, the audience reacted consistently. The "brisket" line in Chapter VI, page 13 (which is the version of Healure actually used) and the lines about "tits" on page 32 of the same chapter were the biggest laughs.

In addition to the observations I made of the audience for the new play process, I made two other observations that are typical of any production.

Firstly, the lack of music in the show was a major problem. Unfortunately during the tech/dress week music became a very low priority. The lack of music created a sense of tension within the audience before the show and even more so between scenes. The studio theatre is a small space where voices, even at a conversational level, tend to be amplified. Without the music to offset this intimacy the audience felt uncomfortable talking before the show. Between scenes there were blackouts, and without anything to occupy their senses the audience felt uneasy. Also, music could have helped in terms of furthering the message of the play. Usually you pick the music early in the process, but because the rewrites would effect the message, I felt it would have been a waste of time. I'm a great believer in using music for a play, and it was unfortunate that this choice had to be made.

Secondly, the lack of a curtain call was a problem I noticed during performance. In addition to music, I have strong opinions about curtain calls. I originally chose not to have one simply because they have never used curtain calls for the studio theatre. I don't know why this is. Bruce felt strongly, after seeing the show, that there should be a curtain call. I talked to the actors about adding one and they were opposed to the idea. Since I feel a curtain call is an actor's moment and they didn't want that moment I ended up not using one. In hindsight, I realize a curtain call is an audience's moment too and should have been included. Its absence leaves them with uneasy feelings by continuing

to clap. It would have helped the actors to break loose from the emotion of the show as well.

Post-performance

After the show was down I felt I had an obligation to the playwright. I sent the video tape to Mark along with some post-performance notes on the play as well as the production. I feel this kind of input from the director is not only a courtesy to the playwright but a necessity for the process of developing a new script.

CHAPTER III

DIRECTOR/PLAYWRIGHT RELATIONSHIP

If the modern theatre is to have any level of success in the future, it is going to have to rely heavily on the development of the new script. This exciting form of theatre is, unfortunately, something students at the college and university levels have little experience in. I resented this form of theatre a great deal as an undergraduate. I considered it less than predictable. As I have gotten older I realize the importance of the exposure to new material in educational theatre training. Up to the production of Healure I have only worked on new plays as a stage manager, actor, and scene designer.

As a stage manager, my major problem was to come up with different ways of controlling the changes in the script. There aren't any books for stage managers on this particular subject. I went through several methods, trying to find the best, for keeping the script in tact and the most recent version in everyone's hands. It is a difficult task. The solution to the problem was having an actual script person who would only keep track of the script.

As an actor I worked on one production of a play by a young playwright. He understood his play very well, the problem was nobody else understood the play. This is most young playwrights' downfall. They are unwilling to rewrite.

They consider what they have written as "gold." This is what puts Medoff above most playwrights. He is never afraid to dump any segment of a play if he truly feels it is not right. A good example of this is when he was workshopping Children of a Lesser God. He spent a year at the university working on the play with a full cast, including Phyllis Frelich. When he went to the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, he immediately dropped eight characters from the play. Gordon Davidson who was directing the play, suggested that Mark Taper Forum could not afford to pay the extra actors and the characters were extraneous to the plot. When it went from Los Angeles to New York, Medoff rewrote the entire second act. He and Gordon were convinced it wasn't working. This re-writing process helps in finding the perfect way of communicating the ideas.

As a scene designer I felt the freedom of the new script the most. As a scene designer I have done two scripts. One of them was an American College Theatre Festival entry. I was truly breaking new ground. The work had nothing to be compared to. That is an especially exciting position to be in.

As a director I have met the greatest and most exciting challenge yet. Next to the playwright the director is the key person in realizing a new work. The director's responsibility is threefold: gain the trust of the playwright, maintain an objective eye, and establish a creative atmosphere. Before I discuss these three elements, it is important to

mention that because of my background, I'm afraid to approach a new script from a rather biased, subjective point of view. All the playwrights I have worked with have either been direct students of Mark or people on the outside who came in to work under him. So, the process I will talk about is a Mark Medoff process. This is a very effective method, though, of putting new works on the stage.

In the director/playwright relationship the first thing which must develop is a strong bond of trust between the playwright and director. The playwright's relationship with a new script is very personal. Because of this it has the power to make him very vulnerable. With few exceptions a playwright puts a written word down out of a need to express an idea. This need comes from a personal base. Because of this, trust in the director is of the utmost importance.

Because of this personal nature that the playwright has with his material, he sees the play very subjectively. The director must maintain an objective eye so the message of the play does not get lost. This objectivity helps the playwright to focus on a sharp storyline that is economical. It becomes a job of helping the playwright make a personal statement for the audience as well as for himself.

Establishing a creative atmosphere simply means juggling the playwright and actors' egos for the best input. Part of keeping this relationship as a reciprocal relationship and not one-sided is to have a great deal of tact regarding changes that the director feels are needed. Part of this tact is

realized through pointing up the positive as well as the negative aspects of the script. Positive reinforcement moves any situation in a forward direction. It is important for the director not to constantly say "this is bad." He must have reasons why it is bad and have possible solutions for the problem. This aspect of the director/playwright relationship is analagous to the director/actor relationship. In the best of situations ideas freely flow back and forth between the actor and director. This flow of ideas must exist in the director/playwright relationship as well. This will create an atmosphere where one idea sparks another and another.

The actors, as well, bring a subjective slant to the process. The actors bring the point of view of individual characters and what they are feeling. This is juxtaposed against the playwright's statement and the director's need to see the overall picture.

Another area where the actors are responsible for giving life to the script is improvisation. This is a tool used in all plays, new or old, but is most effective in the rewrite process. Because of the time constraints of the weekend this tool was not put to use as it may have been. Improvisation is a great tool for helping to answer the director/playwright question "what if?" This allows the actors to bring something to the scene which maybe the playwright and director have overlooked. Many times I've witnessed good actors improvise a scene which the playwright ended up using word for word. There is nothing cheap about this rewriting method. Ultimately, the best work comes from the best collaboration of artists.

I know I've made it sound like the theatre is not possible without the director, but hopefully in the new play process the playwright is the one person who can synthesize this exchange of ideas into a living, breathing, theatrical experience.

Healure provided me with a very small taste of this vital process, and hopefully it is a process I will build upon in the future.

VICTIM PENITENT

By MARK MEDOFF

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Night. A MAN in costume--black pants and shirt, black eye mask and a black yarmulka--sits against a tree smoking a cigaret. HE has a drink in hand, has had several prior to this one. A WOMAN in a Daisy Duck costume approaches him.

WOMAN

Bobby, I just heard! From Israel. I've been accepted. I'm doing my internship in Tel Aviv.

(SHE begins to SING "Hava Nagileh" and to DANCE, trying to turn him into her partner. HE breaks from her)

MAN

I hope nobody tells them you were dressed up like a duck when you got the news.

WOMAN

Aren't you gonna say congratulations?

MAN

What's the word again?

WOMAN

Con-grat-u-la-tions.

MAN

I'm smoking a cigaret.

WOMAN

You're not going to ruin this moment for me.

MAN

I didn't invite you out here.

WOMAN

You can be very unkind, Bobby.

MAN

I wonder why.

WOMAN

So do I. Why do you think, Bobby?

MAN

You tell me--you're going to be a psychiatrist.

WOMAN

I'm going to be a pediatrician.

MAN

must have you confused with someone else. Pediatricians, of course, know everything about children--so explain me to me anyway.

WOMAN

I don't understand you all that well, Bobby. I know your pain bothers me but I don't know what to do about it anymore.

MAN

When did you know?

WOMAN

I mean I've run out of clever ideas for trying to tap into you, Bobby.

3

MAN

That's some outfit. Why would anyone come to a medical school Halloween party dressed like Daisy Duck? As Louis Pasteur or a penicillin mold or a syringe, okay; but Daisy Duck? Rhonda Claymore's dressed as an enema bag--that's how you come to a medical school Halloween party.

WOMAN

You said if I would come as Daisy, you would come as Donald.

MAN

I said that?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

I didn't say that.

WOMAN

You said that.

MAN

I'm sure I never spoke those words.

WOMAN

The fact is you did.

MAN

I hate Donald Duck. I said because you could speak duck with a Jewish accent, you should come as a noted duck.

WOMAN

That's probably what you said. My interpreter probably screwed it up.

MAN

We're not a couple, Madeline, or a team. We are neither a couple nor a team. You have an inexplicable, I would say perverse, attraction to me which I have for four years assiduously rejected, yet you persist as if my lack of interest offends you in no way whatsoever. This outfit, however, is for you. If not coordinated with you, I am dressed for you.

WOMAN

I'm sure I'm going to be flattered.

MAN

Dr. Robert Bergstein, Terrorist Rabbi. What's that Yiddish word you told me for bandit, thief..?

WOMAN

Goniff.

MAN

Goniff. Dr. Bob, Terrorist Goniff. So you're going to do your internship in Israel. Jewish Princess Madeline Rosenberg from Miami Beach, Florida is going to slip into a pair of designer fatigues and minister to children in the homeland. I've been thinking a lot about Jews and me and you and Israel and I find myself wondering why the hell you would wanna be a pediatrician in a place like Israel where they kill people as fast as they can get 'em old enough to pack a rifle?

WOMAN

We've had this conversation before, Bobby.

MAN

I'm trying to get your thinking straight--let's have it again.

WOMAN

The Israelis hold human life in the highest esteem.

MAN

Who told you that? The Israeli Chamber of Commerce? Ya know something--even now--what is this, nineteen eighty-something, you, if I wanted to kill you, you'd let me.

WOMAN

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

MAN

You always know what I'm talking about.

WOMAN

You think I think I do, but I don't. I understand where the anger comes from, Bobby; but, you wear it like a banner--my grandparents, my uncles died in the camps, my mother survived; but if there's really all that pain, Bobby, I don't understand where the anti-semitism comes from. Jewish anti-semites are the worst.

MAN

You don't know what you're talking about! It's the docility that makes me crazy--the docility, the passivity, the willingness, not to die, but to be put to death without resistance.

WOMAN

Then how can you criticize Israel for fighting, for killing to endure, to live.

MAN

They've become fascists and butchers.

WOMAN

You haven't been there. You should go there.

MAN

You went on a tour with a bunch of Miami Beach Jews who rode in an air conditioned bus and you stayed at Hilton hotels--and you're an expert on Israel.

WOMAN

You should go there.

MAN

With you, right? I should go there with you. We could doctor together on a kibbutz, share a bunk and a canteen.

WOMAN

Well, I think I'll go inside now, Bobby, and continue to revel in this important moment in my life.

MAN

You would let me put you in a cattle car and ship you to the showers.

WOMAN

I've learned not to argue with you when you're drunk, Bobby.

MAN

Being drunk has never made me inaccurate, Madeline. Or--listen to me now--or are you dedicated to going to Is-ra-el because you look so exceedingly Jewish that you've decided the smartest thing to do is to accept being exceedingly Jewish? Go to a place where all the women have big honkers and an abundance of body hair and all of you can conspire together in a lifetime of righteous indignation.

WOMAN

I care about you, Bobby. I wish you peace. I love you.

(SHE touches him, comforts him, and for a moment HE permits it, even relishes it... then breaks free of her)

MAN

You're not a saint, Madeline. You don't love me and I don't want you to. So don't. You know what they think about your nurturing, mothering smothering ministrations--the other young humanitarian medical students? You think I'm alone in finding you tiresome? They think you're a goddamn nurto-maniac. You know what they call you behind your back? Huh? Young Dr. Rosenberg? No! Saint Nosenberg, the nurto-maniac. Will you get outta here. Stop trying to redeem me. A person has the right not to be harrassed by another individual, Madeline. Go inside, stick your nose in the punch bowl and drain it. Then go to Israel! Go to Israel, Madeline, go and do and believe and get yourself killed so that, if not a saint, you can at least become a martyr, and eight or ten people out of the billions in the world will remember you with respect for a week, maybe ten days. Now will you leave me alone or do I have to get nasty with you?

WOMAN

No. No, Bobby, you don't have to get nasty with me.

(SHE goes)

MAN

I wouldn't want to. I wouldn't want to get nasty with you. You're the only one among us who's actually becoming a doctor for the right reasons--because you care, because you want to make people well, to restore, heal. It would be unforgivable to treat you badly. People could hurt someone like you. Insensitive people could hurt someone as rare as you.

(A beat. HE sits alone, as the LIGHTS FADE)

SCENE 2

GRACE RICE, 35, working out to an aerobics class on television in the kitchen/living area of a loft in New York. SHE works with a ferocity; drives herself unstintingly. The PHONE RINGS. SHE ignores it. It stops. SHE continues her exercise. The PHONE RINGS again. Persists. SHE reaches out, grabs the phone, turns down the volume, continues the exercises.

GRACE

Hello....Good morning, darling....Yes, yes, I am--you hear me panting....Pineapple, what pineapple? United flights to Hawaii. That pineapple. Go on....Taste-test today or they go to Anderson....I believe that's a threat....All right, you simply remind them that Flight Gourmet has always delivered a quality product. They want it with pineapple, we'll make it work with pineapple. But they won't tell us whether to use fresh or canned....I can't believe we're having this discussion. A kid is driven to academic excellence all her life, is therefore enormously unpopular among her peers, endures years of costly and distasteful psychotherapy in an effort to fabricate a habitable self-image, only to end up at the pinnacle of her success arguing about pineapple....Look, my body's falling apart, I gotta go.

(SHE hangs up. Turns the VOLUME UP. The PHONE RINGS again. The exercise has changed. SHE can't hold the phone and do this one, so SHE TURNS THE VOLUME DOWN and reaches out, slaps on the speaker phone)

MALE VOICE

Howdy do. Miss Rosenberg up and about?

GRACE

Who?

VOICE

Miss Madeline Rosenberg--is she handy?

(A beat)

Can she come to the phone? El telefono.

GRACE

Neil, what are you doing?

VOICE

A Miss Madeline Rosenberg, please.

GRACE

Neil, you're really screwing up my exercise program, goodbye.

VOICE

Hay-lo? Dr. Nosenberg!

(SHE punches the speaker device off. The PHONE RINGS. SHE ignores it and, distracted, finishes the cool-down portion, the end of the exercise program. The INNERCOM PHONE inside the front door BUZZES. SHE hits the SPEAK button)

GRACE

Yes, good morning, Manuel.

HECTOR (O.S.)
(HISPANIC ACCENT)

Good morning, Miss Rice. Groceries coming up.

GRACE

Yes--thank you, Manny.

(SHE goes for her robe. Catches a glimpse of herself in a mirror. A stunning woman, SHE nevertheless scrutinizes herself oddly and from a certain distance. The DOOR BELL. SHE doesn't appear to hear it. Then snaps out of it. SHE slips into a robe, turns the SOUND ON THE TV down.

Outside her door is a man who might be thirty, thirty-five. HE's carrying two bags of groceries. HE's wearing dark glasses and a knit cap that covers his head; an old hunting jacket, dungarees, and hiking boots. HE has an HISPANIC ACCENT for the time being. His name, HE will inform GRACE, is HECTOR SPAIN. But that's a lie.

GRACE opens the door)

Manuel?

HECTOR

Manuel? No--no, I'm not Manuel. Who is Manuel?

GRACE

Manuel delivers my groceries.

HECTOR

Ya lo creo--that Manuel. Who delivers your groceries. He had to go to a knife fight. We tried to get him to postpone but he said they been rained out two days in a row, had to be today.

GRACE

Well, that explains it.

HECTOR

You think so?

GRACE

Just put the bags down there, please.

(HE stares at her a moment, then SMILES/NODS. HE drops the HISPANIC ACCENT and takes on a New York accent)

HECTOR

Manuel phoned in sick. *V*I'm the Assistant Manager of the lousy store. I happen to know who ya are so I thought I'd try an accent on ya. I don't blame ya for bein cautious though. These are some days we live in, I'm tellin ya. Like to tell ya my theory about the whole mess ya got a minute one a these days. Have to be in the late afternoon though. How's late afternoon for you?

(SHE is lighting a cigaret. HE holds the bill and pen out to her)

GRACE

Happens to be the only part of the day booked up the rest of my life.

HECTOR

Aw, that's a shame. Would you mind puttin that cigaret out--I'm allergic to smoke.

(SHE takes the bill, continues to smoke)

Okay, who's this?

(In a proper ^{Kennedy} Bostonian accent)

The Republic is dying around us of some creeping malignity without the courage or decency to put itself out of its irksome misery. Next election, my judgment is we vote to abolish everyone and start over with the paramecium. Who was that?

GRACE

No idea.

HECTOR

Don't follow politics, huh?

GRACE

Ted Kennedy.

HECTOR

What?

GRACE

Who?

HECTOR

Max Schmeling.

GRACE

He was going to be my next guess.

(HE stares at her a moment, SHE holds the signed bill out to him. HE SMILES, turns toward the TV)

HECTOR

Hey, the sound on your TV's busted. Ya want I should fix it? I do TV repair on the side.

GRACE

I have the volume turned down.

(HE turns the sound up so that it is just audible)

HECTOR

This is my favorite game show. You know anybody can get me on this show, I'd really appreciate it.

(SHE holds the bill out again. HE ignores it. Stares at her)

GRACE

Let me get some change.

3

HECTOR

A tip! Are you crazy? I just delivered groceries to the American Dream Girl, for chrissake. Listen, I gotta tell ya just one thing and then I really gotta get back to a creamed soup inventory. You remember all the commercials and ads you used to do for all the Saint-Just perfume and beauty products? You remember them?

GRACE

I seem to recall something about them.

HECTOR

Well, I gotta make a confession, ya don't tell my wife: I thought you were the cat's meow.

GRACE

Thank you.

HECTOR

Just keep it under your hat.

GRACE

I'll try.

HECTOR

Then the next thing I know, they got some grungie lookin redheaded scank pushin the stuff. Rumor round my neighborhood was you was gettin too old so they hadda turn ya out to pasture.

GRACE

Someone in your neighborhood must be terribly well connected.

HECTOR

Bud Fetzer. Never misses "Entertainment Tonight." Knows everything. I like your bathrobe. Some a the ladies, ya know, they like to open the door for the groceries naked when they see it's me, and to tell ya the truth, lot of 'em have lousy bodies. Waffle-y asses mainly. Amazing what happens to the human ass when it starts to go. Those your knockers?

GRACE

I've been asked a lot of interesting questions, but that certainly ranks right up there.

HECTOR

Helluva job for nature to've pulled off, I'll tell ya.

(HE takes the bill and pen. With a HUMPHREY BOGART ACCENT)

Well, so long, sweetheart.

GRACE

Yeah, see ya around.

HECTOR

Where?...Oh, damn, that was just a figure of speech, wasn't it? Or do ya wanna set a date?

GRACE

Figure of speech.

HECTOR

Gee, really kinda got my hopes up there a minute.

(HE swings to the door)

Will ya look at these locks.

GRACE

Bye bye now.

HECTOR

You don't really need all these locks.

GRACE

Good, that's a comfort.

HECTOR

Make ya feel better, terrific; but I can open any one of 'em, even this one that locks the burglar in so he has to wake ya up to get out. If I was a burglar and you locked me in, ya know what I'd do? I'd just kill ya and find the key myself. Nobody goes to the trouble of hidin the damn things. They're jist sittin right there on the dresser. Well...adios.

(HE is suddenly gone. GRACE throws one of the locks. SHE bangs aout her cigaret, disappears into the bathroom. SOUND OF BATH RUNNING.

Then the SOUND OF THE LOCKS FLIPPING OPEN. The door opens and HECTOR steps back into the apartment.

HE stalks the loft, but HE does it as someone other than the HECTOR we saw moments earlier, in fact as the man underneath the HECTOR disguise.

HE finds the key to the burglar-in lock above the door and locks himself into the loft with GRACE. HE pockets the key and then disconnects the extension phone by the bed and sticks it in the refrigerator. HE starts unloading groceries noisily, SINGING "La Cucaracha."

SOUND OF BATH BEING TURNED OFF. GRACE comes out of the bathroom)

4

Hiya.

(A beat)

You are? GRACE
What are you doing?
I know HECTOR
Who--me?
GRACE
You--yes; yes, you. How did you--What is this, a joke? I asked you what you're doing.
HECTOR
I'm helpin ya put things away.
GRACE
How did you get in here?
HECTOR
I told ya. I can pick any a these locks.

(Her eyes riveted to him, SHE backs toward the packing crate on which the bedside phone sat the last time SHE looked)

Where ya goin? Phone?

GRACE

That's right.

HECTOR

Gonna call the cops? That's a good idea. By the time they get here, we could both be dead of natural causes. Just as well I put the phone in the refrigerator.

(SHE glances behind her. A beat. SHE measures him, the space)

Who did your nose, if I may ask?

GRACE

No one did my nose!

HECTOR

Really? Another admirable job for nature to have pulled off.

GRACE

All right, now you get out of here before I get angry.

HECTOR

Hey, don't get angry. I hate anger. It really pisses me off.

GRACE

Okay, very funny--you have the gift of tongues.

HECTOR

You should see what I can do with my ding-dong.

GRACE

I knew I shouldn't have said that.

HECTOR

I wonder why ya did.

GRACE

It's the subliminal baby-you-know-you-want-it Freudian slip. I'm asking for it, right?

HECTOR

Where do the breadcrumbs go?

GRACE

I'll take care of them.

HECTOR

No, let me--please; then I'll go. No kiddin.

GRACE

(A beat)

Second shelf.

HECTOR

I'm gonna put 'em on the first shelf--whudduya thinka that?

GRACE

Very daring. Now out.

HECTOR

Couldn't help noticin the whipped cream in the fridge. You and your boyfriend like to lather up and mess around? I knew a girl once liked to coat herself with horseradish, pretend she was a brisket. If people think they're in danger and the person they think they're in danger from is funny, is someone they would laugh at if they didn't think they were in danger, do they laugh? Do you think I'm funny but you're too afraid to laugh or are you not afraid and ya don't think I'm amusing? Which?

GRACE

I'm gonna have to get back to you on that one.

HECTOR

Lemme rephrase it.

GRACE

Why not tell me first who are you and what you want.

HECTOR

Hector Spain is my name, Miss, clandestine operations and what-not my game. Used to call myself Hector Italy but nothin rhymed with it. Do the Lord's work mainly.

GRACE

Really?

HECTOR

Na, forget I said Lord. I do...somebody's work.

GRACE

Ah.

HECTOR

But not the Lord's.

GRACE

Whose?

HECTOR

I got it!

GRACE

Good.

HECTOR

I do the work a whoever you got somethin to hide from.

GRACE

Well, as I don't have anything to hide from anybody, you've come to the wrong place.

HECTOR

Isn't this Nosenberg's Delicatessen?

("Nosenberg" rings a bell)

GRACE

No--no it isn't.

HECTOR

Then this isn't a business trip. Pleasure. Pleasure trip.

GRACE

You made that call, asking for someone named Madeline.

HECTOR

Rosenberg. Madeline Rosen- or Nosenberg. Askin for her. I was across the street on that pay phone. I been observin' you for a coupla days.

GRACE

Why?

HECTOR

Hey, you should have a word with those people at your grocer. That Manuel, he forked these bags over dirt cheap. He shoulda taken one look at me and called the cops. Course to ole Manuel, I look a hunnerd percent kosher. I'm tellin ya--the indentification problem today is a real pisser.

GRACE

(Reaching for a cigaret)

I get the feeling you're speaking to me in riddles. Why don't you just tell me what's on your mind.

HECTOR

Uh-uh--no cigarets.

(SHE withdraws her hand. HE stares at her, seems to waver a moment, to weaken in the face of the position HE's put her in)

HECTOR (Con't)

Oh hell, have a smoke. What the hell--we'll both have one. I quit out in the hall before I came in, but I got no will power.

(HE offers her a cigaret)

GRACE

That's all right--I'm trying to give them up.

HECTOR

Oh, go ahead, for chrissake. What kinda time is this to go on the wagon.

(SHE takes a cigaret. HE lights it for her)

I have these shipped in special from Cairo. What makes 'em unique is just a toucha camel shit in each one. Distinctive taste. You sure you don't know anybody can get me on that show?

GRACE

Actually, I think maybe I could help you.

HECTOR

I know the capitals of all the states.

GRACE

Really?

HECTOR

I bet you don't know the capital of South Dakota.

GRACE

Pierre.

HECTOR

Whudduya, tryin to be cute? Course, word is you're very smart. Men must resent the hell outta that--a smart woman that happens to be one of your half dozen best lookin on the planet. Should I wash the fruit?

GRACE

There's no need for you to do that.

HECTOR

Whudduya, gonna eat it dirty?

GRACE

Fine--wash it.

HECTOR

Believe me, I didn't need your okay.

(HE turns his back on her to dump the fruit in the sink. SHE makes a break for the door. HE watches her placidly as SHE discovers SHE's locked in with him. SHE reaches above the door for the key to the burglar-in lock, discovers it's gone, then hits the buzzer on the intercom and screams:)

GRACE

Help!

(HE pulls her away)

HECTOR

What, you think someone from the block association's gonna risk his life for ya? Huh? Come up here and make a citizen's arrest?

(HE has wipped a pair of wirecutters from his jacket)

Look--wirecutters. Watch what they can do.

(HE clips the telephone cord neatly from the receiver. HE releases her. THEY stare at each other a moment)

Would you mind strippin the bed.

GRACE

(A beat)

What?

HECTOR

The bed. The sheets look a little gamey.

(GRACE does not or cannot move. HECTOR gets stuck momentarily watching her immobility)

Strip it.

GRACE

Now, I know a lot of people in this kind of situation fall apart.

HECTOR

Don't know. Never done it before.

GRACE

Yes, well, I'm not going to fall apart.

HECTOR

Fine with me.

GRACE

And I'm not going to simply accede to your wishes. Do you understand?

HECTOR

In other words, I'm gonna hafta chop your tits off, or what?

GRACE

I'm just going to sit here and have a cigaret and...and what are you going to do about that? Huh? Just what do you intend...

(HE suddenly smashes a fist on the counter and SCREAMS at her:)

HECTOR

Do it! You can't be available when you're pushing perfume on TV and not available when a guy shows up to collect.

(These two things--the fist, the command--scare her a great deal. A beat. SHE gets up and begins to strip the bed and HECTOR changes completely--whistles, moves around the room)

I'll never forget that one commercial where you came walkin out of a lotta fog and the announcer said, "The American Dream Girl lives. She is Miss Grace Barley." Barley? That doesn't sound right. Oats. Rice. Don't take offense, I'm always mixin my grains up. Once ordered a bowl a kasha--that's this kinda Jew-y buckwheat dish--in this cafe outside a Cuernavaca; they brought me Grapnuts instead. I didn't know the difference. And you said on the commercial--this was very heavy material, I thought--you said: "It's one thing to be loved and to love...yet another to be loved and to love passionately. A woman may not know passion...but at least there is St. Just's Passione for those who dream." And that very handsome guy slips outta the fog behind ya and he touches ya on the shoulder with his index finger--ya remember--arousing your passion just by that little index finger poke. Boy, that was passion. Okay, clean sheets.

(When SHE doesn't move)

Think about it.

(SHE moves for the sheets)

Hey, but no stripes and no animals. Somethin in a nice pastel, ya got it. 7

(HE has discovered and unwrapped a pile of pictures of her body parts. HE takes up the blow-up of her big toe)

Nice toe. Yours?

GRACE

(A beat)

Yes. Would you put that away, please.

(HE begins to display the photos)

HECTOR

All these parts yours?

(A beat)

GRACE

No.

(HE holds up the blow-up of her tuchus)

HECTOR

Nice ass. Or toekiss as we used to say at my house--or tenement, to be more precise. Actually, the Hebes next door said toekiss. We said culo....No waffling on this ass. When these pictures taken?

(SHE does not respond)

Be sure to make hospital corners.

(HE turns back to the pictures)

My mother saw this picture of your ass, she'd commit suicide, if she wasn't already dead.

(HE looks back at her. SHE moves into the dressing area for the sheets, will bring them back, begin to make the bed)

Why would somebody as famous as you have pictures of her parts layin around the loft?

(A beat)

I'd like an answer to that.

GRACE

It was a joke.

HECTOR

I don't see the humor. Don't ya have any sense a dignity? What are ya, just a piece a meat? Ya gonna hang 'em on the wall so every moron like me that breaks in can look at your ass? That's your ass, for chrissake.

GRACE

They're going to be stored.

HECTOR

Can I have 'em?

GRACE

Sure.

HECTOR

You should make a better hospital corner than that. Minor activity, that sheet'll be a wreck.

GRACE

All right, look, you have managed to frighten me, to conjure all my worst fears. Let that be enough.

(HE now has the blow-ups displayed around the counter. HE focuses on them)

HECTOR

Makin the imperfect look perfect. You remember what Whozit-- Shakespeare--had to say about illusions?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

Bestard musta said somethin. He had some wise ass crack about everything.

(HE looks at her)

Keep makin the bed, lady.

(A beat. SHE continues to make the bed. HE takes up another picture)

What's the hell's this?

(GRACE does not respond)

Miss?

GRACE

Armpit.

HECTOR

Armpit my foot. Try again.

GRACE

(A beat)

Pubis.

HECTOR

Didn't catch it.

Pubis.

GRACE

Nice word for it. / How bout some coffee?

HECTOR

GRACE

What?

Cafe. This your cup? Cute. Boyfriend give it to ya special? Like a little kicker in it?

HECTOR

(HE takes up a bottle of Kahlua and a bottle of Tia Maria from under the counter)

GRACE

I don't drink.

HECTOR

(Pouring some of each into her cup)

Little Kahlua.

GRACE

I said I don't drink.

HECTOR

Tia Maria.

GRACE

Are you deaf?

HECTOR

A little in my left ear--how'd ya know?

(HE holds the cup out to her)

This'd cost ya a small fortune in a cocktail lounge.

GRACE

You know, if this is your idea of a joke--

HECTOR

If this ain't my idea of a joke, you're in a shitload a trouble, lady.

GRACE

I have a right to know why you're--

HECTOR

You have no rights. None. You are a victim and you have no rights. There are people in this world things happen to, terrible and grotesque things that they got no control over.

(A beat. HE holds the cup out to her until SHE takes it. HE pours himself some coffee. Takes a sip)

Jesus, what is that--catfish?

GRACE

(A beat)

Bavarian chocolate.

HECTOR

Tastes like somebody slipped in some catfish.

(HE looks at her almost empathically)

Ya wish ya could kill me for intrudin on your life like this?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

Yeah, well what if I told ya it's you that's intrudin on my life, Grace Rice. Huh? Magazines, TV. Posters! Tee-shirts!

GRACE

Grace Rice is just an image--

HECTOR

For which you are not responsible? Shovin all that perfection down our throats. Yeah. Maybe I'm talkin about the American Dream Girl--that face and body a hers invadin everybody's life....And then again, maybe I ain't talkin about that.

(A beat. Then from right up front)

Maybe...maybe I don't know what the hell I'm talkin about.

(HE seems confounded. HE hooks onto the cup of coffee)

You wanna take a shot a that.

GRACE

I'm sorry--I'm not drinking that.

(HE looks at her until SHE manages a sip of the mixture. Indicating the crates)

HECTOR

You movin in or out?

GRACE

Out.

HECTOR

Why? You could do a lot with this place--give tap dancin lessons, board a coupla horses...

GRACE

I'm getting married.

HECTOR

What?

GRACE

I'm getting married.

HECTOR

No. Why?

GRACE

Why? Because I'm in love with somebody I want to have a family with.

HECTOR

Who?

GRACE

My business partner.

HECTOR

What business? That airline food business?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

Why would ya wanna marry some guy in the airline food business? Ya pregnant? Just as a point a information--at your age, the chances of coughin up a coupla mongoloids is terrific. That'd be a joke, wouldn't it? The American Dream Girl givin birth to an accident a nature that can't be made to appear perfect with make-up and a line a television bullshit. You reformed alcoholics and whackos are enough to make me puke. Take my advice, Miss, smartest route for you at this juncture is to accept the living death like it's just what ya had in mind all along.

GRACE

Whatever you say.

HECTOR

What's the point a bein a smart aleck? When this is over, who's gonna care whether ya played it tough or compliant. Seems to me resilience is the key.

(A beat)

So, what's it gonna be? Big ole house on a hunk of land up in Connecticut. Brace of dalmatians. One of those little tractor lawn mowers.

GRACE

Something like that.

HECTOR

Sounds nice, actually, doesn't it?

GRACE

Gotta have dreams.

HECTOR

Or what?

GRACE

Or, as we used to say, you're up Shit Creek.

HECTOR

(W. C. Fields)

Ole Shit Creek. Have a boat moored there myself. Look at your face there--little skin startin to collect along your jaw there and under your chin, little laugh lines like ditches. So how long'd it last--the perfection, huh? What'd it mean to give up what ya gave up for this?

GRACE

What did I give up?

HECTOR

You know what you gave up.

(HE stares intently at her, then says simply, quietly)

Now, take off your bathrobe and get down on your knees.

GRACE

You take so much as a step toward me and I'll--

HECTOR

--Scream?

GRACE

--Do whatever I have to do.

HECTOR

You neighbors would insist you was merely a boid choipin.

(THEY hold tightly on each other's eyes. HE seems affected by her, therefore confused, therefore hesitant)

Speakin a choipin boids, you know the one about the two thousand pound canary?

(A beat)

Huh?

GRACE

Yes!

HECTOR

Then, goddamn it, say so!

GRACE

I said yes.

HECTOR

Well, don't take so goddamn long. All right, tell ya what: Special, one day only. You do the two thousand pound canary and I walk out the door. That's the kinda operation I run...Whudduya got to lose? And now, ladies and germs, the American Dream Girl, Miss Grace Wholewheat, doin her imitation of the two thousand pound canary.

(A beat. Then out of fury and fear; deep and throaty)

GRACE

CHHHHEEEEEEEEEEEEP!

(SHE stares defiantly at him)

HECTOR

Unspeakable. To be so humiliated and to have no recourse.

(A beat. HE turns and picks his way out of the loft.

For a moment GRACE seems immobilized. Then SHE moves toward the phone. Severed cord. SHE goes for the one in the refrigerator...as the door flies open and HECTOR fills the doorway. HE is carrying a sporty, canvas over-the-shoulder duffel bag.

GRACE grabs a tennis racket)

//

HECTOR (Con't)

Told ya I'd walk out; didn't say nothin about not walkin right back in.

GRACE

Stay where you are.

HECTOR

Tennis rackets are no damn good, kid. You should have a gun.

GRACE

Right.

HECTOR

You should have a bazooka...

GRACE

Sure, sure.

HECTOR

...set up on a permanent tripod, aimed at the door.

(HE takes a step toward her)

GRACE

Don't move.

HECTOR

What if I move?

GRACE

You'll find out.

HECTOR

Know a guy in one of our metropolitan areas keeps a Sherman tank parked in his living room behind a coupla potted palms.

(HE takes several steps, sits at the counter)

GRACE

Stand up! Don't sit down!

(HE remains seated)

Look--I really don't want to have to use this.

HECTOR

I don't blame ya. That racket's gonna be about as much help as all those locks.

(HE spins the Roladex of recipes in front of him on the counter, stabs into it and reads off one of the hundreds of cards)

"Potato and cheese mayonnaise alla Romano." What in the name of God is that?

GRACE

What do you want?

HECTOR

In about one second, I'm gonna take that friggin tennis racket and hit a forehand through your capped teeth! Grace Rice, huh? Yeah, right: The American Dream Girl. Gonna get married, have kids, gonna be a regular human bein? Oh no, uh-uh, not after the deceptions you pulled. Uh-uh. There're limits. I think ya better placate me, sweetheart, and wet your lips with that coffee.

GRACE

All right, look, uhm...Hector, I have to...I have to go to work.

HECTOR

All right, look, hey, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to scare ya.

GRACE

No, that's fine...but you'll have to...have to excuse me.

HECTOR

I said I'm sorry, for chrissake. I just wanna talk to ya.

GRACE

Apology accepted. Come on. Walk me downstairs. We'll walk downstairs together.

HECTOR

What am I--a moron, I don't see what you're doin?

GRACE

I don't follow you.

HECTOR

Pretendin to humor me like I'm some lunatic, pretendin you're not her!

GRACE

Not her who?

(HE suddenly thrusts something from the counter at her, distracting her, and slaps her across the head, knocking her onto the bed. SHE drops the tennis racket, and in a flash HE's on her, pinning her)

HECTOR

You're Madeline Rosenberg, goddamn it! Admit it! Say it! My name is Madeline Rosenberg....Admit it! Say it!

GRACE

My name is Madeline Rosenberg.

HECTOR

I had a nose job, a boob job, and a name job.

GRACE

I had a nose job, a boob job, and a name job.

(A beat. He suddenly gets off of her. Softly,
SHE begins to SOB)

HECTOR

Oh Jesus, I'm sorry. Okay, okay, sshh, sshh. Ya okay? Huh? Ya okay?

GRACE

People aren't allowed to do this!

HECTOR

Maddy, Maddy, I was just foolin around.

GRACE

People have rights!

HECTOR

I know it.

GRACE

I have rights!

HECTOR

Course ya do.

GRACE

You're not allowed...You can't...You can't punch people's jaws!

HECTOR

I know it, kid. I know it. Jesus, I never woulda hit ya for the world, Maddy, you know that. Just relax. Come on. Just chew the fat a minute.

(GRACE is enervated, exhausted; lost between
LAUGHTER and TEARS)

GRACE

I don't know what you're talking about. Do you know that?

HECTOR

Okay, Maddy, sure, yes I do, I understand, just a little identification problem on my part. So listen, should I start the conversational ball rollin? Huh? Should I roll the ole conversational ball down the ole alley?

GRACE
(LAUGHING)

Yeah. Yeah, you start the conversational ball rolling.

HECTOR

So, this airline food company, this Flight Gourmet, what's that all about? Little office with a metal desk, coupla illegal aliens slaving over hot plates?

GRACE

We have offices on Fifth Avenue. All the cooking is done out on Long Island near the airports.

HECTOR

Make me something to eat, somethin special. Whudduya say, huh-- that'd be a fun way to pass the time, huh?

GRACE

Make you something?

HECTOR

Cook me somethin special.

GRACE

Cook you something special like what?

HECTOR

Whudduya got?

(HE opens the refrigerator, hands her the telephone)

Should always have these at room temperature. Not much--boy, you sure don't got much. You must eat out a lot, huh?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

You must eat out a lot. Mushrooms--got a bag of mushrooms. Got any anchovies?

GRACE

Yes, I think so.

HECTOR

Feel like making some stuffed mushrooms?

GRACE

Sure.

HECTOR

Okay, you do it and I'll watch ya. I wanna watch ya.

(SHE begins to prepare mushroom stuffing)

Hey, guess what I'm doin, Maddy. With my life.

GRACE

Gee, I don't know.

HECTOR

Livin in the southwest.

GRACE

Ah.

HECTOR

Been to the southwest?

GRACE

No. No, I haven't.

HECTOR

They ever put dust on the market, my backyard's gonna be worth a fortune. Sellin insurance in Tucson, Arizona.

GRACE

Oh yes?

HECTOR

Yep. You're in damn good hands with Hector Spain. Very big man around the Rotary Club luncheon, I don't mind tellin ya. "How ya doin, Hector, how's the enchiladas look today?" Bigots, Maddy, bigots everywhere. The thing I finally figured out is everybody's gotta hate somebody because we mostly hate our own guts so much if we didn't have somebody to dump all that hostility on, we might all hafta commit suicide. You had everything to look forward to! A goddamn life a service to mankind! You were goin to Israel! You were th eogddamsn prototype for a generation! Look at you, for chrissake! What happened?

GRACE

I don't know what you mean.

HECTOR

Don't screw me around! I need a goddamn answer! I'm on the goddamn wire! What the hell happened to that kid was gonna set an example for the rest of us to live up to?

GRACE

I don't know, Hector. What do you think happened?

13

HECTOR

I'm sorry, I really don't mean to scare ya. I think I got a stomach ulcer or somethin. My goddamn gut feels like it's gonna explode. Taken every pill they make. Had those berium x-rays. You had those? Those berium enemas where they light up your gut?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

You're missin a treat, I'm tellin ya. All this goddamn plastic surgery and all these goddamn cosmetics to make people look better--but nobody's doin anything for a person's gut. Feels like I'm packin around a pair of your cast iron matzohballs--one a those little portable storage buildings. Anybody need to park any cast iron matzohballs? Put 'em right here! You ever whip up a pot a matzohball soup anymore, kid?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

Never?

GRACE

Rarely.

HECTOR

Rarely? You mean to tell Spain that only rarely do you slip into an old housedress of a shabbus morning and whip up a pot a matzohball soup for your buddies, for your fiance, for the folks flyin first class? You shoved a lotta matzohball soup down our gullets in med school, Maddy. Come on, kid, talk soup to me.

GRACE

I...make a lot of cold soups.

HECTOR

Ya off hot soups in general or just the tell-tale matzohball variety? You used to be so proud a bein a Jew, Maddy. What happened? Grace Rice--what a name, Maddy. Couldn't you have thought up a more gentile name? So, what brand a religion does someone named Grace Rice smoke, Maddy?

GRACE

I'm between religions right now.

HECTOR

Gettin late, kid--better pick one out and get some seniority in. Boy, I can see you and your fiance sittin around the ole loft here stuffin your faces with a lotta that vichyssoise muke while I'm settlin a coupla insurance claims in a dust storm in the middle of the night. Maybe you could gimme your recipe, I could send it to my third wife. She had a thing with Campbell's Chicken Gumbo that just about drove me right outta my friggin mind. What's a good cold soup for like a person that lives in the desert and that's mainly a TV dinner specialist.

GRACE

(A beat)

Iced curry soup is nice.

HECTOR

My third wife wouldn't know iced curry soup from iced shit soup. Gimme somethin simple, preferably in a nice color.

GRACE

Well...jellied beet consomme..?

HECTOR

You ever have me for dinner and serve jellied beet consomme, you're gonna find out what true grief is. Hey, whudduya know, I'm calm. The soups calmed me down. I seem calm?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

I feel calm. You?

GRACE

No. Perhaps if I knew why you're playing this...

HECTOR

Playing?

GRACE

...this game...

HECTOR

Game?

GRACE

...with me--

HECTOR

I'm not playin any game, Madeline.

GRACE

Then perhaps if I knew what it is you want from Madeline--from me--Hector, I could--

14

HECTOR

Hey, ya wanna see a picture of you when you were Madeline Nosenberg? Might as well say yeah--I mean, when ya think about it, what choice ya got.

GRACE

In that case, I'd love to see a picture of what I looked when I was Madeline Noseberg.

HECTOR

Here, remember this baby? You were canine supreme in those days, I'm tellin ya.

(HE shows her a snapshot)

Remember? Huh? Fourth year of med school Halloween party? That was a swell Daisy Duck costume, Maddy, that was vintage duck. I hope you haven't given up your duck imitation altogether--you singin the "Stars Spangled Banner" in duck was not anything any of us were gonna forget in a coupla seconds. Ever launch into a burst of duck?

GRACE

Oh, I occasionally find myself singing a refrain or two of an old ditty in duck, yes.

HECTOR

That was a damn fine duck, Maddy. And who's that next to ya, Maddy? Looks like a schmuck with earlaps. Came as a giant rectal glove. Who's that right there? There's ole Herman Rosenberg, known affectionately as Rectal Rosiebung--who could forget him? He changed his name too, Maddy--to Edward Black. Dr. Black, nice doctoree name for a guy, like you, who was ashamed of havin a heavily Hebraic name. Several guys heading back the other way. Kyle Black just changed his name back to Harvey Levitsky. Big fundraiser for Israel. Lotta guys like me, I guess--former Jewish anti-semites, trying to make it up. Next thing ya know, we'll all be marrying Jewish girls with big noses and mustaches from poor Brooklyn families. And who's this on this side? Why, Robert Bergstein. The goniff. Thief of affection and trust and time. You cared about that person at that time, and he treated you about as badly as one person can treat another. I wonder what's happened to him. You? You wonder what happened to the ole bandido?

GRACE

What did happen to the ole bandido?

HECTOR

Ya know, Maddy, you're a very glib hostage. I'll betcha nine outta ten hostages opt for glibness--whudduya think?

GRACE

Wouldn't doubt it.

HECTOR

Robert Bergstein, Maddy, is a plastic surgeon. Married a woman named Barbara Levy. Very Jewish wedding--a concession to her, one of the few. Talk about tits; she had tits coulda kept the Titanic afloat. You should see 'em now after three kids--stretch-marked and battling for airspace with her knees--I wish to hell I'd brought one with me, you could see what can happen to a supposedly perfect set a bongos when nature starts to have her way. Barb's gonna have an operation this year, take about half of each of 'em, give it to the disadvantaged. Hope when you had yours done, Maddy, you didn't have the silicone shot straight into the tissue, hope ya had nice little implants. Ladies had the silicone shot straight in are lookin at mastectomies just down the highway here round the next bend. You really cared about him, Maddy--that always amazed all of us, 'cept those, I guess, became psychiatrists who're used to people doin the 15 very thing ya figure they'd be best off not doin. So, your fiance, how'd ya meet him and what does a guy say to the American Dream Girl the first time he meets her? I figure ya start by gawkin, huh, and sayin, "Duuuh..!" What'd he say? What's his name?

GRACE

Neil.

HECTOR

Nice name for a guy gonna marry the American Dream Girl--Neil. What'd Neil say when he first met ya, how'd he affect the intro?

GRACE

He approached me at a cocktail party.

HECTOR

Not very interesting so far, maddy. What was his opener?

GRACE

He said, "You're standing on your pajamas."

HECTOR

Whoa! Don't know what it means, but it sounds like a helluva way to open relations with a legend.

GRACE

I was standing on the hem of my lounging pajamas. He was afraid I'd tear them.

HECTOR

Guys--that's what's so irresistible about us--always comin to the rescue of maidens in distress.

GRACE

I was drunk.

HECTOR

"You're standin on your pajamas." Fabulous. Then what'd you say?

GRACEE

Nothing.

HECTOR

Smart--good move. And he said..?

GRACE

He said, "Don't you get tired of going places where you're expected to wear lounging pajamas?"

HECVTOR

Nice line, nice line. And then you said..?

GRACE

I said, "Very tired."

HECTOR

You sure weren't as glib then as you are now, were ya? I hope this is gonna get some juice in it again. Then what?

GRACE

The next day he arrived at my apartment with a bag of mud.

HECTOR

Now we're talkin. What kinda mud? Special mud?

GRACE

Standard Central Park mud.

HECTOR

He's standin at your door with a bag a Central Park mud? Jesus-- what'd ya say?

GRACE

I just stared at him; it was noon, it was Sunday, I'd already had several Bloody Marys.

HECTOR

And so he spoke.

GRACE

"Would you like to play in some mud?" he asked me.

HECTOR

Try to keep a guy with a bag of mud out of your life.

GRACE

I did.

HECTOR

Made him work hard to win ya, huh, kid? Can't win a woman like Grace Rice just with a bag a mud.

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

What else did it take, Maddy?

GRACE

He loved me with everything he had to give.

HECTOR

A quantitative thing then. Hmph. Was that, ya figure, Bergstein's problem with ya when you were Madeline Nosenberg?

GRACE

I don't know.

HECTOR

Seems to me Madeline was in the thick of it quantitatively speaking. That fanatical willingness to sell the product. Why was it finally crucial, I wonder, that Bergstein resist bein loved with everything she had to give?

GRACE

Maybe he just didn't love her.

HECTOR

Yeah, yeah--never thought a that, but I suppose that's possible. Just because a person loves you doesn't mean you're obligated to love that person in return. Must be literally millions of guys who're in love with you. Are you obligated to be in love with them back? No--course not. Good answer, Maddy--illuminating. Bergstein treated you with a total lack of humanity because he was not obligated to love you even though you loved him. Other than the fact that that's an incredible crock of shit, Maddy, that's a damned insightful answer.

(HE stares at her a moment, intensely, the intensity conveying its own menace)

Whudduya call these nuts here, Maddy?

GRACE

Peanuts.

HECTOR

Clever name for 'em. Mind if I have one?

GRACE

Only one.

HECTOR

I hope ya didn't spit in 'em.

GRACE

I beg your pardon.

HECTOR

Spit. Spit. I hope you didn't spit in the goddamn peanuts.

GRACE

Why would I spit in the peanuts?

HECTOR

Just remembering when Bergstein used to work in the kitchen at med school to defray expenses you rich Hebes didn't need to defray, he used to spit in your food.

(SHE stares at him)

Started by spitting in your chocolate pudding. And once he discovered that spit in chocolate pudding was absolutely undetectable, he made it his business to discover other dishes about which the same was true. Potatoes au gratin, for instance. Poached eggs. Cherry cobbler. He served you and you inhaled through your ole banana bender night after night entrees and pasty confections into which Bergstein had spat.

GRACE

Why did he do that?

HECTOR

He used to insist it was because you drove him nuts with your professed affection for him. Me, I think it was something else.

GRACE

What?

HECTOR

Nice lookin herb. Whudduya got there?

GRACE

Fresh oregano.

HECTOR

Looks fresh. Want me to do some mincing?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

I'm an aces mincer.

GRACE

Sure--mince.

HECTOR

Na, you're probably better....Sex.

GRACE

What sex?

HECTOR

The spitting in your food. I think it was sexual. Very unconscious, ya know. I think he was havin sex with you, saliva to saliva, that he wouldn't permit himself to have with ya body to body. I think he loved you.

(HE focuses on the picture of the pubis again.
Picks it up)

17

Bergstein told me he had a patient recently with a pubis but no vagina. He took a picture of her too. Speaking of breast augmentation, as they call it--nice euphemism for making your boobs bigger--he said lately he's developed some pretty whimsical impulses. Coupla times, he said, he's been tempted to put both implants into the same breast. "What, Mrs. Fetzer, you wanted both breasts the same size. Ach!" I told him, son, you need a hobby. So what'd he do? He got into collages. Started making abstracts from the extracted bone and cartilage from the nose jobs and jaw reconstructions he was doin. Guess you'd call it his ecological period. When someone offered to buy one of the pieces for twenty-five hundred bucks, he got confused and quit. So, Maddy, ya went to Israel to do your internship, right?

GRACE

I guess so.

HECTOR

Don't guess, kid.

GRACE

Yes, I went to Israel to do my internship.

HECTOR

Really?

GRACE

Didn't I?

HECTOR

Did ya?

GRACE

Let me think.

HECTOR

Think about it. Cuz when I got there, you were gone.

GRACE

You went to Israel looking for her--forme.

HECTOR

Yeah. Got there, you were nowhere to be found. There are those who say ya went into seclusion with relatives in Paraguay.

GRACE

I don't have relatives in Paraguay.

HECTOR

I thought that story smelled pretty fishy myself. Then there are those that say somethin happened over in Israel that sent ya into a mental institution. Any a this ring a bell, kid?

GRACE

Yes, I think so.

HECTOR

Really?

GRACE

Just tell me whether you want it to ring a bell or not--

ARNOLD

I just want the truth, Maddy.

GRACE

I don't know the truth!

HECTOR

You're tellin me the truth is you don't know the truth?

GRACE

Yes!

HECTOR

Me--I say the truth is somethin happened in Israel. And I say whatever it was, maybe ya spent a little time in a padded cell somewhere. But then I say ya came here--to Manhattan Island, Maddy, to Gotham, Maddy. I say ya came here and ya had your nose done, your teeth capped, silicone shot into your chest and ya changed your name and gave yourself a past that wasn't repellent to ya. Presto!--the American Dream Girl was raised and born simultaneously. Ya became one a the most famous people in the goddamn country. Still ya became an alcoholic. Still ya took drugs.

GRACE

I'm past all that now.

HECTOR

No--never. Drink it down, Maddy. Drink it all down.

(A beat. SHE takes the cup up as if SHE'll comply. As SHE's about to drink...)

No.

(A quick beat)

Don't.

(HE takes the cup from her, puts it on the counter. SHE looks at him, HE at her. The New York accent is no more now)

What am I doing? I guess I figured you approach someone in disguise in a disguise of your own. So I did. But you're so good at being who you've become you're confusing me.

(HE peels off the cap; with it comes a wig. HE removes the mustache. HE pops out a pair of contact lenses. SHE stares blankly at him)

You actually have me wondering whether you're who I think you are--or were--or whether I am indeed very mistaken. It's very important to me that I understand if you were who I think you were; what happened to you, and what I had to do with it. I know ten years may seem like a long time between insulting someone and wanting to clear the air, but if anyone understood the inconsistencies of human behavior, Madeline, you did.

(A beat)

GRACE

You would be Robert Bergstein. Dr. Bergstein.

BOBBY

Yes.

(A long beat)

GRACE

You look different than the picture.

BOBBY

Ten years older.

GRACE

Your nose. You had your nose done.

BOBBY

Did it myself, actually, with a hand mirror and a paring knife after it was plastered all over my face for me.

GRACE

Fight?

BOBBY

War.

GRACE

Vietnam?

BOBBY

Israel versus her Palestinian neighbors.

GRACE

What were you doing fighting in Israel?

BOBBY

I wasn't fighting--or not with a weapon. I was fighting to put people back together as the Palestinians and Syrians tried to blow them up.

GRACE

Are you an Israeli?

BOBBY

Madeline would know I'm not.

GRACE

You're an American Jewish doctor who went to Israel to fight for them?

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

A plastic surgeon.

BOBBY

Yes. You're thinking I could be making a fortune here in America, doing nose jobs and facelifts.

GRACE

No, I wasn't thinking that at all.

BOBBY

What were you thinking?

GRACE

I was thinking that if--if I were the woman you're looking for, I wouldn't be her anymore, I would have been Grace Rice for some time.

BOBBY

At least as long as Grace Rice has been before the public eye--six, seven years. Madeline went to Israel nine years ago. She disappeared from a hospital in the Golan Heights eight and a half years ago. Plenty of time for a transformation. And there would be something left. Something of her compassion, surely, would be left.

GRACE

That you're sure you would recognize.

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

Have you seen it in me?

BOBBY

No.

GRACE

So?

BOBBY

So I was wrong.

GRACE

Wrong that I was her.

BOBBY

Wrong that I would know for sure.

GRACE

What made you think I was her in the first place?

BOBBY

I've felt a strange kinship with you for several years.

GRACE

Why?

BOBBY

I was watching "The Tonight Show" twenty-two months ago when you came on bombed out of your skull and passed out in front of fifty million people. Before that I had been merely fascinated, quite normally sexually attracted by that remote gentility wrapped in some fiercely sensual, some subcutaneous and passionate inaccessibility, and now there you were suddenly totally vulnerable. I had an extraordinary urge to get out of bed, where I lay half-crooked myself, get on a plane and go get you.

GRACE

To do what with me?

BOBBY

Get you out of those lounging pajamas into a nice pair of soft jammies. Under the covers in a pair of baggy, flannel jammies. But you've clearly come a long way since that night. But I wonder if you miss your afflictions. Me--I miss the passion that goes with the disease. About half the time I'm stone sober, I feel dead. I wonder if you really think this equanimity you carry around like a two thousand pound souffle was worth trading for that passion and fury and if that addiction was something I caused or if you gave it up because of that something you inherited because of whatever happened those several years earlier when you disappeared from the Golan Heights, if in fact that was you before you became the person on the Carson Show who became this person.

GRACE

What do you want?

BOBBY

Not to hurt you.

GRACE

Then what?

BOBBY

What's your favorite herb. Something esoteric, I'll bet. Tumeric.

GRACE

What do you want?

BOBBY

--Bobby. What do you want, Bobby?--that's fine. Lot of people still call me that. Bob just doesn't seem to work, Rob's impossible, and Robert somehow always sounds pompous.

GRACE

What do you want, Bobby?

BOBBY

Ya know, I've been trying to figure out why I don't recognize your voice and it finally dawns on me that you had voice lessons. To do all those commercials, you couldn't have Madeline's accent or a voice pitched that high to do those commercials.

GRACE

How did you decide I was Madeline?

BOBBY

Very interesting question, I'm glad you asked it. What else you got to eat--I'm starving.

(HE looks in the refrigerator drawers)

Hey, lady, you got a dead fish in your refrigerator.

GRACE

It's for sushi.

BOBBY

Never heard of her.

GRACE

Japanese food.

BOBBY

Japanese make food? I thought only cars and TVs.

GRACE

Sushi is a raw fish dish.

BOBBY

And you eat it? Raw. Fish?

GRACE

Sure.

BOBBY

Gee.

GRACE

You're teasing me.

BOBBY

Does it hurt?

GRACE

No.

(A beat)

My God, we're talking like we're on a date, like a couple of normal...This is ridiculous!

BOBBY

Play a little Scrabble?

(A beat)

I'm serious. I saw a Scrabble game in one of the boxes. While the mushrooms are baking and we filet the fish, we'll play a little Scrabble.

(When SHE stares at him)

Listen, I'm sorry, I know this isn't your standard breaking and entering, but I'm standing on the hem of my goddamn lounging pajamas and I don't know what else to do but what I'm doing.

GRACE

Hey, let's play some Scrabble.

(HE gets the Scrabble board; sets it up
as THEY continue)

BOBBY

So tell me how you came together with this guy Neil.

GRACE

Lost interest in your basic superficial relationship.

BOBBY

One of your specialties?

GRACE

Oh yeah--queen of the superficial relationship. Ask nothing of me, I ask only slightly more of you. So I more or less took myself off the market as a kindness to myself and the men I would otherwise have misused.

BOBBY

And Neil changed everything.

GRACE

Yep.

BOBBY

Or did you just decide, if you were ever gonna do it, it was time to get married and have children, and so you contrived to convince yourself that this was the real thing?

GRACE

No. This is really it.

BOBBY

I don't believe you.

GRACE

No offense, but I couldn't care less what you think.

(SHE stares at him. Indicating the Scrabble game)

Who's first?

BOBBY

You, by all means.

(SHE lays out three tiles)

"Cat"? You expect to beat a major figure in American Scrabble starting with cat?

GRACE

What can I say?

BOBBY

Fine. Double word--six points. Like to have dinner tonight, go to a play?

(SHE stares at him)

Go bowling, punch some cattle--doesn't matter to me. Been so long since I've been interested in being with someone, I'll do anything.

GRACE

I have a party to go to tonight.

BOBBY

Otherwise we'd go out? You can relax, answer honestly--the threat of rape and dismemberment has pretty well passed. Unless, of course, you say something I don't like. Big crowd? Lotta show biz luminaries?

GRACE

Just a few of Neil's friends. Our friends.

BOBBY

You oughta try to get that straight.

GRACE

What kind of plastic surgery do you do?

BOBBY

I only work on children.

GRACE

Why?

BOBBY

Not that crazy about adults.

GRACE

Are you good at what you do?

BOBBY

Not one malpractice suit yet. Yes, I'm very good at what I do. You believe that?

GRACE

Yes.

BOBBY

"Gourd." Triple word, twenty-one points. There's a paradox though: The more proficient I become at these stays of execution, the greater quantity and still more grotesque examples of the condemned they bring to me. I've become confused lately about who's God.

GRACE

How so?

BOBBY

I wonder whether many of these children wouldn't be better off dead. They become grotesques, many of them, institutionalized and finally unloved. Sometimes I'm afraid my only interest in them is how far I can extend the limits of the surgical procedure.

GRACE

What can the worst of them hope for?

BOBBY

That others will look at them without turning away. You'd be amazed how many little girls with third degree burns over ninety percent of their bodies want me to make them look like Grace Rice.

GRACE

What do you do?

BOBBY

What's possible. The best I can with what's available. Sometimes the children are even pleased. Occasionally, even their parents are pleased. Gonna put a word out?

(SHE studies her tray of letters)

22

Tell me how you took your big nose and flat chest and all the humiliation of your childhood and shoved it in boxes like all this crap all over this place.

(SHE takes a long moment to decide to say...)

GRACE

I took a big chance.

BOBBY

You must have. But is a woman with all these beautifully packed crates aware still how tenuous the accomplishment is, how easily they can be tipped, upended, the contents strewn all over the floor for anyone who happens to know how to pick a lock to see?

(SHE stares at him, having--during the above--distractedly set out a word)

What? "Fard"?

GRACE

It's a word.

BOBBY

Oh no, pardon me, uh-uh, but I challenge. Get the dictionary.

GRACE

I don't know which box it's in.

BOBBY

Well, I got news for you--we don't continue the game till this challenge is settled.

(SHE goes to the boxes of books. HE follows. Together THEY look for the dictionary, as...)

If I'd known this was gonna turn into this kind of hostage situation, I'd have at least brought a pocket Webster's. Having a good time?

(SHE stares at him)

Don't have any friends, do you? I mean no one you can confide in.

GRACE

I have Neil. He's the best friend a person could have.

BOBBY

This has been a paid political announcement by the committee to elect Neil-no-last-name to the position of Mr. Grace Rice.

GRACE

You're wrong.

BOBBY

Then why haven't you told him about your child?

GRACE

What child?

23

BOBBY

The child who's institutionalized here in New York. The one I saw you visit yesterday when I was following you. Your child. The one you conceived either at the very end of med school or when you first got to Israel. Why would you want to marry and have a family with a man to whom you would tell a lie of that magnitude? Ut--here's the ole dictionary.

(HE looks up "fard")

Fard. Fard. "Farcy." "Farcy bud." Oh, come on--no! "Fard." Pronounced ford. Well, that's better already, isn't it? "To put on make-up, to minimize a fault." So, in other words, if you were to say: I'm going to the lavatory to fard, I shouldn't think you have a speech defect. Little joke there.

(HE takes the dictionary back to the counter, looks at the board)

That's a double word--sixteen points--and double again for the insult. Did the little boy ever live with you? You might as well talk to me--the mushrooms have another ten minutes to go and this fish is gonna take forever at the rate this Scrabble game is going. I can only imagine how tough it is for a parent to admit that a child needs to be institutionalized. I go through it with parents at least once a week, but I...I can't begin to fathom how awful that decision must be.

GRACE

He lived with me until I...until my life changed and...I hate you.

BOBBY

I don't blame you. All righty, double word, watch this--a honey. "Dog." Eight points. Your turn. He could live with you at least part of the time. He's obviously not untrainable...and not ineducable. He ought to live with you part of the time just in terms of his psychological--

GRACE

What did you do--interrogate the staff there? Don't you have any respect for a person's privacy?

BOBBY

You keep insisting you're Grace Rice. You're in the public domain, you belong to all of us who have bought your jams and jellies.

GRACE

Are you afraid it's your child? Did you sleep with her and you're afraid it's your child?

BOBBY

Yes, of course.

GRACE

You treated her so badly that you slept with her as penance or what?

BOBBY

I slept with her the night before we graduated medical school.

GRACE

Why?

BOBBY

Because, I told myself, it was the one thing I didn't want to do. Because somewhere in me I knew I would never never recover from laying down with someone that full of feeling.

GRACE

You seem to have maintained your insensitivity pretty damn well, ya ask me.

BOBBY

The distance between something that seems to be true and something that is true is often very great.

GRACE

Oh, I love a good aphorism, I do! I'll certainly try to remember that one. But the particular truth here is that I'm not her, not Madeline Rosenberg or Nosenberg and never was.

BOBBY

And yet I say you are.

GRACE

Hasn't it occurred to you that you're just wishing I were this woman you treated so badly, so that you could think I'm what became of her, that she came out all right, that you don't have to feel guilt or remorse anymore for the way you treated her? Huh? You can even get mad at her for betraying your unkindnesses by not telling you that she overcame them! Has that occurred to you? Huh? That you picked me out to be someone I'm not and that I have every right to take revenge on you just like she would if I were her or she were here?

BOBBY

Take revenge on me how?

GRACE

By not assuming her role, by not granting you forgiveness! Isn't that why you're here? "Doctor, heal thyself!" Don't come to me.

(A beat)

BOBBY

You gonna play or pass?



GRACE

"Alarum." An archaic from of alarm.

BOBBY

I know what it means.

GRACE

I'm adding an "s" to "dog," making "dogs" and "alarums."

BOBBY

More than one dog, more than one archiac alarm. Why haven't you told him about your little boy? Afraid he won't love you?

GRACE

Why does it have to be fear?

BOBBY

What then?

GRACE

That's just none of your damn business.

BOBBY

Feeble answer form someone of your intelligence and sensibilities.

GRACE

You're no one to make judgments about other people! People have the right to change, to become someone other than who they once were. 23

BOBBY

Who were you once?

GRACE

Who was I once?

BOBBY

Yeah.

GRACE

Who was I once?

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

I was someone who thought she was ugly and stupid--someone named Harriet Naismith with a hose nose and kinky hair who had a child she didn't want and then fell hopelessly in love with the child before she found out he was brain damaged due to some aberration in her or her baby's father. And so she had her nose done and her teeth yanked and sawed and capped and she had the hair on her head straightened and ironed and colored across the spectrum of the rainbow in search magic so she might someday attract men like you who decide the life

GRACE (Con't)

and death issues for little monsters like Harriet Naismith and Madeline Rosenberg. And whudduya know, she was finally acceptable. Hell, she was goddamn perfect. She became the mold. Those photographs...I was drinking a quart of vodka every two days and sucking my way through a gram of cocaine every single day. I got a photographer who'd been clawing at me since I did my first Vogue cover to shoot each of my perfect parts for my sagging and wrinkled old age. Then we smoked a pipe of hash and screwed all over twenty yards of red butcher paper. And believe me, he wasn't the first guy I blithely banged just because he craved me. Yeah, well the day he delivered those photos, I spent my first sober afternoon in months staring at them. What amazed me most about them was that I was unable to experience any but the remotest familiarity with those individual parts or with the whole they composed. Me. Grace Rice. The American Dream Girl. Well, I got myself drunk and high and went to a party where I was standing on the hem of my lounging pajamas when a strange man entered my tangled vision and offered to rescue me from myself. And now you come along with your preposterous accusation and challenge my plans, my dreams, my life. Well, I won't let you do that!

(HE leans across the counter and kisses her.
For a moment SHE resists, then SHE doesn't.
Then SHE breaks away. A beat. The BUZZER on
the oven sounds)

BOBBY

Bout time those mushrooms were ready.

(HE goes to the oven with a hot pad and
removes the baking dish of mushrooms, uses
a spatula to put them on a plate, gets napkins
and forks)

What do you want to drink?

GRACE

This is fine--nothing, I'm not really--I don't care.

BOBBY

What about this fish?

(A beat. SHE continues fileting the fish.
HE puts out a word)

Triple word. Twenty-seven points.

GRACE

"Healure." What the hell's healure?

BOBBY

Darn good word.

26

GRACE

I challenge.

BOBBY

Don't. Excellent word--trust me.

GRACE

Trust you--right, good advice. Jesus, what am I doing? I'm a hostage in my apartment and I'm playing Scrabble with some lunatic I just kissed. You say it's a word, it's a word. Take it. Twenty-seven points.

(SHE writes it on the score pad)

BOBBY

I worked with this old Latvian doctor when I first got to the so-called Holy Land. Sweet man, good doctor. Spoke Hebrew and German but his English left something to be desired. Healure, he would tell me passionately over a glass of tea, there must be healure. At first I thought he was trying to say "failure," there must be failure--meaning, I supposed, that we must be able to accept failure, to forgive ourselves what we failed to accomplish. But he was saying "healure."

GRACE

Meaning?

BOBBY

Not so different from what I thought he was saying in the first place. End of conflict, restoration of humanity, reconciliation. Healure. An act of mercy and compassion between people. The word was wrong but the sentiment was right. But there was no healure--not for me personally, not being in Israel anyway. There wasn't enough restoration I could do there, even if I worked twenty-four hours of everyday. And too often, as soon as I restored someone, he or she was shot again or burned again or killed. So I came home, went to work on children and tried to find Madeline Rosenberg--the key to healure for me. But there was no trail; it was as if once she left med school, she walked off the face of the earth. Then last week I saw you on "Good Morning, America" talking about the passion you feel for life and for your affianced now that you're free of demon rum and the cocoa leaf. And I found myself thinking: Looking at you, I'd wager you haven't known a flicker of immortal passion with another human being for as long as I haven't.

GRACE

And how long would that be, Doctor?

BOBBY

Since the great hormonal insurrection of our teens when we thought relations between boys and girls were vested in some vast, pure emotion that endured throughout life. And all that bullshit about the right to change you just spewed at me. There are so many people who don't have the chance to change that to witness people like you content to have achieved lives of fanatically controlled safety and predictability makes me...makes me mad. To have risked what you did only to take refuge in safety is not only wasteful but must ultimately be deadly.

GRACE

So you came to warn me. Look, I already see a therapist and I have a lot of friends who do a lot of free lance meddling on the side. 27

BOBBY

I was home that morning rather than in surgery because I was drunk out of my head. A patient--a child, a seven year old girl--had died. Set afire by two playmates--little boys, of course. Third degree burns over ninety-six percent of her body. I operated on her five times. She died after the fifth. I told her parents I was relieved, that I was engaging by that last journey through their child's flesh in little more than experimentation, that in fact there was no hope whatsoever the child would ever be looked on with covetous eyes by boys of any age. I told my colleagues I wanted out, that I was sick of these fucking children, these accidents of nature, of stupidity, of human ignorance and cruelty. And I was sick of people like me, who--no matter how seemingly compassionate--didn't know dogshit about what life looked like from the inside of someone grotesque in this society that rewards first and foremost the physically attractive. When I saw you on TV that morning through my own tangled vision, I wanted somehow to make you a complicitor in my anger, to make you responsible for it; but then something you said, the way your mouth moved suddenly brought Madeline back to me. My partners and I work with a very precise kind of computer art when we're doing a nose job or reconstructing an entire face that's been shattered or scorched. I took that picture of Madeline I showed you...and I took a picture of you and I did some cosmetic computer surgery on Madeline's face...and came up with this.

(HE takes a computer sheet from his pocket and hands it to her. SHE looks at it, hands it back, picks up the fileting knife and works on the fish)

GRACE

Certainly a resemblance.

BOBBY

I thought so.

GRACE

What do I have to say or do to convince you I'm not her?

BOBBY

Make love with me--I'll know.

(A beat. SHE immobile, knife in hand)

I know you're not her. Or if you are--were--if you want to protect yourself from that time, those memories, I don't want to stop you.

GRACE

After all this, why not force it to the end.

BOBBY

Wrong end. Being with you...there's something quite wonderful beneath your physical beauty, a person of seismographic sensitivity, I suspect. I wouldn't want to hurt you either again or anymore than I have. Watch out, you're destroying that fish. I'm a surgeon.

(HE holds his hand out for the knife. A beat... and she hands it to him. HE takes the knife and a whetstone, sharpens the knife, then has at the fish. A beat)

GRACE

Maybe you weren't a terminal illness. Maybe you flatter yourself that she still bears the scars you think you inflicted on her back then.

BOBBY

The slickest plastic surgeon in the world can't completely obliterate the tiniest scar. Fifty years later, there'll still be a little white line.

GRACE

But the atrocities that are perpetrated against us are perpetrated because we invest our tormentors with the power to savage us. What is it you want to know from her?

BOBBY

Why she would have been attracted to that young man?

GRACE

Aren't we most often attracted to what's unavailable?

BOBBY

How does that apply to you?

GRACE

We're not talking about me. Of course, there's always the possibility that she saw something in you much more appealing than you saw in yourself.

BOBBY

I wonder what.

GRACE

Maybe a great desire to love.

BOBBY

My, we're being so supportive of each other, aren't we? Would you get the wasabe and the soy sauce?

(SHE does)

I did love her. Maybe it's not really a matter of what I want to know from her anymore as much I need to find her to tell her that...that I cared for her.

GRACE

Maybe she knew.

BOBBY

She was very insightful.

GRACE

I'll bet she knew.

BOBBY

Why can't I find her, why did she disappear?

GRACE

Those are two very different questions.

BOBBY

Feel free to answer them one at a time.

GRACE

I'm afraid I don't know the answer to either one.

BOBBY

Come away with me.

GRACE

What.

BOBBY

Just a coupla weeks. We'll despise each other, it'll be done.

GRACE

Are you crazy?

BOBBY

Jesus, I wish I were. I wish I were screaming fucking nuts.

GRACE

No, you're not crazy. You're desperate. I should recognize the symptoms.

BOBBY

But should you try to do anything about them? Come on, we'll walk around the countryside for a coupla weeks, see if we can make some sense of things.

GRACE

I've already made some sense of things.

BOBBY

What are you afraid of? You're unassailable. You've got all those locks on your door and all these crates. How'd yo get all your shit packed in boxes like all the stuff all around this place?

GRACE

I took a big chance.

BOBBY

Jesus, you must have. But how do you make it all so...clean?

GRACE

You admit to some limitations.

BOBBY

Of what?

GRACE

Control.

BOBBY

More limitations.

GRACE

No, it's not more limitations. It's a question of responsibility.

BOBBY

All right--but is a woman amidst all this sanitation, with all these receptacles, is she aware still that even as she orders her shit and stores it, she continues to expire?

GRACE

Yes.

BOBBY

All right, all right--but what happens if the whole mess, the whole it of a person's life, what happens if the whole thing is just one great mass without detachable components? If that is the case, can you tell me how I should deal with...with my it? Is this what I should be striving for? Building crates and storing the shit away?

GRACE

What do you want me to say?

BOBBY

I don't know! Jesus, is it possible that all I want is for someone to take control of me, to do it for me!

(HE thrusts the fileting knife into her hand)

Here, take retribution. I'm not terminal! Cut me out!

GRACE

You want me to? Is that really what you want? If it is, I'll do it. You broke in here, I'd be justified in killing you. Is that what you want?

BOBBY

I want you to take a walk with me. You got thirty, forty years left of your life. What do you think you're gonna do in a relationship virtually beyond risk and danger? Flourish?

GRACE

You don't know this relationship!

BOBBY

I know it! I feel it! I saw it in your face on television that day, I see it now!

GRACE

No you don't! No you don't!

(A beat)

BOBBY

I know faces. I know everything faces are capable of communicating. I don't misread them.

(A beat)

GRACE

My mother, with whom I shared very little except my height and my old nose, told me when I married the first time that there are three arena in which we play out our lives. In the first we dream of all that can be; in the second we are staggered by the realization of all that can't be; and in the third we compromise on something sensible between our dreams and fears.

BOBBY

So what are you saying--that you know you're compromising? Are you crazy? You'll stagnate--your feelings, your sensibilities, your passions are going to atrophy, petrify, and finally die. Is that what you want?

GRACE
You misunderstand me. That's not what I want and that's not what will happen.

Bobby

Of course it will!

GRACE
Don't yell at me! Who are you to yell at me? I won't let that happen.

BOBBY
Of course you will, because you haven't got the guts to stop it!

(BOBBY begins to rampage through the apartment, to upend the crates, making a shambles of the order SHE's created)

GRACE
Stop it! Stop it!

(In trying to stop him, THEY end up clutching each other fiercely.

Silence)

BOBBY
I miss zeal. I long for a passion other than rage.

(A beat. HE releases her, makes the smallest effort at restoring order. It consists of taking up the picture of her pubis. HE puts his face to it)

I feel...so...meager. Maybe half my life down the tubes and I've used, explored, challenged so little of what I might be capable of with another human being. And time goes, it does; it leaps past with each blink of the eye.

GRACE
I'd give anything to be able to help people the way you can.

BOBBY
Blink...blink... blink.

(A beat)

I could kidnap you.

GRACE
I'm not dressed for a kidnapping. I'm dressed for a hostage taking in my own apartment. Kidnappings aren't a spur of the moment thing--they have to be well planned.

30

(A beat)

BOBBY
Well, listen, you can take off anytime you want.

GRACE
It's my apartment.

BOBBY
Right. So I'll go anytime you want me to.

(A beat)

What would he do if you went away with me and it didn't work out?
I'm just saying what if, purely hypothetical. What would happen?

GRACE
We would talk until he forgave me.

(A beat)

Go.

BOBBY
You're sure.

GRACE
Yes. Go away.

BOBBY
What about the fish?

(HE SMILES...gets himself together and starts
out the door)

Listen, thanks for a nice morning.

GRACE
Bobby...

(HE stops, his back to her. A beat)

Don't go.

(HE turns to her. THEY stare at each other
as the LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK)

HEALURE

by

Mark Medoff

October 21, 1985

Night. A Man in costume--black pants and shirt, black eye mask and a black yarmulka--sits against a tree smoking a cigaret. He has a drink in hand, has had several prior to this one. A Woman in a Daisy Duck costume approaches him.

WOMAN

Bobby, I got the telegram from Israel. I've been accepted. I'm doing my internship in Tel Aviv.

(She begins to Sing "Hava Nagileh" and to Dance, trying to turn him into her partner. He breaks from her)

MAN

I hope nobody tells them you were dressed up like a duck when you got the news.

WOMAN

Aren't you gonna say congratulations?

MAN

Congratulations, Madeline.

WOMAN

You're not going to ruin this moment for me.

MAN

I didn't invite you ort here.

WOMAN

Why did you walk out as soon as I read the telegram to everybody? You can be very unkind, Bobby.

MAN

I wonder why.

WOMAN

So do I. Why do you think, Bobby?

MAN

You tell me--you're going to be a psychiatrist.

WOMAN

Actually I'm going to be a pediatrixian.

MAN

I must have you confused with someone else. Pediatricians, of course, know everything about children--so...

WOMAN

I don't understand you all that well, Bobby. I know your pain bothers me but I don't know where it comes from or what to do about it. I mean I've run out of clever ideas for trying to tap into you, Bobby.

MAN

Stop trying, quit trying. You're a goddamn nurto-maniac. That's some outfit. Why would anyone come to a medical school Halloween party dressed like Daisy Duck? Rhonda Claymore's dressed as an enema bag--that's how you come to a medical school Halloween party.

WOMAN

It seems to me you said if I would come as Daisy, you would come as Donald.

MAN

I said that?

WOMAN

Yes.

MAN

I didn't say that.

WOMAN

I seem to recall you said that.

MAN

I'm sure I never spoke those words.

WOMAN

The fact is you did.

MAN

I hate Donald Duck. I said because you could speak duck with a Jewish accent, you should come as a noted duck.

WOMAN

That's probably what you said. My interpreter probably screwed it up.

MAN

We're not a couple, Madeline, or a team. We are neither a couple nor a team. You have an inexplicable, I would say perverse, attraction to me which I have for four years assiduously rejected, yet you persist as if my lack of interest and insults offend you in no way whatsoever. This outfit, however, is for you. If not coordinated with you, I am dressed for you.

WOMAN

I'm sure I'm going to be flattered.

MAN

Dr. Robert Bergstein, Terrorist Rabbi. What's that Yiddish word you told me for bandit, thief...?

WOMAN

Goniff.

MAN

Goniff. Dr. Bob, Terrorist Goniff.

WOMAN

You don't scare me Bobby.

MAN

Jewish Princess Madeline Rosenberg from Miami Beach, Florida is going to slip into a pair of designer fatigues and minister to children in the homeland. I find myself wondering why the hell you would wanna be a pediatrician in a place like Israel where they kill people as fast as they can get 'em old enough to pack a rifle?

WOMAN

We've had this conversation before, Bobby. The Israelis have the highest regard for human life.

MAN

Who told you that? The Israelis Chamber of Commerce? You went on a tour with a bunch of Miami Beach Jews who rode in an air conditioned bus and you stayed at Hilton hotels--and you're an expert on Israel.

WOMAN

Ya know, Bobby, I've wanted to tell you for four years--you're the most boring, interesting person I've ever met. You wear your pain like a banner. What is it? Your childhood? Mom and Dad? Poverty?

MAN

I don't know.

WOMAN

Come on. The general malays? Your basic dissatisfaction with the arrangement of your life? Come on, what do you want?

MAN

I don't know. I just know that nothing is enough.

WOMAN

What do you mean?

MAN

No, no. Nothing.

WOMAN

Come on--what?

MAN

You got that telegram and you were happy. You satisfied with your life. And I came out here and realized for me, that I'm not satisfied, and worse, I can't think of anything that would satisfy me.

WOMAN

I don't understand.

MAN

I got here. I'm going to be a doctor. I'm scheduled for a life of philanthropy and healing, and it's not going to be enough. I don't know what to do about it. And somehow, somewhere deep inside me I've known since I was a kid, that it wasn't going to be enough. I don't and maybe I never did hold human life in the highest regard.

WOMAN

You're a terrible person, Bobby. You're the only confused, imperfect person in the world. You should be expelled from the human race. It's not all going to fit neatly into boxes, Bobby. Let me help you.

MAN

How?

WOMAN

Come on, take a walk with me. You have forty or fifty years left of your life. Let's see if we can make some sense of things.

MAN

Your only a doctor, Madeline, not Madeline St. Nosenberg.

WOMAN

I don't want to be a saint Bobby. I just want to love and be loved--just like you.

MAN

You couldn't love me. So don't. I don't want you to. I couldn't...Will you get outta here. Stop trying to redeem me. Go inside, stick your nose in the punch bowl and drain it. Then go to Israel! Go to Israel, Madeline, go and dedicate your life to the care and feeding of the human spirit. Now are you going to leave me alone or do I have to get nasty with you?

WOMAN

No. No, Bobby, I'd hate for you to get nasty with me.

(She goes)

MAN

I wouldn't want to. I wouldn't want to get nasty with you. A person could hurt someone like you. An insensitive person could hurt someone as rare as you.

(A beat. He sits alone, as the lights fade)

SCENE 2

Grace Rice, 35, working out to an aerobics class on television in the kitchen/lining area of a loft in New York. She works with a ferocity; drives herself unstintingly. The Phone Rings. She ignores it. It stops. She continues her exercise. The Phone Rings again. Persists. She reaches out, grabs the phone, turns down the volume, continues the exercise.

GRACE

Hello...Good morning, punkin....Yes, yes, I am--you hear me panting...Pineapple, Neil what pineapple? United flights to Hawaii. That pineapple. Go on....Taste-test today or they go to Sanderson....I believe that's a threat....All right, you simply remind them that Flight Gourmet has always delivered a quality product. They want it with pineapple, we'll make it work with pineapple. But they won't tell us whether to use fresh or canned....I can't believe we're having this discussion. A kid is driven to academic excellence all her life, is therefore enormously unpopular among her peers, endures years of costly and distasteful psychotherapy in an effort to fabricate a habitable self-image, only to end up at the pinnacle of her success arguing about pineapple... Look, my body's falling apart.I have the utmost faith that you can take care of the pineapple. I gotta go. See you in a couple of hours.

(She hangs up. Turns the volume up. The Phone Rings again. The exercise has changed. She can't hold the phone and do this one, so She turns the volume down and reaches out, slaps on the speaker phone)

MALE VOICE

Howdy do. Miss Rosenberg up and about?

GRACE

Who?

VOICE

Miss Madeline Rosenberg--is she handy?

(A beat)

Can she come to the phone? El telephono.

GRACE

Neil, what are you doing?

VOICE

A Miss Madeline Rosenberg, please.

GRACE

Neil, you're really screwing up my exercise program, pineapple, darling, pineapple, goodbye.

VOICE

Hay-lo? Dr. Nosenberg!

(She punches the speaker device off. She ignores it and, distracted, finishes the cool-down portion, the end of the exercise program. The innercom phone inside the front door buzzes. She hits the speak button)

GRACE

Yes, good morning, Manuel.

HECTOR (O.S.)
(Hispanic Accent)

Good morning, Miss Rice. Groceries coming up.

GRACE

Yes--thank you, manny.

(She goes for her robe. Catches a glimpse of herself in a mirror. A stunning woman, She nevertheless scrutinizes herself oddly and from a certain distance. The Door Bell. She doesn't appear to hear it. Then snaps out of it. She slips into a robe, turns the sound on the TV down.

Outside her door is a man who might be thirty, thirty-five. He's carrying two bags of groceries. He's wearing dark glasses and a knit cap that covers his head; an old hunting jacket, dungarees, and hiking boots. He has an Hispanic accent for the time being. His name, He will inform Grace, is Hector Spain. But that's a lie.

Grace opens the door)

Manuel?

HECTOR

Manuel? No--no, I'm not Manuel. Who is Manuel?

GRACE

Manuel delivers my groceries.

HECTOR

Ya lo creo--that Manuel. Who delivers your groceries. He had to go to a knife fight. We tried to get him to postpone but he said they been rained out two days in a row, had to be today.

GRACE

Well, that explains it.

HECTOR

You think so?

GRACE

Just put the bags down there, please.

(He stares at her a moment, then smiles/nods. He drops the Hispanic accent and takes on a New York accent)

HECTOR

Manuel phoned in sick. I'm the Assistant Manager of the loousy store. I happen to know who ya are so I thought I'd try an accent on ya. I don't blame ya for bein cautious though. These are some days we live in, I'm tellin ya. Like to tell ya my theory about the whole mess ya got a minute one a these days. Have to be in the late afternoon though. How's late afternoon for you?

(She is lighting a cigaret. He holds the bill and pen out to her)

GRACE

Happens to be the only part of the day booked up the rest of my life.

HECTOR

Aw, that's a shame. Would you mind puttin that cigaret out--I'm allergic to smoke.

(She takes the bill, continues to smoke)

Hey, the sound on your TV's busted. Ya want I should fix it? I do TV repair on the side.

GRACE

I have the volume turned down.

(He turns the sound up so that it is just audible)

HECTOR

This is my favorite game show. You know anybody can get me on this show, I'd really appreciate it.

(She holds the bill out again. He ignores it. Stares at her)

GRACE

Let me get some change.

HECTOR

A tip! Are you crazy? I just delivered groceries to the American Dream Girl, for chrissake. Listen, I gotta tell ya just one thing and then I really gotta get back to a creamed soup inventory. You remember all the commercials and ads you used to do for all the Saint-Just perfume and beauty products? You remember them?

GRACE

I seem to recall something about them.

HECTOR

Well, I gotta make a confession, ya don't tell my wife: I thought you were the cat's meow.

GRACE

Thank you.

HECTOR

Just keep it under your hat.

GRACE

I'll try.

HECTOR

Then the next thing I know, they got some grungie lookin redheaded scank pushin the stuff. Rumor round my neighborhood was you was gettin too old so they hadda turn ya out to pasture.

GRACE

Someone in your neighborhood must be terribly well connected.

HECTOR

Bud Fetzer. Never misses "Entertainment Tonight." Knows everything. I like your bathrobe. Some of the ladies, ya know, when they see it's me, they like to open the door for the groceries naked. And to tell ya the truth, lot of 'em have lousy bodies. Waffle-y asses mainly. Amazing what happens to the human ass when it starts to go. Those your knockers?

GRACE

No, there rentals.

HECTOR

Helluva job for nature to've pulled off, I'll tell ya.

(He takes the bill and pen)

GRACE

Thanks, I'll pass it on.

HECTOR

(With a Bogart accent)

Well, so long, sweetheart.

GRACE

Yeah, see ya around.

HECTOR

Where?Oh, damn, that was just a figure of speech, wasn't it? Or do ya wanna set a date?

GRACE

Figure of speech.

HECTOR

Gee, really kinda got my hopes up there a minute.

(He swings to the door)

Will ya look at these locks.

GRACE

Bye bye now.

HECTOR

You don't really need all these locks.

GRACE

GRACE

Good, that's a comfort.

HECTOR

Make ya feel better, terrific; but I can open any one of 'em, even this one that locks the burglar inso he has to wake ya up to get out. If I was a burglar and you locked me in, ya know what I'd do? I'd just kill ya and find the key myself. Nobody goes to the trouble of hidin the damn things. They're jist sittin right there on the dresser. Well....adios.

(He is suddenly gone. Grace throws one of the locks. She bangs out her cigaret, disappears into the bathroom. Sound of bath running.

Then the sound of the locks flipping open. The door opens and Hector steps back into the apartment.

He stalks the loft, but He does it as someone other than the Hector we saw moments earlier, in fact as the man underneath the Hector disguise.

He finds the key to the burglar-in lock above the door and locks himself into the loft with Grace. He pockets the key and then disconnects the extension phone by the bed and sticks it in the refrigerator. He starts unloading groceries noisily, singing "La Cucaracha."

Sound of bath being turned off. Grace comes out of the bathroom)

Hiya.

(A beat)

GRACE

What are you doing?

HECTOR

Who--me?

GRACE

You--yes; yes, you. How did you--what is this, a joke? I asked you what you're doing.

HECTOR

I'm helpin ya put things away.

GRACE

How did you get in here?

HECTOR

I told ya. I can pick any a these locks.

(Her eyes riveted to him, She backs toward
the packing crate on which the bedside
phone sat the last time She looked)

Where ya goin? Phone?

GRACE

That's right.

HECTOR

Gonna call the cops? That's a good idea. By the time they
get here, we could both be dead of natural causes. Just as
well I put the phone in the refrigerator.

(She glances behind her. A beat. She
measures him, the space)

Who did your nose, if I may ask?

(A beat)

Another of natures wonders, eh?

GRACE

All right, now you get out of here before I get angry.

HECTOR

Hey, don't get angry. I hate anger. It really pisses me off.

GRACE

Okay, very funny--you have the gift of tongues.

HECTOR

You should see what I can do with my ding-dong.

GRACE

I knew I shouldn't have said that.

HECTOR

HECTOR

I wonder why ya did.

GRACE

It's the subliminal baby-you-know-you-want- it Freudian slip. I'm asking for it, right?

HECTOR

Where do the breadcrumbs go?

GRACE

I'll take care of them.

HECTOR

No, let me--please; then I'll go. No kiddin.

GRACE

(A beat)

Second shelf.

HECTOR

I'm gonna put 'em on the first shelf--whudduya thinka that?

GRACE

Very daring. Now out.

HECTOR

Couldn't help noticin the whipped cream in the fridge. You and your boyfriend like to lather up and mess around? I knew a girl once liked to coat herself with horseradish, pretend she was a brisket. If people think they're in danger and the person they think they're in danger from is funny, is someone they would laugh at if they didn't think they were in danger, do they laugh? Do you think I'm funny but you're too afraid to laugh or are you not afraid and ya don't think I'm amusing? Which?

GRACE

I'm gonna have to get back to you on that one.

HECTOR

Lemme rephrase it.

GRACE

Why not tell me first who are you and what you want.

HECTOR

Hector Spain is my name, Miss, clandestine operations and what-not my game. Used to call myself Hector Italy but nothin rhymed with it. Do the lord's work mainly.

GRACE

Really?

HECTOR

Na, forget I said Lord. I do...somebody's work.

GRACE

Ah.

HECTOR

But not the Lord's.

GRACE

Whose?

HECTOR

I do the work a whoever you got somethin to hide from.

GRACE

Well, as I don't have anything to hide from anybody, you've come to the wr0ng place.

HECTOR

Isn't this Nosenberg's Delicatessen?

("Nosenberg" rings a bell)

GRACE

No--no it isn't. You made that call, asking for someone named Madeline.

HECTOR

Rosenberg. Madeline Rosen- or Nosenberg. Askin for her. I was across the street on that pay phone. I been observin you for a coupla days. Hey, you should have a word with those people at your grocer. That Manuel, he forked these bags over dirt cheap. He shoulda taken one look at me and called the cops. Course to ole Manuel, I look a hunnerd percent kosher. I'm tellin ya--the indentification problem today is a real pisser.

GRACE

(Reaching for a cigaret)

I get the feeling you're speaking to me in riddles. Why don't you just tell me what's on your mind.

HECTOR

Uh-uh--no cigaretts.⁴⁰

(She withdraws her hand. He stares at her, seems to waver a moment, to weaken in the face of the position He's put her in)

Oh hell, have a smoke. What the hell--we'll both have one. I quit out in the hall before I came in, but I got no will power.

(He offers her a cigaret)^{SP}

GRACE

That's all right--I'm trying to give them up.

HECTOR

Oh, go ahead, for chrissake. What kinda time is this to go on the wagon.

(She takes a cigaret.^{SP} He lights it for her)

I have these shipped in special from Cairo. What makes 'em unique is just a toucha camel shit in each one. Distinctive taste. You sure you don't know anybody can get me on that show?

GRACE

Actually, I think maybe I could help you.

HECTOR

I know the capitals of all the states.

GRACE

Really?

HECTOR

I bet you don't know the capital of South Dakota.

GRACE

Pierre.

HECTOR

Whudduya, tryin to be cute? Course, word is you're very smart. Men must resent the hell outta that--a smart woman that happens to be one of your half dozen best lookin on the planet. Should I wash the fruit?

GRACE

There's no need for you to do that.

HECTOR

Whudduya, gonna eat it dirty?

GRACE

Fine--wash it.

HECTOR

Believe me, I didn't need your okay.

(He turns his back on her to dump the fruit in the sink. She makes a break for the door. He watches her placidly as She discovers She's locked in with him. She reaches above the door for the key to the burglar-in lock, discovers it's gone, then hits the buzzer on the intercom and screams)

GRACE

Help!

(He pulls her away)

HECTOR

What, you think someone from the block association's gonna risk his life for ya? Huh? Come up here and make a citizen's arrest?

GRACE

Just the obligatory rescue attempt.

(He has wipped a pair of wirecutters from his jacket)

HECTOR

Look--wirecutters. Watch what they can do.

(He clips the telephone cord neatly from the receiver. He releases her. They stare at each other a moment)

Would you mind strippin the bed.

GRACE

(A beat)

What?

HECTOR

The bed. The sheets look a little gamey.

(Grace does not or cannot move. Hector gets stuck momentarily watching her immobility)

Strip it.

GRACE

Now, I know a lot of people in this kind of situation fall apart.

HECTOR

Don't know. Never done it before

GRACE

Yes, well, I'm not going to fall apart.

HECTOR

Fine with me.

GRACE

And I'm not going to simply accede to your wishes. Do you understand?

HECTOR

In other words, I'm gonna hafta chop your tits off, or what?

GRACE

I'm just going to sit here and have a cigaret and...and what are you going to do about that? Huh? Just what do you intend...

(He suddenly smashes a fist on the counter and screams at her)

HECTOR

You can't be available when you're pushin perfume on TV and not available when a guy shows up to collect. Do it!

(These two things--the fist, the command--scare her a great deal. A beat. She gets up and begins to strip the bed and Hector changes completely--whistles, moves around the room)

I'll never forget that one commercial where you came walkin out of a lotta fog and the announcer said, "The American Dream Girl lives. She is Miss Grace Barley." Barley? That doesn't sound right. Oats. Rice. Don't take offense, I'm always mixin my grains up. Once ordered a bowl a kasha--that's this kinda Jew-y buckwheat dish--in this cafe outside a Cuernavaca; they brought me Grapnuts instead. I didn't know the difference. And you said on the commercial--this was very heavy material, I thought--you said: "It's one thing to be loved and to love...yet another to be loved and to love passionately. A woman may not know passion...but at least there is St. Just's Passione for those who dream." And that very handsome guy slips outta the fog behind ya and he touches ya on the shoulder with his index finger--ya remember--arousing your passion just by that little index finger touch. Boy, that was passion. Okay, clean sheets.

(When She doesn't move)

Think about it.

(She moves for the sheets)

Hey, but no sripes and no animals. Somethin in a nice pastel, ya got it.

(He has discovered and unwrapped a pile of pictures of her body parts. He takes up the blow-up of her big toe)

Nice toe. Yours?

GRACE

(A beat)

Yes. Would you put that away, please.

(He begins to display the photos)

HECTOR

All these parts yours?

(A beat)

GRACE

No.

(He holds up the blow-up of her tuchus)

HECTOR

Nice ass. Or toekiss as we used to say at my house--or tenement, to be more preeise. Actually, the Hebes next door said Toekiss. We said culo....No waffling on this ass. When these pictures taken?

(She does not respond)

Be sure to make hospital corners.

(He turns back to the pictures)

My mother saw this picture of your ass, she'd commit suicide, if she wasn't already dead.

(He looks back at her. She moves into the dressing area for the sheets, will bring them back, begin to make the bed)

Why would somebody as famous as you have pictures of her parts layin around the loft?

(A beat)

I'd like an answer to that.

GRACE

It was a joke.

HECTOR

I don't see the humor. Don't ya have any sense a dignity? What are ya, just a piece a meat? Ya gonna hang 'em on the wall so every moron like me thta breaks in can look at your ass? That's your ass, for chrissake.

GRACE

They're going to be stored.

HECTOR

Can I have 'em?

GRACE

Sure.

HECTOR

You should make a better hospital corner than that. Minor activity, that sheet'll be a wreck.

GRACE

All right, look, you have managed to frighten me, to conjure all my worst fears. Let that be enough.

(He now has the blow-ups displayed around the counter. He focuses on them)

HECTOR

Makin the imperfect look perfect. You remember what whozit--
Shakespeare--had to say about illusions?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

Bastard musta said somethin. He had some wise ass crack
about everything.

(He looks at her)

Keep makin the bed, lady.

(A beat. She continues to make the bed.
He takes up another picture)

What's the hell's this?

(Grace does not respond)

Miss?

GRACE

Armpit.

HECTOR

Armpit my foot. Try again

GRACE

(A beat)

Pubis.

HECTOR

Didn't catch it.

GRACE

Pubis.

HECTOR

Nice word for it. How bout some coffee?

GRACE

What?

HECTOR

Cafe. This your cup?

GRACE

Yep.

HECTOR

Cute. Boyfriend give it to ya special?

GRACE

Yep.

HECTOR

Like a little kicker in it?

(He takes up a bottle of Kahlua and a
bottle of Tia Maria from under the
counter)

GRACE

I don't drink.

HECTOR

(Pouring some of each into her cup)

Little Kahlua.

GRACE

I said I don't drink.

HECTOR

Tia Maria.

GRACE

Are you deaf?

HECTOR

A little in my left ear--how'd ya know?

(He holds the cup out to her)

This'd cost ya a small fortune in a cocktail lounge.

GRACE

You know, if this is your idea of a joke--

HECTOR

If this ain't me idea of a joke, you're in a shitload a trouble, lady.

GRACE

I have a right to know why you're--

HECTOR

You have no rights. None. You are a victim and you have no rights. There are people in this world things happen to, so terrible and grotesque things that they got no control over.

(A beat. He holds the cup out to her until She takes it. He purs himself some coffee. Takes a sip)

Jesus, what is that--catfish?

GRACE

(A beat)

Bavarian chocolate.

HECTOR

Tastes like somebody slipped in some catfish.

(He looks at her almost empathically)

Ya wish ya could kill me for intrudin on your life like this?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

Yeah, well what if I told ya it's you that's intrudin on my life, Grace Rice. Huh? Magazines, TV. Posters! Tee-shirts!

GRACE

Grace Rice is just an image--

HECTOR

For which you are not responsible? Shovin all that perfection down our throats. Yeah. Maybe I'm talkin about the American Dream Girl--that face and body a hers invadin my life....And then again, maybe I ain't talkin about that.

(A beat. Then from right up front)

Maybe...maybe I don't know what the hell I'm talkin about.

(He seems confounded. He hooks onto the cup of coffee)

GRACE

What do you want?

HECTOR

Don't know, I thought I did, maybe I don't. You wanna take a shot at that.

GRACE

I'm sorry--I'm not drinking that.

(He looks at her until She manages a sip of the mixture. Indicating the crates)

HECTOR

You movin in or out?

GRACE

Out.

HECTOR

Why?

GRACE

I'm getting married.

HECTOR

So I heard. Your business partner.

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

Why would ya wanna marry some guy in the airline food business?
Ya pregnant?

GRACE

I wish.

HECTOR

Your 35, better hurry.

GRACE

We're trying.

HECTOR

Us reformed alcoholics and whackos are enough to make me puke. Always wanting what we don't deserve.

GRACE

Whatever you say.

HECTOR

What's the point a bein a smart aleck? When this is over who's gonna care whether ya played it tough or compliant. Seems to me resilience is the key.

(A beat)

So, what's it gonna be? Big ole house on a hunk of land up in Connecticut. Brace of dalmatians. One of those little tractor lawn mowers.

GRACE

Something like that.

HECTOR

Sounds nice, actually.

GRACE

Gotta have dreams.

HECTOR

Or what?

GRACE

Or, as we used to say, you're up Shit Creek.

HECTOR

(W.C. Fields)

Ole Shit Creek. Have a boat moored there myself. Little skin startin to collect along your jaw there and under your chin, little laugh lines like ditches. So how long'd it last--the perfection, huh? What'd it mean to give up what ya gave up for this?

GRACE

What did I give up?

HECTOR

You know what you gave up.

(He stares intently at her, then says
simply, quietly)

Now, take off your bathrobe and get down on your knees.

GRACE

You take so much as a step toward me and I'll--

HECTOR

--Scream?

GRACE

--Do whatever I have to do.

(He moves toward her)

Stay where you are.

HECTOR

Tennis rackets are no damn good, kid. You should have a gun.

GRACE

Right.

HECTOR

You should have a bazooka...

GRACE

Sure, sure.

HECTOR

...set up on a permanent tripod, aimed at the door.

(He takes another step toward her)

GRACE

Don't move.

HECTOR

What if I move?

GRACE

You'll find out.

HECTOR

Know a guy in one of our metropolitan areas keeps a Sherman tank parked in his living room behind a coupla potted palms.

(He takes several steps, sits at the counter)

GRACE

Stand up! Don't sit down!

(He remains seated)

Look--I really don't want to have to use this.

HECTOR

I don't blame ya. That racket's gonna be about as much help as all those locks.

GRACE

What do you want?

HECTOR

I told ya, I don't know. In about one second, I'm gonna take that friggin tennis racket and hit a forehand through your capped teeth!

GRACE

Look, I've got a pineapple dilemma. I am not going to spend the whole morning doing this. Make your point, make your move-

HECTOR

Huh?

GRACE

_but gē't it over with!

HECTOR

Gonna get married, have kids, gonna be a regular human bein? What am I--a moron, I don't see what you're doin?

GRACE

I don't follow you.

HECTOR

Pretendin you're not her!

GRACE

Not her-who?

HECTOR

Ya know, I've been trying to figure out why I don't recognize your voice and it finally dawns on me that you had voice lessons. To do all those commercials, you couldn't have Madeline's accent or a voice pitched that high to do those commercials.

GRACE

I wish to God, I knew what you're talking about.

HECTOR

Alright I'll tell you.

(He suddenly thrusts something from the counter at her, distracting her, and slaps her across the head, knocking her onto the bed. She drops the tennis racket, and in a flash He's on her, pinning her)

You're Madeline Rosenberg, goddamn it!

GRACE

Who?

HECTOR

Admit it! Say it! My name is Madeline Rosenberg...Admit it! Say it!

GRACE

My name is Madeline Rosenberg.

HECTOR

I had a nose job, a boob job, and a name job.

GRACE

I had a nose job, a boob job, and a name job.

HECTOR

I had everything to look forward to.

GRACE

I had everything to look forward to.

HECTOR

A goddamn life a service to mankind!--

GRACE

A service to....

HECTOR

You were goin to Istael! You were the goddama prototype for a generation! Look at you, for chrissake! What happened?

GRACE

I don't know what you mean!

HECTOR

Don't screw me around! I need a goddamn answer! I'm on the goddamn wire! What the hell happened to that kid was gonna set an example for the rest of us to live up to?

(A beat. He suddenly gets off of Her.
Softly, She begins to sob)

Oh Jesus, I'm sorry.

GRACE

People aren't allowed to do this!

HECTOR

I know.

GRACE

People have rights!

HECTOR

I know it.

GRACE

I do have rights!

HECTOR

I know it. I'm sorry. I don't know what I'm doing. What am I doing? I guess I figured you approach someone in disguise in a disguise of your own. So I did. But you're so good at being who you've become you're confusing me.

(He peels off the cap: with it comes a wig. He removes the mustache. He pops out a pair of contact lenses. She stares blankly at him.)

Grace is enervated, exhausted: lost between laughter and tears)

GRACE

I don't know why you're here? What do you want?

HECTOR

You know me!

GRACE

I don't.

HECTOR

You know-me!

GRACE

Alright, I do. I know you!

HECTOR

Who am I?

GRACE

I don't know.

(A beat)

HECTOR

So, this airline food company, this Flight Gourmet, what's that all about? Little office with a metal desk, coupla illegal aliens slaving over hot plates? C'mon talk to me, c'mon, please, just talk to me.

GRACE

We have offices on Fifth Avenue. All the cooking is done out on Long Island near the airports.

HECTOR

Make me something.

GRACE

Make you something?

HECTOR

To eat. Cook me something special.

GRACE

Cook you something special-like what?

HECTOR

Whudduya have?

(He opens the refrigerator, hands her
the telephone)

You should always eat these at room temperature. Not much--
boy, you sure don't have much. You must eat out a lot, huh?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

You must eat out a lot. Mushrooms--got a bag of mushrooms.
Got any anchovies?

GRACE

Yes, I think so.

HECTOR

Feel like making some stuffed mushrooms?

GRACE

Why not.

HECTOR

Good, you do it and I'll watch ya.

(She begins to prepare mushroom stuffing)

I really don't mean to scare ya. I think I got a stomach
ulcer. My goddamn stomach feels like it's gonna explode.
I've had a complete GI. Had those berium x-rays. You had
those? Those berium enemas whare they light up your gastro-
intestinal tract?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

HECTOR

You're missin a treat, I'm tellin ya. Feels like I'm packin around a pair of Madeline's cast iron matzphballs--you ever whip up a pot a matzohball soup, kid?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

Never?

GRACE

Rarely.

HECTOR

Rarely? You mean to tell me that only rarely do you slip into an old housedress of a shabbus morning and whip up a pot a matzohball soup for your buddies, for your fiance, for the folks flyin first class? Madeline shoved a lotta matzohball soup down our gullets in med school. Come on, Grace, talk soup to me.

GRACE

I...make a lot of cold soups.

HECTOR

Ya off hot soups in general or just the tell-tale matzohball variety? Madeline used to be so proud a bein a Jew. What brand a religion does someone named Grace Rice smoke?

GRACE

I'm between religions right now.

HECTOR

Gettin late, better pick one out and get some seniority in. Boy, I can see you and your fiance sittin around the ole loft here stuffin your faces with vichyssoise. Maybe you could gimme your recipe, I could send it to my wife. She had a thing with Campbell's Chicken Gumbo that just about drove me right outta my friggin mind. What's a good cold soup for like a person that lives in the desert and who's mainly a TV dinner specialist.

GRACE

(A beat)

Iced curry soup is nice.

HECTOR

My third wife wouldn't know iced curry soup from iced ship soup. Gimme somethin simple, preferably in a nice color.

GRACE

Well...jellied beet consomme..?

HECTOR

You ever have me for dinner and serve jellied beet consomme, you're gonna find out what true grief is. Hey, whudduya know, I'm calm. The soups calmed me down. I seem calm?

GRACE

Yes.

HECTOR

I feel calm. You?

GRACE

No. Perhaps if I knew why you're playing this...

HECTOR

Playing?

GRACE

...this game...

HECTOR

Game?

GRACE

...with me--

HECTOR

I'm not playin any game.

GRACE

Then perhaps if I knew what it is you want from Madeline--Hector.

HECTOR

Don't call me Hector. Hey, ya wanna see a picture of Madeline Nosenberg? Might as well say yeah--I mean, when ya think about it, what choice ya got.

GRACE

In that case, I'd love to see a picture of Madeline Noseberg.

HECTOR

She was canine supreme in those days, I'm tellin ya. I used to call her, Saint Nosenberg, the nurtro-maniac.

(He shows her a snapshot)

Fourth year of Med school Halloween party? That was a swell Daisy Duck costume, that was wintage duck. Wonder if she hasn't given up her duck imitation altogether. And who's that next to Madeline? Looks like a schmuck with earlaps. Came as a giant rectal glove. Who's that right there? There's ole Herman Rebinowitz, known affectionately as Rectal Rebinobun-- who could forget him? He changed his name too, Grace--to Edward Black. Dr. Black, nice doctoree name for a guy, like some Jewish persons, who are ashamed of havin a heavily Hebraic name. Several guys heading back the other way. Kyle long just changed his name back to Harvey Levitsky. Big fundraiser for Israel. And who's this on this side? Why, Robert Bergstein. The goniff. Thief of affection and trust and time. She cared about that person at that time, and he treated her about as badly as one person can treat another. I wonder what's happened to him. You? You wonder what happened to the ole bandido?

GRACE

What did happen to the ole bandido?

HECTOR

Ya know, Grace, you're a very glib hostage. I'll betcha nine outta ten hostages opt for glibness--whudduya think?

GRACE

Wouldn't doubt it.

HECTOR

Robert Bergstein, Grace, is a plastic surgeon. Married a woman named Barbara Levy. Talk about tits; she had tits coulda kept the Titanic afloat. You should see 'em now after three kids--stretch-marked and battling for airspace with her knees-- I wish to hell I'd brought one with me, you could see what can happen to a supposedly perfect set a bongos when nature starts to have her way. Barb's gonna have an operation this year, take about half of each of 'em, give it to the disadvantaged. Hope when you had yours done, Grace you didn't have the silicone shot straight into the tissue, hope ya had nice little implants. Ladies had the silicone shot straight in are lookin at mastectomies just down the highway here. So, your fiance, how'd ya meet him and what does a guy say to the American Dream Girl the first time he meets her? I figure ya start by gawkin, huh, and sayin, "Duuuuuuh..!" What'd he say? What's his name

GRACE

Neil.

HECTOR

What'd Neil say when he first met ya, how'd he affect the intro?

GRACE

He approached me at a cocktail party.

HECTOR

Not very interesting so far, Grace. What was his opener?

GRACE

He said, "You're standing on your pajamas."

HECTOR

Whoa! Don't know what it means, but it sounds like a helluva way to open relations with a legend.

GRACE

I was standing on the hem of my lounging pajamas. He was afraid I'd tear them.

HECTOR

Guys--that's what's so irresistible about us--always comin to the rescue of maidens in distress.

GRACE

I was drunk.

HECTOR

"You're standin on your pajamas." Fabulous. Then what'd you say?

GRACE

Nothing.

HECTOR

Smart--good move. And he said...?

GRACE

He said, "Don't you get tired of going places where you're expected to wear lounging pajamas?"

HECTOR

Nice line, nice line. And then you said...?

GRACE

I said, "Very tired."

HECTOR

You sure weren't as glib then as you are now, were ya? I hope this is gonna get some juice in it again. Then what?

GRACE

The next day he arrived at my apartment with a bag of mud.

HECTOR

What kinda mud? Special mud?

GRACE

Standard Central Park mud.

HECTOR

He's standin at your door with a bag a Central Park mud? Jesus-- what'd ya say?

GRACE

I just stared at him; it was noon, it was Sunday, I'd already had several Bloody Marys.

HECTOR

And so he spoke.

GRACE

"Would you like to play in some mud?" he asked me.

HECTOR

Try to keep a guy with a bag of mud out of your life.

GRACE

I did.

HECTOR

Made him work hard to win ya, huh, kid? Can't win a woman like Grace Rice just with a bag a mud.

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

What else did it take, Grace?

GRACE

He loves me with everything he has to give.

HECTOR

A quantitative thing then. Hmph. Was that, ya figure, Bergstein's problem with Madeline Nosenberg?

GRACE

What do you think?

HECTOR

Seems to me Madeline was in the thick of it quantitatively speaking. That fanatical willingness to sell the product. Why was it finally crucial, I wonder, that Bergstein resist... bein loved with everything she had to give?

GRACE

Maybe he just didn't love her.

HECTOR

Yeah, yeah--never thought a that, but I suppose that's possible. Just because a person loves you doesn't mean you're obligated to love that person in return. Must be literally millions of guys who're in love with you. Are you obligated to be in love with them back? No--of course not. Good answer, Grace, --illuminating. Bergstein treated her with a total lack of humanity because he was not obligated to love her even though she loved him. Other than the fact that that's an incredible crock of shit, Grace, that's a damned insightful answer. Bergstein told me he had a patient recently with a pubis but no vagina. He took a picture of her too. Speaking of breast augmentation, as they call it--nice euphemism for making your boobs bigger--he said lately he's developed some pretty whimsical impulses. Coupla times, he said, he's been tempted to put both implants into the same breast. "What, Mrs. Bodine, you wanted both breasts the same size. Ach!" I told him, son, you need a hobby. So what'd he do? He got into collages. Started making abstracts from the extracted bone and cartilage from the nose jobs and jaw reconstructions he was doin. Guess you'd call it his ecological period. When someone offered to buy one of the pieces for twenty-five hundred bucks, he got confused and quit. Whudduya call these nuts here, Grace?

GRACE

Peanuts.

HECTOR

Clever name for 'em. Mind if I have one?

GRACE

Only one.

HECTOR

I hope ya didn't spit in 'em.

GRACE

I beg your pardon.

HECTOR

Spit. Spit.. I hope you didn't spit in the goddamn peanuts.

GRACE

Why would I spit in the peanuts?

HECTOR

Just remembering when Bergstein used to work in the kitchen at med school to defray expenses that you rich students didn't have to defray, he used to spit in Madelines food.

(She stares at him)

Started by spitting in her chocolate pudding. And once he discovered that spit in chocolate pudding was absolutely undetectable, he made it his business to discover other dishes about which the same was true. Potatoes au gratin for instance. Poached eggs. Cherry cobbler. He served her and she inhaled through her hole banana bender night after night entrees and pasty confections into which Bergstein had spat.

GRACE

Why did he do that?

HECTOR

He used to insist it was because she offended him with her professed affection for him. Me, I think it was something else.

GRACE

What?

HECTOR

Nice lookin herb. Whudduya got there?

GRACE

Fresh oregano.

HECTOR

Looks fresh. Want me to do some mincing?

GRACE

No.

HECTOR

I'm an aces mincer.

GRACE

Sure--mince.

HECTOR

Na, you're probably better.....Sex.

GRACE

What sex?

HECTOR

The spitting in her food. I think it was sexual. Very unconscious, ya know. I think he was havin sex with Madeline, saliva to saliva, that he wouldn't permit himself to have with her body to body. The thing is you see, I think he loved you. So, Madeline, ya went to Israel to do your internship, right?

GRACE

I guess so.

HECTOR

Don't guess, kid.

GRACE

Yes, I went to Israel to do my internship.

HECTOR

Really?

GRACE

Didn't I?

HECTOR

Did ya?

GRACE

Let me think.

HECTOR

Think about it. Cuz when I got there, you were gone.

GRACE

You went to Israel looking for her.

HECTOR

Yeah. Got there, you were nowhere to be found. There are those who say ya went into seclusion with relatives in Paraguay.

GRACE

Relatives in Paraguay?

HECTOR

I thought that story smelled pretty fishy myself. Then there are those that say somethin happened over in Israel and you stopped being a doctor and became a patient. Any a this ring a bell, kid?

GRACE

I don't know, maybe. Yes, I guess so.

HECTOR

Really?

GRACE

Just tell me whether you want it to ring a bell or not--

HECTOR

I just want the truth, Madeline.

GRACE

I don't know the truth!

HECTOR

You're tellin me the truth is you don't know the truth?

GRACE

Yes!

HECTOR

Me--I say the truth is somethin happened in Israel. All that idealism, all that dedication to the care and feeding of the human spirit went down the toilet and you did some time in a psychiatric ward. But then I say ya came here--to New York Madeline. I say ya came here and ya had your nose done, your teeth capped, silicone shot into your chest and ya changed your name and gave yourself a past that wasn't repellent to ya. Presto!--the American Dream Girl was raised and born simultaneously. Ya became one of the most famous people in the goddamn country. Thanks to modern science, you got to miraculously stop being what you didn't want to be anymore and become something truly stisfying, right? You got to become something perfect, right? Still ya became an alchoholic. Still ya took drugs.

GRACE

I'm past all that now.

HECTOR

So, your living happily amidst all this sanitation, with all these neatly sealed recepticles, with all this shit from your past, ordered and stored. No--never. Drink it down, Madeline. Drink it all down.

(A beat. She takes the cup up as if she'll comply. As she's about to drink...)

No.

(A quick beat)

Don't.....You actually have me wondering whether you're who I think you are--or were--or whether I am indeed very mistaken. It's very important to me that I understand if you were who I think you were; what happened to you.

(A beat)

GRACE

You would be Robert Bergstein. Dr. Bergstein.

BOBBY

Yes.

(A long beat)

GRACE

You look different than the picture.

BOBBY

Ten years older.

GRACE

Your nose. You had your nose done.

BOBBY

Did it myself, actually, with a hand mirror and a paring knife after it was plastered all over my face for me.

GRACE

Fight?

BOBBY

War.

GRACE

Vietnam?

BOBBY

Israel versus her Palestinian neighbors.

GRACE

What were you doing fighting in Israel?

BOBBY

I wasn't fighting--or not with a weapon. I was fighting to put people back together as the Patestinians and Syrians tried to blow them apart.

GRACE

Are you an Israeli?

BOBBY

Madeline would know I'm not.

GRACE

You're an American Jewish doctor who went to Israel to fight for them?

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

A plastic surgeon.

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

If--if I were the woman you're looking for, I wouldn't be her anymore, I would have been Grace Rice for some time.

BOBBY

At least as long as Grace Rice has been before the public eye-- six, seven years. But Madeline went to Israel nine years ago. She disappeared from a hospital in the Golan Heights eight and a half years ago. Plenty of time for a transformation. And there would be something left. Something of her compassion, surely, would be left.

GRACE

That you're sure you would recognize.

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

Seen it, in me?

BOBBY

No.

GRACE

So?

BOBBY

So I was wrong.

GRACE

Wrong that I was her.

BOBBY

Wrong that I would know for sure.

GRACE

What made you think I was her in the first place?

BOBBY

I've felt a strange kinship with you for several years.

GRACE

Why?

BOBBY

I was watching "The Tonight Show" twenty-two months ago when you came on bombed out of your skull and passed out in front of fifty million people. Before that I had been merely fascinated, quite normally sexually attracted, and now there you were suddenly totally vulnerable. I had an extraordinary urge to get out of bed, where I lay medicated and half-crocked myself, get on a plane and go get you.

GRACE

To do what with me?

BOBBY

Get you out of those lounging pajamas and into a nice pair of soft jammies. Under the covers in a pair of baggy, flannel jammies. But you've clearly come along way since that night. But I wonder if you miss the booze and the drugs. Me--I miss the passion that went with my diseases. About half the time I'm straight and sober, I feel dead. I wonder if you really think this equanimity you carry around like a two thousand pound soufflé was worth trading for that passion and fury and if your addictions were something I had anything to do with.

GRACE

If I were her, and you had something to do with what happened to her, what do you want now?

BOBBY

Not to hurt you.

GRACE

Then what? To say you're sorry?

BOBBY

More. What's your favorite herb? Something esoteric, I'll bet. Turmeric.

GRACE

What more do you want?

BOBBY

--Bobby. What more do you want Bobby? Lot of people still call me that. Bob just doesn't seem to work, Rob's impossible, and Robert somehow always sounds pompous.

GRACE

What more do you want, Bobby?

BOBBY

Total comprehension.

(A beat)

What else you got to eat--I'm starving. I've been so nervous, I haven't eaten for days.

(He looks in the refrigerator drawers)

Hey, lady, you got a dead fish in your refrigerator.

GRACE

It's for sushi.

BOBBY

Never heard of her.

GRACE

Japanese food.

BOBBY

Japanese make food? I thought only cars and TVs.

GRACE

Sushi is a raw fish dish.

BOBBY

And you eat it? Raw. Fish?

GRACE

Sure.

BOBBY

Gee.

GRACE

You're teasing me.

BOBBY

Does it hurt?

GRACE

No.

(A beat)

My God, we're talking like we're on-a date.

BOBBY

Play a little Scrabble?

(A beat)

I'm serious. I saw a Scrabble game in one of the boxes. While the mushrooms are baking and we filet the fish, we'll play a little Scrabble.

(When She stares at him)

Listen, I'm sorry, I know this isn't your standard breaking and entering, but I'm standing on the hem of my goddamn lounging pajamas and I don't know what else to do but what I'm doing.

GRACE

Hey, let's play some Scrabble.

(He gets the Scrabble board; sets it up
as they continue)

BOBBY

So tell me how you came together with this guy Neil.

GRACE

Lost interest in your basic superficial relationship.

BOBBY

One of your specialties?

GRACE

Oh yeah--queen of the superficial relationship. Ask nothing of me, I ask only slightly more of you. So I more or less took myself off the market as a kindness to myself and the men I would otherwise have misused. Doesn't sound like Madeline, huh?

(She stares at him. Indicating the Scrabble game)

Who's first?

BOBBY

You, by all means.

(She lays out three tiles)

"Cat"? You expect to beat a major figure in American Scrabble starting with cat?

GRACE

What can I say?

BOBBY

Fine. Double word--six points. Like to have dinner tonight?

(She stares at him)

GRACE

I have a party to go to tonight.

BOBBY

Otherwise we'd go out? You can relax, answer honestly--the threat of rape and dismemberment has pretty well passed. Unless, of course, you say something I don't like. Big crowd? Lotta show biz luminaries?

GRACE

Just a few of Neil's friends. Our friends.

BOBBY

You oughta try to get that straight.

GRACE

What kind of plastic surgery do you do?

BOBBY

Children.

GRACE

Only children?

BOBBY

Yeah.

GRACE

Why?

BOBBY

Not that crazy about adults.

GRACE

Are you good at what you do?

BOBBY

Yeah, you believe that?

GRACE

Yes.

BOBBY

"Gourd." Triple word, twenty-one points. There's a paradox though: The more proficient I become at these stays of execution, the greater quantity and still more grotesque examples of the condemned they bring to me. I've become confused lately about who's God.

GRACE

How so?

BOBBY

I wonder whether many of these children wouldn't be better off dead. They become grotesques, many of them, institutionalized and finally unloved. Sometimes I'm afraid my only interest in them is how far I can extend the limits of the surgical procedure.

GRACE

What can the worst of them hope for?

BOBBY

That others will look at them with out turning away. You'd be amazed how many little girls with third degree burns over ninety percent of their bodies want me to make them look like Grace Rice.

GRACE

What do you do?

BOBBY

What's possible. The best I can with what's available. Sometimes the children are even pleased. Occasionally, even their parents are pleased. Gonna put a word out?

(She studies her tray of letters)

Tell me how you took your big nose and flat chest and all the cruelties administered by boys like me and shoved them in boxes.

GRACE

I took a big chance.

BOBBY

You must have. But is a woman with all these beautifully packed crates aware still how tenuous the accomplishment is, how easily they can be tipped, upended, the contents strewn all over the floor for anyone who happens to know how to pick a lock to see?

(She stares at him, having--during the above--distractedly set out a word)

What? "Fard"?

GRACE

It's a word.

BOBBY

Oh no, pardon me, uh-uh, but I challenge. Get the dictionary.

GRACE

I don't know which box it's in.

BOBBY

Well, I got news for you--we don't continue the game till this challenge is settled.

(She goes to the boxes of books. He follows. Together they look for the dictionary as...)

If I'd known this was gonna turn into this kind of hostage situation, I'd have at least brought a pocket Webster's. Having a good time?

(She stares at him)

Don't have any friends, do you? I mean no one you can confide in.

GRACE

I have the best friend a person could have.

BOBBY

This has been a paid political announcement by the committee to elect Neil-no-last-name to the position of Mr. Grace Rice.

GRACE

You're wrong.

BOBBY

Then why haven't you told him about your child?

GRACE

What child?

BOBBY

The child who's institutionalized here in New York. The one I saw you visit yesterday when I was following you. Your child. The one you conceived either at the very end of med school or when you first got to Israel. Why would you want to marry and have a family with a man to whom you would tell a lie of that magnitude? Ut--here's the ole dictionary.

(He looks up "fard")

Fard. Fard. "Farcy." "Farcy bud." Oh, come on--no! "Fard." Pronounced ford. Well, that's better already, isn't it? "To put on make-up, to minimize a fault." So, in other words, if you were to say: I'm going to the lavatory to fard, I shouldn't think you have a speech defect. Little joke there.

(He takes the dictionary back to the counter, looks at the board)

That's a double word--sixteen points--and double again for the insult. Did the little boy ever live with you? You might as well talk to me--the mushrooms have another ten minutes to go and this fish is gonna take forever at the rate this Scrabble game is going. I can only imagine how tough it is for a parent to admit that a child needs to be institutionalized. I go through it with parents at least once a week, but I...I can't begin to fathom how awful that decision must be.

GRACE

He lived with me until I ...until my life changed and...I hate you. I really do, I hate you.

BOBBY

I don't blame you. All righty, double word, watch this--a honey. "Dog." Eight points. Your turn. He could live with you at least part of the time. He's obviously not untrainable... and not ineducable. He ought to live with you part of the time just in terms of his psychological--

GRACE

What did you do--interrogate the staff there? Don't you have any respect for a person's privacy?

BOBBY

You keep insisting you're Grace Rice. You're in the public domain, you belong to all of us who have bought your jams and jellies.

GRACE

Are you afraid it's your child? Did you sleep with her and you're afraid it's your child?

BOBBY

Yes, of course.

GRACE

You treated her so badly that you slept with her as penance or what?

BOBBY

Halloween. A month before she went to Israel.

GRACE

Why?

BOBBY

Because, I told myself, it was the one thing I wanted most not to do. Because somewhere in me I knew I would never recover from laying down with someone that full of feeling.

GRACE

You seem to have maintained your insensitivity pretty damn well, ya ask me.

BOBBY

The distance between something that seems to be true and something that is true is often very great.

GRACE

Oh, I love a good aphorism, I do! I'll certainly try to remember that one. But the particular truth here is that I'm not her, not Madeline Rosenberg or Nosenberg and never was. Hasn't it occurred to you that you're just wishing I were this woman you treated so badly, so that you could think I'm what became of her, that you don't have to feel guilt or remorse anymore for the way you treated her? Huh? You can even get mad at her for betraying your unkindnesses by not telling you that she overcame them! Has that occurred to you? Huh? That you picked me out to be someone I'm not and that I have every right to take revenge on you just like she would if I were her or she were here?

BOBBY

Take revenge on me how?

GRACE

By not assuming her role. Here, one good aphorism deserves another, "Doctor, heal thyself!" Don't come to me.

(A beat)

BOBBY

You gonna play or pass?

GRACE

"Alarum." An archaic form of alarm. I'm adding an "s" to "dog", making "dogs" and "alarums."

BOBBY

More than one dog, more than one archiac alarm. Why haven't you told him about your little boy? Afraid he won't love you?

GRACE

Why does it have to be fear?

BOBBY

What then?

GRACE

That's just none of your damn business.

BOBBY

Feeble answer from someone of your intelligence and sensibilities.

GRACE

You're no one to make judgments about othe people! People have the right to change, to become someone other than who they once were.

BOBBY

Who were you once?

GRACE

Who was I once?

BOBBY

Yeah.

GRACE

Who was I once?

BOBBY

Yes.

GRACE

I was someone who thought she was ugly and stupid--someone named Harriet Naismith with a hose nose and kinky hair who had a child she didn't want and then fell hopelessly in love with the child before she found out he was brain damaged due to some aberration in her or her baby's father. And so she had her nose done and her teeth yanked and sawed and capped and she had the hair on her head straightened and ironed and colored across the spectrum of the rainbow in search magic so she might someday attract men like you who decide the life and death issues for little monsters like Harriet Naismith and Madeline Rosenberg. And whudduya know, she was finally acceptable. Hell, she was goddamn perfect. She became the mold. Those photographs...I was drinking a quart of vodka every two days and sucking my way through a gram of cocaine every single day. I got a photographer who'd been clawing at me since I did my first Vogue cover to shoot each of my perfect parts for my sagging and wrinkled old age. Then we smoked a pipe of hash and screwed all over twenty yards of red butcher paper. And believe me, he wasn't the first guy I blithely banged just because he craved my. Yeah, well the day he delivered those photos, I spent my first sober afternoon in months staring at them. What amazed me most about them was that I was unable to experience any but the remotest familiarity with those individual parts or with the whole they composed. Me. Grace Rice. The American Dream Girl. Well, I got myself drunk and high and went to a party where I was standing on the hem of my lounging pajamas when a strange man entered my tangled vision and offered to rescue me from myself. And now you come along with your preposterous accusation and challenge my plans, my dreams, my life. Well, I won't let you do that!

(A beat. The buzzer on the oven sounds)

BOBBY

Bout time those mushrooms were ready.

(He goes to the oven with a hot pad and removes the baking dish of mushrooms, uses a spatula to put them on a plate, gets napkins and forks)

What do you want to drink?

GRACE

This is fine--nothing, I'm not really--I don't care.

BOBBY

What about this fish?

(A beat. She continues fileting the fish.
He puts out a word)

Triple word. Twenty-seven points.

GRACE

"Healure." What the hell's healure?

BOBBY

Darn good word.

GRACE

I challenge.

BOBBY

Don't. Excellent word--trust me.

GRACE

Trust you--right, good advice. Jesus, what am I doing? I'm a hostage in my apartment and I'm playing Scrabble with some lunatic. You say it's a word, it's a word. Take it. Twenty-seven points.

(She writes it on the score pad)

BOBBY

I worked with this old Latvian doctor when I first got to the so-called Holy Land. Sweet man, good doctor. Spoke Hebrew and German but his English left something to be desired. Healure, he would tell me passionately over a glass of tea, there must be healure. At first I thought he was trying to say "failure," there must be failure--meaning, I supposed, that we must be able to accept failure, to forgive ourselves what we failed to accomplish. But he was saying "healure."

GRACE

Meaning?

BOBBY

Not so different from what I thought he was saying in the first place. End of conflict, restoration of humanity, reconciliation. Healure. An act of mercy and compassion between people. The word was wrong but the sentiment was right. But there was no healure--not for me personally, not being in Israel anyway. There wasn't enough restoration I could do there, even

BOBBY (con't)

if I worked twenty-four hours of everyday. And too often, as soon as I restored someone, he or she was shot again or burned again or killed. So I came home, went to work on children and tried to find Madeline Rosenberg--the key to healure for me. But there was no trail; it was as if once she left that hospital in Israel and she disappeared off the face of the earth. Then last week I saw you on "Good Morning, America" talking about the passion you feel for life and for your afianced now that you're free of demon rum and the coca leaf. And I found myself thinking: Looking at you, I'd wager you haven't know a flicker of immortal passion with another human being for as long as I haven't.

GRACE

And how long would that be, Doctor?

BOBBY

Since that night I laid down with Madeline and here now it troubles me, not it makes me mad that you risked what you did only to take refuge in safety.

(A beat)

I was home that morning rather than in surgery because I had just retired from the business. A patient--a child, a seven year old girl--had died. Set afire by two playmates--little boys, of course. Third degree burns over ninety-six percent of her body. I operated on her five times. She died after the fifth; I told her parents I was relieved, that I was engaging by that last journey through their child's flesh in little more than experimentation, that in fact there was no hope what soever the child would ever be looked on again with covetous eyes by boys of any age. I told my colleagues I wanted out, that I was sick of these fucking children, these accidents of nature, of stupidity, of human ignorance and cruelty. And I was sick of people like me, who--no matter how seemingly compassionate--didn't now dogshit about what life looked like from the inside of someone grotesque in this society that rewards first and foremost the physically attractive. When I saw you on TV that morning through my own tangled vision, I wanted somehow to make you a complicitor in my anger, to make you responsible for it; but then something you said, the way your mouth moved suddenly brought Madeline back to me. My partners and I work with a very precise kind of computer art when we're doing a nose job or reconstructing a face. I took that picture of Madeline I showed you...and I took a picture of you and I did some cosmetic computer surgery on Madeline's face...and came up with this.

(He takes a computer sheet from his pocket and hands it to her. She looks at it, hands it back, picks up the fileting knife and works on the fish)

GRACE

Certainly a resemblance.

BOBBY

I thought so.

GRACE

What do I have to say or do to convince you I'm not her?

BOBBY

Make love with me--I'll know.

(A beat. She immobile, knife in hand)

Watch out, you're destroying that fish. I'm a surgeon, give me the knife.

(He holds his hand out for the knife. A beat... and she hands it to him. He takes the knife and a whetstone, sharpens the knife, then has at the fish. A beat)

GRACE

Maybe you flatter yourself that she still bears the scars you think you inflicted.

BOBBY

The slickest plastic surgeon in the world can't completely obliterate the tiniest scar. Fifty years later, there'll still be a little white line.

GRACE

What is it you want to know from her?

BOBBY

Why she would have been attracted to that young man?

GRACE

Aren't we most often attracted to what's unavailable? Of course, there's always the possibility that she saw something in you much more appealing than you saw in yourself.

BOBBY

I wonder what.

GRACE

Maybe a great need to be loved, and maybe a great desire to love.

BOBBY

Would you get the wasabe and the soy sauce?

(She does)

Maybe it's not really a matter of what I want to know from her as much as I need to find her to say something to her.

GRACE

What?

BOBBY

I slept with Madeline, and as I was afraid, once I had and she left-I wanted her. Wanted to be with her, to be consumed by her. Wanted to be her. So I went after her. And I tried, I really tried to dedicate myself to the care and feeding of the human spirit. But she was gone, and I can only assume, she discovered what I did--that a doctor, even one as compassionate as she, couldn't overcome the lunacy and cruelty of men. And so she gave it up. Disappeared, leaving me with the remains of her legacy. I want her back. If not to keep, at least to find out for sure if that's what happened, and if it is, I want to offer her, what she offered me. Help.

GRACE

I'm sure she understands, it's okay, I'm sure it's okay.

BOBBY

You're not her.

GRACE

No.

BOBBY

I'm never gonna find out what happened to her, am I?

GRACE

Maybe not.

BOBBY

And I'm never gonna be able to say I'm sorry.

GRACE

Maybe you already have.

BOBBY

When?

GRACE

That night when you made love to her.

BOBBY

Come away with me.

GRACE

What?

BOBBY

Just a coupla weeks.

GRACE

Are you crazy?

BOBBY

Come on, we'll walk around the countryside for a coupla weeks, see if we can make some sense of things.

GRACE

I've already made some sense of things.

BOBBY

What are you afraid of? You're unassailable. You've got all those locks on your door and all these crates. You got thirty, forty years left of your life. What do you think you're gonna do in a relationship virtually beyond risk and danger? Flourish?

(A beat)

I could kidnap you.

GRACE

I'm not dressed for a kidnapping. I'm dressed for a hostage taking in my own apartment. Kidnappings aren't a spur of the moment thing--they have to be well planned.

BOBBY

What would he do if you went away with me and then came back?

GRACE

We would talk until he forgave me. Can you take one more aphorism?

BOBBY

Please.

GRACE

My mother, with whom I shared very little except my height and my old nose, told me when I married the first time that there are three arenas in which we play out our lives. In numero uno we dream of all that can be; behind door number two we are staggered by the realization of all that can't be; and then, finally, we compromise.

BOBBY

So what are you saying--that you know you're compromising?

GRACE

Yes, but I also know that it's alright.

BOBBY

Well, listen, you can take off anytime you want.

GRACE

It's my apartment.

BOBBY

Right. So I'll go anytime you want me to.

GRACE

Now.

(He looks around, looks at the photographs displayed. Then stacks the photos, turns them away from view, as if restoring Grace's privacy. Then he takes out a business card and sets it on the table.)

BOBBY

If you change your mind--thanks for a nice morning, I had fun.

(They stare at each other. He starts for the door)

GRACE

Hey.....

(He stops, looks at her then goes. She picks up the business card. She stares.....

.....as the lights fade to Black)

PROGRAM

HEALURE

by

Mark Medoff

Oct. 31

Nov. 1, 2, 3

8:00pm

Lindenwood Downstage Theatre

HEALURE

by

Mark Medoff

Directed by David W. Hoover

CAST

Madeline Rosenberg.Lisa Albert

Hector/Bobby.William Lengfelder

Grace Rice.Jannell R. Robinson

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Sc. 1: Medical School Halloween Party

Sc. 2: New York apartment, ten years later

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager.Linda J. Maley

Assistant to the Stage Manager. . . .Jofi Shoemaker
Tracey Zerwig

Costumes by.D. Keith Muessigmann

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bruce Longworth and Suzanne Mills

Doug Mayer

Juli and Stephen Duncan

Trappers

Matt Schliesman and all the graduate students

Nora Lisa Faidi

Ken Brown

Bryan Reeder

Naney Fleming

Mark Medoff for sharing a bit of his vast knowledge with us

UPCOMING STUDIO PRODUCTIONS

KENNEDY'S CHILDREN.March 6, 7, 8

A COUPLE OF WHITE CHICKS SITTING
AROUND TALKING.March 20, 21, 22

'NIGHT, MOTHER.April 24, 25, 26

All Studio productions will take place in the Lindenwood
Downstage Theatre. Curtain time is 8:00pm for all
performances

APPENDIX 2: REVIEW #1

Medoff Work Workshoppe



Joe Pollack

Several threads run through the plays of Mark Medoff. The difficulty of communication is one, shown most obviously in his Pulitzer Prize-winner, "Children of a Lesser God," in which the leading lady is deaf. The suddenly arriving, mysteriously threatening stranger is another theme, as in "When You Comin' Back, Red Ryder?"

Medoff writes interesting plays; like the works of every playwright, some are better than others. "Red Ryder" was strong, and a touring company at the American some years ago offered solid entertainment. "Children" is a brilliant piece of writing, deserving of the many honors it has won, and its view of a deaf protagonist was a harsh, truly delineated picture that made the hearing-impaired more than just children, like Helen Keller.

A number of Medoff plays are tried out, or workshopped, on college campuses or through regional theaters. "The Heavenly Kid," originally written as "The Education of Aaron Weiss," was done through the Guthrie, and "Firekeeper" first saw staging at the St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley a handful of years ago.

Another Medoff play in the early stages of production is "Healure," a one-act drama that was shown over the weekend at the Lindenwood colleges in St. Charles.

"Healure" is not a real word, but a created one that sounds much like one people heard before, close enough, perhaps, so that many viewers could even have a definition for it.

There's a mysterious stranger again, threatening a beautiful woman in her apartment after entering by posing as a delivery boy. Whether she is the woman of his boyhood dreams, now grown, is difficult to determine, and whether or not he is the person he says he is also is not answered.

There are moments of quiet horror, but I'm missing patience with more plays that are set in potential rape situations. "Extremities" was fine, but I'd hate to think we're in a trend.

Jannell R. Robinson is quite effective as the woman, and William Lengfelder often exhibits the proper sense of foreboding. David W. Hoover's direction is crisp.

the nicely pragmatic — "We dream of all we can be. We are staggered by the realization of what we can't be. Then we compromise." — to the wryly humorous — "I knew a girl who liked to coat herself in horseradish and pretend she was a brisket."

I don't know if Medoff is planning a full-length play, and if so, whether this is a part of it, or if this is simply a complete one-act play. I think it has merit, but I also think it needs some tightening and some adjustments of character here and there.

The important thing, however, is that playwrights like Medoff have the confidence that new works will receive respectful, competent treatment through our area colleges. That's nice to know.

☆☆☆

VISITING HUMORIST: Art Buchwald, humorist and satirist, was in town last week, partly to "flog a new book" (his phrase) and partly to address a convention group, but he had time for some visiting and dinner.

Buchwald began with the Paris edition of the Herald-Tribune shortly after World War II, and spent 14 years writing from Europe before moving to Washington and challenging an assortment of public figures.

"I may have been the first restaurant critic," he said happily over pasta and calamari. "I began with the Trib by writing a nightclub column, and would have some restaurant notes at the end. Then I realized that people were more interested in the restaurants than in the nightclubs, and things began to change.

"It was a great time for enjoying restaurants and writing about them. Paris was just filled with good ones."

Buchwald admits to a bit of sleight-of-hand in getting his job with the Trib.

"I went to see the managing editor," he recalled with a Puckish smile, "and suggested a nightclub column, and some movie reviews, which the paper didn't have.

"The managing editor looked at me and said, 'We don't need that sort of thing, and if we did, I wouldn't hire you.'

"Well, a few weeks later, I learned that he had gone on a six-week vacation, back to the States. So I went to see the editor and I told him, almost truthfully, that the managing editor and I had been talking about a nightclub column.

"That's a great idea," said the editor, and he

"When had a de became

One of involves talking to Dispatch him up a Because had to be men got

So the and Buc interview "I neve

CURT,

son, vete screen ir Space a briefly a band of a brief app son and I ran, Jr., v Illinois U pears in : all part o

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Chase, ra many ye appear la Theatre p Florida Ir She appea Maude in husband, Fla.

BETTY

grows in B Heaven. N a tree whic boarded-up heaps. It g only tree tl ... survive without ea except the ailanthus

(REVIEW #2)

On Stage

Continued from pg. 6b

fine ear for dialogue. Rice tells Bobby she is in between religions, and he replies that she better pick one and get some seniority.

The sarcasm Medoff invests in Bobby, mainly in the form of put-downs toward Rosenberg and Rice, has a wicked bite to it. While this is one of *Healure's* strengths, the women — particularly Rice — seem violated in far too many ways, both verbally and in Bobby's attempted rape of her.

Using Bobby as a menacing intruder clutters up the beginning of the second act. The improbability of him picking multiple locks with a credit card after Rice sends him on his way also hampers the scene's credibility.

But even more to the point, the attempted rape and put-downs prevent the audience from developing much empathy for Bobby, who turns out to be vulnerable as the play proceeds. Nor is it ever clear why he is so abusive to begin with.

The brevity of the first scene is partly to blame for this, as it simply doesn't allow Medoff ample time to lay the necessary groundwork for the complexities that follow. For example, there is nothing about the opening exchange to suggest that Bobby and Rosenberg would sleep together later that night. Nor does it seem likely that Bobby would follow her to Israel after he rejects her in this scene. Yet these are both stated in the second scene.

But this is a work-in-progress, and it is a tribute to Hoover and Lindenwood that Medoff chose to work on it here. ■

Lesser God, producing *Healure* is nevertheless quite a coup for the theater department at Lindenwood.

David Hoover, who directs *Healure*, is the bridge between Medoff and Lindenwood. Hoover did his undergraduate work at New Mexico State University at Las Cruces, where Medoff is chairman of the theater department. The two became friends, and when Hoover decided to go for a MA in direction at Lindenwood, Medoff asked Hoover to take a look at a script he had shelved, thinking Hoover might like to direct it. Hoover read it and asked Medoff if he would consider coming to Lindenwood to do some rewriting.

That is exactly what happened. At his own expense, Medoff flew to St. Charles, staying from October 18-21 to see if mentor and student couldn't whip *Healure* into shape. Quite a few changes were made, and more will probably follow.

One thing that changed was the title. The script Hoover first read was titled *Victim, Penitent*, which was actually a rewritten version of *The Halloween Bandit*, Medoff's full-length play produced off-Broadway about eight years ago.

The current title, *Healure*, is a word that is not found in the dictionary. But one of the characters in the play defines it as an act of mercy between two people. The search for *healure* is what this play is all about.

Healure opens abruptly with a short scene in which two characters are amid crisis after a medical school Halloween party. Madeline Rosenberg (Lisa Albert) is delighted by the news that she is going to be a pediatrician in Israel, while her pained companion Bobby (William Lengfelder) is moody and certain that his being a doctor "is not going to be enough" to satisfy him. He is searching for something, but it definitely doesn't seem to be Madeline, who has offered her love only to be insulted and rejected by Bobby.

The second scene picks up the story 10 years later, but it is a bit unclear whose story Medoff is now telling. A wise-cracking delivery boy brings groceries to a famous model he calls "the American dream girl." Her name is Grace Rice (Janell R. Robinson); his name is Hector. But before too long, the disguised Hector turns out to be Bobby trying to catch up with the woman he suspects to be Rosenberg.

Rice denies she is Rosenberg, but Bobby relates the remarkable similarities between the backgrounds of the two women over the past 10 years. Bobby has come to think of Rosenberg in *healurean* terms, and he wants to know what bearing his actions had on the pain and success she experienced since leaving med school.

He knows of her institutionalized child, which might be his, and her addiction to alcohol and drugs. But by the end of the play he still doesn't know if he is talking to the right woman, nor does he know if he should continue his search.

In this hour-long piece, Medoff shows a

Continued on pg. 11b

On Stage

by Tim Bocklage

It is exciting to see the production of a new work by a major playwright, especially when it happens in your own backyard. *Healure*, by Tony award-winner Mark Medoff, had its world premiere at Lindenwood College's Downstage Theatre. While this one-act does not measure up to the standards Medoff set in *Children of a*