

WHAT THE LIGHT LIGHTS UP
An Offbeat Comic Romance By
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Cast of Characters

<u>GABE</u> :	Male (White), about 70
<u>NANG</u> :	Female (Asian), about 20
<u>KENNY</u> :	Male (White), about 30
<u>WALTER</u> :	Male (White), about 40
<u>DAPHNE</u> :	Female (White), mid 30's
<u>LUISA</u> :	Female (Black), mid 30's
<u>MARION</u> :	Female (Black), mid 30's

Scene

Act I: The living room of Kenny's home in Oakland, California. Act II: The back yard of Kenny's new home in the Oakland hills. Act III, Scene 1: Entrance to a dock at the Berkeley marina. Act III, Scene 2: The living room of Gabe's home in Berkeley.

Time

Act I: March, in the early 1980's, three-thirty A.M. Act II: The following October, early weekday afternoon. Act III, Scene 1: The following August, Saturday dusk. Act III, Scene 2: The following January, weekday mid-afternoon.

ACT ONE

1

March, in the early 1980's, three-thirty A.M. The living room of Kenny's home in Oakland, California. Left, the front door. Right, passage to the kitchen. Upstage, passage to the bedroom. A table, a sofa, a few chairs and lamps.

Walter, casually dressed, lies asleep on the sofa. The doorbell rings. Nang, in jeans, enters from the kitchen, crosses, and opens the door. Gabe, casually dressed, enters.

GABE

Are you the midwife?!

NANG

Midwife sick.

GABE

Sick! Is the baby all right?!

NANG

No baby yet.

GABE

But...then who is going to deliver the kid?!

NANG

Why you want to "deliver?"

GABE

I don't want to! But **somebody** has to!

NANG

Why?

GABE

Listen, you! Who is attending to my nephew's wife?!

NANG

Who your nephew?

GABE

The guy who lives here.

NANG

Kenny.

GABE

Kenny! Right! Who is going to attend to Gloria?!

NANG
 "Gloria?!"

A woman moans off stage.

NANG (cont'd)
 Kenny wife not "Gloria." She "Yvonne."

GABE
 (To himself.)
 "Yvonne." His wife's name is "Yvonne."
 (Pointing to his head.)
 Starting to lose it. Ha, ha!
 (Making a muscle.)
 Feel that.
 (Pause.)
 Feel!

Nang feels his biceps.

GABE (cont'd)
 Stronger than ever.
 (Pointing to his head.)
 But I'm losing it up here.

NANG
 Midwife very hot.

GABE
 Huh? Oh, you mean a fever?

NANG
 Yeah.

GABE
 My God! She may be contagious! Women die in childbirth!

NANG
 Sometime. Sometime they all right.

GABE
 "Sometime!" That's my nephew's wife in there! Oh,
 poor...poor what's-'er-name.

NANG
 Daphne.

GABE
 "Daphne?" Are you sure?

NANG
 Yvonne call midwife "Daphne."

GABE
 "Yvonne." His wife is "Yvonne!" Oh, my mind is going. But I
 am strong!

Gabe grabs Nang.

NANG
 No! Don't touch!

GABE
 Strong as a man **your** age!

Gabe lifts Nang up high.

NANG
 No!

Kenny, casually dressed, enters
 from the bedroom.

KENNY
 Walter!

GABE
 (To Kenny.)
 The baby! Nephew, is the baby all right?!

NANG
 (To Gabe.)
 Mister! Down!

GABE
 (To Kenny.)
 Did it cry?! I didn't hear it cry!

KENNY
 It hasn't come out yet, Uncle Gabe. Take care you don't
 rupture yourself.

Gabe sets Nang down.

KENNY (cont'd)
 (Poking Walter.)
 Hey, Walter!

WALTER
 (Jumping up, startled.)
 Whaaa?!!!

KENNY
 (Jumping back, pushing Gabe and Nang
 away.)
 Watch out!

WALTER

What do you want?!

KENNY

(To Gabe and Nang.)

Get back!

WALTER

(Pause. Calm and cold.)

Kenny, what's up?

KENNY

Calm down! Relax!

WALTER

I have **been** relaxing! Nang, you are beautiful. Charming, gracious, and kind. You are forever sad, and old...so terribly old, but you are always happy, and younger than the very morning.

Walter reaches to touch Nang. She turns away.

NANG

Kenny, okay I go sleep?

KENNY

Sure, kid. But first, make us some coffee.

Nang exits to the kitchen.

WALTER

Oh, I am going home.

KENNY

You can't. Yvonne wants you.

WALTER

Again?!

A woman moans off stage.

KENNY

She wants wallpaper.

WALTER

Not paint?

KENNY

She changed her mind.

WALTER

But we have already ordered the curtains!

Walter starts for the bedroom.

KENNY

Walter! Control yourself! Suppress your fury!

WALTER

What fury?

KENNY

You have seen pain, and you have caused pain. You yourself have been hurt horribly, and your hurt never goes away. I understand, Walter. Just...please, do not lash out.

Walter exits to the bedroom.

KENNY

(To Gabe.)

The guy has nightmares.

GABE

Oh, that's too bad.

KENNY

He is just bursting with violence. And after what he's been through, why shouldn't he be? But violence only destroys the splendor of life. Life *is* splendid. Don't you think so, Uncle Gabe?

GABE

Absolutely.

KENNY

Deep down, Walter knows that, too. I am sure he is basically a fantastic human being. But some day, I tell you, he is going to pop his cork.

GABE

Can he deliver a baby?

KENNY

That is not what I am paying him for.

GABE

But the Chinese girl said---

KENNY

Nang? Nang is Lao.

GABE

That sounds Portuguese.

KENNY

Huh?

GABE

"Islao." It has a Portuguese ring to it.

KENNY

Her name is "Nang." She *is* Lao. *From* Laos.

GABE

A-a-ah! Have I ever acquainted you with my views on how President Reagan has been handling international affairs?

KENNY

Many times.

GABE

But you have never told me where you stand on any of the issues.

KENNY

Not now, Uncle Gabe! I am having a baby!

GABE

What are you going to call it?

KENNY

What do you care?

GABE

That hurts, nephew. Your little one will be like a grandchild to me.

KENNY

I know. Look, we can't name it till we know what sex it is.

GABE

Say it's a boy.

KENNY

Hey, you want to give it a nice present?!

GABE

Anything, nephew. Anything.

KENNY

Pay for the nursery.

GABE
You mean the crib, and stuff like that?

KENNY
Yeah. And Walter's fee.

GABE
Whose?

KENNY
The guy with nightmares.

GABE
What does he dream about?

KENNY
Carnage, Uncle Gabe! Dismemberment! Evisceration!

GABE
Oh, how horrific.

KENNY
Can you handle his fee?

GABE
But why should I pay this poor man?

KENNY
Walter is designing the nursery.

GABE
(Whistles.)
"Designing!" Fancy!

KENNY
Nothing but the best.

GABE
Tell him to send me his bill.

KENNY
(Hugging Gabe.)
Oh, I love you!

GABE
Yes, but not as much as you loved your parents. No, no,
don't tell me you do. My sister and her husband---

KENNY
Whose names you can not recall.

GABE

Well, no mere uncle deserves the love I know you felt for **them**. But **I** love **you**, nephew, as if you were my son.

KENNY

Would you pay for the maid, too?

GABE

Oh...so that lady is your maid!

KENNY

Yeah. I give her a great little corner of the basement to sleep in, and I feed her. All you have to shell out is twenty bucks a week.

GABE

But I...I'm retired. I can't take on an expense like that.

A woman moans off stage.

GABE

What are you going to call the baby if it's a girl?

KENNY

You would not remember.

GABE

You are right. So right. My mind is fading away.

KENNY

I could have hired cheaper help. Illegals are a steal. But refugees are worth that little extra. They are exotic, they have a bit of class.

Daphne, with a surgical gown over her blouse and jeans, enters from the bedroom.

DAPHNE

Oh, Kenny. I'm sorry

KENNY

Sorry?! For what?! My God, what happened?! Yvonne, Yvonne!

Kenny runs into the bedroom. Daphne throws herself on the sofa.

GABE

(To Daphne.)

Oh, my. You look awful.

Kenny enters from the bedroom.

KENNY
Yvonne is okay! Yvonne is okay.

DAPHNE
I can't go on.

KENNY
You have to. Just hang in till the back-up midwife gets here.

GABE
(To Daphne.)
You are perspiring terribly.

KENNY
Daphne, I have paid! Up front! You people have a contractual obligation to attend to my wife throughout her labor. So get back in there!

GABE
But nephew, this lady isn't well!

KENNY
Who is going to deliver my baby?!

GABE
Call an ambulance.

DAPHNE
I don't need an ambulance.

GABE
No, no, dear. You rest. Here's a pillow.
(To Kenny.)
Call an ambulance for...for the pregnant one.

KENNY
All right! All right!
(To Daphne.)
But you people are going to pick up the tab!

Kenny exits to the bedroom.

GABE
(Feeling her forehead.)
My, oh my! What on earth is wrong with you?

DAPHNE
I must have the flu.

GABE
Shall I get you some aspirin?

DAPHNE

I took three an hour ago.

GABE

How 'bout some juice?

DAPHNE

Thank you, no. I just need rest.

GABE

(Mopping her brow.)

You shouldn't be sick. You're young and strong.

DAPHNE

Well, I caught a bug that's stronger. Do you always lay your hands on women who are total strangers the minute that you meet them?

GABE

(Taking his hands from her face.)

Oh! Oh, I'm sorry! I never touch women. I mean, I've been alone since my wife died, and all I do to women is look, and I looked at you, and I would have kept my hands to myself, even though you're lovely, but you were drawn and feverish, and...oh, I touched your face without asking you, and that makes me feel bad, very bad.

DAPHNE

What's your name?

GABE

Gabe.

DAPHNE

My name you know.

GABE

I'm afraid not.

DAPHNE

But you just heard Kenny call me Daphne.

GABE

I forgot. I keep forgetting names. The gray matter is wearing out.

DAPHNE

Well, thank you for being so attentive to me, Gabe. You **are** sure you're "Gabe?"

GABE

Yes. **My** name I always get right. But I can't remember anyone else's. Except my wife's.

DAPHNE
How long have you had this problem?

GABE
My whole life.

DAPHNE
Then your gray matter isn't wearing out. It is working just the way it always has.

A woman moans off stage.

DAPHNE (cont'd)
(Sitting up.)
I'd better get in there.

Daphne gets up, starts to faint.

GABE
(Catching Daphne, helping her back onto the sofa.)
Are you sure this is just the flu?

DAPHNE
No.

GABE
(Mopping her brow.)
Well, then, what in heaven's name is the matter?!
(Stopping his mopping.)
Oh, I'm sorry!

DAPHNE
For what?

GABE
For touching you. I forgot to ask permission again.

DAPHNE
Forgetful Gabe.

GABE
Forgetful, yes. My age has caught up with me.

DAPHNE
Don't be silly. Dry my face.

GABE
(Mopping her brow.)
Lord, it is wet! Your hair is wet, too. The same color my wife's hair was, before it all went gray.

Quiet.
DAPHNE

I can't keep quiet.
GABE

But I want to doze.
DAPHNE

All right. I will try to shut up.
GABE
(Pause.)

No, I can't. I need to talk. You're dozing anyway. You sleep, I'll ramble. While there is time. The time for silence will come soon enough. But until the end, I will chatter away. I will hold forth on whatever subject you like. What say you to...oh, to sports? If you don't mind, I prefer to skip the trivia. Not because I can't tell you who pitched, for example, the last game of the 1936 World Series, but because what most fascinates me about professional athletics in this country is their economic, social, and cultural import. You don't seem interested. All right, what would you say if I presented a reasoned analysis of the interrelation between the needs of industry and the imperative of environmental preservation? Lord, what indifference! Where, young lady, is your intellectual curiosity?

(Pause.)

Sound asleep. Your hair is wet, but just like hers. It is a good sleep, this. It may not lend itself to repartee, but it is the sort of sleep you are likely to wake up from.

(Arranging her hair, singing softly.)

Gloria! In excelsis, Deo.

Pause. Walter enters from the bedroom.

WALTER
Yvonne is a lively woman with an irrepressible imagination. Unfortunately, she has no sense of beauty whatsoever.

GABE
I am sorry to hear you have nightmares.

WALTER
I have no nightmares.

The doorbell rings. Nang enters from the kitchen, crosses, opens the door. Luisa and Marion, both casually dressed, enter.

Where do I go? LUISA

What? NANG

Where is the lying-in, honey? LUISA

What you mean? NANG

Daphne! What's the story? LUISA
(Poking Daphne.)

Oh, Luisa. I feel like hell. DAPHNE
(Waking.)

Same here. LUISA

Nang shrugs, and exits to the kitchen.

Nang, we really ought to talk. WALTER
(Following Nang.)

Walter exits to the kitchen.

No sleep last night, no sleep tonight. I have had it. LUISA

Oh, quit complaining. MARION

Daphne, meet my neighbor Marion. LUISA

Hi. DAPHNE

A woman moans off stage.

She drove me here. LUISA

The birth room is through there. DAPHNE

LUISA

She **had** to drive me, Daphne. My car broke down. Again! I can't afford a new one, I can't even afford repairs!

DAPHNE

I know. Our pay is not so good.

LUISA

Our pay, our hours, the whole job sucks!

DAPHNE

Oh, go on. You love it.

LUISA

I used to. About two hundred deliveries back. I am worn out, Daphne, and I am going crazy, and if I don't get off this treadmill, I am going to drop.

Kenny enters from the bedroom.

KENNY

The ambulance is on its way.

DAPHNE

Call them off, Kenny. My back-up's here.

Kenny looks inquisitively at the two new arrivals. Marion points to Luisa.

KENNY

(Grabbing Luisa's arm.)

Come with me.

Kenny pulls Luisa into the bedroom.

MARION

(To Daphne.)

I'll take you home, if you're not up to driving.

DAPHNE

Thank you.

Daphne gets up slowly with Gabe's help, as Nang enters from the kitchen with a tray of coffee mugs. Walter follows her in.

WALTER

At least let me give you a hand.

NANG

No hand.

Nang sets out the cups on a table, as Gabe escorts a shaky Daphne to the door.

GABE

I'll help you to the car.

DAPHNE

No. Marion can take me the rest of the way. Thank you, Gabe.

Nang exits to the kitchen with the tray; Marion takes Daphne's arm.

WALTER

Oh, I want that girl so bad.

Marion and Daphne exit.

GABE

I know. I mean, I know the power of love.

WALTER

"Love." Yeah. Ha! I am just hyper-horny.

GABE

Oh, no!

WALTER

Is there something wrong with that?

GABE

You...you really must restrain your primal feelings.

WALTER

I restrain **all** my feelings. Or at least, when I let my feelings show, women run away.

GABE

Out of fear, I suppose.

WALTER

Nah. I am a pussycat.

GABE

So, then, some of your feelings are actually...not threatening?

WALTER

Oh, every last feeling I have is absolutely deadly. Your nephew is so, **so** insightful. I am nothing but a bundle of pure, explosive rage.

A woman moans off stage.

WALTER (cont'd)

What Nang has been through...mister, I know. I have been there. She...she is sublime. But for *me*...oh, face up to it, Walter: she is a cause that is lost, lost, lost. It is now time that I...chased someone else.

A knock at the front door. Gabe opens it. Marion and Daphne enter.

MARION

The car won't start.

GABE

(Helping Daphne to the sofa.)

Come. Come lie back down.

Daphne lies down, and Gabe mops her brow.

WALTER

(To Marion.)

What is it? Battery trouble?

MARION

I don't know.

WALTER

Let's check it out.

MARION

Aren't you busy?

WALTER

Not at all.

MARION

Then, have you given up on that girl?

WALTER

Yes.

MARION

She *is* lovely.

WALTER

I have jumper cables.

MARION

Okay. Let's give it a shot.

Walter and Marion exit.

GABE

(Mopping Daphne's brow.)

How long have you been sick, young lady?

DAPHNE

Daphne.

GABE

Yes. How long?

DAPHNE

Since yesterday. You forgot to ask permission to wipe off my face.

GABE

I did not forget.

DAPHNE

That's a good sign.

GABE

Really? Do you like aggressive men?

DAPHNE

I like 'em macho, Gabe. Just like you.

GABE

Don't laugh at me.

A woman moans off stage.

DAPHNE

You are not the least bit senile.

GABE

I don't like people laughing at me. Not unless they love me.

DAPHNE

Did your wife laugh at you?

GABE

Constantly. I am too the least bit senile.

DAPHNE

But just now, you did not forget to ask my permission. So your short-term memory is fine.

GABE

I did not ask because I am a better judge of your condition than **you** seem to be.

DAPHNE

Short-term memory is the first thing to go when your brain withers up. So quit yammering that you are beginning to fail.

Nang enters from the kitchen with a coffee pot.

GABE

(To Nang.)

Did you just brew that?

NANG

"Brew?" I don't understand.

GABE

Is that coffee instant?

NANG

Oh, no. I grind bean, use filter.

GABE

But you people drink tea.

NANG

I drink tea, I drink coffee, I drink soda.

GABE

Culturally speaking, you are supposed to drink tea. Where on Earth did you learn to brew fresh-ground coffee?

NANG

Yvonne teach me.

GABE

Remarkable.

NANG

Many people teach me many thing.

GABE

(To Daphne.)

You know, we live in a remarkable country.

NANG

Most important I learn English.

GABE

America's *lingua franca*. Yes.

NANG

Tell me what "*lingua franca*" mean.

It's Latin, Nang.

DAPHNE

Roman language?

NANG

Uh-huh.

DAPHNE

A woman moans off stage.

NANG

(To Gabe.)

Why you talk Roman language?

GABE

(Laughing.)

I'll stick to American, I'll stick to American! Oh, what a remarkable country this is!

NANG

I learn good English, I get good job.

GABE

Yes you will. This is a land of opportunity. Problematically so, to be sure, but it beats where you come from. What do you like most about America, young lady?

NANG

Bowling.

GABE

Now *I* don't understand.

NANG

Bowling. Plain English word.

GABE

With ten pins and a ball?

NANG

Yeah!

Nang exits to the kitchen. Daphne laughs, and starts to get up.

GABE

Where are you going?

Daphne falls back.

DAPHNE

Apparently nowhere. Not without your help.

GABE

You didn't get sick just yesterday.

DAPHNE

Give me your arm. I want to go to the bathroom.

Gabe gives Daphne his arm, and she stands. Marion and Walter enter by the front door.

MARION

Sorry, Daphne. It still won't start. Where's **your** car? I'll take you home in **it**.

DAPHNE

No, Marion, I'm afraid you won't. My car broke down five blocks from here.

GABE

You have been sick a long, long time.

DAPHNE

No more than a month.

Gabe escorts Daphne off by way of the kitchen exit.

WALTER

Hey, **my** car works just fine. What do you say the two of us take her home?

MARION

You take her. You don't need **me**.

WALTER

Oh, come on!

MARION

No. She doesn't look well at all. You give her a lift, and I will say a prayer for her.

WALTER

A **prayer**! Ha! That is cute. After we drop her off, I'll buy you a drink.

MARION

At four A.M.?

WALTER

I'll buy you breakfast.

A woman moans off stage.

WALTER (cont'd)

You need a new ignition switch, Marion. After we eat, I will hot-wire that wreck of yours, and you bring it in to the shop.

MARION

No, thank you.

WALTER

If I offended you, I am sorry. If you want to pray: fine. Plenty of people thump their Bibles and have a good time, too.

MARION

I have a great time.

WALTER

In bed.

MARION

I have a live-in lover.

WALTER

Oh. Damn!

Nang enters from the kitchen with a container of cream.

NANG

I forget to bring cream.

Kenny enters from the bedroom.

KENNY

Walter, get in there.

WALTER

What does Yvonne want now?!

KENNY

She wants to paper three walls, and paint the fourth.

WALTER

That is disgusting!

KENNY

Hey, man: no anger. You got that? Now, come with me.

Kenny and Walter exit to the bedroom.

MARION

"I forgot" is the past tense, Nang. And you might want to use "the," the definite article. You would have been correct to say: "I forgot to bring the cream."

NANG

"I forgot to bring the cream." Thank you. You help my English. But why you talk like that? Like in school? Other black people...**the** other black people I meet...I **have** meet...the other black people I have meet talk very different than English in school. But I don't meet too much. Mostly I don't meet American, no black no white. Till last month, when I move here.

A woman moans off stage.

NANG

Before, I live in Chinatown.

MARION

What days do you have off?

NANG

Day off? No, I don't have.

MARION

Don't you understand?

NANG

Sure. Every day I work. Kenny let me go to English class in afternoon, and I come home and study here in big, nice house. You live in big house, too?

MARION

I live in a very small house, Nang. With a roommate. But we haven't been getting along. I expect she will move out pretty soon. Look, Kenny can't make you work seven days a week. I'll talk to him about some off-time for you. Time you would be free to do what you like. Maybe...maybe you would like to get together with me when you're off.

(Reaching to touch Nang's cheek or hair.)

We could work on your English.

NANG

(Pulling away.)

Why you always touch?! Hands here always busy! **I** don't never touch.

MARION

Never?

NANG

Never so quick. Never with person I don't know. Here it very strange. I...I am used to---is that right idiom?

MARION

Yes.

NANG

I am used to Chinatown-style people.

MARION

Well, you are in the wider world now, not in an Asian ghetto.

NANG

Chinatown not just Asian. People from every country come shop in Chinatown. Only American don't come too much.

A woman moans off stage.

NANG (cont'd)

American only come eat in restaurant, go home fast. Other people take time. They shop, they talk. I meet many Asian, sure, not just from east part of Asia but from Arab part, too. And India. And I meet Ethiopia people, and lots and lots of Spanish. *Muchos, muchos centroamericanos.*

MARION

Ah! *Tu hablas español?!*

NANG

I learn a little.

MARION

Are you studying English and Spanish both?

NANG

English I study. Spanish I learn from friend.

MARION

Can I be your friend?

NANG

Sure. You help my English, just like Carlos help my Spanish.

MARION

"Carlos?" Does **he** touch you?

NANG

I don't let him.

MARION

My, my, but you are hard to get!

NANG

He don't speak English too good, so I learn **his** language. Maybe I let him touch me soon. And you...oh, you touch me now. Okay. Here, you touch my face.

MARION

(Touching Nang's cheek.)

You are very sweet.

NANG

You touch me nice.

(Stepping away from Marion.)

But Carlos, he going to touch different. Like man touch woman, you know? Only not too soon.

MARION

Is he legal?

NANG

He don't tell me.

A woman moans off stage.

MARION

Where is he from?

NANG

He say *centroamerica* only. He don't say what country.

MARION

You ought to find out. It is important to know which side he's on.

NANG

He not on any side.

MARION

Did he come here just to make money?

NANG

He come here so he don't get killed.

MARION

Well, if the people out to kill him are on **our** side, immigration had better not pick Carlos up.

NANG
Why?

MARION
They would send him back.

NANG
Even if he die?

MARION
Even if. But if the people out to kill Carlos are the ones on the **other** side, Immigration would likely let him stay. You ought to find out where he's from.

Walter enters from the bedroom.
Luisa, in a surgical gown, follows at his heels.

KENNY
(Off stage.)
Luisa! Come back in here!

LUISA
(To Walter.)
How much do you make?

WALTER
Enough. But I have to deal with jerks like Yvonne.

Kenny enters from the bedroom, and grabs Luisa.

KENNY
Come on!

LUISA
(Pulling free of Kenny. To Walter.)
I have a flair for interior decoration.

KENNY
(To Luisa.)
Lady, I have paid you to deliver my baby!

LUISA
You paid the doctors who run my group. What **they** pay **me** is peanuts!

A woman moans off stage.

MARION
Luisa, do your job.

LUISA

I am not like you, Marion! I do not bust my ass for the joy of it! Walter, let's make a date. I need to talk to you.

MARION

I do what's right.

LUISA

Yeah?! Do you have the money to fix your car?!

MARION

I'll borrow it.

NANG

Oh, I forget sugar!

Nang starts for the kitchen.

NANG (cont'd)

(Turning back. To Marion.)

I **forgot the** sugar.

WALTER

Nang! Listen!

Nang exits to the kitchen, with Walter at her heels.

KENNY

Luisa, are you coming?!

LUISA

Walter and I have business to discuss.

KENNY

Be careful when you deal with him.

A woman moans off stage.

LUISA

How much do **you** make?

KENNY

More every day.

LUISA

Moving up, are you?

KENNY

Like a rocket. Business is booming. I am making a mint. But it isn't enough.

LUISA
What are you going to do to make enough?

KENNY
Parlay.

LUISA
Huh?

KENNY
Invest.

LUISA
That is a luxury *I* do not have.
(Heading for the kitchen.)
Walter!

Luisa exits to the kitchen.

KENNY
(To Marion.)
You know how to deliver a kid?

MARION
No. Do you know how to hot-wire a car?

KENNY
Yeah.

Gabe escorts Daphne in from the kitchen.

MARION
Then would you please come get me started?

KENNY
After the baby is born.
(Calling to the kitchen.)
Luisa!

Kenny exits to the kitchen.

MARION
Kenny, I want to get out of here now!

Marion exits to the kitchen.

GABE
Poor...poor what's-'er-name.

A woman moans off stage.

GABE (cont'd)

The one who's moaning.

DAPHNE

Gabe, you go in and help her. I'll tell you what to do.

Nang enters from the kitchen with sugar.

GABE

I could never deliver a baby!

NANG

Why you want to "deliver" baby?

GABE

Do you know what is happening in there?!

NANG

I know. Yvonne don't want to deliver.

GABE

After nine months, she wants to keep it in?!

DAPHNE

Nang, do you know what "deliver" means?

NANG

It mean take to different place and give.

A woman moans off stage.

NANG (cont'd)

Yvonne don't want baby took to different place. She want it here.

Daphne laughs.

GABE

It isn't nice to laugh.

NANG

No. Laughing very nice.

DAPHNE

He's right, Nang. I shouldn't be laughing. See, we say someone "delivers" a baby when she helps the mother get it out.

NANG

O-o-oh! You mean "catch."

"Catch!" "Deliver!"

GABE

A woman moans off stage.

Who is going to **do** it?!

GABE (cont'd)

Maybe me.

NANG

A woman moans off stage.

Have you been trained?

GABE

What?

NANG

A woman moans off stage.

Do you have experience?!

GABE

Oh, in my country I catch many baby.

NANG

A woman moans off stage.

Go!

GABE

A woman moans off stage.

I catch baby many time.

NANG

Go catch it!

GABE
(Shoving Nang to the bedroom.)

Don't touch!

NANG

Go!

GABE
(Throwing his hands in the air.)

Nang exits to the bedroom as a woman moans off stage. Gabe heads for the kitchen.

Nephew!

GABE

Gabe exits to the kitchen as Walter enters from the kitchen.

Nang!

WALTER

She's in there, catching a kid.

DAPHNE

A baby cries off stage.

WALTER

(Pause.)

We have planned the nursery in yellow and green. I lay you odds, Daphne---generous odds---that, her progeny in her arms at last, Yvonne will forthwith switch to pink or blue.

Gabe and Kenny enter from the kitchen.

Nang! Nang!

KENNY

Nang enters from the bedroom.

What is it?!

KENNY (cont'd)

You listen.

NANG

I can't tell by the way it cries!

KENNY

But that best way to tell.

NANG

Do not spout Southeast Asian folklore!

KENNY

(Shaking Nang.)

Why you always touch?!

NANG

Damn it, Nang! Tell me what it is!

KENNY

(Still shaking her.)

NANG

Healthy!

GABE

Fantastic! Come, I'll take you home.

With a whoop, Gabe takes Daphne's arm and starts for the door.

NANG

Very healthy baby!

GABE

Sensational!

Gabe escorts Daphne out the front door.

KENNY

(Letting Nang go, and heading for the bedroom.)

Nang, that was not what I meant!

Kenny exits to the bedroom.

WALTER

(Pause.)

I love you.

NANG

No. You want woman. Maybe try Luisa. She follow you to kitchen. She want you.

(Heading for the bedroom.)

I go back to Yvonne. Have to catch more.

WALTER

More?! Don't tell me she's having twins?!

Nang turns back, as Luisa and Marion enter from the kitchen.

LUISA

Marion, stop lecturing me!

MARION

Then you stop acting irresponsibly.

NANG

(To Marion.)

What Walter mean? He say "twins."

MARION

Two babies.

WALTER

One of each, no doubt. She will require pink **and** blue. I can see it now: stripes!

NANG

No, Walter, she don't have twins. One baby only. I got to catch what come out after.

Kenny enters from the bedroom, as
Nang starts for the bedroom.

KENNY

Walter, Yvonne doesn't want your yellow and green.

LUISA

Nang!

Nang turns back.

LUISA (cont'd)

I will deliver the afterbirth.

NANG

"Afterbirth." That word make sense. Good, Luisa: you deliver. Kenny, okay I go sleep?

KENNY

Yeah.

Nang exits by way of the kitchen.

KENNY (cont'd)

(To Walter.)

Kindly go in there and do what she tells you.

(To Marion.)

Come on. Let's start your car.

Kenny heads for the door, then
turns back.

KENNY

Walter! Do not blow up.

Kenny and Marion exit by the front
door.

WALTER

To have taste and no money is misfortune; to have money and no taste is a crime.

LUISA

I will deal with Yvonne for you.

Luisa exits to the bedroom. The baby keeps crying.

###END OF ACT ONE###

ACT TWO

2

The following October, early weekday afternoon. The back yard of Kenny's new home in the Oakland hills. Left, a path to the street; right, an off stage exit to the house. A few garden chairs, and a table. The sound of birds.

DAPHNE

(Off stage.)

Let go of me, Gabe!

GABE

(Off stage.)

But the path is uneven and steep.

Daphne and Gabe, both dressed casually for a warm day, enter from the street. He holds her arm.

GABE (cont'd)

This is it.

DAPHNE

Wow!

GABE

Sit there. In the sun.

DAPHNE

Gabe, the ground **here** is smooth and level. I do not need your support.

GABE

But you are weak.

DAPHNE

(Removing his hand from her arm.)

I am not helpless!

(Looking around.)

What did Kenny pay for this place?!

GABE

Not much.

DAPHNE
Are you kidding?! How many bedrooms?

GABE
Five.

DAPHNE
But he only has one kid.

GABE
Another is on its way.

DAPHNE
Okay, and one room is for the maid.

GABE
No, it's not.

DAPHNE
Is he sticking Nang in the basement **here**, too?!

GABE
It is a nice basement.

DAPHNE
The house is enormous, with a view of San Francisco, the Golden Gate, and the Bay. Don't tell me Kenny bought it cheap.

GABE
He put up the equity from his old house, that's all.

DAPHNE
His mortgage payments must be astronomical.

GABE
You and I may think they are. Remember, though, my nephew is a hot-shot executive.

DAPHNE
What does he need all those rooms for?

GABE
More children.

DAPHNE
One kid would drive **me** crazy.

GABE
No. You would be a marvelous mother.

DAPHNE

I'm thirsty.

GABE

Sit. I'll see about some drinks.
(Taking Daphne's arm.)

Sit here.

DAPHNE

(Removing his hand from her arm.)
Let go of me, damn it!

GABE

(Pause.)

Tea. We will have iced tea. That maid is bound to make great tea.

Gabe exits to the house. Daphne looks around another moment, then sits. Luisa, dressed casually but stylishly, enters from the street.

LUISA

Hey, Daphne, you're looking good!

DAPHNE

Luisa, tell me how to love a guy.

LUISA

Don't think.

DAPHNE

Will that keep me from snapping at him when he's kind to me?

LUISA

It will keep you from dwelling on it when you do.

Gabe enters from the house.

LUISA (cont'd)

Is my man in there?

GABE

The one with nightmares?

LUISA

He has no nightmares. He sleeps better than any guy I have ever had.

DAPHNE

That's too bad.

LUISA

Oh, but Walter works before he slumbers, Daphne!

GABE

He's yelling at my nephew's wife about rugs.

LUISA

Uh-oh.

Luisa exits to the house.

DAPHNE

Gabe, sit down.

Gabe goes to a chair at some remove from Daphne.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Not there. Next to me.

Gabe sits next to Daphne.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Are you my boy friend?

GABE

(Laughing.)

Me?! A boy?!

DAPHNE

How many dates have we had?

GABE

We haven't had "dates." I just take you places every now and then.

DAPHNE

Why?

GABE

You need to get out. To recuperate.

DAPHNE

But I'm a homebody.

GABE

Then you should have kids. That's what domestic people do.

DAPHNE

I like home because it is peaceful. It is a place where I can think. It would not be peaceful if I filled it up with brats.

GABE
Are you going back to work?

DAPHNE
Next month.

GABE
Why deliver babies if you think they're brats?

DAPHNE
Birth is...it's miraculous.

GABE
So is what comes after.

DAPHNE
The afterbirth?

GABE
Hey, I'm serious.

DAPHNE
About what? Diapers? Pestering? Adolescent rebellion?

GABE
All of it.

DAPHNE
And then there is the angry ingratitude when they finally grow up.

GABE
Everything in life is a miracle. You are afraid of living.

DAPHNE
Why didn't **you** have kids?

GABE
We tried. But we couldn't.

DAPHNE
On account of you, or her?

GABE
That was never clear.

DAPHNE
Would you want to have children with **me**?

GABE
What?!

DAPHNE
Are you my boy friend, or are you my nursemaid?

 GABE
I...I'm old, Gloria.

 DAPHNE
Daphne.

 Kenny, in a business suit, enters
 from the street.

 KENNY
Hey, Daphne! Long time no see!

 DAPHNE
Hi, Kenny. To me, Gabe, you are not old. I am nearer the
grave than you.

 GABE
Oh, no! Have you had a relapse?!

 KENNY
Daphne, you look terrific!

 GABE
 (To Daphne.)
How...how long do you have left?!

 KENNY
Don't be morbid, Uncle Gabe.
 (To Daphne.)
Tell me what you think of the place.

 DAPHNE
It is impressive.

 GABE
 (To Daphne.)
I thought you were still in remission.

 DAPHNE
I am.

 GABE
Oh, thank God!

 KENNY
Daphne, enjoy yourself. Sit back all afternoon and take in
the view.

DAPHNE

(To Gabe.)

Of course, I could relapse any time.

KENNY

What a silly thing to say.

DAPHNE

It's nice you can afford a place like this.

KENNY

Oh, there is no other way to live! Daphne, you look absolutely splendid!

DAPHNE

Considering what I've gone through.

KENNY

Treatment! You have had treatment, and it is over. From now on, you will thrive.

DAPHNE

Maybe.

GABE

What are the chances of a recurrence?

DAPHNE

Fifty-fifty.

KENNY

That is ridiculous.

DAPHNE

It is what my oncologist says.

KENNY

Then your oncologist is a quack.

DAPHNE

Lymphoma *is* a form of cancer, Kenny.

KENNY

Do not use that word!

DAPHNE

All right. It is a malignancy.

KENNY

Daphne, shut up! This is my home! Where I am raising my family. This is a place for life! For joy and love, for nurture and growth.

DAPHNE

Cancer is growth.

KENNY

I forbid you to use that word here!

Daphne gets up and starts for the street.

GABE

Nephew! Don't let her go!

KENNY

This is a place for health, Uncle Gabe.

GABE

She's healthy! She's healthy!

KENNY

Sure! Of course she is! Daphne, you are doing fine! Just thriving! You could not be more welcome here.

(To Daphne, taking her arm.)

Sit back down. Please.

Daphne sits.

KENNY (cont'd)

You are beautiful and happy and well. You have come to delight in my garden and glow in the sun. That gives me more pleasure, Daphne, greater satisfaction by far, than I can hope ever to say.

Kenny exits to the house.

DAPHNE

My cycles are messed up.

(Pause.)

Gabe, did you hear me? I haven't had normal periods in a year.

GABE

I can't talk about such things, the way you youngsters do.

DAPHNE

I might have trouble conceiving. Would you want me anyway?

(Pause.)

I **have** been afraid of life, you're right. I am mortal: that is certainly no revelation. I am mortal, and I always did think I was. Thinking so, I clung to the illusion---an illusion that cuts off life's flow---that I could control my future. But now...now I know. I am mortal, Gabe, and I know it with all my being. I finally see that illusion for what it is. I can't even pretend to control my future. I must

(MORE)

DAPHNE (cont'd)

stop cutting off the flow of whatever forces alive inside me scare me. The future is just a chance we take, and my future isn't long.

GABE

That you do *not* know.

DAPHNE

If I make it to a hundred, my future will still be brief. Just an instant, like my past has been. From now on, I want to live more, and think less.

GABE

Oh, but it's great to be a thinker!

DAPHNE

It is debilitating. Yes...I do think I am ready to settle down.

GABE

You do..."think?"

DAPHNE

(Laughing.)

There I go again!

GABE

Settling down is a fine idea. Gloria and I were happy; find the right young man, and you'll be happy, too.

DAPHNE

You talk about her, and her name pops right out. No hesitation, no groping. How do you manage that, Gabe?

GABE

I loved her.

DAPHNE

If you loved someone else, would you remember *her* name, too?

GABE

I couldn't love anyone else.

DAPHNE

Why not?

GABE

That's a good question.

DAPHNE

You mean it has never occurred to you?

GABE
It has occurred.

DAPHNE
Could no one take her place?

GABE
It would be different.

DAPHNE
Of course. But would it be inferior?

GABE
Not if I loved the lady.

DAPHNE
But you couldn't love the lady.

GABE
Says who?

DAPHNE
You just said you couldn't love anyone but Gloria.

Walter, in casual clothes, enters
from the house. Luisa follows him.

WALTER
I can no longer put up with her.

Kenny enters from the house.

KENNY
Walter, my wife has more to say to you.

WALTER
The dining room floor, Kenny, is gorgeous.

KENNY
It certainly is.

WALTER
Yvonne wants to carpet it over.

KENNY
Fine.

WALTER
(To Luisa.)
We have to drop this job.

LUISA

No, Walter. We have to uphold our reputation. We can not quit after we have started.

Walter, shaking his head, exits to the house.

LUISA

(To Kenny.)

That is: we can not quit, as long as the client pays.

KENNY

You are playing with dynamite, Luisa.

GABE

From what I have seen, nephew, that fellow is not as worrisome as you seem to think.

KENNY

Uncle Gabe, Walter is a Vietnam vet!

GABE

So?

KENNY

Don't you know what that **means**?!

GABE

I...I don't understand.

KENNY

I have to go make some calls.

Kenny starts for the house.

LUISA

To customers?

KENNY

To **prospective** customers, Luisa.

LUISA

Well, get those suckers trading, Kenny. You are in over your head.

KENNY

I am doing just fine.

LUISA

Why did your check bounce?

KENNY

It did? Then the bank screwed up.

LUISA

Your deposit on our services is past due. I want it now, in cash.

KENNY

No one deals in cash, Luisa. Resubmit the check.

LUISA

How much have you lost?

KENNY

What are you talking about?

LUISA

You will pay cash now, or Walter and I are gone.

KENNY

Luisa, one day he is going to explode. You watch out.

LUISA

What exactly have you been losing money *on*?

KENNY

I happen to be extremely conservative with my capital.

LUISA

Then your losses must be small.

KENNY

Very small.

LUISA

How often do you take very small losses?

KENNY

I *cut* my losses. I play options and I play futures, and when I hit on a winner, I will ride it for everything it is worth. I am going to walk away with a sum you never dreamed of.

LUISA

I want our money.

KENNY

Uncle Gabe, how much do you have on you?

DAPHNE

Kenny, pay her yourself.

KENNY

Oh, all right! I have some cash inside. Explain to my uncle about Walter, will you?

DAPHNE

Explain what?

KENNY

About guys who fought in Vietnam.

DAPHNE

What about them?

KENNY

Jeez! Am I the only one who understands?!

LUISA

Go get the cash.

KENNY

Mark my words, Luisa: the day will come when Walter snaps.

Nang enters from the house with a tray of glasses and a pitcher of iced tea.

NANG

Kenny, you give me my wages?

KENNY

Later.

Kenny starts for the house.

NANG

But you don't pay me in three months.

Kenny exits to the house.

LUISA

Three months! Nang, why haven't you quit?

NANG

Oh, no. When I finish school, I apply for a better job. This job fine for now. Kenny and Yvonne are good, Luisa. With a wonderful baby. My family all die in fighting, but I have a new family here.

GABE

You do indeed. And there is no finer family on earth.

LUISA

(To Nang.)

What do you think of the work we're doing?

NANG

You and Walter?

LUISA

You think it's atrocious.

NANG

I don't know that word.

LUISA

Yes you do.

NANG

It worse than atrocious. But that not your fault.

LUISA

You have decorated your sleeping area beautifully. And for next to nothing. Hey, why don't you skip class this afternoon?

NANG

I never skip class.

LUISA

I am going to an auction. Furniture, paintings, odds and ends. You come with me.

NANG

But I can't buy.

LUISA

I will buy, Nang. We are doing three other houses, one of them for people with taste. You help me decide what to get.

NANG

When you going?

LUISA

Right away.

NANG

I have to finish the laundry. I'll be fast.

Nang exits to the house.

LUISA

That high-rolling stockbroker had better hurry up, too.

Luisa follows Nang off to the house.

GABE
Let's talk ideas.

DAPHNE
Why? You want to change the subject?

GABE
But you were just talking ideas!

DAPHNE
I was talking about our getting married.

GABE
That is not possible. I am heading straight down hill.

DAPHNE
Who went inside just now?

GABE
The decorator.

DAPHNE
Walter?

GABE
No, the female one. And the maid.

DAPHNE
Good. Your short-term memory keeps holding up.

GABE
After the short-term memory goes, then what?

DAPHNE
Anyone else might start forgetting names.

GABE
I could forget Gloria's.

DAPHNE
And the name of any other woman you happened to love.

GABE
I know what senile people do! They get disoriented, right?

DAPHNE
Uh-huh.

GABE
They forget where they are.

DAPHNE

(Laughing.)

Yes, they do. Gabe, you are a long way from that!

GABE

I sure am! And I am strong as a man of twenty.

(Standing.)

I'll show you. Let me lift you up.

DAPHNE

Sit down.

Gabe sits.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

For all that, you go on insisting that you are losing your powers.

GABE

Because...everything has changed. She's gone. Oh, Gloria, Gloria, you were my life.

DAPHNE

She was your ***past***. Your past was an instant.

GABE

An eternal instant.

DAPHNE

You have another instant coming.

GABE

Eternal but...gone.

DAPHNE

If you live your coming instant empty, it will be unbearably long.

GABE

I am used to absence. The children we never had left a hole even before Gloria's dying did.

DAPHNE

Gabe, find yourself someone you know for sure can have kids.

GABE

But I am...

DAPHNE

"...way too old, young lady whose name I don't remember."
No, that is ***not*** what you are. You are funny. And...and full of love, and I am so wild about you I could explode!

(Pause.)

(MORE)

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Hell, why am I so pessimistic? I don't feel bad. Betcha I could make lots of babies.

GABE

Now you're talking!

DAPHNE

Do you love me, Gabe?

GABE

Yes.

DAPHNE

Say it.

GABE

I love you.

DAPHNE

"I love you, Daphne."

GABE

Marry me.

DAPHNE

Can you remember my name?

GABE

I will never forget it.

DAPHNE

Take my hand. And don't talk. I want to think.

GABE

(Long, fidgety pause.)

Well?

DAPHNE

Be quiet.

GABE

That is hard.

(Pause.)

I have been fascinated---thoroughly intrigued---by the election campaign for the Oakland School Board. The issues are tricky...extraordinarily subtle, and all tangled up.

DAPHNE

Shhh.

Pause. Marion, in a suit, enters from the street.

MARION

Well, hello Daphne. How are you feeling?

DAPHNE

Hi.

GABE

She's thinking. Do you vote?

MARION

What are you running for?

GABE

I **should** run for office. I...I am **not** over the hill. I have the wisdom of age, and time on my hands.

MARION

Luisa said Kenny wouldn't mind if I came and saw his new place.

GABE

Look around! Look around! I do. I have plenty of time, and I read at least five books a week. I am the best-read person I know. Here.

(Offering a glass.)

That Asian girl makes excellent tea.

MARION

Do you think Kenny would mind if I went inside?

GABE

My nephew? He is very busy. Do you like fiction?

MARION

The tea needs sugar. I'll go ask Nang for some.

Marion starts for the house.

GABE

Who? Oh, you mean the girl who works here. No, stop. **She** is busy, too.

Marion stops.

GABE

I read about all sorts of subjects. But fiction is my passion. Because it can deal with everything, and do it all at once. You can put any fact you like into a work of fiction, but you can not make things up when you write about facts. Now if you were writing, say, the biography of a novelist, and striving to be factual, you would discuss, of course, the books he or she wrote, though they themselves are fictions. So here we have a case in which fiction would be fact. How about that?!

MARION

I am not a writer. I don't know.

GABE

Neither am I! Oh, but I do wish I had the wherewithal to wrap this world up in words, and make sense of the whole dizzying mess. Nobody does that any more!

MARION

Nobody ever did.

GABE

The worst writers are the ones who don't even try. The ones who just write about themselves. Or about---and this is even worse yet---about **writing!**

MARION

Actually, I misspoke. There **have** been writers, and there are now, who do make sense of what you call "the whole dizzying mess." **Moral** sense. They do that by elucidating those issues which affect the way people actually live.

GABE

Issues, yes! I totally agree! In the final analysis, it all comes down to **issues!** **You**, for instance, just being here: **you** are an issue. Well, so am I, and so is she.

MARION

Are you sure Nang is busy?

GABE

Don't be offended! Listen: I am fed up with the way people of your pigmentation have been misrepresented, over and over again. If I could write, I would remedy that. I would write a...a happy black family, that was admirable in every way. A family...just like my nephew's.

Daphne has a coughing fit.

GABE

Are you all right?!

DAPHNE

I'm fine.

MARION

How 'bout writing this? It's a story---

GABE

About what?

MARION

About whatever you like. And there is a black woman in it, and her race never once comes up.

Luisa and Walter enter from the house, she leading him by the hand.

LUISA

Walter, you get your wish. We are out of here. Oh, hi Marion.

WALTER

(To Luisa.)

Come on.

LUISA

(To Marion.)

Excuse us. Kenny hasn't paid. We have to go.

(Calling.)

Nang!

Kenny enters from the house with a handful of folding cash.

LUISA (cont'd)

Well, will you look at that!

KENNY

(Handing Luisa the money.)

There! Now let me make my phone calls.

(Starting for the house.)

LUISA

Hey, hang on, Kenny! These are all singles.

Luisa proceeds to count the money.

GABE

Nephew, this lady is thoughtful and really, really sharp.

KENNY

Marion! Hello! Has Uncle Gabe been annoying you?

MARION

Within reason.

KENNY

Analysis! Argumentation! He can be such a bore.

MARION

He has an active mind.

KENNY

At least he isn't delusional, like *some* people with active minds. Like those maniacs who go screaming that the planet is rife with injustice and...and---

MARION

---and deprivation---

KENNY

Yeah. And pain. What *I* want to shout around is that people---billions of 'em---are, at this very moment, loving their lives, just like me. There is no reason we can not all be happy.

MARION

I disagree.

KENNY

All but a very, very few.

MARION

A multitude of people don't stand a chance.

KENNY

Nonsense.

LUISA

Kenny, this is twenty-eight dollars short.

KENNY

Count again.

LUISA

I have already counted twice.

KENNY

Marion, you are welcome here. But I will tolerate no advocacy, no special pleading, no crusading, on my property.

LUISA

Pay the rest of what you owe us, Kenny, or we're leaving.

KENNY

I'll get it, I'll get it! Walter, come back in here. Yvonne has new instructions for you.

Kenny and Walter exit to the house,
as Nang enters from the house.

NANG

Ready, Luisa!

LUISA

In a minute. I'm giving Kenny one more chance.

MARION

How are you, Nang?

NANG

Oh, Marion! My English much...**is** much better.

MARION

How's Carlos?

NANG

He never going to learn. No ear for language, you know?
What's new with you?

MARION

Things have been pretty uneventful.

LUISA

Your roommate moved out.

MARION

How did **you** know?

LUISA

I still talk to friends in that crummy old neighborhood.

MARION

(To Nang.)

Is your Spanish better, too?

NANG

Sí! Cómo no?! You know what else?

MARION

What?

NANG

I let Carlos touch me.

LUISA

Oh?

NANG

But only just a little.

MARION

You're getting serious about him, are you?

NANG

I am.

MARION

Hey, I should get back to the office.

NANG

And all the time, I worry. I think Immigration come and pick him up. He from the wrong country, like you warn me. We don't know what to do.

MARION

Nang, let me...oh, let me talk to Carlos.

NANG

What for?

MARION

I'm a lawyer.

NANG

No, we can't afford.

LUISA

That's the way Marion likes it, Nang. She's a **poverty** lawyer. Her clients are all poor, so she stays poor herself.

MARION

Luisa, I have more than I need.

LUISA

More bills, more debts. Excuse me. I have to collect an account receivable.

Luisa exits to the house.

GABE

(To Marion.)

But aren't we all somebody? Hey, you!

MARION

My name is Marion.

GABE

You can not ignore someone's identity. I mean, this girl is oriental, and you know it. A writer can't deny that sort of thing. You have to own up, you can't run and hide. I would include her, if I could write, and I would say just who she is. I would write people from every background I know; all kinds of people, too. Saints, sinners, wise men and fools. Not to mention wise women.

Daphne laughs.

GABE (cont'd)

(To Daphne.)

You are laughing at me.

DAPHNE

Yes, I am.

GABE

Okay.

(To Marion.)

I would write Samoans, and I would write Greeks; Filipinos, Jamaicans, Uzbeks and Basques. Hungarians and Eskimos; Argentinians, Mongolians, Nigerians and Kurds.

MARION

And which of those might **you** be?

GABE

I...well, my mother was Scotch-Irish. A quarter, anyway. Dad had some Mohawk, I believe, a smattering of Egyptian, substantial Romanian and a good bit of Dutch.

(To Daphne.)

What are you? Let me guess: you have Swedish in you, right?

DAPHNE

Gabe, I can not think while you natter.

GABE

Go on! You can't help thinking, whatever I do.

(To Marion.)

I would not be surprised if she had German blood, too.

MARION

Nang, set me up a date with Carlos. Pay what you can.

NANG

(Taking a bill from her bosom.)

Here.

MARION

Twenty dollars. That's fine. I will look for an angle. Maybe we can make him legal. Don't you carry your money in a pocket or a handbag?

NANG

My regular money.

MARION

What is this, then?

NANG

For emergency.

MARION

Are you broke? Take this back.

NANG

But I don't want your help for nothing.

MARION

I haven't helped. I am going to try, that's all.

NANG

You try, and so you keep it.

MARION

(Handing the bill back to Nang.)

No. Pay me some other way.

NANG

Well, okay. How 'bout I take you bowling?

MARION

What?

GABE

Ten pins and a ball.

MARION

Oh, bowling! Oh, yeah, sure! I would love it!

Luisa and Walter enter from the house, she leading him by the hand. Kenny follows on their heels.

LUISA

Let's go, Walter.

KENNY

Wait!

LUISA

Come on, Nang.

KENNY

(Holding out and jingling a sock full of coins.)

Luisa! Look! I am loaded!

LUISA

You can not be serious.

KENNY

I told you I was careful with my money. See how frugal I am? Hold out your hands.

Luisa holds out her hands, and
Kenny counts coins into them.

KENNY (cont'd)

Ten...thirty-five...forty...fifty...fifty one---

LUISA

You have got to be kidding.

KENNY

Seventy-six...seventy-seven---

LUISA

Give me that.

KENNY

The whole sock?!

Luisa grabs the sock.

KENNY (cont'd)

Oh, no you don't! You get twenty-eight dollars, not one penny more!

LUISA

(Handing the sock to Walter.)

Hold this open.

Walter holds the sock open, and
Luisa drops the coins back in.

KENNY

Walter is on **your** side for **now**, Luisa. But when he turns on you...

LUISA

(To Walter.)

Give the sock to Nang.

Walter hands the sock to Nang.

LUISA (cont'd)

Okay, now let's go.

Walter starts for the house.

LUISA (cont'd)

Walter, you got what you wanted. We don't work here any more.

WALTER

I can not leave without a parting word for Yvonne.

KENNY

(Calling after Walter.)

You be polite!

Walter exits to the house.

LUISA

(To Nang.)

Count those coins. Then tell Kenny how much he still owes you.

Nang and Luisa exit to the street.

KENNY

(Calling after.)

Mark my words, Luisa: that partner of yours will blow up in your face some day!

GABE

Was he in combat, nephew?

KENNY

He has been through hell. Through an indescribable ordeal we can not begin to imagine.

MARION

But, Kenny, you just told me the world is not so bad.

KENNY

The world is wonderful.

MARION

Wonderful, but Walter has been through hell. Is that not a contradiction?

KENNY

Interesting. Thank you, Marion. What a fascinating observation.

GABE

You are part Russian, nephew, aren't you? You have some Mexican, too.

(To Marion.)

His great-great-grandfather's name was Vassily Herrera.

DAPHNE

Gabe, that is preposterous.

GABE

But it is true!

DAPHNE

How can you know that? Unless, of course, **he** was someone you loved.

KENNY

The guy's name was Vladimir Hernandez.

GABE

(To Daphne.)

There! I told you so!

MARION

'Bye, Daphne. I am glad to see you looking well.

Marion starts for the street.

GABE

Don't leave!

Marion turns back.

GABE (cont'd)

I would write Lebanese. And Lapps, and Bantus, and Poles...

MARION

I would write Hoosiers. Cornhuskers, too. And Hawkeyes, and Tarheels, and Sooners and...

GABE

...and Turks! I left out Turks!

Marion, laughing, exits to the street.

KENNY

You are simply glowing, Daphne. Radiant. The picture of indestructible good health. Marion can not tell me this is anything but a stupendous world.

WALTER

(Off stage.)

You imbecile!

KENNY

My wife!

Kenny rushes off into the house.

WALTER

(Off stage.)

Philistine!

GABE

(Pause.)

Estonian, right?! You have Estonian in you!

DAPHNE

No. Welsh.

GABE

And what else?

DAPHNE

Welsh. One hundred percent, as far back as I know.

GABE

That can not be very far. You are fair and tall, and the Welsh are dark and squat. Besides, they don't name their daughters "Aphrodite."

DAPHNE

Daphne.

Kenny pursues Walter on from the house.

KENNY

If you ever so much as **try** to lay a finger on Yvonne, I will butcher you!

Kenny exits back to the house.

WALTER

Daphne, you are simply luminous.

GABE

If I were a writer, I would capture the sun on her face. I would write no characters, be they Pakistani, Korean or Czech. No ideas, no issues, would taint my work. I would forswear everything that is particular, I would invoke nothing specific at all.

Walter exits to the street.

GABE (cont'd)

You know what the Welsh call their girls? They call them "Gwendolyn."

DAPHNE

Indeed?

GABE

If I were a writer, I would write page after page about light. The light is all there is.

DAPHNE

All there is is what the light lights up.

GABE

What it lights up *is* the light. You in the sun are the sun itself.

DAPHNE

Why must you talk so much?

GABE

I will just look at you.

(Pause.)

There is no power over words equal to the light.

(Pause.)

Won't you marry me, Gwendolyn?

DAPHNE

No.

GABE

"No?!" Oh, but how can that be?!

DAPHNE

I meant no: my name is *not* Gwendolyn!

GABE

Oh! Thank God! Now...what do you say?

DAPHNE

"What do you say, *Daphne!*"

GABE

Okay! Okay!

DAPHNE

Gabe, things may not work out the way we hope.

GABE

"The future is just a chance we take."

DAPHNE

I said that, didn't I?

GABE

You did. Now: tell me what you're thinking.

DAPHNE

"Tell me what you're thinking...what?"

GABE

Tell me what you're thinking...*Daphne.*

DAPHNE

I am thinking: it is time I stopped thinking away what time I have left.

She smiles at Gabe, and leans toward him. Still holding hands, they kiss.

###END OF ACT TWO###

ACT THREE, SCENE ONE

3

The following August, Saturday dusk. Entrance to a dock at the Berkeley marina. A bench just left of center stage, facing right at a thirty degree angle. A stone-bordered path down stage of, and parallel to, the bench, forking stage right. The fork furthest up stage leads to the parking lot; the other, to the dock. Shadows extend up left as the act begins in a golden glow. They lengthen as the light takes on a tinge of red; then, by act's end, disappear. The cries of gulls; and the sound of foghorns, ever-more-frequent as the act progresses. Against that aural background, a string quartet can be heard tuning up as Luisa, standing in front of the bench in a gown, looks into the distance down right. Walter, in suit and tie, enters from the dock.

LUISA

Did you tell the quartet what to play?

WALTER

Yeah.

LUISA

(Looking into the distance again.)

There's a billow of fog at the Golden Gate. It is going to be cold tonight.

WALTER

Luisa, this is costing us a fortune.

LUISA

It is a shrewd marketing expense, honey.

WALTER

We don't need new clients. We have more than we can handle.

LUISA

Our clients are nobodies, Walter. The people who sail with us this evening are the cream.

WALTER

They are freeloaders. They get dinner, a cruise, and live music. And **we** pay the freight.

LUISA

When we get their business, we will be in clover.

WALTER

They're rich: so what? They are no less vulgar than the creeps we've dealt with all along.

LUISA

Walter, every couple on our guest list is worth millions. They deserve the services we provide. Not because they are rich, but because rich people happen to be more interesting and more intelligent, and to have better taste, than anyone else.

WALTER

I wouldn't even credit the **old** rich with that. As for this crowd---

LUISA

"This crowd," has something the old rich can never have: the right to self-respect. Because they earned their money, just like we are earning ours.

(Looking at her watch.)

Nang is late.

WALTER

What is **she** coming for?

LUISA

I want to introduce her to quality people. She deserves better than she has, and they deserve **her**.

WALTER

She's too good for them.

LUISA

Yeah, and she is the only woman good enough for **you**.

WALTER

In spite of our problems, Luisa, I am still very fond of you.

LUISA

I know.

WALTER

Maybe I don't mean it. Maybe I said that because it's what you want to hear.

LUISA

(Laughs, then kisses him.)

Walter, you would never willfully say **anything** to me that you thought I might want to hear. Now, I will stay put, and direct people as they arrive; you wait on board to greet them.

WALTER

I could have given Nang a ride. How is she getting here, anyway?

LUISA

Daphne and Gabe are bringing her.

WALTER

Them? They can't be worth even two hundred grand.

LUISA

His house alone is pricier than that.

WALTER

It was his inheritance. He didn't earn it, Luisa, so he has no right to self-respect. Besides, even with the house, he isn't worth anything like a million.

LUISA

Daphne is my friend. I thought her husband and she would enjoy an evening on the Bay.

The musicians play the opening bars of Beethoven's 13th String Quartet.

LUISA (cont'd)

Walter, that is Beethoven!

WALTER

Opus one hundred thirty.

LUISA

But I told you to tell them to play Mozart.

WALTER

Seeing as how this crowd we are waiting for is so interesting and intelligent and loaded with taste, I should think opus a hundred and thirty is just the ticket.

Kenny, in suit and tie, enters from the parking lot.

KENNY

God, that sounds gloomy!

LUISA

Walter, why did you tell them to play this?

WALTER

Because it is profound, honest and magnificent. It is an exquisite meditation on death.

LUISA

Go tell them I want Mozart!

Walter exits to the dock. Kenny follows him.

KENNY

Great idea! Mozart is super!

LUISA

Kenny, where do you think you're going?!

KENNY

I'm a client of yours, am I not?

LUISA

You are not.

KENNY

I **was**. See, Luisa, Walter is just like I have been telling you: he is obsessed with death.

LUISA

Beat it.

Marion, in jeans and sweater, enters from the parking lot.

LUISA (cont'd)

Marion, you can't come like that!

The music stops.

MARION

Why did they stop?

LUISA

Because **I** am in charge. Don't you have a decent dress?!

MARION

I'm not coming. Where is Nang?

LUISA

She isn't here yet. Go home and change. Make it quick.

MARION

Gee, that was gorgeous music.

LUISA

Marion, I want you to meet my guests. It is time you quit thinking of people like them as villains. Time you came to see they are complex, compassionate human beings whose efforts to build a better world are as sincere as yours and more effective.

MARION

Why build a better world? It's perfect as it is. Ain't that so, Kenny?

KENNY

In some ways, yes.

(To Luisa.)

I know how to deal with these folks you invited.

MARION

In what ways is it not perfect?

KENNY

There are too many misfits.

MARION

Me, for instance?

KENNY

Exactly.

(To Luisa.)

Luisa, let's you and me work these suckers as a team. We can both cash in. Hey, come on: think of my family. I have a wife and kids to feed. And they are...oh, so very dear to me.

LUISA

I am sure.

KENNY

They depend on me.

MARION

We know, Kenny.

KENNY

No you don't! No one depends on **you**, so you can't know! I have to make it, see? For their sake I...I have to get to the top. Which is why I work and I work but...somehow, I keep coming up short. I keep going for it anyway, though. Every single day.

MARION

You really ought to lighten up.

KENNY

I can't.

MARION

Your family would still be fine.

KENNY

Don't be so sure. The world is a nasty place.

MARION

You said it!

KENNY

I did not say---! Damn it, Marion, you are wrong, wrong, wrong!

MARION

I do wish Nang would get here.

KENNY

She's moving out on me.

LUIZA

It is about time! Have you paid her lately?

Pause.

MARION

No? Then how can she afford any rent?

KENNY

Her rent is covered. She's moving in with some guy. Luisa, you will be prospecting tonight. I am an expert at that. I can make those people think they need you.

LUIZA

Thank you, Kenny. I will be upgrading my clientele without your help. Good-bye.

KENNY

See you.

Kenny exits to the parking lot.

LUISA

So: Nang is moving in with that man.

MARION

Carlos. He is very sweet.

LUISA

But way beneath *her*.

MARION

He is superior to the social climbers who will be sailing with *you*.

LUISA

Well, she is bound to outgrow him.

MARION

She may not have the chance. Immigration just picked Carlos up.

The musicians play the opening bars of the second movement of Charles Ives' 2nd String Quartet, as Walter enters from the dock.

LUISA

Walter, what in God's name is that noise?!

Luisa exits to the dock.

WALTER

Such insensitivity! *I* would never spit out the name of the Almighty in front of a believer like you.

MARION

How thoughtful. You might do well, though, to contemplate it quietly. That music is interesting.

WALTER

Charles Ives, my dear. It is great stuff. But music like that: you have to *listen* to it if you want to hear it.

The music stops.

WALTER (cont'd)

I understand your roommate moved out.

MARION

Luisa told you?

WALTER

She didn't intend to. She doesn't talk about you much. Says you have a right to privacy. But she did blurt that out the last time we fought.

The musicians play the opening bars of Mozart's 17th String Quartet.

WALTER (cont'd)

Now, **that** is music for people who **don't** listen. She said if I was fed up with her, **you** were available. Shall I let you know when the two of us finally call it quits?

Luisa enters from the dock.

LUISA

(Waving in the direction of the parking lot.)

Hello! The boat's down there! Go right on board!

(To Walter.)

Okay, they're starting to show up. Now, get back on there, and greet them.

As Walter starts for the dock, the music stops.

LUISA (cont'd)

What happened?!

WALTER

Sounds like a string broke. It will take a few minutes for them to get going again. I'll grab some cassettes from the car.

Walter exits to the parking lot.

LUISA

Marion, don't tell Nang about Carlos now. Wait till after the cruise.

(Pause.)

Oh, come on! Let her have a little fun for a couple of hours.

Nang, in a dress, and carrying a bag, enters from the parking lot with Daphne, in a dress; and with Gabe, in suit and tie.

NANG

Luisa! Marion! I am so happy!

LUISA

Nang, what are those things on your feet?!

NANG

Bowling shoes!

LUISA

Bowling?!

MARION

Tell her, Gabe.

(Slight pause.)

Come on! Tell Luisa: ten pins and---

DAPHNE

He has laryngitis. He can't say a word.

MARION

Those shoes look new.

NANG

Carlos give---gave---them to me today.

LUISA

What's in the bag?

NANG

Other shoes.

LUISA

Decent ones?

NANG

Yes. Luisa, why is Kenny bothering people?

LUISA

Kenny is **what**?!

DAPHNE

He is hustling your guests in the parking lot.

LUISA

Daphne, you two get on board.

(To Nang.)

And you change your shoes, while I go deal with that turkey.

Luisa exits to the parking lot, as
Daphne and Gabe exit to the dock.
Nang goes about changing her shoes.

MARION

Nang, listen...

NANG

Oh, I never been so happy!

MARION

Because of a boat ride?

NANG

The boat ride will be fun!

MARION

Look, Carlos...it's just that---. Oh, I do guess you deserve a little fun.

NANG

What about Carlos?

MARION

If he got caught...just in case he gets caught, we would have a better chance to fight deportation if he were married.

NANG

Sure. I am legal, so if we got married I protect him.

MARION

That would be helpful, yes. But it would be more helpful if you were a citizen.

NANG

One day I will be. It's time we pay you, Marion. Carlos and I take you bowling whenever you say.

MARION

Nang, *I* am a citizen *now*. *I* want to marry him.

NANG

You can't.

MARION

Strictly as a legal tactic.

NANG

Impossible. These shoes are my wedding present. I married Carlos this morning.

MARION

Oh, I wish you hadn't done that.

NANG

You are supposed to...how do you say? Wish me well.

MARION

You should be together on your wedding night.

NANG

We will be. He gotta work till one, then Gabe and Daphne drive me to his place.

Walter enters from the parking lot with a cassette.

WALTER
Nang...oh, you are lovelier than ever.

MARION
She isn't available.

WALTER
But **you** are.

Walter exits to the dock, as Luisa enters from the parking lot, with Kenny at her heels.

KENNY
If you don't want me working the parking lot, then take me on your cruise.

LUISA
(To Nang.)
Get on board.

KENNY
Nang, I thought you loved my kids.

NANG
I do.

KENNY
Then how can you move out?!

NANG
I come work every morning, if you pay me.

Nang exits to the dock.

KENNY
Luisa, here's the deal: you let me prospect at your party, and I share my client list with you.

LUISA
How many millionaires you got?

KENNY
I'll show you my accounts on Monday.

The sound of Walter's cassette: Charlie Parker playing "Bird Feathers." Luisa throws up her hands, and exits to the dock. Kenny exits behind her, as Walter enters from the dock.

WALTER

The way Luisa just looked at me, you would think she didn't like Charlie Parker.

MARION

She's mad about him.

The music stops.

WALTER

Sad, isn't it? She knows what's good, but panders to these bozos. American music is beneath them, and they slobber over European as long as it comes with sugar-coating.

MARION

Wasn't that Mozart she had them play before?

WALTER

Koechel listing number four five eight, yes. By the main man of the middle-brow.

MARION

I guess I'm middle-brow.

WALTER

You like him, do you?

MARION

Very much.

WALTER

Well...strictly between us: so do I. But what Luisa wants that string quartet for is: background. It is ideal, she thinks, because it will bathe those bozos in sound, while no one pays it the least bit of proper attention. In order to **hear**, Marion, you have to---

MARION

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You have to listen.

WALTER

You do! In order to know beauty---any kind of beauty---you have to **engage**. To **re**-create, actively, what has been created. Turn passive, and...beauty dies away.

Luisa, Daphne and Gabe enter from the dock, as the musicians restart the Mozart.

LUISA

But Daphne, that is gourmet food we're serving!

DAPHNE

It looks delicious.

LUISA

Then why won't you stay?

DAPHNE

Thank you, but we only came to drop Nang off.

MARION

I will come pick her up after the cruise.

DAPHNE

That's okay. We can do it.

MARION

No. No, I have to talk to her.

Marion exits to the parking lot.

LUISA

Why did you get dressed up if you planned not to stay?

DAPHNE

We are going out for an intimate dinner. And it makes no sense joining you if Gabe can't talk.

(Looking toward the parking lot.)

Look. More people showing up.

LUISA

(Looking, waving.)

That's right! That's our boat! Go right on board!

DAPHNE

It will be a mob scene in no time. With a crowd babbling all around him, he would go bonkers if he couldn't get his two cents in.

Gabe raises two fingers, as if to ask: "only two?"

DAPHNE (cont'd)

(Laughing.)

Gabe, let that pass as a figure of speech. I did not mean to undervalue all you have to say.

The music stops.

LUISA

Damn!

(To Walter.)

Another broken string?

WALTER

Sounds like it.

LUISA

Do you have any cassettes that are Mozart?

WALTER

A few.

LUISA

(Handing back the Charlie Parker
cassette.)

Get one.

WALTER

You want to hear Koechel number five two two, six two six,
or six eight four?

LUISA

Walter, play anything you like. As long as it is Mozart!

Walter exits to the parking lot.

LUISA (cont'd)

Excuse me. There is someone I have to go kick off the boat.

Luisa exits to the dock.

DAPHNE

(Looking into the distance down right.)

Wow! Will you look at that fog billow in! Come on, let's go
before it gets here.

Gabe shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

It will be cold.

Gabe smiles and shrugs.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

We have no coats.

Gabe points back and forth between
Daphne and himself.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Yes, we have each other. You want to stay?

Gabe nods, and makes hand motions
to suggest a boat sailing off, and
him waving it good-bye.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Okay. We shall wait. We will watch them sail away.

(Pause.)

I...I'm not used to silence any more. I thrived on silence before I married you, but now it gives me the creeps.

(Pause.)

Have I ever told you I love you?

Gabe nods.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

I did?! I can't remember ever getting a word in edgewise. Well, you're out of commission, so I can ramble if I want to. Shall I?

Gabe nods.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Okay, I do love you. How's that for starters?

Gabe nods solemnly, as if impressed.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Gabe, how do you pile the words up? They just tumble out of you. Me, I have to think.

Gabe shakes his head.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Don't think! All right! I love you. No reflection now, Daphne. Just talk. I love you like...no, no similes. I love you, I love you, I love you. Oh, but that is way too repetitious, wouldn't you say?

Gabe vigorously shakes his head
"no."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Let me try this. If everyone who ever said "I love you" meant it the way I do, the world has been possessed by boundless, inexpressible joy since Day One.

Gabe smiles sadly and shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

No. You're right. It has not been. Let there be redemption, then. Let our love redeem all the pain in the world since Day One, even the pain of those still to come. May at least one of those to come be ours.

Gabe pulls a pamphlet out of his pocket.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Oh, not another one! Honey, we have tried every technique in...in how many guides and manuals? And to publish all that stuff about copulation is...it is positively indecent!

Gabe opens the pamphlet and points out a passage.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Sweetheart, I am not going to read that.

Gabe pockets the pamphlet, and looks downcast.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Look, it isn't fun that way!

Gabe looks inquisitively at her, as if stunned.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

It's fun! It's fun! Gabe, it is more fun with **you** than it ever was before! I used to worry I would get pregnant. Now, I **want** to, and nothing is as erotic as that!

Luisa chases Kenny on from the dock.

LUISA

Stay off my boat!

Walter enters from the parking lot with a cassette.

LUISA (cont'd)

Walter, kindly escort this gentleman to his car.

KENNY

(To Walter.)

No! You keep away from me!

LUISA

Then will you go on your own?

KENNY

I am low on gas, Uncle Gabe.

DAPHNE

Kenny, good-bye.

KENNY

But I only want to borrow twenty bucks.

WALTER

Beat it!

KENNY

Okay, okay. Just don't you come near me!

Kenny exits to the parking lot.

WALTER

(To Gabe.)

I would like to do your house, old man. I love that skylight in the living room.

DAPHNE

The place *could* use a facelift.

LUISA

If you made real money, you could give it one.

WALTER

Redecorating doesn't have to be expensive, Luisa.

(To Daphne.)

There are some good materials that don't cost a lot. Besides, Luisa and I would be happy to waive our fee.

LUISA

No, Walter. We don't work for nothing. If Daphne is content with what they pay her, she will have to be content with what she can afford.

WALTER

How much was the caterer's bill?

LUISA

You know how much.

WALTER

Well, the table sure looks great. Too bad everything on it is inedible.

LUISA

The caterer, Walter, has a national reputation. People will be delighted with her food.

WALTER

Too much butterfat. Too much oil.

LUISA

Go put on your cassette.

WALTER

Last time we ate that stuff, we both had the runs for days.

LUISA

I didn't.

WALTER

Then why did keep you racing me to the bathroom every ten minutes?

LUISA

I want to hear Mozart!

Walter exits to the dock.

LUISA (cont'd)

The boat is about to leave.

DAPHNE

Gabe and I will stay standing right here to wish you *bon voyage*.

LUISA

You are going to miss a real good time.

DAPHNE

I have my man and my hopes, Luisa.

LUISA

And your work.

DAPHNE

That, too. I do not need to party.

LUISA

The old job: it just wasn't right for me. But doing it...was a privilege. Childbirth leaves you speechless.

DAPHNE

Yes, birth does that. Just like death.

The sound of Walter's cassette:
"Old MacDonald Had A Farm." Luisa
screams, then exits to the dock.
Pause. The music stops.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

I know what you would say if you could talk.

Gabe mouths and gestures: "what?"

DAPHNE

You would say *you* love *me*.

Gabe shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE

No?! You don't love me?!

Gabe mouths "I love you."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

You love me, then. Good. But, at this very moment, if you could talk, that is not what you would say.

Gabe shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE

You would say you are afraid for me. That I might get sick again, and you will lose me.

Gabe shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE

You **are** worried though, aren't you?

Gabe nods.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

You would say that you are old.

Gabe shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

But you do still think you are?

Gabe nods.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Too old to make a baby?

Gabe vigorously shakes his head
"no."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

(Laughs.)

All right. Give me that pamphlet. I will read it tomorrow.

Gabe smiles and gives her the pamphlet.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

Look! The boat is pulling away!

Gabe and Daphne wave toward the dock. The musicians restart the Mozart, as Walter enters from the dock.

WALTER

I am going to go take a hot tub.

Walter exits to the parking lot.

DAPHNE

Gabe, I give up. What would you say?

Gabe mouths "Daphne."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

"Daphne?!"

Gabe nods.

DAPHNE (cont'd)

(Snuggling up to Gabe.)

Brrr! This fog is cold! Is "Daphne" all you would say?

Gabe shakes his head "no."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

What else, then?

Gabe mouths "Daphne."

DAPHNE (cont'd)

"Daphne," again?!

Gabe nods.

DAPHNE

Oh, but you must have something else to say?

[Gabe nods.]

DAPHNE

Tell me.

Gabe mouths a string of "Daphnes," as they hold each other tight. The music fades into the distance while the fog horns sound.

###END OF ACT THREE, SCENE ONE###

ACT THREE, SCENE TWO

4

The following January, weekday mid-afternoon. The living room of Gabe's home in Berkeley. Right, the front door. Left, passage to the bedrooms. A passage to the kitchen up center. One bright Coleman-type lantern at each side of the stage. A dim, gray light emanates from the skylight overhead, upon which rain falls audibly. A table and a few chairs.

The door bell rings. Nang, in jeans, enters from the bedrooms, crosses, and opens the door. Walter, in a wet raincoat and casual clothes, enters.

WALTER

What weather!

NANG

It is so dark outside.

WALTER

(Taking off his raincoat.)

And the power is down for blocks around.

(Looking around the room.)

This room is fantastic! Give me a hand.

(Taking out a tape measure, he hands her one end, and goes about measuring a wall.)

Luisa is coming to talk to you.

NANG

I am so glad you're happy with her.

WALTER

Because if I weren't, I would be bugging you.

NANG

Walter, I liked you from the start. But you...confused me.

WALTER

You mean if both of us were free, I would have a chance with you?

(Pause.)

Well, **one** of us is free.

NANG

That isn't so. Carlos is in jail, but he is still my husband.

WALTER

What's the latest?

NANG

Just a lot of legal tactics.

Gabe, in a wet raincoat and casual clothes, enters by the front door.

GABE

(Taking off his raincoat.)

Well, well! The decorator has arrived!

Nang helps Gabe with his raincoat.

GABE (cont'd)

Thank you, young lady. But you really shouldn't. It is not as if you were our maid.

NANG

No. But you are very generous.

(To Walter.)

He gives me---.

WALTER

I know. Room and board.

GABE

(To Nang.)

I give you nothing. You are our guest.

(To Walter.)

Won't you let us pay you something?!

WALTER

(On his knees, by the wall.)

No. There is a patch of dry rot here.

GABE

How big?

WALTER

I need to probe it. Do you have a knife?

GABE

In the kitchen.

WALTER

(Standing and looking around.)

I love that skylight!

GABE

It isn't much use on a day like this. But when the sun is out...oh, the sunny days I have spent right here!

WALTER

(Handing her a tape measure end.)

Nang, hold this.

Walter measures another wall.

GABE

I have lived here all my life.

WALTER

Lucky you.

GABE

I know every corner of this house. Every room, every closet, every quirk. It became part of me just like my parents did, by being my world, my joyous world, from the start. This is a place for childhood, Mr. Decorator; it is a place for the world to unfold.

The doorbell rings. Gabe opens the door. Kenny, in a wet raincoat and a suit, enters with a briefcase.

KENNY

Hi, Uncle Gabe. Is Luisa here?

WALTER

She is coming to see Nang, not **you**.

KENNY

That's what **you** think.

(To Gabe.)

Mind if I make myself a sandwich while I'm waiting?

GABE

Go ahead, nephew; make yourself **two**!

KENNY

Hey, listen, Uncle Gabe: Yvonne told me to buy some groceries. Would you loan me twenty bucks?

GABE

Sure. First, go eat.

Kenny picks up a lantern, and exits to the kitchen.

GABE (cont'd)

I want one child at least, Mr. Decorator, even though his life---or her life---will, like every life, know its portion of grief.

WALTER

(To Nang.)

Come measure over here.

GABE

Because he---or she---will discover the joy I found here, a boundless joy, a joy that permeates all of life's sadness and pain, and transforms them.

WALTER

Don't tell **me**. Tell Daphne.

GABE

She knows! She knows!

(Holding up a pamphlet, and calling.)

Daphne! Look what I just got you! Daphne!

NANG

She went out.

GABE

Where to?

NANG

The doctor.

GABE

But she was at the doctor last week!

The door bell rings. Nang goes to
open the door.

GABE (cont'd)

Don't open it!

NANG

Why not?

GABE

Bad news. It will be someone with news, and the news will be
disastrous.

NANG

Sometimes you are very silly.

Nang opens the door. Marion enters
in a wet raincoat, and jeans.

MARION

Okay, Nang. You ready?

NANG

You bet.

MARION

Let me call to check for any messages before we go.

(To Gabe.)

May I use the phone?

GABE

After me. After I call that oncologist.

Gabe exits to the bedrooms.

MARION

Is something wrong with Daphne?

WALTER

Sounds like it. You gonna pray for her again?

Gabe enters from the bedrooms.

GABE

The phone book's in the kitchen! The phone book's in the kitchen!

Gabe exits to the kitchen.

WALTER

Luisa and I have broken up.

NANG

Oh, Walter! I'm sorry.

WALTER

(To Nang.)

Don't be.

(To Marion.)

So, now I am free. Just like you.

Gabe enters from the kitchen with a phone book.

MARION

Not just like me, no. I am living with my lover again.

WALTER

Damn! What does this guy have that I don't have?

MARION

It isn't a matter of what **she** has. Or doesn't.

GABE

No! Are you a lesbian?!

(To Walter.)

She is a lesbian! Oh, that is super!

(To Marion.)

I would write lesbians. Yes! If I were a writer, I would write gay people, and Norwegians, and Texans, and...and dwarfs!

Gabe exits to the bedrooms.

WALTER

Yea and verily, Marion, your twisted proclivities are an offense unto the Lord. Well, at least you have the good sense not to sweat it. Because you have the good sense, for

(MORE)

WALTER (cont'd)

all your piety, to know there is no Big Cheese In The Sky who will smite you for your sins. To know you need not fear this nasty Mr. God of yours, because it was **we** humanoids who created **him**, and it is we who run the show.

Walter goes about measuring.

MARION

You, Walter, revere beauty. And you insist that the very **appreciation** of beauty is a creative act. **I** revere beauty, too. But to me, and many others, what is **most** beautiful is that which, being mere "humanoids," we can never comprehend. What is most beautiful is not, so to speak, the music itself, but the mystery from which it came. What is most beautiful is not any of the artifacts of creation, or even the incalculable sum total of all those artifacts, but the incomprehensible **fact** of creation itself. I call that "glory."

WALTER

Nang, help me measure over here.

MARION

If, as you say, we have created God, then we have, like you, performed a creative act, in order to appreciate what is, to us, at least, most beautiful. The mystery. The glory.

Gabe enters from the bedrooms.

GABE

She was there last week! The doctor told her not to come back for six whole months! He said: "Don't come back unless you get sick!"

MARION

Well, what did he say when you spoke to him now?

GABE

I **didn't** speak to him. I couldn't look him up. How could I? I can't remember his name!

MARION

Let me make my call.

Marion exits to the bedrooms with the second lantern, leaving only a dim glow from overhead.

GABE

She's dying! That's what happens to kids: they grow up, they suffer, and they die. Why bring children into the world?

WALTER

(Stopping his work, and standing.)

I want to check that dry rot. Get me a knife and a lantern, will you?

GABE

In the kitchen, in the kitchen.

Gabe starts for the kitchen, as Kenny enters from the kitchen with a lantern and a sandwich.

KENNY

Let's have the money, Uncle Gabe.

GABE

What money?

KENNY

You just said you would loan me twenty bucks.

GABE

I did? Oh, nephew, I forgot!

KENNY

Well, I reminded you.

GABE

I forgot! I forgot! Oh, my short-term memory is shot!

Gabe exits to the kitchen. The door bell rings. Nang opens the door. Luisa enters, in a wet raincoat and a suit.

KENNY

(Patting his briefcase.)

Luisa, I have my accounts right here.

LUISA

Hang on. We'll go discuss things over a drink. Nang, I don't work with Walter any more.

KENNY

Walter is going to take lots of your clients. So you need **mine**.

LUISA

Kenny, **if** we reach an agreement, I will use you as a resource. But don't even begin to think I could not do very well without you. Nang, I want you as a partner.

Gabe enters from the kitchen.

GABE

It's dark in there, it's dark everywhere.

KENNY

Where is my money, Uncle Gabe?

GABE

Money? Oh, my short-term memory! And look at me walk. I can hardly lift my feet. My strength...all my strength is gone! My wife is dying, and *me*...*I* have finally become a senile old man!

Gabe exits to the bedrooms.

KENNY

Nang, would you loan me twenty bucks?

LUISA

She will not.

KENNY

Luisa, butt out! I have two kids, and a pregnant wife, and there isn't a drop of milk in the house.

NANG

No milk?!

KENNY

Not a single drop. Nang, please...I need the money to feed my family.

NANG

I don't believe you.

WALTER

Atta girl!

Walter picks up the lantern, and starts for the kitchen.

LUISA

Hey! Don't take the lantern away.

Walter puts down the lantern and exits to the kitchen.

KENNY

Luisa, that man is deadly and he hates you.

LUISA

I want to start you on a salary, Nang. If you are as sharp as I think you are, we could be full partners in a year.

KENNY

Did you bring me your own client list?

LUISA

Don't you trust me?

KENNY

Why shouldn't I? **You** trust **me**.

LUISA

Ha! Kenny, those files you will be showing me are confidential. If you ever cheat me, I will tell your firm what you have done. My offer is this: I give you five percent of the money I make off the people from your list, and **you** give **me** twenty percent of the commissions **my** people end up paying **you**.

Walter enters from the kitchen with a knife. Kenny throws Luisa aside.

KENNY

Watch out!

(Jumping Walter, getting him in a stranglehold.)

Drop that knife! You fucked-up bastard, drop it! Drop it! Drop it!

Walter drops the knife. Kenny releases his hold, sets Walter up, and socks him. Walter falls. Kenny picks up the knife.

KENNY (cont'd)

(Knife at Walter's throat.)

This is it! This is it!

LUISA

Kenny! No!

KENNY

(Knife at Walter's throat.)

It is self-defense!

NANG

(Taking a bill from her bosom.)

Kenny, here!

KENNY

It is self-defense!

NANG

Kenny! Twenty dollars!

KENNY

(Knife at Walter's throat.)

If I kill him now, it's self-defense!

NANG

Take it, Kenny!

KENNY

(Knife at Walter's throat.)

Twenty bucks?

NANG

Take it!

KENNY

(Backing away from Walter, knife extended.)

Nang, I always knew you had a heart.

Kenny takes the money.

LUISA

Kenny let's get out of here.

KENNY

(Knife extended toward Walter.)

She has a heart.

LUISA

She certainly does. Let's go.

KENNY

(Knife extended toward Walter.)

Walter, move a muscle, and I will slit your throat!

LUISA

(Opening the door.)

Come on!

(Pushing Kenny out.)

Out!

Luisa follows Kenny out. Marion enters, without a lantern, from the bedrooms. Pause.

NANG

Marion! What's the matter?!

MARION

(Looking up.)

The rain is tapering off.

NANG

Why are you upset?

MARION

Carlos is on a southbound plane.

Brief pause. Then Nang lets out a long and piercing wail. Here, and through each subsequent scream, she takes the deepest possible breath, then expels every last bit of air from her lungs. Walter and Marion speak only in the intervals, while Nang breathes in.

WALTER

(To Marion.)

I want to say something to her. To tell her something.

Nang screams.

MARION

So do I.

Nang screams.

WALTER

What?

Nang screams.

MARION

Something.

Nang screams.

WALTER

Anything.

Nang keens, with all she's got.

MARION

Anything.

NANG

(Heading for the front door.)

I am going after him!

Nang exits.

MARION

I tried everything, Walter. Oh God, there was nothing I didn't try!

Nang enters.

NANG

(Hysterical.)

How could they do that?! How can they do such a thing?!

Nang wails.

NANG

I am going to work, and save, and I will buy a ticket, and I will go down there, and I will be with him!

WALTER

But Nang, it is hell down there. You have already lived through hell. How could you go back?

NANG

How can I stay here?! Oh, I lose everything, over and over again!

MARION

Everything?

NANG

Everything worth living for.

MARION

You know what, girl? You speak English now almost like a native.

NANG

Carlos...Carlos used to tease me. He said he didn't believe what I told him about my past, he said I talked like a Yankee so I must be a Yankee. He used to call me...oh, he used to call me "*gringa*."

(Crying.)

Marion, he was so proud of me!

MARION

He wanted you to be happy.

NANG

He did, he did. And I was. For a while...oh, it was perfect. For a while.

MARION

Maybe you **will** go to him some day soon. Maybe we can even get him back.

NANG

Can we?!

MARION

We can try.

NANG

(Hugging Marion.)

Oh, Marion! We have to!

MARION

Yes, we have to make things perfect again. In the meantime, don't you think he still wants you to be happy?

NANG

How **can** I be?!

MARION

In little ways. Some of us have never known the love that you, it seems, have had. We settle for bits of warmth that come in fleeting moments.

(Pause.)

Nang, I did the best I could for you and Carlos. Is it too much to ask that you pay me now?

NANG

Now?!

MARION

You promised you would take me bowling today.

NANG

But...I don't feel like---

MARION

It will do you good.

NANG

And anyway, I have no money.

MARION

You have your emergency twenty.

Nang cries.

MARION (cont'd)

Nang, pull yourself together!

WALTER

Hey, easy on her, Marion.

MARION

This is none of your business.

(To Nang.)

Pay me what you owe me.

WALTER

Listen, you sanctimonious dyke! **I** am going to pay her legal fee.

NANG

No, Walter.

WALTER

Hey, kid, I intend to get my money's worth. I am coming along, and I am going to whip you both!

MARION

Ha!

WALTER

In fact, I will spot you ten pins each, and still win by thirty.

MARION

(Grabbing Walter's hand and yanking him up off the floor.)

No way!

(To Nang.)

Think you can beat this fathead?

NANG

He's not a fathead.

Nang pecks Walter on the cheek.

WALTER

Let's go.

NANG

Walter: there is something I want to tell you.

WALTER

Shoot.

NANG

You won't like it.

WALTER

Then wait till later.

NANG

What I have to say is: you may think you know how to bowl, but I am going to whip your ass!

Daphne, in a raincoat and skirt, enters by the front door.

DAPHNE

The clouds are breaking up.

MARION

And **we** are **on** our **way**!

Marion goes out the door. Nang sulks for a moment, then slowly follows. As Walter begins to leave too, he turns back.

DAPHNE

Gabe!

WALTER

Love that skylight, Daphne! See you in the morning!

Walter exits by the front door.
Gabe enters from the bedrooms.

DAPHNE

I have just been to the doctor.

GABE

I do not want to know.

DAPHNE

Gabe, listen---

GABE

No! I couldn't stand it. I lost...my first wife...I lost...I...I can't remember! I can't remember my first wife's name!

DAPHNE

Gabe! I just saw the obstetrician.

GABE

Obstetrician! Oncologist! Oh, my mind! My mind is gone forever!

DAPHNE

You're upset, that's all.

GABE

My short-term memory is gone, and I have no strength, and I can't remember **your** name, either!

DAPHNE

I did a pregnancy test. Then I went to the doctor, who confirmed---

GABE

Don't tell me! A doctor is the next thing to an undertaker.
I have to go lie down

Gabe exits to the kitchen, then
returns.

GABE

That's not the bedroom! Oh, I am disoriented! I am totally
senile at last! I have lived here all my life, and I don't
know even where my bedroom is!

DAPHNE

Stop that! We are going to have a baby!

GABE

I think the bedroom is in there.

Gabe exits to the bedrooms. Nang
enters by the front door, leaving
it open.

NANG

My bowling shoes!

Nang picks up the lantern, and goes
off to the bedrooms. Gabe enters
from the bedrooms.

GABE

A baby?! You?!

DAPHNE

The two of us, my love. Together.

GABE

O-o-oh---!

Nang, without the lantern, enters
from the bedrooms. She pauses
briefly, a bowling shoe in each
hand.

NANG

(Calling out the door.)

All right...

GABE

(Approaching Daphne.)

Oh!

NANG
(Calling out the door.)
...watch out.

Nang raises the bowling shoes over her head, as Gabe grabs Daphne.

NANG
Here I come!

Shoes held aloft, Nang dashes out the front door.

GABE
(Thrusting Daphne high into a sunbeam which bursts through the skylight.)
O, Gloria!

###THE END###