To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Annelle Foutch entitled "Confections: Three One-Act Plays." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

Jon Manchip White

Jon Manchip White, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
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Graduate School

CONFECTIONS: THREE ONE-ACT PLAYS

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Annelle Foutch

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ABSTRACT

In writing these plays, I wanted to investigate relationships, the interdependence of people, and the limitless frontiers of these associations. The plays are communications of the mind; they rarely foray into the boundless horrors of physical violence, except when it appears as an intrusion as it does in the first play. Violence, especially in humor, must be assumed, yet the anger that humor helps to assuage must be explored. The conflicts of our inner being are as challenging, perhaps more challenging in some respects, than those of war, poverty, starvation, or catastrophe of any major proportion where the question becomes how to survive, as the central character realizes in the first scene. These plays deal with those who are not generally threatened by outward misfortune, but by the insecurities of being alone, being needed, wanting companionship, and disdaining it. It all gets mixed together: friends become lovers, lovers become friends; friends demand more love, lovers demand more of everything.

I chose for this project a core of characters who reappear in each play. The plays are a series of vignettes that can be presented together in one performance. The first revolves around a burglary, the second around a wedding ceremony, and the third around the reunion of a brother and sister. They are ordinary events depicted in rather

ordinary lives. But the lives are bound by intimacy and and the fear of the pain that has to be endured even in the best of relationships.

There is no one conclusion in this project. There are many conclusions, and they are always changing and vital.

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I: BREAK-IN

CAST OF CHARACTERS

QUIMBY MARTIN--A woman in her late twenties. She owns a gourmet pastry and bake shop.

JONATHAN LAZARUS--A self-made man who has made his wealth in tire recapping. He is the major investor in QUIMBY'S shop. He is in his early forties.

NICHOLAS RESTIN--Quimby's pastry chef and very close friend.

MIKE--A physician.

DETECTIVE PHIL BRATTON

TWO DEPUTIES

TWO PARAMEDICS

TRUST HALL

JUDGE HALL

SET

QUIMBY's home, the living room-dining room combination. Off stage right is the bedroom; off stage left is the kitchen. The furnishings are contemporary, but warm and comfortable.

The stage is dark and remains dark for the first portion of the scene. Dim light from the moon silhouettes some of the furniture and the actor's movements. All is quiet for a few moments until the BURGLAR starts making a few rustling sounds. Once in a while, a dog barks outside. The BURGLAR turns a flashlight on the hutch and proceeds to take the silver from it.

QUIMBY appears stage right with a large object in her hand. She sneaks across the room and conks him on the head. We hear him slump to the floor, then QUIMBY turns toward the wall to get the lights. She doesn't make it. She screams as the BURGLAR grabs her feet, throws her to the floor and pins her down. The scuffle ends and all is silent for a moment. The stage is still dark.

QUIMBY: Damn. I thought that thump would knock you unconscious.

BURGLAR: Don't move. I've got a gun.

QUIMBY: Well, it's not in your hand. You're using both hands to hold me down.

BURGLAR: It's in my pocket. I'll use it if I have to.

QUIMBY: Which pocket?

BURGLAR: (Pause.) I think the right one.

QUIMBY: Aren't you sure?

BURGLAR: I hadn't planned on using it. I thought this would be simple.

QUIMBY: You know, normally I enjoy this sort of intimacy, but . . .

BURGLAR: Shut up. My head hurts and I have to figure out what to do next.

QUIMBY: Ow! Okay! You don't have to do that. In fact, you can let me up. Go ahead. Take anything you need. Really. I won't try to stop you. Just take it and go.

BURGLAR: After that whack on the head? I don't think I should trust you.

QUIMBY: Well, what are we going to do? Lie here all night?

With your gun in your pocket?

BURGLAR: You should have let me finish. Why did you try to stop me?

QUIMBY: Why didn't you run when I thumped you?

BURGLAR: It made me MAD, lady. I shoulda run. But you stunned me and I just fought back automatically.

QUIMBY: Well, see? I understand your attitude. When I saw you in here fingerprinting all my grandmother's silver, it made me furious.

BURGLAR: Yeah?

QUIMBY: But I'm over it now, I assure you. I realize you must need it more than I do. Help yourself.

BURGLAR: Don't worry, I plan to. I just gotta figure out what to do with you. You could recognize me.

QUIMBY: Just your breath. It's very distinctive. What is it? Kosher dills? Jalapeno peppers?

BURGLAR: Shut up! Maybe I should kill you.

QUIMBY: (Placating.) Look, I'm sorry. You don't want to kill me. I mean, burglary is one thing. But . . . murder?

BURGLAR: I'm gonna get up now. And I'm gonna get my gun. Don't try anything funny, or I'll shoot. Okay? That's right, be still.

Immediately there is a scuffle and a couple of shots are fired. A pause, then QUIMBY slowly straightens up and goes to the wall to turn the lights on. The dog starts to bark again. QUIMBY goes to the door to speak to the dog.

QUIMBY: Quiet, Sal. Everything's okay now. (She turns slowly to the audience and sees blood all over her robe. The dog quiets.) Oh, God, I've killed him! Okay. What do I do next? Check to see if he is dead. (She walks to the body, points the gun back at him and stares at him for a moment.) He sure looks dead. Hey. (She nudges him with her foot.) Hey. Yes. Well. That's that. I've killed the poor guy. (Mocking.) Guess that'll teach you to mess around with Quimby Martin, you varmit. (She slumps.) Christ. How could I be so stupid. Get a hold on yourself. Call the police. (She goes to the phone and dials. She keeps the gun in her hand, though she seems unconscious of it. She talks while she dials.) So much blood!

Idiot burglar! Hello! (Trying to be calmer, she puts hand to her temple.) Hello. This is Quimby Martin. (Very strained.) How are you today? Tonight--tonight, I mean . . . Good. Yes, yes, that's me. I own the bakery. . . . Oh, do you? Those are favorites of mine, too. Listen, the reason I called is that a burglar broke into my house. I wonder if you could come over right away. . . . Yes. . . . Really? . . . Several? . . . I live on Hamilton Road, the last house. . . . Oh, right in this area, huh. . . . Well, no, he didn't get away with anything at all. . . . Oh, yes, very lucky. No, I didn't scare him away . . . No, he's still here. . . . Oh, I'm fine. He won't be going anywhere. Well, he died, you see . . . Yes. . . When I shot him. . . . He tried to kill me and there was a struggle . . . (She puts her hand over her mouth to keep from going into hysterics. She nods and shakes her head into the phone as if she is listening to instructions.) Yes. I'm still here. . . . Okay. . . . Soon? Oh, please make it soon as possible. I've never been so scared in all my life. Okay. . . . yeah . . . thanks. (She hangs up, looks at the body and away again.) Nicholas. (She starts to dial.) Oh, Nicholas, I need you. (She listens.) Nicholas, why don't you answer? . . . Nicholas, Nicholas . . . Jolly old St. Nicholas, lean your ear this way. (She slams the phone down.) Tonight is Wednesday. Tonight, Nicholas took Mrs. Petty

to the symphony. Tonight, Nicholas even borrowed my car. May he roast his next leg of lamb over the fires of hell! (She yells at the phone.) Nicholas--how can you be there for me two thousand nine hundred and ninety nine times, and miss the three thousandth time? Huh? (She starts to pace, then starts to dial again. She still has the gun.) Mother? (Relieved.) Oh, hello, Mother. . . . Yes, I'm fine. . . . Is it that late? Well, I just needed to talk . . . When could you get here? Tomorrow? What makes you think something is wrong? I just want to talk to you in person, but nothing specific. . . . No, Mother, I'm not involved with a married man. . . . Don't worry. How's Dad? . . . No, it's not bankruptcy, either . . . You'll come tomorrow? Better yet, I'll come to visit you. You know, I'm so used to living ten minutes from you, that for a while I forget I moved three hundred miles away . . . Bye . . . I love you, too . . . (She hangs up. She paces again.) Where are the police? (She paces, she looks at the phone, shakes her head and paces. Finally, she stops at the phone again, notices the gun in her hand and puts it down gently. Meanwhile, unnoticed by QUIMBY, the BURGLAR tries to pull himself to the door. It is a painful struggle, but he is determined. This goes on during the following phone conversation.) Jonathan? . . . This is Quimby. . . . Yes, I'm sorry. I know it's late. . . . Oh, did I interrupt something? What did I

want? I shot a man and I need some company . . . Busy? . . . Doing what? . . . You call that busy? . . . He broke into the house and was burglarizing it. (She pauses, starts getting steamed.) I don't know how it happened. I'm tired of telling the telephone about it! I feel terrible and I need a friend. . . . Nicholas has deserted me. . . . don't make puns now, Jonathan. (Pause.) I can only be calm for a few more sconds and then I'm going to need back-up. Unqualified sympathy. Can you handle that? Maybe you could fake it. Look at it as protecting your investment. If the owner goes berserk, the bakery will no longer function. . . . (Screeching.) Are you coming or not? Thank you, Jonathan. (Hangs up, notices the BURGLAR has moved. Panics and grabs the gun.) Hold it. I thought you were dead. You will not stay down!

BURGLAR: (Mumbles, painfully out of breath.)

QUIMBY: Roll over.

BURGLAR: (Mumbles a protest.)

QUIMBY: Roll over, or I'll shoot you in the kidneys. I know I can get one or the other of them from here.

BURGLAR rolls over.

QUIMBY: Now sit up. Lean back against the couch where I can see you. (He does so, slowly.) Damn, you've bled all over my Dhurrie rug.

BURGLAR: That's a pisser, ain't it?

QUIMBY: I know that may seem a little harsh to you, seeing the mess you're in right now, but it's a little hard to feel sorry for someone who just tried to kill me. (Whining.) My life will never be the same.

BURGLAR: I wouldn't have hurt you. You didn't have to shoot me.

QUIMBY: That's what I kept thinking when you had me pinned down--he doesn't have to shoot me. But you would have.

BURGLAR: I just wanted to scare you.

QUIMBY: Oh, that's another story, then. That you accomplished. Who are you?

BURGLAR: Nobody.

QUIMBY: Don't move. (She exits the room, covering him with a gun. She returns immediately with towels.) Here. (She tosses them to him.) Try to stop the

blood before we have to wade in it.

BURGLAR: Got anything for pain? It's beginning to hurt.

QUIMBY: No medication. Some brandy? (He nods. She gets him a glass.)

BURGLAR: Crystal? Pretty. Too hard to steal and it's too hard to get rid of. So fragile and all. (He drinks.) I like your house. Cozy. A few things to steal, not much really. But a pleasant atmosphere to work in, you know?

QUIMBY: Thanks, I guess. Have you been here before?

BURGLAR: Oh, yes. To look the place over.

QUIMBY: So you knew how to get in?

BURGLAR: Oh, yeah, that was easy. I broke the window to the utility room and got in.

QUIMBY: Did you think I was gone? Because my car wasn't here?

BURGLAR: Yeah.

QUIMBY: Then why the gun?

BURGLAR: Oh, just in case of emergencies.

QUIMBY: Like what? Like if you don't know if someone is home or not?

BURGLAR: Or if your dog attacked me.

QUIMBY: Sal? You would have shot Sal? I can't believe you would shoot my dog.

BURGLAR: Hey, calm down. Just one of the hazards of the job. She never bothered me, but she just wouldn't stop barking.

QUIMBY: I can't believe you would have shot my dog.

BURGLAR: Going to hold that one against me? (Takes a drink.) Might as well get drunk. I botched everything else up.

QUIMBY: I must say this has been a sloppy job.

BURGLAR: You think it's so easy, you try breaking and entering. Let me tell you, it's one hassle after another.

QUIMBY: Are you a professional burglar?

BURGLAR: You make it sound good. You know, efficient. I guess I just steal a lot. I'm not too good at anything else.

QUIMBY: Have you tried anything else?

BURGLAR: Yeah, I was a bodyguard once. I went into burglary because I like being self-employed. But I'm getting bored with that.

QUIMBY: Well, prison should be a nice change.

BURGLAR: Huh, I'll never go to prison. No brandy in prison. Another shot? Of brandy, I mean.

QUIMBY: Sure. Say, you going to be all right?

BURGLAR: Yeah, people like me live forever.

The phone rings. QUIMBY answers, one eye on the BURGLAR.

QUIMBY: Hello? . . . Yes, this is she. . . . Detective Bratton? Why aren't you here, Detective Bratton? . . . Don't you think you could hurry it up a bit? He's not

dead . . . No. Not yet, anyway. He's losing a lot of blood . . . Yes, bring an ambulance. And hurry. (Hangs up. To the BURGLAR:) They're on their way. They should be here any minute. They had a problem getting in touch with Detective What's-his-name. Are you all right? (No answer. He has passed out. She gingerly checks his pulse while holding the gun on him. The dog barks and JONATHAN knocks.)

JONATHAN: Quimby. It's me, Jonathan. (He enters through the open door and sees her over the body.)

QUIMBY: He's not dead. He just passed out. Thanks for coming. I need some brandy. Want some?

JONATHAN: Yes, but let me get it. Sit down. Are you okay?

QUIMBY: No.

JONATHAN: Where's the police?

QUIMBY: Late.

JONATHAN: What happened?

QUIMBY: Sal woke me with her barking. I found him looting my silver, so I conked him on the head. The blow only

stunned him and he pinned me down. He threatened me with his gun and I was afraid he would kill me. We struggled. He practically gave me the gun and then . . . I thought he was dead, but I caught him trying to crawl out when I was on the phone with you. I don't know where he thought he was going with a wound like that. He must have been in shock.

JONATHAN: (Pausing. Looks closely at the BURGLAR and downs his brandy, gets another. Comes back, checks his pulse.) Have you ever seen him before?

QUIMBY: No. Not that I know of.

JONATHAN: Great. This is just great.

QUIMBY: What's wrong?

JONATHAN: (Getting hyper.) I can't believe you. Out here by yourself and you attack a burglar. I thought you were a smart woman. Don't you have a gun of your own?

QUIMBY: No.

JONATHAN: Why not?

QUIMBY: I'm afraid I'll shoot myself in the foot with it

or something. My mother's neighbor had a gun for twenty years in case she was ever attacked or burgled and all she ever shot were half a dozen garter snakes and a mouse that got in her basement once. Besides, this time the intruder very thoughtfully provided the firearms.

JONATHAN: (Picks up the object she hit the burglar with.) Is this what you hit him with?

QUIMBY: Yes, and it didn't even phase him.

JONATHAN: God, Quimby, you've lost all your wits. Why didn't you just phone the police when you saw him? I presume you do have a phone by your bed.

QUIMBY: Yes, I do, but it's dead. It's been out about two weeks. But I've been so busy with the shop, I haven't had time to get it fixed. Deregulation couldn't have come at a worse time for me.

JONATHAN: Jesus, Quimby, the phone company is the least of your problems right now.

QUIMBY: Why are you so mad? I don't need this, you know. I need you to--to . . .

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: I don't know. What my mother or Nicholas would do. Hover. Can you hover?

JONATHAN: Hover? Like a helicopter?

QUIMBY: No. Something a little less mechanical and suspicious. Something a little more like . . .

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: Concerned.

JONATHAN: I am concerned. You said yourself I should try to protect my investment.

QUIMBY: Yes, well, there are other types of concern. Like . . .

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: Sympathetic. I mean, maybe you could act like you're glad that I didn't get killed. Instead of getting mad because I almost got killed. I told you over the phone . . .

JONATHAN: (Together with QUIMBY.) Unqualified sympathy.

JONATHAN: I am glad you didn't get killed.

QUIMBY: Thanks. That helps a little.

JONATHAN: You're welcome. See. I really didn't need to hover. Sure you've never seen this guy before?

QUIMBY: All I know about him is that he must frequent a deli. I'll have another brandy. You? (He nods.) When are the police going to get here?

JONATHAN: They better come soon. He can't lose much more blood.

QUIMBY: Will he die?

JONATHAN: I don't know. He shouldn't have tried to move.

QUIMBY: I couldn't tell my mother.

JONATHAN: Tell her what? About tonight?

QUIMBY: Yes.

JONATHAN: Just as well. I'm sure she would just worry.

QUIMBY: I don't think that was it. I'm not sure. Somehow I felt as if I would be confessing a crime. How could I tell her that I had shot someone?

JONATHAN: I'd say she would be a lot more upset if it had been the other way around.

QUIMBY: I feel like I've just run over a puppy. I mean you can't help it, a dog runs in front of your car, a man breaks into your home . . . I don't know.

JONATHAN: You're just tired now, Quimby. Don't worry about it tonight.

QUIMBY: When he came to, I was ready to do it again. I was scared and mad and frantic.

JONATHAN: (He puts his arms around her to comfort her.) Be quiet now. (He's thinking.) You didn't have any trouble telling me you shot the man. Why?

QUIMBY: I don't know.

JONATHAN: Tell me.

QUIMBY: I didn't think it would bother you. Shock you.

JONATHAN: I think the only one who has to worry about dealing with the shock is you. (They are silent for a few moments.)

QUIMBY: Thanks, Jonathan.

JONATHAN: Now, why don't you go change? You'll feel better.

QUIMBY: You were wrong. You can hover. Very well. (She exits.)

JONATHAN: (Sirens. JONATHAN goes to the door. Enter a couple of policemen, two paramedics and DETECTIVE BRATTON.) Phil. I'm glad you made it. What took you so long?

PHIL: Sorry. I was over on the other side of town working on a hit and run. Busy night. Where's Miss Martin?

JONATHAN: She's changing.

PHIL: What happened? Did you hear the shots?

JONATHAN: You'll have to talk to Quimby. I just got here a few minutes ago.

PHIL: Yeah? You two good friends?

JONATHAN: We're business associates. I invested in her bakery downtown.

PHIL: That new one? I didn't know you were in on that.

JONATHAN: She called me after she called you. You'll have to talk to her about what happened.

PHIL: Well, maybe you can comfort her after we're gone.

JONATHAN: Don't you have a burglary to investigate?

PHIL: Okay, Jon. (Now the picture of efficiency.) Sam, get Miss Martin out here. (Looks at the body.) Oh, Christ. Is he the burglar?

JONATHAN: Yes.

PHIL: (To paramedics.) Can he talk?

PARAMEDIC: No, Detective Bratton. He's in pretty bad shape. We need to take him on if it's okay with you.

PHIL: God, yeah. Get his ass out of here in one piece and don't let any vital organs fall out or nothing. If he dies we'll all see hell in less than a week. (Gets closer to JONATHAN so he can talk lower.) Jon, what

about this Quimby Martin?

JONATHAN: What about her?

PHIL: What's she like?

JONATHAN: She's okay. Look, Phil, I know that's Judge Hall's son. But he was burglarizing her house.

PHIL: You believe that?

QUIMBY enters, looks at the huddle a little concerned.

QUIMBY: Detective. I'm Quimby Martin. I'm the one who called. (She looks at JONATHAN, who shrugs.)

PHIL: Can you tell me what happened tonight?

QUIMBY: I seem to be able to talk of nothing else. I surprised that man (she points to the BURGLAR as they take him out on a stretcher) stealing my silver (she walks to the hutch). I left everything as it was.

PHIL: Do you keep many valuables here?

QUIMBY: I only have a few silver pieces my grandmother left me and a few pieces of jewelry. Not a lot, really.

PHIL: What happened next?

QUIMBY: I hit him on the head with this; it only stunned him.

PHIL: Why didn't you call me instead of trying to stop him? That's very dangerous, Miss Martin.

QUIMBY: The only working phone is in here. I didn't think the chances of him being a deaf burglar were very good. It was either stop him or let him prowl around the house until he was through.

PHIL: Dale, go check the other phone . . . (Looks at QUIMBY questioningly.)

QUIMBY: In the bedroom.

PHIL: In the bedroom and see if it works. How do you think he got in?

QUIMBY: He told me he smashed the window to the utility room.

PHIL: Sam, go check it.

QUIMBY: I have the uneasy feeling you don't believe me.

PHIL: Just routine, Miss Martin. What happened next?

QUIMBY: Then he knocked me down, pinned me to the floor. He threatened to kill me, so when he tried to get his gun . . .

PHIL: Where was that?

QUIMBY: In his pocket. I struggled with him and I got the gun first.

PHIL: You were very lucky. Extremely lucky, I could say.

QUIMBY: Yes, I was.

PHIL: You said he told you he broke into the back door?

QUIMBY: Yes.

PHIL: When was this?

QUIMBY: He came to after I called you and Jonathan.

PHIL: What else did he say?

QUIMBY: He said he had been here several times to check the place out.

PHIL: Have you ever seen him before?

QUIMBY: No.

PHIL: I'm going to have a look around.

QUIMBY: Go right ahead. (She goes to JONATHAN.) What's going on?

JONATHAN: What do you mean?

QUIMBY: The detective. He knows something. What is it?

JONATHAN: The burglar--the guy you shot--is Trust Hall.

QUIMBY: Trust? His name is Trust?

JONATHAN: Yes, Trust.

QUIMBY: You know this guy?

JONATHAN: Not really. I just know of him.

QUIMBY: Why didn't you tell me?

JONATHAN: You were in no state to find out you had shot Judge Hall's son.

QUIMBY: (Plops down on a chair.) Okay. I'm ready now. What does all this mean?

JONATHAN: It means that if Trust lives and tells the truth, at best you'll be the topic of every gossip in town.

QUIMBY: Why?

JONATHAN: If he dies, the judge, his father, will accuse you of killing him in a lover's quarrel. If he lives, Trust will probably try to get out of the burglary rap by saying you shot him in a lover's quarrel.

QUIMBY: A lover's quarrel? With that poor frumpy guy? And people are really going to believe this?

JONATHAN: Nobody will believe it, but it'll be a lot of fun for some people to talk about for a while. There'll be a flap, but it will all blow over.

QUIMBY: Who is Judge Hall?

JONATHAN: He used to be court judge several years back. You know, drunk driving, small claims, all that. He was always known for being willing to take small, unobtrusive donations to eradicate those moving violations. Blind as a bat when it came to his son.

QUIMBY: Well, Trust followed a well-known course. Become a criminal and you'll get the judge's attention. This is depressing and sordid. And to think I was scared of him. Now I do feel terrible.

JONATHAN: Don't. He doesn't deserve it.

PHIL: (Re-enters the room.) Well, Miss Martin, everything seems to be in order. I'd like to get a statement, if you'll come down sometime tomorrow. Will you be all right?

QUIMBY: Sure. Thanks.

PHIL: Keep your door locked. And you might want to put something over that back window.

QUIMBY: All right. (All exit except JONATHAN.)

JONATHAN: Another brandy?

QUIMBY: Yes. At least one. Or as many as it takes to get to sleep.

JONATHAN: Do you want me to stay?

QUIMBY: Just a few minutes, okay? I know you want to

get back to your friend.

JONATHAN: Oh, she'll wait. Or if she doesn't she'll come back. Or if she doesn't come back, there will be another one like her.

QUIMBY: Yes. Of course. For men like you there are lines of women. For women like me there are klutzy burglars.

JONATHAN: Oh, you are forgetting Mike.

QUIMBY: Oh, no. I am not forgetting Mike. Mike is wonderful.

JONATHAN: Then why didn't you call him tonight?

QUIMBY: Damn, are you still upset about that?

JONATHAN: No. Really. I was just curious.

QUIMBY: I didn't forget him. I just don't know him well enough yet to get him involved in a messy scandal.

JONATHAN: Sounds like you knew how this was all going to turn out.

QUIMBY: Well, I didn't know the particulars, but I know

enough about life to know there is no such thing as a simple shooting. Ah, we're out of brandy. I'll get some more. (She exits.)

Doorbell rings again. NICHOLAS peeps in.

JONATHAN: Hi.

NICHOLAS: Oh, hi. (He looks confused.) Where's Quimby?

JONATHAN: In the kitchen.

NICHOLAS: Oh. I didn't know you were here. I came to return her car and I saw her lights were on. I'll just leave you two alone.

JONATHAN: Come on in.

QUIMBY: (Re-enters.) Nicholas!

NICHOLAS: I've got to go now. Butterfly is waiting in her car for me.

QUIMBY: Butterfly? (Giggling.) Is that what you call Mrs. Petty?

NICHOLAS: Mrs. Petty? Oh, yes. Look, darling, I must go.

(He kisses her on the head and looks at the rug in dismay.) God, Quimby, what have you two been doing here?

JONATHAN: Quimby shot a burglar tonight.

NICHOLAS: Oh, are you all right? (He hugs her.) So that's why you're here.

JONATHAN: You don't have to look so relieved.

QUIMBY: He's been very kind. I'll be fine. Go on.

JONATHAN: Butterfly is waiting. But you'll get a break tonight.

NICHOLAS: Oh, no! Was he here?

JONATHAN: Talk about your close calls.

QUIMBY: What's he talking about?

JONATHAN: He's probably at the hospital now. I wouldn't push my luck, though. You better get her home.

NICHOLAS: (Indignant.) Thank you so much for your advice.

QUIMBY: Wait a minute, Nicholas. What is he talking about?

NICHOLAS: (Looking daggers at JONATHAN.) Nothing, my sweet. I just need to get my friend home. Soon.

QUIMBY: Isn't that Mrs. Petty out there? That genteel woman who loves your chocolate decadence and gets us more business than an all-out advertising campaign? Mrs. Petty's recommendations got us off to a great start.

NICHOLAS: Mrs. Petty is a lovely woman, Quimby, and is quite convinced of our quality food. However, one cannot live on recommendations alone. Goodbye, my sweet.

QUIMBY: Who is she? Nicholas! Come back!

NICHOLAS: You'd better let me go if you don't want your pastry chef behind bars.

QUIMBY: Oh, Christ! Nicholas!

NICHOLAS: She's a beautiful woman. And so neglected. It's a sin.

QUIMBY: Bratton's wife! God, Nicholas. It's not a sin,

it's insanity. If he finds out you're seeing his wife, I'll be sent up the river.

NICHOLAS: You're panicking, my dear. He'll never know.

QUIMBY: Nicholas, you'd better know what you're doing.

NICHOLAS: Trust me.

QUIMBY: Now is not the time to use that word. Get going.

NICHOLAS: See you tomorrow. (He exits.)

QUIMBY: How long has that been going on?

JONATHAN: Just a couple of weeks.

The doorbell rings. QUIMBY and JONATHAN look at each other. QUIMBY answers the door.

QUIMBY: Mike! (MIKE rushes in and grabs her and kisses her passionately.)

MIKE: Quimby! Are you all right?

QUIMBY: (A little drunk.) Yes. I'm great now. I could use a little more of that. (They kiss again and

QUIMBY relaxes in his arms. (To JONATHAN, pointing to MIKE.) Unqualified sympathy.

JONATHAN: Really? I thought that was plain old lust.

QUIMBY: How did you know?

MIKE: I was at the hospital when they brought Trust in. Phil told me what happened. Did you try to call me?

QUIMBY: Well . . . (looks at JONATHAN, who looks exasperated.)

MIKE: I'm sorry. I must have already been at the hospital.

QUIMBY: (She shrugs.) It's okay, really. I'm fine. Jonathan came over.

MIKE: Oh, Jon, I didn't even see you.

He goes to shake his hand.

JONATHAN: How's Trust?

MIKE: Not too good. But he'll live. He was wounded quite seriously.

QUIMBY: Oh, God. Time for another brandy.

MIKE: He's going to be okay, though. Really, Quimby.

QUIMBY: Good. I guess.

JONATHAN: I'm going.

QUIMBY: Thanks, really. You were very kind to come.

JONATHAN: Well, try keeping your phone working. Bye.
(He exits.)

QUIMBY turns to MIKE.

MIKE: What happened tonight?

QUIMBY: I've told it too many times already. It's been a long night.

MIKE: Well, then, what will happen tonight? (He's embracing her; they kiss.)

QUIMBY: (She puts her arms around him.) We will go out this door and into your car and drive to your place where there is no blood on the floor and we will stay there the rest of the night. (They kiss.)

MIKE: Sounds right.

QUIMBY: Why did you come tonight? We've only been out a couple of times.

MIKE: I don't know. To see if you were all right. To see if I could take advantage of your confused state of mind in order to seduce you.

QUIMBY: I'm not confused.

MIKE: But I am seducing you.

QUIMBY: Yes. How long is it to your house?

MIKE: About fifteen minutes. Course, I never minded a little blood myself. Guess I'm used to it.

QUIMBY: Really? You don't mind? (She hits the lights. They slide down the wall and onto the floor.)

Scene ends.

SCENE 2

The next day. Same set, QUIMBY's living room. She enters. She looks a mess: red eyes, droopy hair, a big floppy robe on. She walks in blowing her nose. She grimaces at the rug. She struggles to move the couch and roll the rug up, scooting it into a corner. She goes off stage left and returns with a steaming cup of coffee. She tries to drink, makes a face, and goes off stage again. This time she comes back with a tall bloody mary, complete with celery stick. She takes a long drink and plops down on the couch. She blows her nose again. The phone rings.

QUIMBY: Hello. Oh, hello Mother. I'm great. (Sniff.) . . . I shouldn't have called you last night. I didn't mean to worry you. I just needed to hear your voice . . . (Sniff.) I'm coming tonight. I've got a flight out this evening. I don't think I could stay here tonight. . . . Asbestos? In the ceiling? . . . No, Mother. This house is very safe . . . Okay. Ready? Flight 743. Arriving 8:22. . . . Okay. Nicholas is going to take me to the airport. . . . He's fine. . . . No. NO! I did not have an abortion. I'm sure. . . . You think I'd tell you about it if I did? . . . Why are you crying? (Starting to sniffle.) Please don't cry. (Sniffle.) The Internal Revenue Service is not after me. I've never even been audited. . . . I'm not trying to make you guess. . . . No, Mother, you're wonderful to

me. . . . We can communicate. It's just that some things take longer than others. . . . I know you love me. . . . Mother! Honestly, you shock me! I couldn't do anything like that! How did you even know about things like that? Have you been reading about Linda Lovelace again? . . . Quit thinking the worst. . . . Wait. I have an idea. Just stay by the phone for a minute, okay? . . . I promise. I don't have anything terminal--unless it's life itself. . . . Okay. Just wait there. Bye. (She hangs up and dials again.) Nicholas? I didn't know for sure if you'd be home or in jail. Did you get Butterfly home? . . . Well, good. I need you to do me a favor. Call Mother and tell her what happened. . . . Please. . . . Because I still can't seem to tell her about last night. She'll go into hysterics first and then straight into a lecture about the evil in the world today and I can't handle that right now. . . . (Huffy.) Yes, I'm sure. That's the only reason. . . . Please. . . . Yes, I'm fine. No, I'll be okay. . . . No, Jonathan left, but Mike came by. (Very arch.) He was quite a comfort to me. I'll be forever grateful. . . . (Shocked.) Nicholas, how can you compare my relationship with Mike to your sordid little affair with Bratton's wife? I'm surprised at you really. . . . I don't want to hear about it. . . . I am NOT jealous. . . . Just call Mother for me, won't you? She can't make you feel guilty. Ghandi, Mother

Teresa, and Tiny Tim at a saint convention couldn't make you feel guilty. (Defensive.) I know I don't have anything to feel guilty about last night. But at the very least, I'll worry about them getting upset. Understand? . . . Neither do I. . . . Just call her. And you'll take care of the shop for me today, won't you? I'm not coming in. . . . Louella James is having her reception today, and . . . okay, okay. I know you will. . . . Thanks, Nicholas. I love you. (She hangs up.)

MIKE: (Coming in behind.) That had better be your mother you were talking to. (Puts his arms around her.)

QUIMBY: Next best thing. It was Nicholas. What'll you have? Coffee, or a bloody mary?

MIKE: Coffee, definitely. Have you eaten anything?

QUIMBY: Yeah. Celery.

MIKE: You don't need that. (Pointing to drink.)

QUIMBY: I'm having bloody marys for breakfast, wine for lunch, and if I still can't sleep, I'm having qualudes for dinner.

MIKE: Skip the alcohol and go straight to the narcotic.

QUIMBY: Huh?

MIKE: I'll call you in a mild sleeping pill that will help you sleep and send it over. Okay?

QUIMBY: Okay. Thanks.

MIKE: What's eating you? Didn't you sleep well?

QUIMBY: No. I don't know what's wrong.

MIKE: You're not worried about Judge Hall, are you? Trust has been in trouble all his life. Everybody knows he's a loser. Nobody's going to believe any story the Judge comes up with.

QUIMBY: No. I'm not worried about that. It's just all the feelings about what happened. I'm just confused.

MIKE: And tired. Try to get some rest, okay? (She nods.) I have to go to the office now. See you later?

QUIMBY: Okay. That sounds good.

MIKE: (They kiss.) I could get used to this.

QUIMBY: So could I. (Phone rings.) Hello. Mother, calm down. (MIKE motions he is going to leave, gets his coat, kisses her on the head, she squeezes his hand, he exits while she is on the phone.) But I'm fine. Really . . . I don't know why I couldn't tell you. I feel bad about shooting him, even though it was a matter of self-defense. . . . You and Dad took it so badly when I got my divorce. . . . Wrong, Mother. That was self-defense, too. . . . I know three months is not too much time to give a marriage--are we going to go through that again? . . . I'm sorry, too. Yes, of course, it is different. . . . I knew that is what you would say. I don't know why I worried so. . . . Yes, I'm fine. . . . All right. See you tonight. (She hangs up, sits for a minute, tries to lie down on the couch, then gets up again. Doorbell rings. She tries to straighten herself up a bit and opens the door.) Jonathan! (He enters with a large bouquet.) Thank you. They're beautiful. (She gets a vase from the hutch.) What are you doing here this morning?

JONATHAN: I just thought I'd come by to check on you on my way to work. You look terrible.

QUIMBY: Thanks. I couldn't sleep last night. Want some coffee?

JONATHAN: No, thanks. (Silence. She is arranging the flowers.)

QUIMBY: Was your friend still there when you got home?

JONATHAN: Oh, sure. Sleeping like a baby when I got in. I promised to make it up to her tonight. Mike's not still here, is he?

QUIMBY: He went in to the office. (Pause. Softly.) I really like Mike. At least one good thing happened last night.

JONATHAN: He's a good guy. (Paces.)

QUIMBY: What's wrong? Jonathan (she stops arranging the flowers), tell me. You came to tell me something--not to see how I was. What is it?

JONATHAN: Quimby, the kid died.

QUIMBY: (At first she doesn't know what to say. Then she bursts with anger.) He died! He died! The stupid idiot died! Is that why you brought me these flowers, Jonathan? To congratulate me? Huh? For killing a man?

JONATHAN: Damn, Quimby, don't do this. . .

QUIMBY: (Begins to take the flowers a handful at a time and throw them down.) He dies. He doesn't die. He dies. (She goes to the hutch and begins to throw silver and china down in a rage. She screams her words.) He dies. He doesn't die. (Etc.)

JONATHAN: Quimby, listen to me. (She ignores him. By now she is oblivious to JONATHAN in her rage. He hesitates for a moment, then he gets behind her and tries to bind her with his arms. She starts fighting him. They struggle. Finally, he wrestles her to the floor and in a little while, she quietens. They are now quiet and trying to catch their breath. She chuckles. He looks at her concerned anew.) What is it?

QUIMBY: You're the third man to have me down on this floor in less than twelve hours.

JONATHAN: Promiscuous little wench, aren't you?

QUIMBY: (She starts crying.)

JONATHAN: (Tenderly.) Hey, Quimby, I was only kidding.

QUIMBY: (Laughs between the sobs.) Oh, I know. It's not that.

JONATHAN: You think it will be safe if I let you up now?

QUIMBY: Yes. (They sit on the floor, their backs against the couch, facing the audience. She blows her nose again.) I don't know what's wrong with me. My life was so wonderful until Lex Luthor decided to pull his grand caper. Now everything is miserable.

JONATHAN: Really, Quimby, you're taking this much too hard.

QUIMBY: He was a stupid, mixed-up kid who no longer cared whether he lived or died--or whom he took with him. I thought I was going to die, Jonathan. I mean, what is death to me? I'm healthy, my parents are healthy. I've never lost anyone close to me. I could only think of it in terms of deprivation.

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: You know, no more madeleines, no more challah bread, fruit tarts, no more . . .

JONATHAN: I get the idea.

QUIMBY: But last night, there it was, pinning me to the floor--Death, breathing garlic in my face. Or so I thought.

JONATHAN: He would have killed you if you hadn't defended yourself.

QUIMBY: (Quietly.) Yes. Yes. I think he would have. And I was so scared. I hated him for making me that scared. I hated myself for being so vulnerable. But you know the worst part of it, Jonathan?

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: The worst part of it was that through it all--the struggle, the fear--through it all, I had fun.

JONATHAN: Fun?

QUIMBY: Oh, yes, I had a marvelous time. You see, I really am perverse.

JONATHAN: Oh, I agree. Absolutely.

QUIMBY: That's really the reason I couldn't tell Mother about what happened. (Pretends to be talking into the phone.) Hello, Mother? I killed a man tonight and it was GREAT! (Stops the pantomime.) I was really scared, but the fight was . . . was . . . exhila rating.

JONATHAN: Of course it was. You made it out alive. This

has definitely put you in a kinky frame of mind.

QUIMBY: What's more, I celebrated the evening with a glorious gluttony of sex. I mean, it was wonderful.

JONATHAN: Mike would feel so cheap.

QUIMBY: (They both break out laughing. She stops suddenly.) God, Jonathan, what's wrong with me?

JONATHAN: Nothing. You're just glad to be alive.

QUIMBY: Is that it?

JONATHAN: Maybe your life wasn't that wonderful before. Maybe it was just tied up in a neat little package.

QUIMBY: What was?

JONATHAN: All those things that are confusing you now--fear, anger, maybe even a little loneliness.

QUIMBY: You surprise me.

JONATHAN: No, I don't. That's why you called me last night.

QUIMBY: You think so?

JONATHAN: I surprise me. I've not got much experience being a comforter. I'm pretty good at it really. No one's demanded it from me like you have.

QUIMBY: (Going out.) I'm tired.

JONATHAN: Here, let's get you to bed.

QUIMBY: (In a fog.) You mean I don't have to stay on the floor? (They exit.)

A knock at the door, no one answers, NICHOLAS enters. He gives the place a look of alarm, then eyes JONATHAN suspiciously as he comes out of the bedroom.

NICHOLAS: God, Jonathan, what have you two been doing here?

JONATHAN: Quiet, I think she's asleep.

NICHOLAS: I just heard about Hall. Mike sent these over. (Holds up the pills.)

JONATHAN: I don't think she'll need them now.

NICHOLAS: How is she?

JONATHAN: Oh, it will be rough for a while, but I think she'll be okay. Let's leave her alone right now.

Lights outside get brighter and then dimmer, then almost dark to show it is dusk. QUIMBY comes to the living room refreshed and dressed up. Phone rings.

QUIMBY: Mother! Hi. . . . Yes. Much better. I got some rest and I think I'm back in one piece. . . . I'm getting ready to leave now. I feel better, but I do need to get away. . . . Oh, Mother, really, you don't have to do that. . . . Well, you know how I love your veal scallopine . . . and the braised carrots and the salad with pecans. . . . Oh, you know I think those are the best rolls. . . . Really! God, I haven't had homemade ice cream in ages. It sounds wonderful, Mother. But promise you won't go to any trouble? . . . Yes, only a mother would say that. . . . Tell Dad I'm fine. Bye.

Doorbell rings.

QUIMBY: Just a minute, Nicholas. (She opens the door.) Yes?

JUDGE HALL: (Still outside.) I'm Judge Hall. May I come in?

QUIMBY: No. I don't think that would be wise.

JUDGE: I don't want any trouble. I just want to talk to you.

QUIMBY: Only for a minute. I'm expecting company. (He enters.)

JUDGE: (They sit opposite each other.) I want to know what happened last night.

QUIMBY: You know, Judge.

JUDGE: He wasn't a common burglar.

QUIMBY: No, a common burglar wouldn't have gotten himself killed.

JUDGE: I don't know what all happened last night. I just know I lost my boy. And he was a good boy.

QUIMBY: (Remains silent.)

JUDGE: I feel like there must have been other circumstances that lead to his death. But I want you to know, Miss Martin, that I don't hold it against you. (QUIMBY is still silent.) I just want you to know that however

it happened, I forgive you.

More silence. QUIMBY gets up and goes to the JUDGE and talks to him as she takes his arm and leads him to the door.

QUIMBY: You've helped me a lot, coming here tonight. You shed some light on some suspicions I had about you and your son. Kind of made concrete some things I just speculated on before, you know? I think you do feel bad about last night, Judge Hall. But I think that what would make you feel better would be not to forgive, but to be forgiven. To be forgiven for having a raging, violent, treacherous son. Ultimately, of course, Trust has to be held accountable for his own actions. But you were his father, and nothing you can do can change that. No, I think you came tonight wanting forgiveness, and I can't do that. That's going to be up to you.

JUDGE: (Indignant.) Miss Martin . . .

QUIMBY: It's time for you to go now. My company is here. (NICHOLAS enters.) Nicholas, meet Judge Hall.

NICHOLAS: (Tentative.) Judge Hall. Everything okay, Quimby?

QUIMBY: Fine. The judge is just leaving.

JUDGE: (Looks to both, begins to show his anger.) All right, I'll go, but . . .

QUIMBY: (Firmly.) Goodbye, Judge. (He hesitates, then exits.) Contemptuous old sleaze!

NICHOLAS: Well, if that's the worst you're going to call me tonight, I'll be happy. Quimby, my darling, you look your old self again. Great, just great.

QUIMBY: Don't try to divert me, Nicholas. I could choke you.

NICHOLAS: I doubt it.

QUIMBY: I could if I really concentrated on it. I don't think you're being smart, seeing this Butterfly. But it's your business and I shouldn't have gotten on your back about it.

NICHOLAS: You're right, of course, but it's too late. I can't give Butterfly up.

QUIMBY: Ah, God, It's your funeral. I guess that's what makes you so endearing, your insolent stubbornness.

NICHOLAS: Besides, did I say a word when I kept finding

Jonathan here? Both times? With the place in rather dishevelled circumstances? He's not around somewhere offering up sacrifices, is he?

QUIMBY: Nicholas, Jonathan and I settled our relationship a long time ago, when we first started the shop. You know that. (Distracted now.) I should call him.

NICHOLAS: Why?

QUIMBY: To thank him.

NICHOLAS: He'll get his thanks in dividends at the end of the year. We'll be late. We'd really better go. You can call him from your mother's house.

QUIMBY: Nicholas! Are you jealous? Of Jonathan?

NICHOLAS: That's absurd. (They exit arguing.) I'm just not sure you can trust Jonathan's judgement.

QUIMBY: Well, at least his judgment was around. HE wasn't out prowling all night like a tom cat. HE came over when I called.

NICHOLAS: Quimby, there you go again. Let's leave Butterfly out of this.

QUIMBY: Fine with me.

Scene ends.

II: ALLIANCES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

QUIMBY MARTIN

JONATHAN LAZARUS

NICHOLAS RESTIN

PHIL BRATTON

BUTTERFLY BRATTON--PHIL's wife.

RONNIE SUTTON--Employed in QUIMBY's shop as janitor and handyman. He's eighteen.

SANDY--RONNIE's girlfriend.

ROSE SUTTON--RONNIE's mother. Forty-five.

SCENE 1

In the pastry shop, in the back where QUIMBY's office is. None of the shop can be seen, but noises from the customers indicate how busy it is. It is afternoon. QUIMBY is over her desk, muttering at some bills.

QUIMBY: (Looking at an invoice.) Apricots! What are they? An endangered species? Did we buy the last bushel ever produced? (Picks up another.) And raspberries! Anything that expensive should not have the ability to rot. (A knock on the door.) Come in. (Enter DETECTIVE BRATTON.) Oh, Detective Bratton. Come in, please. Have a seat.

PHIL: Miss Martin.

QUIMBY: What can I do for you today?

PHIL: Oh, I just wanted to let you know that the whole incident with Trust Hall is considered closed. There won't even be an inquiry.

QUIMBY: Thank you for coming by. But I've already talked to my attorney. She told me that a couple of days ago.

PHIL: (As if she hadn't said anything.) The shooting was

self-defense and there is plenty of evidence to show he was burglarizing your place. His gun, and someone had seen him at your place once before when you weren't home, and . . .

QUIMBY: Detective. I know. (Silence.) Is there something else? Judge Hall?

PHIL: (Surprised.) Hall? Oh, no, no. He's not said a blamed word about it to anyone. I'm beginning to think he feels like you did him a favor. It surprises me. I thought he'd raise a flap, losing his son like that.

QUIMBY: I am, too, I must admit. Pleasantly surprised. (Pause.) Is there something else?

PHIL: (Pause. He stiffens.) Well, you know, I have friends around here.

QUIMBY: Good. We all need friends.

PHIL: Well, I have some in high places.

QUIMBY: Yes?

PHIL: Like the district attorney.

QUIMBY: You mean Mr. Sams? He's crazy about our Black Forest Cake.

PHIL: You know Sams?

QUIMBY: Oh, yes. He's in here a couple of times a week.

PHIL: (Short silence, stares at her, then proceeds.) And there's Walt McMinton, the head of the Health Department.

QUIMBY: Ah, yes. Let me see. The Raspberry Bavarian.

PHIL: I thought he was Irish. And then there's Ruby Schneider from the County Licensing Board.

QUIMBY: Hazelnut Meringue Cake.

PHIL: Oh. So you've gotten to know them all.

QUIMBY: They're good customers.

PHIL: Well, I've known them a long time.

QUIMBY: Planning on calling in a few favors?

PHIL: Why?

QUIMBY: That's what friends in high places are for, aren't they?

PHIL: I was thinking about it.

QUIMBY: And what would these favors involve? Perhaps a botulism suit? Or the discovery of rat droppings in the whipped cream? Maybe a delinquent form that's never been filled out and is mandatory to keep my license?

PHIL: Maybe.

QUIMBY: I'm doing all the talking here. Why don't you start?

PHIL: I want you out of business.

QUIMBY: Why?

PHIL: My own personal reasons.

QUIMBY: Maybe I should report this conversation to some friends of mine. Like the chief of police, Ed Brown. We named one of our specialties after him: The Best Brownie Ever.

PHIL: Oh, getting tough, eh?

QUIMBY: You haven't answered my question. Why do you want me out of business?

PHIL: Oh, maybe you wouldn't have to go out of business. Maybe you could just replace that fat little pastry chef of yours.

QUIMBY: (Incredulous.) Replace Nicholas?

PHIL: Yeah, or whatever you want to call it. Replace, fire, terminate, exterminate . . .

QUIMBY: (Tentative, as if she didn't already know.) Why?

PHIL: (Suddenly angry.) You know why. He . . . he . . . won't leave my wife alone. (Can't talk about it any more.) I just want you out of town. Him anyway. Go back to where you came from. I thought this shooting scandal might do it. I thought it would at least hurt your business.

QUIMBY: Actually, this "scandal," as you so quaintly put it, has done nothing but help. All the excitement has been a good draw.

PHIL: Yeah, I can see.

QUIMBY: So, what are my choices? I can fire Nicholas and keep the business. Or wait till you disgrace me and you can run us both out of town? Right?

PHIL: Yep. (With false bravado.) That's about it.

QUIMBY: Sounds a bit stretched to me. Look, Detective Bratton, you and I know that playing big bad wolf is going to get you nowhere. I don't know what kind of favors these people owe you or how a few desserts would stack up against them, but I'm not going anywhere. Not till I'm ready. And neither is Nicholas. He's a great chef and my best friend.

PHIL: (Standing up.) You're young, Miss Martin, and smart. I hate to see you involved in this, but if that's your choice . . . (starts to leave.)

QUIMBY: Look, I'll let you in on a secret. I don't like the idea of your wife and Nicholas together any more than you do.

PHIL: (He winces at "together.") No?

QUIMBY: No. I didn't like it from the beginning.

PHIL: (Sits back down with a sigh.) Oh, I don't know what's gotten into her. She's been acting crazy.

QUIMBY: I take it you want Butterfly back.

PHIL: More than anything.

QUIMBY: You know, even if Nicholas left town, she'd just get someone else.

PHIL: (Defensive.) That's not so. She's always been faithful to me until your friend came along.

QUIMBY: How did you find out about them?

PHIL: Well, hell. How could I not find out? She says she's going to the movies with her girlfriend, and then I find two ticket stubs to the symphony for that same night. She calls me from work to say she's going shopping and won't be home until late. Late was right. Two a.m. You don't have to be a detective to figure out what's going on, you know. Then the clincher. Night before last I got into the car and it reeks of Grand Marnier liqueur. (QUIMBY winces.) But then last night, she came right out and told me.

QUIMBY: She told you? That she and Nicholas were having

an affair? Why?

PHIL: It was a slip. She called me--(his face is twisted; he spits it out)--Nicholas. Then I confronted her and she told me about it.

QUIMBY: How serious are they?

PHIL: She wants a divorce. She wants out.

QUIMBY: (Quietly.) I'm sorry, Mr. Bratton.

PHIL: Yeah, me too. (He starts crying.) What'll I do without her?

QUIMBY: (Surprised.) Please, Mr. Bratton, please don't do that.

PHIL: Thirty years down the drain. My beautiful Butterfly.

QUIMBY: Please don't cry. (The more she pleads, the louder he gets. She stand up and yells.) Stop it! (The crying subsides. She's all nerves now, but tries to be calm.) Christ. She doesn't want out.

PHIL: She said so.

QUIMBY: (Slowly.) If she really wanted out she would be gone. She wouldn't be standing around announcing it all the time. She just wants your attention.

PHIL: My attention?

QUIMBY: And she's not getting it with you here, is she?

PHIL: I guess not.

QUIMBY: Okay. Go try to get her back. Get some counseling. Think of things she likes to do. Spend more time with her.

PHIL: Well, she loves the dog races, and she likes to play rook. . . .

QUIMBY: Fine. Whatever. (She is escorting him out.) This is really up to you. Putting me out of business is not going to save your marriage.

PHIL: I guess I was a little rash.

QUIMBY: It's understandable. (Opens the door for him.) Go after her, Detective. And for what it's worth, I'll talk to Nicholas.

PHIL: Okay. I'll give it a try. But you tell Restin to watch his step. I'd better not catch him near her again.

QUIMBY: I'll pass it on. Goodbye. (He exits.) Ronnie.

RONNIE: Hi, Miss Martin.

QUIMBY: Hello, Ronnie. Go tell Nicholas I need to talk to him.

RONNIE: Sure.

QUIMBY: (Back at desk.) Oh, hell. If running this business only meant baking the cakes, I'd have it made.

RONNIE: (Re-entering.) He says he can't come now. He's making meringue swans. He'll come when he gets done.

QUIMBY: Okay. Thanks, Ronnie.

RONNIE: (He's still hanging around.) I got the windows washed and the trash out.

QUIMBY: Great. You're working fast today, aren't you? (Working on the bills.)

RONNIE: Well, I know how much you need me around here. I'm going to change the filters in the furnace and repaint that back door next.

QUIMBY: Good. I can always count on you. (Still looking at her work. RONNIE stands there.) You need anything?

RONNIE: Last night, I cleaned all the light fixtures, and . . .

QUIMBY: Ronnie, what is it?

RONNIE: Could I talk to you for a minute?

QUIMBY: Are you going to tell me what else you've cleaned? Because, really, I'll let you know if I think you've missed something.

RONNIE: No.

QUIMBY: Okay, then, good. What is it?

RONNIE: Well, I want you to meet someone.

QUIMBY: Who?

RONNIE: Sandy. (To the shop.) Sandy, come on in. (She

enters.) Sandy, this is Miss Martin.

QUIMBY: (Getting up and going to her.) Sandy. I'm pleased to meet you.

SANDY: Well, I've heard a lot about you. I'm glad I finally got to meet you.

QUIMBY: (A little patronizing and sugary.) Is Sandy someone special in your life?

RONNIE: Oh, yes. Sandy and I have been going together for three years now. We are getting married.

QUIMBY: Oh, that's great. When are you planning to get married? After you graduate from college?

RONNIE: No, Miss Martin. We're getting married Saturday. That's why I wanted you to meet her.

QUIMBY: (In disbelief.) Saturday?

RONNIE: Yeah. We're going to the justice of the peace. Everything's all set.

QUIMBY: (Still in disbelief.) Saturday?

RONNIE: Yeah. Well, Sandy's got to go now. She's taking night classes. Just wanted you to meet her.

QUIMBY: (Regaining her composure.) Oh. I'm glad you came by.

SANDY: Same here. I'd better let Ronnie get back to work. Bye. (She exits.)

QUIMBY: Well, you need some time off?

RONNIE: Oh, no, I can't afford to do that. I'll be back Monday.

QUIMBY: Well. (Pause.) Congratulations.

RONNIE: Thanks. Just thought you might want to know. For my W-2 form or something like that.

QUIMBY: Oh, yes, certainly. I do need that information. I just didn't . . .

NICHOLAS: (Barging in.) Quimby, what is it, darling? I have a few minutes before I have to finish the next batch.

RONNIE: I'll get back to work. See you later.

QUIMBY: (Starts to say something, but he exits. Turns to NICHOLAS, exasperated.) Detective Bratton was here.

NICHOLAS: Really? (Arch.) Did he have anything interesting to say?

QUIMBY: Only that he was going to close down the shop and run us out of town.

NICHOLAS: Tarred and feathered?

QUIMBY: And on a rail.

NICHOLAS: Mmmm. This doesn't have anything to do with my seeing Butterfly, does it?

QUIMBY: Oh, hell, no Nicholas. He just doesn't like the smell of freshly baked bread.

NICHOLAS: Did he really threaten you?

QUIMBY: He brought out everything but the rubber hose.

NICHOLAS: I see. We have a problem, don't we?

QUIMBY: WE don't, Nicholas. YOU do. I told you before, this is your business. I just wanted to pass the word

along.

NICHOLAS: Well, things are not what they used to be between us.

QUIMBY: (Hurt.) No, Nicholas, not ever since this tawdry episode began.

NICHOLAS: I don't mean us. I mean between Butterfly and me.

QUIMBY: Oh. Well, I thought so.

NICHOLAS: Why?

QUIMBY: She told Bratton about your little affair.

NICHOLAS: (Surprised.) SHE told him? That's how he found out?

QUIMBY: Of course, what she said was that she wanted a divorce. (Pause. Making this up as she goes along.) So she could marry you.

NICHOLAS: Married? (Ruffled.) Me?

QUIMBY: Yes. YOU. Married. (She makes it sound grim.)

NICHOLAS: To Butterfly?

QUIMBY: Butterfly.

NICHOLAS: I don't think I could stay with the same woman for the rest of my life. (Pause.) I don't think I could stay with the same sex the rest of my life. It's simply not in my future.

QUIMBY: Well, you'd better do something. Break her heart. Anything.

NICHOLAS: Leaving town on a rail is beginning to sound good.

QUIMBY: Sure. If we go out of business because of Bratton's jealousy, I could live off of your guilt for the rest of my life.

NICHOLAS: Be still, Quimby. (He is not listening.)

QUIMBY: It wouldn't be too bad. I could get drunk all the time and you could hold my head while I hugged the toilet. I could sell myself on the street and you could handle the collections. I could sell blood and you could make me eat liver to replenish my supply. But I could exist as long as I knew you felt wretched

about ruining our lives. We'd manage.

NICHOLAS: Quiet. I have to think. I don't know what to do.

QUIMBY: Did you know Ronnie was getting married?

NICHOLAS: No. He didn't mention it.

QUIMBY: Yes. Saturday. At the courthouse. I'm worried--they're so terribly young.

NICHOLAS: Yes. And you're Methuselah. I'd better get back to my swans.

QUIMBY: Okay. Good luck with Butterfly. (He exits. Pause. All is quiet. She goes back to her desk. Picks up another invoice.) The man's a thief! Next time one of the ovens goes out, I'll just burn these bills. That should be enough fuel to bake a dozen cakes. (She writes for a few minutes, then puts the invoice down, meditates with a frown on her face. RONNIE enters.)

RONNIE: I'm going home now. Anything special you want done for tomorrow?

QUIMBY: Not that I can think of.

RONNIE: Okay. Bye.

QUIMBY: Ronnie, have you got a minute?

RONNIE: Sure.

QUIMBY: (Gets up from her desk, goes to him.) You've really come a long way since you started working here. I really don't know what I'd do without you.

RONNIE: Thanks. I like working with you and Nicholas. It's fun here. Something's always going on. Like when you shot that burglar . . .

QUIMBY: (Uncomfortable.) Right.

RONNIE: Now Nicholas messing around with that detective's wife and . . .

QUIMBY: (Shocked.) What do you know about that?

RONNIE: Just what everybody else knows.

QUIMBY: Oh, well never mind about that.

RONNIE: And I'll really need a job now that I'm getting married.

QUIMBY: Yes. You know, I was really surprised about your decision. I didn't know you were serious about anyone.

RONNIE: Oh, I am about Sandy.

QUIMBY: Look, I don't want to be nosy, but don't you think you're a little young to be getting married?

RONNIE: No. Not really. I'm eighteen. It's what I want.

QUIMBY: It just doesn't sound like the good-time Ronnie I know.

RONNIE: I have all my good times with Sandy.

QUIMBY: Well, don't you ever wonder about other girls?

RONNIE: Not for a long time now. Sandy and I dated around off and on. We always came back to each other.

QUIMBY: What do her parents say?

RONNIE: Aw, her folks are dead. She's been living with an old aunt who can't remember her name half the time.

QUIMBY: And your folks?

RONNIE: Well, you know Mom. She's always too drunk to care what's going on. Dad's been gone for years.

QUIMBY: (RONNIE seems unconcerned, resigned while saying his last lines, but they make QUIMBY uncomfortable.) Oh. (Then assuming a responsible air.) Well. I think you should know that you could be making a terrible mistake.

RONNIE: I could be. But I don't think so.

QUIMBY: You both are trying to go to school and work. That's a lot of strain on a young married couple.

RONNIE: You going to tell me about your rotten marriage?

QUIMBY: You know about that, too?

RONNIE: Yeah. It only lasted three months.

QUIMBY: (Staring. Decides to go on with it.) Yes. It was very hard to go through that divorce.

RONNIE: You survived. Look at you now. You don't look desperate or anything.

QUIMBY: Well, people get over those things. What I'm

saying is . . .

RONNIE: Besides, three months isn't enough time for anything. Let alone a marriage.

QUIMBY: (Getting steamed.) The guy was a . . . (Trying to cool down.) Let's forget my marriage and talk about yours.

RONNIE: What about it? Are you going to try to talk me out of it?

QUIMBY: No. I just feel like someone should warn you about the pitfalls.

RONNIE: Like the ones in your marriage? The one that only lasted three months? Miss Martin, I think if I was going to listen to advice right now, it would be from someone who's been married fifty years, not from someone who walked out after three months.

QUIMBY: Ronnie, be realistic! What if Sandy gets pregnant? Then what will you do?

RONNIE: She is pregnant.

QUIMBY: What?

RONNIE: She's already pregnant. About two months. She's due next spring.

QUIMBY: (Very grim.) Oh. I see.

RONNIE: (Laughing.) Nobody died. Somebody's going to be born.

QUIMBY: How stupid of me. I should have realized that was why . . .

RONNIE: Oh, that's not it.

QUIMBY: It's not?

RONNIE: No. We love each other. We don't HAVE to get married. (Really exaggerates HAVE, mocking her grimness.) We want to.

QUIMBY: I know you do, Ronnie, but . . . You know, I don't know how you feel about such things, but Sandy doesn't have to have that baby. She can . . .

RONNIE: We planned it. We planned the pregnancy.

QUIMBY: What? Planned it?

RONNIE: We'd like to have three. We didn't have any trouble this time, so there shouldn't be any problem.

QUIMBY: Whatever will you do? Financially?

RONNIE: We both work. She works in the day, I work at night. I go to school in the day, she goes at night. When the baby comes, we'll alternate school and jobs so we can take turns watching the baby.

QUIMBY: You've got this all worked out, don't you?

RONNIE: Yes. You worry too much, Miss Martin. You see, neither of us has ever had family to speak of. It's what we both want most. Why should we put it off another five years?

QUIMBY: Indeed.

RONNIE: Besides, if we have our kids this young, we'll barely be forty years old when they're grown and gone. (Silence.) See, if you wait too much longer, you'll be . . .

QUIMBY: Never mind. (Pause.) I understand. (Pause.) Where are you going for your honeymoon?

RONNIE: You won't tell?

QUIMBY: No.

RONNIE: We're going to the El Patio in Beckton for a couple of nights. They got an indoor pool, dirty movies, and I got an o. z. of grass. We're all set. We'll leave right after the ceremony.

QUIMBY: Still going to the courthouse?

RONNIE: Yeah. We can't afford a fancy wedding, especially if we have any kind of honeymoon.

QUIMBY: How would you like to have it at my house? I'll even get a minister.

RONNIE: Thanks, Miss Martin. That would be great. But a justice is fine. We've never been to church much. We'd just feel funny having a minister marry us now.

QUIMBY: Sure. I'll get Nicholas to bake a cake. What else would you like? We'll have a reception. You can invite whomever you like--as long as the list isn't too long. My house isn't very big.

RONNIE: Miss Martin . . .

QUIMBY: And I have a list somewhere of little delicacies that we serve at wedding receptions . . . (Looking in her desk.)

RONNIE: Miss Martin . . . Miss Martin . . . (Finally gets her attention.) Sandy and I want a quiet wedding, one just for us. All I want there are you and Nicholas and Mr. Lazarus.

QUIMBY: Okay. Whatever you like. Now, what do you want for the reception? We could fix . . .

RONNIE: Cheeseburgers and beer.

QUIMBY: Cheeseburgers?

RONNIE: And beer.

QUIMBY: And beer?

RONNIE: That way we won't have to stop for lunch on our way to Beckton.

QUIMBY: Champagne permissible?

RONNIE: I don't know. I never tasted the stuff.

QUIMBY: Well, I'll have some there. Just in case you break down and feel extravagant.

RONNIE: I do feel extravagant. I love Sandy. You're doing this for us. I feel great.

QUIMBY: I had every intention of raising the somber specter of reality over your head. But since you refuse to be intimidated by the cold, cruel world . . .

RONNIE: I'd better go. I've got to tell Sandy. Bye. (He exits. From off stage.) Thanks!

QUIMBY: (Quietly, as lights fade.) Sure. Anytime. Cheeseburgers.

Scene ends.

SCENE 2

JONATHAN's bar. JONATHAN alone in a booth with some papers. Rest of the bar nearly empty. QUIMBY enters, looks around, finds him, walks to him.

QUIMBY: Jonathan.

JONATHAN: Oh, it's Belle Starr. Sit down.

QUIMBY: Not funny. (She sits.) Is there any decent wine in these Stygian depths? Or do I have to settle for MD 20-20?

JONATHAN: Matt, bring Miss Martin a glass of Chablis. (To QUIMBY.) I always thought Miss Starr liked straight whisky sipped from a gun barrel.

QUIMBY: Will you stop?

JONATHAN: Okay, Belle, but only because I'm afraid you'd blow my head off if I made you too mad.

QUIMBY: You know how sensitive I am about that night.

JONATHAN: You told me it was fun.

QUIMBY: (She groans.) Jonathan. I told you that in confidence.

JONATHAN: You certainly seemed confident to me.

QUIMBY: Belle Starr was an outlaw who was ambushed and shot in the back by her lover. I was defending myself and my home. I see no comparison whatever.

JONATHAN: You're right. I give. What are you doing here?

I believe this is the first trip you have made to your own basement. You must like the idea of a bar below your shop.

QUIMBY: Let's just say I'm getting used to it. I came for a couple of reasons. Ronnie is getting married.

JONATHAN: He is? To Sandy, I guess.

QUIMBY: How come everybody else knows everything that's going on but me?

JONATHAN: I don't know her. He's just talked to me about her some. Is she pregnant yet?

QUIMBY: Some? He must have talked to you considerably more than some. Yes, she is pregnant.

JONATHAN: Well, (he raises his glass) here's to Ronnie. Good luck. He's started a marathon without his Nikes. (He drinks.) Some people.

QUIMBY: Some people are what?

JONATHAN: Some people are crazy.

QUIMBY: Yes. Here's to crazy people. (She drinks.)

JONATHAN: Did you try to talk him out of it?

QUIMBY: Yes. But I sure didn't get very far. He kept cutting me off at the pass. Seems I'm not qualified for marriage counseling. Don't have enough persistence for Ronnie. Did you?

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: Try to talk him out of it?

JONATHAN: Oh, no. Well, just a little. I tried to make some jokes about it, but it didn't make him any too happy.

QUIMBY: In other words, you're not qualified either.

JONATHAN: Something like that. Because I divorced Sheila. He said anyone who would pick a woman like her to begin with was asking for trouble in a marriage.

QUIMBY: Well, at least he was right about one thing. How is Sheila these days? Still the paragon of the New-ford tennis circuit?

JONATHAN: Yeah, I guess. She's buying that club where she coaches.

QUIMBY: Oh, great. I'll go there when I need a good chill.

JONATHAN: Where's Mike?

QUIMBY: He's out of town. At a seminar. He'll be back this weekend. Which is why I'm here to talk to you.

JONATHAN: Need a replacement? I'm busy. You know my schedule.

QUIMBY: Ronnie's getting married at my house and he wants you to come.

JONATHAN: I thought you were against all this.

QUIMBY: I am. But they were going to get married at the courthouse. It seemed so lonely, and they're so determined. He wants you and Nicholas both to come.

JONATHAN: But I hate weddings.

QUIMBY: We're serving cheeseburgers and beer. (They laugh.)

JONATHAN: Well, sure. If that's what he wants. Will it be short?

QUIMBY: Abrupt, more likely.

JONATHAN: Okay.

QUIMBY: I need to ask you something else. What's Bratton like?

JONATHAN: Why?

QUIMBY: He's on to Nicholas and Butterfly.

JONATHAN: Could be dangerous. Just depends. What did he say?

QUIMBY: He wanted me to fire Nicholas. He threatened to put me out of business if I didn't.

JONATHAN: Great. I'm sure you sent Nicholas packing that very instant.

QUIMBY: Of course not. Can Bratton do that?

JONATHAN: I don't think so. Not now. Maybe when you first came here. But still, you don't want to mess with Phil. Can't you talk Nicholas out of this one?

QUIMBY: I've tried. He wouldn't listen. I must be losing my powers of persuasion. But I think it's over, anyway. I have a sneaky feeling Butterfly was using

Nicholas to get back at her husband. I think he's going to be nursing a broken heart.

HONATHAN: Maybe not. Maybe this affair will die a quiet death.

QUIMBY: That's how all of them die, isn't it? They start with fervor and declarations, but then their deaths are quiet. Well, I must go now. See you Saturday.

JONATHAN: I can't wait.

Light fades. Scene ends.

SCENE 3

Saturday afternoon at QUIMBY's home. Her living room has a few bows and flower arrangements for the ceremony. There's a large refreshment table to the left of the stage with a large tray of cheeseburgers and a tub of beer in bottles with a couple of bottles of champagne stuck in with them. NICHOLAS enters the front door bearing a large cake. It's really an atrocious looking thing. It has gray icing with black trim. NICHOLAS places it on the table with the other food and looks at it forlornly. He takes a hanky and dabs his eyes. QUIMBY enters with some more beer for the tubs. Every time a guest comes, QUIMBY's dog barks outside.

QUIMBY: Nicholas! I didn't hear you come in.

NICHOLAS: I just got here.

QUIMBY: (Noticing the cake.) What have you done with the cake?

NICHOLAS: Beautiful, isn't it? So . . . formal. So . . . correct. So . . . perfect for the occasion.

QUIMBY: Yeah. Great for a wake. I didn't know black icing was possible. What did you use to color it? Coal?

NICHOLAS: Ah, Quimby. My heart is broken.

QUIMBY: Oh, Nicholas. I'm sorry. Is it over between you and Butterfly?

NICHOLAS: Yes. She won't see me anymore. Seems she prefers her lout of a husband to me. I don't know why we couldn't keep seeing each other. I was certainly tolerant of the situation, even if he wasn't.

QUIMBY: Oh, Nicholas. She must be blind and stupid. You are wonderful.

NICHOLAS: I know. I can't believe it. She jilted me.

QUIMBY: (Trying to comfort him.) Really, you know it's for the best. Try not to take it so hard.

NICHOLAS: (One should get the idea that he loves nursing his broken heart.) She told me last night. Over the phone.

QUIMBY: The phone?

NICHOLAS: Yes. Can you imagine? Telling someone it's over--by phone? Oh, I'll get over it. It's just that I'll miss her so. I was getting used to her company. She was so much fun. Oh, Quimby. You'll have to help me through this one.

QUIMBY: Oh, you know I will. You know how much I love you. I'll do anything to help. Anything to keep you from making any more black cakes.

NICHOLAS: (Sniffing.) You're a dear. Well, what can I do to help you with the wedding?

QUIMBY: Nothing. It's all done. Cheeseburgers aren't too tricky.

NICHOLAS: Do you think it's wise for Ronnie . . .

QUIMBY: I've already been through all this. They're pretty headstrong. I hate to see them do it. But they've got no one else. Still, I keep thinking I'm aiding and abetting a crime. (Doorbell. QUIMBY answers.)

QUIMBY: Hello, Jonathan. Come in. (He enters.)

JONATHAN: Where's the fated couple?

QUIMBY: They should be here anytime. And we're going to have to do something about our attitude before they get here.

JONATHAN: Nicholas. How are you?

NICHOLAS: Distraught.

JONATHAN: It's quits for you and Butterfly, eh?

NICHOLAS: Yes.

JONATHAN: Just as well. She and Phil have been together too long. It would have been tough on you if you two had gotten married, living in the same town as Phil.

NICHOLAS: Who said anything about marriage? Things were great as they were.

JONATHAN: Oh. (Deadpan.) Great cake.

Doorbell rings. QUIMBY answers.

QUIMBY: Aha! The bride and groom--and . . . (SANDY and RONNIE enter supporting an older woman between them with their arms. She is very drunk.)

RONNIE: (In high spirits.) This is my mother, Rose Sutton.

QUIMBY: (Reaches out her hand to ROSE to shake hands with her.) Mrs. Sutton. Glad you could make it.

RONNIE: (To ROSE--trying to get her attention.) Mom, this is Miss Martin, my boss. (Pause. ROSE rouses slightly.) We're at her house now.

ROSE: (This takes a lot of effort.) How do you do? (She slumps again. The rest talk as RONNIE and SANDY lead her to the couch and sit her down.)

RONNIE: She decided she wanted to come at the last minute. I hope you don't mind.

QUIMBY: Oh, no. It's your wedding. There are cheeseburgers aplenty.

RONNIE: Unbelievable! A licorice cake! Sandy, look. Nicholas made a licorice cake for us!

SANDY: (Delighted.) My favorite. Thank you, Mr. Restin.

NICHOLAS: (He accepts solemnly with a slight bow.)

RONNIE: Where's the justice?

QUIMBY: He'll be here in a few minutes.

RONNIE: (Offering her a joint.) Here, Sandy.

SANDY: Thanks, honey. (To QUIMBY.) I'm giving it up after this weekend. Because of the baby, you know. I don't want to take any chances.

RONNIE: (Offering to everyone.) I've got plenty. Help yourself. It's a time to celebrate.

Everyone is silent, then the silence becomes uncomfortable and everyone starts fidgeting, turning away from the couple, and mumbling, "No, thanks," "After the ceremony," "Got a sore throat," etc. They don't seem to be fazed. They sit together and enjoy themselves. ROSE slides off the couch. RONNIE and SANDY pull her back up and settle her in again.

RONNIE: She stays crocked most of the time. But she's not a rowdy drunk. She's a quiet one.

NICHOLAS: (To QUIMBY.) Nearly catatonic.

QUIMBY: Oh, this is all a terrible mistake. (Doorbell.) That must be the justice. (She answers.) Yes, Mr. Smith. Come in. (RONNIE and SANDY put out their joints and hide them.)

SMITH: Hello, Miss Martin.

QUIMBY: Thank you for coming.

SMITH: Oh, I enjoy it. One of my more pleasant duties. Ah, this must be the young couple. (They stand, smiling.)

RONNIE: (Very proud.) That's right, Mr. Smith. I'm Ronnie Sutton. And this is my bride, Sandy Williams.

SMITH: A fine-looking couple.

QUIMBY: (Starting to get in the spirit.) Yes, they are. Mr. Smith, this is Jonathan Lazarus.

SMITH: Oh, hello, Jonathan! Good to see you again.

JONATHAN: Hello.

SMITH: And how's the tire recapping business these days?

JONATHAN: Fine, just fine. How is Mrs. Smith?

SMITH: Much better since she has had her surgery. You must come by to see her. She always enjoyed your company so.

JONATHAN: I will.

QUIMBY: (To JONATHAN.) Do you know everyone in Newford?

JONATHAN: Only the people with tires.

QUIMBY: And this is Nicholas Restin. (They shake hands.) I suppose we had better get started before the cheeseburgers get cold and the beer and champagne get hot. (ROSE slides off the couch again. RONNIE and SANDY pull her back up.)

RONNIE: (To ROSE.) Mom. Rose. The justice is here. (No response.) Rose. (She rouses.) It's time for the ceremony.

ROSE: Is there any whisky here?

RONNIE: Later, Rose. You can have a drink after we're married.

ROSE: Isn't there a law against that? Marrying your mother?

RONNIE: Sandy. You remember Sandy?

SANDY: Hi, Mom.

ROSE: Oh, yeah, okay. Go ahead. I'll wait here.

The group assembles without anyone directing them--all gracefully and naturally. SMITH is stage center, facing RONNIE and SANDY. QUIMBY, NICHOLAS, and JONATHAN gather around. ROSE goes between nodding and watching.

SMITH: We are gathered here today . . . (Doorbell rings. Everyone freezes.)

QUIMBY: Have we forgotten anyone?

RONNIE: (Checking with SANDY.) Not that I know of.

SANDY: I don't think so.

QUIMBY: (Goes to answer the door.) Hello? Oh, Mrs. Bratton. Won't you come in?

NICHOLAS: (Panicking and motioning "no" to QUIMBY.)

QUIMBY: (She pauses, looking outside as if listening.) Oh, I see. Why don't you give it to him? He's right here. (NICHOLAS panics even more. QUIMBY ignores him.) Are you sure you won't come in? . . . All right. Nicholas, it's Butterfly.

NICHOLAS: What does she want?

QUIMBY: She says she didn't know you were here. She wants to return a book of recipes you gave her. Something about if she ever fixed any of them, her husband would run over them with his car. You'd better talk to her.

NICHOLAS: (Resigned.) I don't need this torture. (He exits through the front door.)

QUIMBY: Would you like to go on? He could be a while.

RONNIE: Sure.

SMITH: Ronnie and Sandy have honored us by inviting us to be with them during this time that will make them husband and wife. (NICHOLAS can be heard crying and moaning from out front. Everyone pauses and looks, then proceeds.) Are you ready to be married? (Loud

moan. JONATHAN and QUIMBY are getting exasperated.)

RONNIE and SANDY: (Together.) We are. (Another moan.)

SMITH: Will you now please clasp your right hands? (RONNIE and SANDY clasp hands. NICHOLAS opens the door, resumes his place and blows his nose loudly. All watch this procedure until he is done.) Do you Ronnie, take Sandy to be your wife, to love and respect all the days of your life?

RONNIE: I do. (A loud squeal of tires and then pounding on the door.)

BRATTON: (Through the door.) Come out, Restin. I know you're in there.

QUIMBY: I think it's for you, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS: It may be, but I'm not answering it.

BRATTON: (Still yelling through the door.) Restin, come out here and meet me face to face.

NICHOLAS: The thought kills my appetite.

QUIMBY: (Goes to the door and opens it--angrily.) Mr.

Bratton, do you mind? We have a wedding going on here.

BRATTON: (Still outside.) I want to see Restin.

QUIMBY: You're in no state of mind . . .

BRATTON: Butterfly was here. I saw her leave.

QUIMBY: Yes . . . (NICHOLAS guides her aside.)

NICHOLAS: Detective Bratton, if you think you can control your abhorrent yelling and pounding, I'll be happy to talk to you.

BRATTON: Certainly I can. I am an officer of the law.

NICHOLAS: Come in. But be quiet. These two young people are trying to get married, though for God's sake I can't think why they would want to.

BRATTON: (Enters. Looks around the room in question.) I didn't know we'd have an audience.

NICHOLAS: You don't think I'd talk to you without one, do you? I'm not stupid.

BRATTON: I came here to warn you . . .

NICHOLAS: Quiet. There's a ceremony in progress. (NICHOLAS nods to the justice. All look at him perplexed.) Proceed. Proceed.

SMITH: Do you, Sandy, take Ronnie to be your husband, to love and respect all the days of your life?

SANDY: I do. (Car screeches outside. Doorbell starts ringing persistently.)

QUIMBY: What is this? A wedding or a parade? (Opens door.) Mrs. Bratton. Yes, he's here . . . Oh, sure. Why the hell not? Come in. We're just in the middle of a wedding. (Enter BUTTERFLY, a very attractive, elegant woman in her late forties or early fifties. She and NICHOLAS look at each other for a moment, then she turns to BRATTON and starts to speak. SMITH resumes and startles her. She turns to see SANDY, RONNIE and the justice and she moves to stand by BRATTON. All become quiet as he speaks.)

SMITH: Ronnie, what token of your love for Sandy have you?

RONNIE: This ring.

SMITH: Place the ring on the third finger of Sandy's left hand as a symbol of your commitment in marriage and

repeat after me: "I pledge my faithful love to you and join my life with yours."

RONNIE: (To SANDY.) I pledge my faithful love to you and join my life with yours.

SMITH: (To SANDY.) Sandy, what token of your love for Ronnie have you?

SANDY: This ring.

SMITH: (To SANDY.) Place the ring on the third finger of Ronnie's left hand as a symbol of your commitment in marriage and repeat after me: "I pledge my faithful love to you and join my life with yours."

SANDY: I pledge my faithful love to you and join my life with yours.

SMITH: In the presence of these witnesses, Ronnie and Sandy have pledged themselves to each other. I now pronounce them husband and wife. (They kiss. BUTTER-FLY approaches them slowly.)

BUTTERFLY: (She shakes both their hands.) Congratulations. May you have years of happiness.

RONNIE and SANDY: (Beaming.) Thank you.

BUTTERFLY: Let's go, Phil.

BRATTON: (He hesitates. He smells the air. All look at him holding their breath.) It doesn't take a detective to figure out some things. (Pause. He sniffs again.) Let's go. (Everybody relaxes. As they exit, BUTTERFLY throws one more wistful glance at NICHOLAS as she goes.)

SMITH: Congratulations, children. I must go, too.

QUIMBY: Won't you stay for some refreshments?

SMITH: No, thank you. I have another appointment. But I must say, it has been entertaining. Goodbye. (He exits.)

ROSE: Can I have a whisky now?

QUIMBY: How about a beer?

ROSE: Sure, I ain't fussy. (QUIMBY gets one for her from the tub.)

RONNIE and SANDY look at each other and they kiss

again. This time it's long and hard. At the end, RONNIE gives out a yelp of joy. All gather around to give their congratulations.

RONNIE: I'm starved. Let's eat.

SANDY: You know, I get hungry every two hours. Isn't it great? I have to eat all the time.

Lights dim to black. While the lights are down, the audience can still hear sounds of a party. Beer opening, champagne popping, clinking sounds. Voices: "God, Nicholas, this cake is terrible," "Light another," "Who took the mustard?" etc. Then the sounds fade into 30-45 seconds of silence. The lights slowly come back up. SANDY, RONNIE, ROSE are all gone. QUIMBY, JONATHAN, and NICHOLAS are at the door waving goodbye. The room is very smoky.

QUIMBY: (To outside.) And drive carefully. (All take a seat. Pause.) Damn, it's quiet.

JONATHAN: Well, at least we know all your smoke alarms work.

QUIMBY: (Pause. Then she gets up and starts to clean up the mess. The men get up and start to help, too.) It's funny, you know? We cater weddings all the time.

This one was different.

NICHOLAS: I'll say.

QUIMBY: Well, it wasn't a wake. Why are we so grim now? (The men mumble around.) Ronnie and Sandy certainly were happy. (Pause. She smiles.) I think we're jealous.

JONATHAN and NICHOLAS look at each other and dismiss the idea wholeheartedly.

JONATHAN: Well, not that it hasn't been fun, Quimby, but I've got to be going. I have to meet someone in an hour.

QUIMBY: Thank you for coming, Jonathan. I think it meant a lot to Ronnie. By the way, what did you get them for a wedding gift?

JONATHAN: What makes you think I got them anything?

QUIMBY: Big tire recapping and saloon magnate like you? Not get a wedding gift for a struggling young couple? Come on. You might be a lot of things, like cold and offensive, opinionated, arrogant, thick-skinned and . . .

JONATHAN: Stubborn.

QUIMBY: Yes, stubborn. But you are not ungenerous. I've seen you with your friends and they generally don't lack taxi fare when they are with you. What did you get them?

JONATHAN: Money. I wired it to the El Patio. It should be waiting for them when they get there. What did you get them?

QUIMBY: What makes you think I got them anything?

JONATHAN: Well, you're cold and offensive, opinionated, arrogant, thick-skinned and . . .

QUIMBY: Stubborn.

JONATHAN: Yes, stubborn. But you are not ungenerous.

QUIMBY: Money. I sneaked it into Sandy's purse.

JONATHAN: Think we could have gotten them something a little more personal?

QUIMBY: Jonathan, you can't get any more personal than that.

JONATHAN: Bye, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS: Goodbye, Jonathan. Say, is your bar open tonight?

JONATHAN: On Saturday? Of course.

NICHOLAS: Then I might bring the lovely Mrs. Petty by for a drink.

JONATHAN: Sure. Have the Moscow mule. Great for broken hearts.

NICHOLAS: Moscow mule. I'll heed your advice. (NICHOLAS exits to the kitchen with empty beer bottles and trash.)

JONATHAN: Bye, Quimby.

QUIMBY: See you next week. Have a good time tonight.

JONATHAN: I will. (Pause.) You know, as far as weddings go, it was--it was--okay.

QUIMBY: It was one to remember, anyway. (Pause.) Bye.

JONATHAN: Bye. (He exits. NICHOLAS re-enters.)

NICHOLAS: It's time for me to head home and nurse my wounded soul. Quimby, answer me truthfully.

QUIMBY: Sure.

NICHOLAS: Did Butterfly love me? Or did she use me?

QUIMBY: Yes.

NICHOLAS: Yes, I think so, too. Well, I must be going. Great wedding, Quimby. One of a kind. Almost makes me want to take the plunge myself.

QUIMBY: Come on, Nicholas. Who would you marry?

NICHOLAS: You, of course. But you would just cut my salary if we got married.

QUIMBY: Will you be all right tonight?

NICHOLAS: Of course I will. I must be going. You need any more help cleaning up?

QUIMBY: No, thanks. I can get the rest.

NICHOLAS: (They hug each other a long time. He kisses her on the forehead. They are somber.) Weddings always

make us sad, you know. They make us remember the failures, the never-have-beens of our lives. They make us think: "Did I miss the one I should have loved?" Or, "Will I meet someone yet?" "Could I have loved more?" "Should I have loved less?" (Pause.) It's the ritual we crave and the bind that smothers. The chance to make contact and the loss of it. It's one big, ironic, seductive mess. (He lets her go, changes his tone.) That's why I refuse to have any part of it.

QUIMBY: It's scary, Nicholas, the way you know my feelings better than I do sometimes.

NICHOLAS: You should see my card tricks. Goodbye, darling.

QUIMBY: Bye. Thanks for the sermonette. Have a good time with Mrs. Petty. And please, don't bake anything else tonight, okay?

NICHOLAS: No, don't worry, I won't. (He exits.)

QUIMBY is alone now. She closes the door slowly, leans back against it, thinking. John Lennon's "Nobody Told Me There Would Be Days Like These" starts to play. She starts again to clean the mess, at first very slowly. Then she begins to pick up speed, starts to shake off the dragginess. Begins to dance in time to the music as she cleans. She is

just alive and searching. The phone rings. The music will still be as loud, and the audience will only hear as much of the phone conversation to know who it is and what is happening. They don't have to hear every word.

QUIMBY: Hello. (Still dancing.) . . . Mike! Well, you're back a little early, aren't you? . . . No, I don't think that will rush me too much. (Lights dim as she talks.) Yeah. I know how you feel. . . . I missed you, too. . . .

Music up. Lights down. Scene ends.

III: UNTIL NOW

CAST OF CHARACTERS

QUIMBY MARTIN

JONATHAN LAZARUS

NICHOLAS RESTIN

RONNIE SUTTON

WILMA CAXTON--Fortyish.

COLLETTE SAYERS--Thirtyish.

HAROLD THOMPSON--Thirtyish.

MIKE

BAND MEMBERS

PARTY GUESTS

SCENE 1

QUIMBY's office at the bakery. She is at her desk, working diligently. A knock at the door.

QUIMBY: Come in.

WILMA: (Sticking her head in the door.) Miss Martin?

QUIMBY: Hello. That's me. What can I do for you?

WILMA: (Enters.) My name is Wilma Caxton. I heard you were looking for help.

QUIMBY: Sit down. We do need more help out front. We're getting covered up.

WILMA: I can see that.

QUIMBY: The job's not too hard. Worked in a bakery before?

WILMA: Well, no. I was an executive secretary for fifteen years.

QUIMBY: Oh, I see. Well, you may be a little more than what we need right now. We're just looking for help to wait on the customers up front when they come in the shop.

WILMA: (Eagerly.) I could do that.

QUIMBY: Oh, I know you could. But I wouldn't be able to pay you the kind of salary I'm sure you're used to.

WILMA: How much are you paying?

QUIMBY: It starts out at five dollars an hour.

WILMA: That's okay. Salary's no problem.

QUIMBY: (Pause.) What did you do before in your job?

WILMA: Everything. I typed HIS business and personal letters, scheduled all HIS appointments, made HIS travel plans, paid HIS bills, ran errands for HIM. I even made sure HIS limo was washed every other day.

QUIMBY: Who was HIM? Uh, he?

WILMA: (Hesitating.) I knew which calls to put through, which ones to put off. I know how to get the best theater tickets at the last minute.

QUIMBY: Miss Caxton . . .

WILMA: Mrs. But call me Wilma, please.

QUIMBY: Where did you work?

WILMA: For the government.

QUIMBY: What department?

WILMA: Oh, the Congress.

QUIMBY: The whole Congress?

WILMA: Oh, I worked for (talking very low) a senator.

QUIMBY: Pardon? What did you say?

WILMA: (Quickly.) I worked for a senator.

QUIMBY: Really? That's very impressive. Who did you work for?

WILMA: (Pause.) Paul Logan.

QUIMBY: Logan. Oh.

WILMA: I can take that experience--I know--and put it to work for you.

QUIMBY: Logan. Selling government contracts.

WILMA: I never witnessed any such transactions.

QUIMBY: Selling food stamps to a black market.

WILMA: I don't know when he could have had the time.

QUIMBY: Providing special privileges to well-heeled constituents who visited Washington.

WILMA: (Getting distraught.) I just couldn't believe those things when I heard them.

QUIMBY: You couldn't?

WILMA: No. I worked for him for fifteen years. He was good to me and my husband. Why, just the other day, when the Senator found out George left me . . .

QUIMBY: George?

WILMA: My husband. He left me when everything broke loose. Anyway, Senator Logan called me. He was so concerned. He was very upset that he should be the cause of our breakup.

QUIMBY: (Incredulous.) Isn't Logan in jail?

WILMA: (Eyes watering.) No. Not yet, anyway. I'm afraid his days are numbered, though.

QUIMBY: Wilma, do you mean to say you didn't know what was going on?

WILMA: Of course not. I thought he was the most wonderful man in the world. Why, you should see what he's done for the mentally handicapped, the Scottish-American Auto Workers, the Washington Orchid Society, the . . .

QUIMBY: Settle down, Wilma. (Pause.) It's okay. (Pause.) You're still under quite a lot of stress from this, aren't you?

WILMA: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to unload on you. Things are a little tough now.

QUIMBY: Are you having a hard time finding a job?

WILMA: No one wants to come near me. They think I helped the Senator with all his "enterprises."

QUIMBY: Oh.

WILMA: And what with the FBI pestering me all the time . . .

QUIMBY: (Alarmed.) The FBI?

WILMA: Oh, yes. You should see them. It's been six months now, and they still come by every two weeks to question me. They don't believe I don't know anything.

QUIMBY: Here. (Gives her a tissue.)

WILMA: Thank you.

QUIMBY: You okay now?

WILMA: Fine. (Pause.) Well, how about it? Can I have a crack at it?

QUIMBY: You need more than a job. You need a herd of attorneys, a marriage counselor, a . . .

WILMA: I can't get any of those without a job. Listen, Miss Martin, being a secretary is all I know, and I can't find a job doing that. So I'm going to have to do something else. (Pause.) I can wait on your customers.

QUIMBY: Why did you come back to Newford?

WILMA: I thought I would have better luck in my home town,

where people knew me before . . .

QUIMBY: Why not? You can start tomorrow. Be here at six a.m.

WILMA: (Excited.) Thank you! You won't regret this.

QUIMBY: I hope not. This kind of salary is not what you're used to.

WILMA: (Resigned.) No. There was a day I could take a two-hour lunch and go buy three suits. He'd even let me used the limo when he didn't need it. It wasn't extravagant, but it was very comfortable. I guess I'll never see those days again.

QUIMBY: Maybe so.

WILMA: No. It's done. That's all.

QUIMBY: Six a.m.

WILMA: Sure. (Pause. As she leaves.) I'm a good secretary. But I learned something else working for the Senator. He and the others in that office became my second family. I know loyalty.

QUIMBY: Yes. Well, Martin Bormann was loyal, wasn't he?

(Knock. NICHOLAS enters.)

NICHOLAS: (Sees WILMA.) Busy?

QUIMBY: No, come in. Nicholas, meet Wilma Caxton. She's going to work out front. Wilma, this is Nicholas Restin.

NICHOLAS: It's a pleasure to meet you.

WILMA: Oh, I'm glad to meet you. I've heard so much about you. (To QUIMBY.) I must be going. I've got to go to bed early if I'm going to be here at six a.m. Good-bye. (She exits.)

NICHOLAS: She seems lovely.

QUIMBY: I hope it works out. Are you about ready to leave?

NICHOLAS: Yes! I'm so excited! It's been months since I've seen Boston. I've missed it so.

QUIMBY: You deserve some time off. Not for good behavior though.

NICHOLAS: So much has happened since we've come here. I

need a breather. Listen, everything is prepared for the Romney reception, and . . .

QUIMBY: (She smiles.) Don't worry. I can handle it.

NICHOLAS: I know. Give me a kiss. (She does.) Goodbye.

QUIMBY: You won't go to Boston and stay, will you? I couldn't manage if you didn't come back, you know.

NICHOLAS: Don't be ridiculous. I've come to terms with Newford. I may even like it one day. But I have to get out of it sometimes so I can remember what goes on in other parts of the world. Don't worry. I'll be back.

QUIMBY: You'd better. I'll miss you.

NICHOLAS: No, you won't. You can harass Jonathan and nuzzle up to Mike while I'm gone.

QUIMBY: Take care. (He exits. QUIMBY is getting her coat, ready to leave. JONATHAN enters.) Hello. You're just in time.

JONATHAN: For what?

QUIMBY: To take me to dinner.

JONATHAN: Uh. Well, okay.

QUIMBY: You serious? Don't you have any hot little mamas to snuggle with while you watch the Playboy Channel tonight?

JONATHAN: Well, we can do that if you'd rather.

QUIMBY: No, thanks. Dinner is fine. (JONATHAN seems preoccupied. He helps her with her coat.) Something wrong?

JONATHAN: No. Why?

QUIMBY: What did you want when you came by?

JONATHAN: We can talk about it over dinner.

QUIMBY: Why don't we talk about it now? You have something on your mind.

JONATHAN: I just wanted to know if you would cater an affair for me.

QUIMBY: Depends on how kinky it gets.

JONATHAN: (Attempting to laugh.) Heh.

QUIMBY: What is it?

JONATHAN: My sister is coming to town. I wanted to have a nice dinner buffet for her and a few friends. I want it to be small, but very special.

QUIMBY: Sure. You just name the day. Whatever you like.

JONATHAN: Oh, she won't be here for a couple of weeks.

QUIMBY: Good. Nicholas will be back by then anyway. Is that all you wanted?

JONATHAN: Yes.

QUIMBY: God, Jonathan, spit it out.

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: Is it about your sister?

JONATHAN: No.

QUIMBY: (Pause.) Tell me about her.

JONATHAN: What about her?

QUIMBY: (A little short-tempered.) Like her name maybe. Does she have a name?

JONATHAN: Sure.

QUIMBY: (Silence. He is still preoccupied.) Jonathan?

JONATHAN: Her name is Collette.

QUIMBY: Yes. Okay, that's a start. Collette. Collette Lazarus, perhaps?

JONATHAN: No. She was married once. She goes by Sayers now.

QUIMBY: Collette? Sayers?

JONATHAN: Yes. (He looks at her apprehensively.)

QUIMBY: Collette Sayers? Is your sister?

JONATHAN: Yes.

QUIMBY: I didn't know that. You never told me that. I knew she was from Newford, but . . .

JONATHAN: Yes. Well, they're not all from Texas and Tennessee. (No meaning to it.) We're very proud of her around here.

QUIMBY: I should say so. The female George Jones! Only three top ten hits this year, that's all.

JONATHAN: You listen to country music?

QUIMBY: I like her sound. It's very . . . raw. What's wrong here? You should be excited.

JONATHAN: I am.

QUIMBY: You are not. I think you're scared.

JONATHAN: What?

QUIMBY: That's what you are. Why?

JONATHAN: I'm not scared. I just want this visit over.

QUIMBY: Why?

JONATHAN: Oh, everybody loves her, all right. I love her. I kicked her out of Newford and gave her enough money till she made it on her own.

QUIMBY: Then what's wrong?

JONATHAN: I don't know. I just can't get along with her somehow. That's why I thought a nice, quiet dinner party--I don't know. Maybe it would help--loosen us up a bit.

QUIMBY: Can't hurt to give it a try.

JONATHAN: We can't seem to talk. She gets made at me. I get mad at her. She'll have me nuts before this is through.

QUIMBY: I've never seen anyone affect you like this. I like her even more now.

JONATHAN: I don't know what it is. She's crazy. Like a man, you know?

QUIMBY: No. Clear that up for me. This should be good.

JONATHAN: Well, she's wrecked every car she's ever owned. She can drink a fifth of whisky like it's a pint of Kool-Aid. She only hangs around guys. I mean, she has no girlfriends, you know? She likes hunting, fishing, all that kind of stuff.

QUIMBY: Oh. She has a good ole boy complex, eh?

JONATHAN: You're making fun now. Well, maybe I'm worried over nothing.

QUIMBY: Worried? Are you worried about her?

JONATHAN: Let's go eat. I just wanted to know if . . .

QUIMBY: You know I will. (Pause.) Where do you want to go?

JONATHAN: Home. To watch the Playboy Channel.

QUIMBY: Oh, yeah? Mike going to be there?

Lights fade. Scene ends.

SCENE 2

Two weeks later. In her office again. MIKE and QUIMBY getting it on. Knock on the door. They pause but do not answer. Resume their kissing. Another knock.

WILMA: Miss Martin. It's Wilma. (They still don't answer.) Are you okay?

QUIMBY: (Goes to door, opens it a little. WILMA peeps in.)

Yes, Wilma. Everything is fine. Could you leave us alone a while? I haven't seen Mike since . . . since . . . lunch.

WILMA: Mike? Oh. Sure. I know. Don't worry. I'll keep everyone away from your office.

QUIMBY: Wilma, the only one who wants in here is you. Nicholas is still gone. Ronnie won't be here till later. Besides, the door is locked.

WILMA: Okay. If anyone wants to see you, though, I'll handle them so you're not interrupted. I'm used to it. I've had a lot of experience at that--pretending the boss is out.

QUIMBY: Right. (Closes door. MIKE comes to her. They begin again. Definitely in heat.) You coming over tonight?

MIKE: Ummmm. When do you get off?

QUIMBY: (Laughing.) When you get there, of course!

MIKE: What are the plans?

QUIMBY: The usual. Drink. (Kiss.) Eat. (Kiss.) Screw.

(Kiss.)

MIKE: What a grind.

QUIMBY: Ain't it, though?

MIKE: Gotta go.

QUIMBY: Urgent? Surgery?

MIKE: Yes.

QUIMBY: Kidney transplant? Artificial heart?

MIKE: Ditzel.

QUIMBY: Ditzel?

MIKE: Removal of. From a finger. The man's an accountant. He can't calculate with that ditzel on his finger.

QUIMBY: Can't face the IRS in that condition, can he?

MIKE: Quimby.

QUIMBY: What?

MIKE: Bye. Anesthesia's wearing off. (They feel each other up again, then he exits. WILMA sticks her head in again immediately.)

WILMA: It's me, Wilma.

QUIMBY: (Rolls eyes.) Yes, Wilma? Somehow, I knew it was you when I saw your face. What's up?

WILMA: (Looks back toward MIKE, hesitates a moment, then continues.) Mr. Lazarus is here to see you.

QUIMBY: Send him in. (WILMA starts to leave.) Wilma, I know you think you have to guard this door, but you don't. If somebody needs to see me, you can send them on back, or they can knock on the door, or they can even walk in if it's open.

WILMA: Okay. I was just trying to . . .

QUIMBY: Your duty is to the customers out front.

WILMA: Sure. (She starts to leave and then comes back in.) You want me to send him back?

QUIMBY: (Giving up.) Sure.

JONATHAN enters with HAROLD THOMPSON, an obnoxious type who wears a shiny jacket that says "Collette" on the back. Wears jeans, boots, shades. Looks like a member of the Gatlin Brothers band.

JONATHAN: (Huffy.) Hey, Quimby, who's this Wilma? I thought she was going to take a blood sample before she let me in here. What's the idea, anyway?

QUIMBY: (Nearly speechless. Staring at HAROLD. He still has his shades on.) Sorry, Jonathan. She's new and over-zealous. Just ignore her.

JONATHAN: (Still a little huffy.) Well, it's not like I don't have any business in here, you know.

QUIMBY: (Still staring.) What did you want?

JONATHAN: This is . . .

HAROLD: Quimby?

QUIMBY: Is that you, Harold?

JONATHAN: Hal.

HAROLD: (He rips his sunglasses off.) It sure is, honey.

(He grabs her; she is very stiff.)

QUIMBY: Harold Thompson?

HAROLD: I can't believe it! How are you?

QUIMBY: Fine. You?

HAROLD: Great, just great.

JONATHAN: You two know each other?

QUIMBY: Yes. It's been a while, though. How long? Five years?

HAROLD: I'd say about that.

JONATHAN: Old friends?

QUIMBY: Not really. (Embarrassed.) We had a brief encounter once.

HAROLD: Encounter? Hell, we were married, weren't we, honey? (He is now very possessive.) But it didn't last so long.

JONATHAN: I know. We all know. Three months, right?

HAROLD: Yeah. Course, that includes the month she moved out before the divorce was final.

JONATHAN: (Loves seeing QUIMBY squirm.) Well, now, this is a coincidence. What about this? You two seeing each other again.

QUIMBY: (Ignoring JONATHAN.) What are you doing in Newford, Harold?

HAROLD: I work for Collette Sayers now. I came to see about the party for her Saturday night.

QUIMBY: (To JONATHAN.) Party? I thought this was going to be a small dinner buffet with a few friends.

JONATHAN: (Shrugs.) She's bringing the band and some others.

HAROLD: Collette loves parties.

QUIMBY: (Becoming her old self.) Why are you talking like that?

HAROLD: Like what?

QUIMBY: Like Loretta Lynn. You're from Pennsylvania. You

never talked like that before.

HAROLD: Oh, I just picked it up from being in the business. You know, all those laid-back types.

QUIMBY: What is your job?

HAROLD: Oh, I check everything out ahead of her arrival. Accommodations, acoustics, set-ups, favors, errands.

QUIMBY: Gopher?

HAROLD: Naw. Road manager. And it pays good, too.

QUIMBY: How wonderful for you.

HAROLD: Like this thing Saturday. Menu, guest list, all that.

QUIMBY: You don't have to worry. I'll take care of it. I just need a number and a time. (To JONATHAN.) Still going to be at your house?

JONATHAN: Yes.

QUIMBY: Okay. Just let me have the information as soon as possible.

JONATHAN: Sure. Might be a good chance for you and Hal to talk over old times.

QUIMBY: I don't think that would be wise.

HAROLD: Aw, Quimby, you don't still hold those things against me, do you?

QUIMBY: (Mocking.) Naw. How do you like working for Miss Sayers?

HAROLD: It's very exciting. I think I've finally found my niche, Quimby.

QUIMBY: And I was worried you wouldn't.

HAROLD: I really love it. I feel needed.

QUIMBY: Needed? That used to send you running!

HAROLD: I just couldn't find myself, that's all.

QUIMBY: I couldn't either, half the time. Let's see, in the year I knew you and grew to love you, you entered law school, dropped out, entered veterinary school, dropped out of that, and when we got married, you had decided on photojournalism. (To JONATHAN.) He took

all the pictures of our wedding himself. They turned out much like the NASA pictures of the journey to Mars and back.

JONATHAN: No fair likeness of the bride?

HAROLD: Well, I see you're doing okay for yourself. Nice little business you got here. Have you been here long?

QUIMBY: About six months.

HAROLD: It seems you're doing okay. Get married again?

QUIMBY: (Firmly.) No. You?

HAROLD: No, me either. (Silence.)

QUIMBY: Ever go back to school?

HAROLD: Naw. Too boring. Can't sit like that all day long. I heard you finished, though. I knew you would. How's your folks?

QUIMBY: Fine. I went back to visit not too long ago. They're doing well.

HAROLD: Your parents are great people. They were always

good to me, even maybe when most wouldn't have been.

QUIMBY: Yes, I know. (Silence.)

HAROLD: I have to leave. Guess I'll see you Saturday.

QUIMBY: Yes, Harold. I suppose that's unavoidable at this point.

HAROLD: Hal. Most people call me Hal now.

QUIMBY: You're still Harold to me.

HAROLD: Right. Bye. (He exits. QUIMBY stares after him.)

JONATHAN: So. That was him.

QUIMBY: Yes. And he's worse than I remembered him to be.

JONATHAN: Ever think Ronnie was right?

QUIMBY: About what?

JONATHAN: Three months isn't enough time to give a marriage.

QUIMBY: It was enough time to find him in our bed with another woman three different times. And then there

was the time I found him with three different women at once. (Pause.) God, he was crazy. Heard anything from your sister?

JONATHAN: No. She just sent your friend over to check things out. She's flying in Saturday.

QUIMBY: How long has it been since you've seen her?

JONATHAN: A year, I guess.

QUIMBY: Jonathan! That's terrible.

JONATHAN: Well, we've both been busy. Time just goes by before you know it.

QUIMBY: Still worried about it?

JONATHAN: Oh, no.

QUIMBY: I'll fix a dazzling buffet for her.

JONATHAN: Well, don't fix too much. (Grimaces, thinking.) She eats like a bird. Bye, Quimby.

QUIMBY: Bye. See you Saturday. (He exits. She stands, thinking.)

Lights fade. Scene ends.

SCENE 3

Divided set. Jonathan's house. Stage left, kitchen with a table and four chairs. Stage right, living room with bar far right. A wall divides the two rooms, a swinging door connects the two. A table parallel to the wall in front of the door holds the buffet for the guests. JONATHAN, HAROLD, BAND MEMBERS and PARTY GUESTS are milling between the buffet and the bar. NICHOLAS and RONNIE are behind the table in caterers' outfits. QUIMBY in street dress with them. Some music of the following plays in the background: Willie Nelson, Emmylou Harris, George Jones, Merle Haggard.

NICHOLAS: (To QUIMBY, bitching.) I should have brought my Walkman. I don't know that I can stand this for a whole evening. (In the manner of Salieri, arms in air.) AMADEUS! Where are you?

QUIMBY: You're in a mood, aren't you? Post-vacation blues?

NICHOLAS: Humph.

QUIMBY: Is everything in order?

NICHOLAS: Everything but the music.

QUIMBY: Nicholas, my dear, these affairs are every bit as important as those symphony fund raisers we cater.

NICHOLAS: Maybe so, but Haydn doesn't cause the decadence to fall, does he? (JONATHAN approaches. NICHOLAS busies himself around the food during the conversation.)

QUIMBY: (To JONATHAN.) When will she get here?

JONATHAN: I don't know. She should be here by now.

QUIMBY: Didn't you pick her up at the airport?

JONATHAN: Yes, but on the way home she saw a 1957 Thunderbird in a used car lot that she <u>had</u> to have. I left her and Harold there. I haven't seen either one since then.

QUIMBY: (pointing.) Well, Harold's back. He's over there.

JONATHAN: I'll go check with him. (He goes to HAROLD. They talk silently. HAROLD acts unconcerned.)

MIKE: (Enters, in a rush.) Quimby, hi.

QUIMBY: You made it.

MIKE: You know I can't pass this food up.

QUIMBY: You have to go back to the hospital tonight?

MIKE: Yes. But not for long. (As they talk across the table to each other, MIKE piles the food on his plate and they make their way down the length of the table.) Then I'm coming to your house with two bottles of wine--one for each of us.

QUIMBY: What an appetite! Are you bringing that damn beeper with you?

MIKE: No.

QUIMBY: I think I'll get one.

MIKE: For emergencies?

QUIMBY: Yes. Envision a peaceful Sunday afternoon. The plants are watered. The bike ride was invigorating. There's just enought time for a long bath and Frank Sinatra. Then that awful sound--

MIKE: BEEEP.

QUIMBY: Suddenly, you're shaken from your reverie. Some-

one's in pain . . .

MIKE: Chocolate cachexia.

QUIMBY: (As if talking into phone.) Administer Tobler's intravenously until I get there. Nicholas, sounds like we'll have to prepare for Gateau au Chocolat. Stat.

MIKE: Any mustard?

QUIMBY: (Handing it to him.) A Sunday afternoon shot, but what the hell. We've saved another one! You missed the pâté.

MIKE: Talk about real and imagined emergencies. I've got to eat. I haven't got long.

QUIMBY: (Softly.) See you. (He moves into the crowd. HAROLD approaches.)

HAROLD: Quimby, honey. (He puts his arm around her shoulder.) This is great stuff.

NICHOLAS: (Looking at HAROLD.) I draw the line at chummy, Quimby.

QUIMBY: (Removing HAROLD's arm. Warning, to NICHOLAS.) Nicholas. (To HAROLD.) Thanks, Harold.

HAROLD: (Holding his hand out to shake hands with NICHOLAS.) Hal Thompson. I've know Quimby for a long time.

NICHOLAS: Really? Nicholas Restin.

QUIMBY: Yes. Nicholas is invaluable to me.

HAROLD: Good to meet you. Yeah, I'm real impressed, Quimby. You've come along way since you were my bride.

NICHOLAS: (QUIMBY and NICHOLAS stare at each other, a moment of silence. Then, in a funereal tone:) Oh, Quimby. I'm so sorry. (He takes her hands and kisses them.) I . . . I didn't know.

QUIMBY: (Through her teeth.) Check the ovens, Nicholas. We may have forgotten something.

NICHOLAS: Certainly. (He exits.)

QUIMBY: (To HAROLD.) You know, Harold, what's past is past. And our marriage is past.

HAROLD: (Unconcerned.) But it will always be there, won't it?

QUIMBY: Where's Miss Sayers?

HAROLD: I don't know. (Nibbling.) She'll be here sometime. These musicians, they don't know what a schedule is.

QUIMBY: Well, you should fit right in.

HAROLD: What do you mean?

QUIMBY: You've missed a few appointments yourself.

HAROLD: Like what?

QUIMBY: Our blood test. The rehearsal dinner.

HAROLD: Aw, Quimby . . .

QUIMBY: You remember when you forgot to pick me up at work one day?

HAROLD: You still pissed about all that little stuff, honey. Things like that can eat away at you, you know.

QUIMBY: I know.

HAROLD: Ever think of me the way you used to, sweetheart? We never did really get to know each other.

QUIMBY: (Enter WILMA, who starts fluttering around one of the dishes on the buffet.) Later, Harold. (WILMA hustles some food from the table in a very sneaky manner.) Wilma, what are you doing?

WILMA: (Nervous.) Just watching out for the customers, like you want, Miss Martin. (She tries to go through the door. QUIMBY stops her.)

QUIMBY: Then why don't you leave those here? So the guests can eat them.

WILMA: I'm just trying to protect the shop.

QUIMBY: How? Is something wrong with them?

WILMA: Why don't you let me take care of it? Really, I'm used to this sort of thing.

QUIMBY: (Going for her throat.) Wilma! For the last time! I want to know what is going on! We don't protect each other around here; we cooperate. We're open! If

we've made mistakes, we correct them. We don't cover them up.

WILMA: Well. Okay, if that's the way you want it.

QUIMBY: It is.

WILMA: Tonight, after I made the drop . . .

QUIMBY: You took the receipts to the night depository at the bank, Wilma. I would hardly call that a drop.

WILMA: I heard on the way over here on the radio that Norton is recalling their strawberries.

QUIMBY: Why?

WILMA: Instead of rinsing them with water, they rinsed them with another dose of insecticide by mistake.

QUIMBY: Oh, no. And these are from . . . ?

WILMA: Norton. I went by the shop and checked the empty boxes. They said it wouldn't kill anybody, but it could make somebody awfully sick if they ate a lot of them.

QUIMBY: (Now she's hustling.) Get them out of here, quick. Don't let anyone even see them. And don't mention this to anyone, understand?

WILMA: (Beaming.) Oh, yes, of course.

QUIMBY: Here, let me take it. We don't want to throw it out. We'll make Norton give us a refund. (NICHOLAS re-enters.) Give Nicholas a hand, would you? (Pause.) And thanks, Wilma. (She goes through the door to the kitchen with the strawberries. She wraps it and puts it in a red box. She labels the box and talks as she writes.) Keep Out. Strawberries Romanoff. Not for consumption. (She puts the box on the table. As she is doing this, COLLETTE stumbles in the back door. She is bloody and bruised, very drunk. She is tall, thin, boyish, naturally pretty. She does not talk with a country accent. They stare at each other a moment.) Are you all right?

COLLETTE: Yeah. I'm great. (She has one large cut on her right arm. She goes to the sink, gets a kitchen towel, wraps the cut. She sits at the table. She is obviously shaky as well as drunk.)

QUIMBY: I'll get Jonathan.

COLLETTE: No. Wait a minute. My mind has to clear up before I talk to him.

QUIMBY: (Getting another cloth.) What happened?

COLLETTE: (Laughing, but weak.) That old Thunderbird I bought. I threw a rod and it threw me out. I landed on the bank beside the road.

QUIMBY: How did you get here?

COLLETTE: (She looks at QUIMBY, then her legs.) I guess my legs got me here. I'm not really sure.

QUIMBY: Did you walk far? (She puts the cloth on COLLETTE's head, tries to clean some of the cuts.)

COLLETTE: I don't think so. You're full of questions, aren't you?

QUIMBY: Yes, usually.

COLLETTE: Well, let me ask you one. Who are you?

QUIMBY: Quimby Martin.

COLLETTE: Oh, yes. Jonathan told me about you. You're a

baker or something, right?

QUIMBY: (Laughs.) Right. I know who you are, Miss Sayers.

COLLETTE: Collette. I'm sorry. Kind of rude of me. I just assume people know my name. (Silence. QUIMBY takes the cloth away, looks at the cuts on her head.)

QUIMBY: I'll call an ambulance. Those cuts don't look too bad, but . . .

COLLETTE: Not yet. I'm not ready for an ambulance yet.

QUIMBY: Coffee?

COLLETTE: (Quickly.) You want to see me throw up?

QUIMBY: (Quickly.) Coke?

COLLETTE: Coke. Yes. A Coke sounds good.

QUIMBY: (Getting Coke and bringing it to the table.) I really like your music.

COLLETTE: Thanks. I do, too. (Starts apologizing.) What I mean is . . .

QUIMBY: I know.

COLLETTE: Sometimes I think it's the only thing that holds me together.

QUIMBY: Beginning to lose its grip, isn't it?

(Silence. COLLETTE looks at her arm.)

COLLETTE: (Stretching her fingers a few times.) I hope I can still play the guitar.

QUIMBY: (Pointing to arm.) That's going to need stitches, you know. (Pause.) Why don't you want to talk to Jonathan?

COLLETTE: Because all he does is get mad at me.

QUIMBY: Why does he do that?

COLLETTE: Because I'm me. Because I can't seem to behave. Ever have that problem?

QUIMBY: (Serious. Innocent.) Not really. I suffer from the good girl syndrome pretty much. You know, good grades, cleaned my room every day. Grew up to be ambitious, efficient. That sort of thing.

COLLETTE: Sounds terminal.

QUIMBY: Could be if you didn't spice it up a bit. (Pause.) I did make one very grave error, though.

COLLETTE: Yeah? Sprinkled cayenne on the pumpkin pie, right?

QUIMBY: My marriage.

COLLETTE: Made in hell?

QUIMBY: Three months of misery.

COLLETTE: Well, you got out quick. Mine lingered on a couple of years. (Pause.) Ever think of him?

QUIMBY: Not until recently. I was married to Harold Thompson, your road manager.

COLLETTE: Hal? (Bursts out laughing.) That little fart?

QUIMBY: Yes. You don't know how it irritates me to admit it.

COLLETTE: I don't blame you. A person can't afford to make too many mistakes like that.

QUIMBY: Just remembering the whole incident was torture enough. Then he had to go and show up in person. (Silence.)

COLLETTE: I've always been a rebel. Always doing something my folks thought was terrible. They'd say, "You're wild, Collette."

QUIMBY: Really? Jonathan said that, too. You don't seem, uh--wild, to me.

COLLETTE: (Eyes QUIMBY, a little hurt.) Yeah? (Defensive.) Well, I am. I just ran a car off the road, after all.

QUIMBY: I thought you said it threw a rod.

COLLETTE: (Impatient.) It did. It did.

QUIMBY: Well, for a minute it sounded like maybe you were proud of what you'd done.

COLLETTE: Proud?

QUIMBY: You bear your rebellion like some people bear a disease. Like a badge. (Pause.) Of suffering.

COLLETTE: (Is angry, then tries to be light.) Ah, maybe

so. I don't think about it anymore. I just do it.

QUIMBY: What was the car you bought like?

COLLETTE: It was a beauty. White, leather upholstery, perfect condition.

QUIMBY: What happened in 1957?

COLLETTE: '57? Why?

QUIMBY: The car you bought. A '57 Thunderbird.

COLLETTE: Nothing. Nothing happened then.

Enter HAROLD, carrying a guitar case.

HAROLD: Quimby, there you are. I just . . . (Sees COLLETTE.) Collette, what happened to you?

COLLETTE: I had an accident in that old car.

HAROLD: You okay? I'll call . . .

COLLETTE: No, really. I'm fine. (Gets up, shaky.) Where's the bathroom? (QUIMBY points; she exits.)

HAROLD: She's really tough, you know.

QUIMBY: Sure, like puff pastry. Is that hers? (Pointing to guitar.)

HAROLD: Yes. I have to be going . . .

QUIMBY: (A spark.) Oh, do you?

HAROLD: I've got to head down to Murphysville to check it out. I'm never to let this out of my sight unless she's around. I'll leave it here for her, now that she's back.

QUIMBY: It was lovely seeing you again. (She offers her hand.)

HAROLD: (He keeps her hand.) Hey, why don't you fix me up a little pack of goodies to take with me?

QUIMBY: (She has to change tone very quickly in mid-sentence. She starts it out really steamed, then very suddenly she is all sugar without pause during the change of tone.) Get your own pack--I've got it ready for you, right here. (She hands him the red package.) Just for you. Strawberries Romanoff. Now promise, no sharing.

HAROLD: Thanks, Quimby. I knew--it says here not for consumption.

QUIMBY: Oh, don't tell me a big, burly man like you suffers from consumption.

HAROLD: (Puzzled.) Oh. (Enthusiasm regained.) I knew there was a soft spot in there somewhere for me. (He grabs her and kisses her against her will. While he is holding her, she grabs a large commercial-type heavy kitchen utensil and makes a motion as if she is going to conk him on the head. He can't see this. COLLETTE re-enters. HAROLD exits through the back door. This must all happen very quickly.)

COLLETTE: Don't do it, Quimby. (QUIMBY halts.) He keeps up with all my guitars. (QUIMBY puts the utensil down. She is still staring daggers out the back door.)

QUIMBY: I hope you can do without Harold for a couple of days.

COLLETTE: I can do without him for a lifetime, as long as I can find a guitar. (Sees hers propped up.) Ahhh!

QUIMBY: (Still looking out the back door.) Been throwing

up?

COLLETTE: You're not a good girl. Good girls don't ask questions like that. It was that damn Coke.

QUIMBY: (She faces COLLETTE, who is back at the table, getting her guitar out.) I'm going after Jonathan. Don't move.

COLLETTE: Don't worry. I don't think I can. (She starts playing Willie Nelson's "Crazy" on the guitar. QUIMBY goes through the door to the party.)

QUIMBY: Jonathan. (The party is about dead. JONATHAN is like a stone now.)

JONATHAN: Yes?

QUIMBY: It's Collette. She's in the kitchen.

JONATHAN: She finally decide to show up?

QUIMBY: She's been hurt, but I think she's okay.

JONATHAN: Wreck that old heap?

QUIMBY: Yes.

JONATHAN: I figured something like that.

QUIMBY: I'll get Mike. (She goes to MIKE. JONATHAN goes to kitchen.)

JONATHAN: (JONATHAN and QUIMBY look at each other. She starts playing again.) You shit.

COLLETTE: Good to see you, too.

JONATHAN: (Pause.) Quimby's gone after Mike. He can look at you.

COLLETTE: Okay, Jon. Whatever you say. (Silence. She stops playing.) You remember that time you sneaked the car and we drove all over the country?

JONATHAN: (Still pissed.) Seems like I remember something like that.

COLLETTE: Let's see. I was six or seven, so you must have been about fifteen. Dad wouldn't ever let you have the car, so you just took it one afternoon and you took me with you.

JONATHAN: Sure. That's been a long time ago.

COLLETTE: '57.

JONATHAN: What?

COLLETTE: 1957. Don't you remember?

JONATHAN: Didn't we stop at the drive-in?

COLLETTE: Yes. We got--I don't know--it seemed like a carful of food. You ate yours, then you ate mine. (She laughs.) And the girls. You were so good-looking--still are, mind you. You were teasing them, weren't you? They all wanted to be with you, but you were with your little sister.

JONATHAN: I always like having you around. You loved getting out and going. And talked and sang all the time, when we got out of the house.

COLLETTE: (Silence. Then she starts playing again.) That was the last time.

JONATHAN: For what?

COLLETTE: (Not looking at him.) That was the last time that I liked being with you.

JONATHAN: Why?

COLLETTE: Dad died. And you became just like him. Straight, withdrawn . . .

JONATHAN: (Blows up.) That's not so. I had more responsibility. But I wasn't like him. I'm not him now.

COLLETTE: (Silence for a long period.) I need a rest, Jonathan. (She looks up to him, he kneels in front of her. She puts her head on his shoulder. QUIMBY and MIKE enter.)

MIKE: Here, let me have a look. (JONATHAN gets up. MIKE looks her over.)

COLLETTE: There you are, you handsome bastard.

MIKE: What a way you have with words, Collette.

COLLETTE: About time for a thorough physical, don't you think?

MIKE: (He is very tender with her as he keeps examining. They are old friends.) Your hospital or mine?

COLLETTE: Yours. Something about all those digital readouts

that get me going.

MIKE: You'll need some stitches and a few X-rays wouldn't hurt. You were lucky, Collette. If I didn't love you so much, I'd strangle you. (To JONATHAN.) Jon, I have to go back anyway. Let me just take her on. You come to the hospital in a little bit, okay?

JONATHAN: Fine. Just don't let her drive. (To COLLETTE.) I'll be there as soon as I get rid of everyone here. (She nods.)

MIKE: Quimby, I'll see you . . .

QUIMBY: When you get there. Bye. (They exit, MIKE helping COLLETTE out. She eyes the back door a moment.) Just how well do they know each other?

JONATHAN: (Surprised, laughs a little.) They grew up together, that's all.

QUIMBY: Well, I think I know why you didn't want to see her.

JONATHAN: (Sarcastic.) Figured that out, did you?

QUIMBY: Because every time you see her, you don't know if

it's going to be the last time or not.

JONATHAN: (Silence.) Why does she do it? She's the only woman in the world I've been able to love, and she's determined to end up splattered all over the highway or with a pickled liver.

QUIMBY: And?

JONATHAN: And what? (Silence. QUIMBY stares at him. He shifts uncomfortably.) And . . . I hate her for it. (He throws something across the room.)

QUIMBY: Is she about to lose you?

JONATHAN: (Resigned.) Yes. She's about to lose me.

QUIMBY: Well, I hope she realizes she can't afford that right now. Maybe she does.

JONATHAN: Sure.

QUIMBY: Well, look, Jonathan. Sure she's reckless and crazy. But she keeps forgetting to die. So far, anyway. She couldn't even manage a good broken arm out of this one. She's at least thinking it over.

JONATHAN: (Pause.) She doesn't wear it well.

QUIMBY: What?

JONATHAN: Laid back. It doesn't fit anymore.

QUIMBY: No. Somewhere under all that is a woman in a rage.

JONATHAN: (Silence.) I'd better get going.

QUIMBY: Say, there's one thing.

JONATHAN: Hmmmm?

QUIMBY: About Collette being the only woman in the world you ever cared for . . .

JONATHAN: Loved. I said loved.

QUIMBY: Okay. Loved. Do you--ever--I mean, not romantically, of course, but . . .

JONATHAN: Yes? I can't wait for you to finish this one.

QUIMBY: Never mind.

JONATHAN: I like you. You know. Like I like Collette.

QUIMBY: (She smiles.) That pleases me.

JONATHAN: (He goes to her and kisses her. They're both a bit surprised, unsettled.) I'd better get to the hospital. (He starts to leave, stops, turns to her.) I don't know. You pull things out of me. Like she does.

QUIMBY: It's not me, or Collette. It's you pulling things out. (They stare a moment.) Goodbye. See you when? Monday?

JONATHAN: Probably.

QUIMBY: Call me. Let me know how Collette is doing. And how you're doing.

JONATHAN: Okay. (He exits.)

NICHOLAS: (Enters, singing "Whisky River" at the top of his lungs.) "Whisky River, take my mind, you're all I've got to take care of me . . . "

QUIMBY: Poor Nicholas. Has the evening been a strain?

NICHOLAS: Why do you ask, Quimby? Just because Wilma runs our recipes through the shredder instead of the

carrots, just because Ronnie walks around like a zombie because he hasn't had any sleep since he got married, and just because the guest of honor never showed up for a party that I've done my best work on since returning from Boston . . .

QUIMBY: It's your only job since Boston. And she did show up.

NICHOLAS: Really?

QUIMBY: Yes. But she left again. They took her to the hospital. She was in a car accident. Feeble attempt at suicide.

NICHOLAS: I've missed all the fun? You were in here with all the drama while I was out there with the Grand Old Opry? Quimby, I thought you were my friend.

QUIMBY: (She kisses him.) I am. I love you.

NICHOLAS: Actually, they're not a bad lot. They have hearty appetites and some of the music is quite touching.

QUIMBY: Why, Nicholas. I'm surprised at you.

NICHOLAS: Me, too. You'd better get me out of here.

QUIMBY: Let's clean up.

WILMA: (Enters with RONNIE, serving platters, etc.) It's all cleaned up. They'll never know we were here.

NICHOLAS: Careful, Wilma, that's what they said at Watergate.

QUIMBY: Ronnie, you've not said a word all evening.

RONNIE: Huh?

NICHOLAS: Good enough. That makes your quota.

QUIMBY: Go home.

RONNIE: Great. (He exits.)

QUIMBY: Is Jonathan gone?

NICHOLAS: Yes. He sped out of here like lightning, leaving a trail of retread, in case enyone should want to follow.

Lights are dimming as they gather their things to exit.

WILMA: Miss Martin, where did you put the strawberries?

QUIMBY: They're safe.

NICHOLAS: Harold Thompson. I never would have believed it of you, Quimby.

QUIMBY: Tragic, isn't it, to have such a past?

WILMA: Did anyone wipe the doorknobs with a handkerchief before we leave?

QUIMBY: God, is she pathological, or what?

THE END

VITA

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