

CHRONIC COMPETITION

by

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Synopsis

Three young systems-analysts are friends during the late 1980's. Their love and friendship are challenged in a competitive atmosphere at work and the fierce pursuit of happiness at home. The play ends with a wedding when a final confrontation between father and daughter brings about a necessary reconciliation.

NICK wants to win the Boston Marathon even if it kills him, MO wants to immigrate to Africa spurred by his unhappiness over a famous Boston shooting (The Charles Stuart case) and JODI feels the use of a turkey-baster will get her what she wants, a child, when NICK refuses to consider the possibility.

The second part of the play, or the frame-place, opens with the wedding of Nick and Jodi's daughter, JEANETTE. She has meanwhile lost her mother in skiing accident which has left her without the use of her legs. NICK redeems his original rejection of her by learning how to care for her but a greater sacrifice has now to come – when he hands her over to the bridegroom.

MO, plays a crucial role. He represents the state of social transition in which all three characters find themselves. His dream of an ideal world counterpoints their short-sightedness and self-obsessed solutions. JEANETTE values him and insists that MO gives her away at the wedding and makes the speech as father-of-the-bride. It is this slap in the face that NICK has to countenance. The tussle between father and daughter come to a climax when NICK learns the secret JEANETTE has been hiding from him since the accident.

Cast

NICK

He epitomizes the reigning ethic by ignoring his partner's wish to have a child without giving a real explanation. He is not only an ambitious competitor at work but is driven by the challenge of long-distant running when at home. This comes to be self-destructive when he ignores a threat to his health and well-being. His unfeeling selfishness climaxes when he leaves Jodi because she is having his child.

In the Second Act Nick has learned to love and care for his disabled daughter, Jeanette, but not without many edgy protests. When he learns the secret his daughter is keeping from him, Jeanette is finally able to break through his hardened shell.

JODI

Jodi is a young woman who is capable of loving another but she has lived so long in a state of insecurity, both in her profession and in an unsatisfying relationship with Nick, that when he refuses to have children, she does not consider leaving him. She contemplates using a sperm bank but in the end is grateful for Nick's unwilling contribution, completely disallowing his feelings in order to become a mother.

As a devoted mother, driving her daughter to ski meets and it is on one of these occasions that the car she is driving skids on the ice, hurtles down the mountain road causing a crash in which Jeanette loses the use of her legs and Jodi loses her life.

MO

When the play opens Mo has recently returned from California. He has found most of his friends have left Boston, which is in the grip of the notorious Charles Stuart case. This is not a backdrop to inspire or encourage Mo and he turns to his Nigerian girlfriend, Olachi, to save him. A low point in his life comes as he's sucked into the vortex created by Nick and Jodi's selfishness.

In Act Two Mo returns to Boston for the wedding. He has been living in Albany and raising three sons, a humbling experience which culminates with his final sacrifice, taking Olachi back to the homeland she misses.

JEANETTE – which can be played by the actor who plays JODI

Jeanette, the daughter of Jodi and Nick, has been a career skier. She suffers a fatal car accident and is confined to a wheelchair but this doesn't impair her personality. The shock of the accident robbed her of speech at first but hearing Jon sing and falling in love with him has given her back her voice and her joy in living. It is this secret that she is not yet willing to share with anyone else, especially her father.

JON'S VOICE – which can be spoken off-stage by either Nick or MO.

Note: the computer generated responses of the daughter's should be fast. The play can be performed without this computerized assistant, with Jodi's dialogue simply being in half-tones, unable to really be heard.

The pace of the whole play is fast and furious in all the passages where Nick is on stage.

AT RISE: NICK comes in from his morning run and shower. He's speaking to JODI - who is off-stage as he gets dressed. It is 1985)

NICK

No matter how early you get up in the morning, you can't get up before yourself. Wherever you go, there you are, been there, done that - and if by some supreme effort you better your record, it's by this much. (HE pinches his fingers together)

Then you realize you're never gonna win big, a big marathon, but neither is any other American. We have to live with that and realize when it comes to running it has to be personal best: everyone has to better themselves, beat their personal best. I was giving my blood sweat and bone marrow to-day; half-way through my toes started to bleed, I was clocking my speed because I can't have a whole day without a decimal point to think about. No white man wins anymore, we know that. We've probably always known it, but so what as long as I better my best. Perhaps I won't even place, but I could beat the first woman.

(JODI enters)

JODI

You'll be happy you've beaten the first woman?

NICK

I know it sounds bad, you get the gist.

JODI

I do. You're killing yourself. To beat the first woman.

NICK

Not just that, that's an excuse. To run my best.

JODI

But you're not fit enough to run, you know that. Not after last time.

NICK

I'll be fine. I'm grateful to marathons because if I hadn't run last time I'd never have known about the aneurysm.

JODI

But doesn't knowing...

NICK

I have to run the Boston. It's the only thing that makes life worth living.

JODI

What about self-abuse?

NICK(devilish smile)

That too!

JODI

(hears MO enter) Hallo, visitor!

(MO enters, glass in hand)

NICK

You're up early.

MO

Don't remember going to bed.

JODI

I knew it. The party started after we left. I told you we should have stayed on.

NICK

I had to run.

MO

No one came after you left.

NICK

No one came before we left. Oh, sorry, I didn't mean to...fact!

MO

Fact! But the day wasn't entirely wasted. I vacuumed, cleaned the toilet, set out ashtrays, BOUGHT ashtrays. .

NICK

Can I tell you something? You didn't WANT anyone to come. You didn't want them coming to your brunch. Who wants office geeks to come and eat your food off your plates?

MO

I now have three bottles of Bloody Mary mix.

JODI

So you have no complaint.

NICK

You don't want them messing up your apartment.

MO

Toilet rolls, I have numerous toilet rolls.

NICK

They guessed you never wanted them to come so they did you a favor and never showed.

MO

I have nice clean carpets.

NICK

They KNEW you wanted to keep your carpets clean. They know how finicky - hygienic you can be.

MO

You think that's why they didn't come? They were afraid of messing up my apartment?

NICK

Everyone remembers you wouldn't drink from that can being passed round.

MO

That was Christmas. I'm sorry but that was the way I was brought up. I have an aversion to germs. So to be popular I'd have to come down with the flu.

NICK

That would help.

MO

Dysentery?

NICK

They're scum! If I were you I'd do the American thing and turn up on Monday with an AK-47.

MO

I couldn't do anything like that.

NICK

Why not?

MO

It'd give you too much satisfaction.

NICK

Then I'll do it for you.

MO

That would still give you too much satisfaction.

NICK

Have yourself another drink. Or some anti-depressants.

(JODI enters)

NICK

They're herbal so you can take six a day. Look, no one comes to these things.

JODI

At the last office brunch only Henderson showed.

MO

Is that right?

JODI

And some lowly fish from M.I.S. But at least Henderson didn't show up with that smile of his.

NICK

JODI feels bitter about Henderson since she gave up smoking for him.

JODI

Yes, and I would have had to smile back. Hate that.

MO

Don't hate anyone on my account. Does anyone want another drink?

NICK

Jodi's hobby used to be smoking.

JODI

I used to read and smoke, smoke and read and feel complete. Without a cigarette, I can't get into a book.

NICK

(Sudden thought) You did send out hardcopy of your invites, as well as the e-mail invitations?

MO

Don't people read their e-mail?

NICK

I never got any e-mail from you.

JODI

Neither did I. You see, that's why.

NICK

You probably 'controlled deed' it by mistake.

MO

I don't think so.

NICK

I did that when I first asked JODI out. Thought she'd turned me down when it turned out...

JODI

He had an unconscious wish not to commit.

NICK

That's it! Let's face it, we work with bastards.

MO

You're right, I never wanted them to come anyway.

JODI

They talk about families, they drone on and on about us being one big family, one rich company, but we're not family on Sundays and Holidays, no, then we're on our own, the whole three days, whatever.

NICK

Righteous anger! Sometimes I fear for the glass doors.

JODI

The glass doors? He fears for the glass doors, not me!

NICK

I love the way she rages.

MO

Excuse me!

(MO exits)

JODI

He went to so much trouble.

NICK

Wouldn't wish that on my worst enemy. Well I would but not Mo. He's the best, more than appears on the surface.

JODI

How do you mean?

NICK

More insensitive than he appears on the surface.

JODI

Insensitive?

NICK

Kid glove on an iron fist.

JODI

It wasn't his birthday, I hope.

NICK

He wouldn't be so stupid as to give himself a birthday party.

JODI

Maybe they didn't come because of the shooting.

NICK

Another one? You mean because of the Charles Stuart thing? Nah!
That was last week. But I don't understand why Loopy Lucy never showed.

JODI(She does)

No? Ummm...

NICK

What?

JODI

She likes him and he doesn't like her. She never stops trekking past his desk in her short skirt and mohair sweater.

NICK

Oh that sweater! Have you seen that thing on her desk?
Looks suspiciously to me like a corset.

JODI

She says it's a Dream Catcher. Her Dream Catcher!

NICK

I don't get it.

JODI

She's looking for a man, don't get trapped in it.

(MO enters)

NICK

How come Loopy Lucy never showed up.

MO

Who?

NICK

The sweater chick who treks past your desk to the Ladies Room.

MO

Oh her. She said she was having trouble with her ovaries.

NICK

Ovaries seem to be the word of the decade.

JODI

Some of us HAVE them, some don't.

NICK (Perplexed)

What?

MO

I don't know anyone here anymore. They've all gone on. I made a few friends in L.A. but I never guessed when I came back there'd only be a few homies left.

NICK

You liked L.A.?

MO

No, but still...

NICK

Everyone from Boston I know has gone to California. I mean those who made it out of Winter Hill.

MO

You didn't.

NICK

Only because every time you move you slip back on the ladder. Even if you trade up, you don't have connections in the new place.

JODI

What about your girlfriend, Mo? Gorgeous woman. Ol...Ola...

MO

Olachi? She left - went back to Nigeria. Had to go.

NICK

She went back on you?

MO

Her work visa ran out. Or at least that's what she said.

JODI

Get her back.

MO

I'm working on it. Convincing her she'd be much better off in sub-zero temperatures with wind chill factors of minus forty.. She sounds happy over there.

JODI

Oh, what's that - happy?

NICK

Brain dead.

MO

But tell me this, is there alternative?

NICK

Mo asks the big ones. He's known for asking the big questions.

JODI

If you ask me, I think people are happy being miserable bastards. Henderson is.

NICK

It's a sad fact but people are not only miserable bastards, they're HAPPY being miserable bastards. Do you know, there's been research, to find out who are the happiest people in the world? They asked a number of nations, rich and poor and you know who qualified? Icelanders. They've got this huge island up there and not enough people to work it, so everyone has three jobs and they're HAPPY working three jobs.

MO

You wouldn't mind working three jobs if the people you were working with were happy.

NICK

I'm not sure I like happy people.

JODI

But look at this, Icelanders, they come home from one job and have to go right back out to another. Right? And then they wonder why they don't have enough people up there. Because they're all working three jobs. Catch 22.

MO

Catch 22, story of my life.

NICK

Running's the best revenge. Run rabbit, run.

JODI

Nick's addicted to jogging.

NICK

RUNNING! Yeah, I marathon.

JODI

Is 'marathon' a verb now?

NICK

It is in Boston. You'd like it, Mo. There's nothing like running solo for 26 solid miles.

MO

Ooh no, no I'm sure there isn't.

NICK

Wait right there... (NICK exits)

MO

I've seen you go by, he's got you into running.

JODI

Not any more. Trying to get pregnant.

MO

Is that right?

JODI

Confidentially of course.

MO

Er, yes! Of course.

(NICK enters wearing mask)

NICK

This is mine but I'll lend it to you first time out.

MO

Er, thanks but no thanks.

NICK

Diesel fumes, diesel kills.

MO(handing it back)

I'm not wearing that in a residential neighborhood.

NICK

Knee pads, elbow too. Got you a knee brace. Good sneakers and you're home free. You'll love running. Great sport - clean without the screaming.

MO

This runnings' your thing. I won't be able to keep up. No one I know runs.

NICK

Are you trying to tell me..no, look who wins every time, look who wins the Boston?

MO
Africans, but I'm an American.

NICK
Best sprinters on the planet. The way you're made, it's in your bones. Straight from your ancestors!

MO
Ummm, some of them didn't run fast enough.

NICK
Of course, you've gotta enjoy the pain and discipline.

MO
Now you're beginning to sound kinky.

NICK
Don't get me wrong. Pain and humiliation, that's wrong.

MO
Yeah, liking pain.

NICK
Talking the right kind of pain.

MO
Let me sleep on it.

(NICK begins to water a big tray of dirt)

MO
What's that you're doing?

NICK
Jodi says she likes being up high but she misses a lawn
So I'm proving we can grow grass on the balcony. What time?

MO
In the morning? I don't know. I'll let you know.

JODI
You don't have to go.

NICK
I'll be round four, five o'clock tomorrow morning.

JODI
I thought you were staying for brunch.

MO

I have five quiches to eat.

(MO exits)

NICK

Sweet man, a very very sweet geek.

JODI

Not a good idea to have an office party. People hate each other at the office.

NICK

You think they didn't come because of the shooting?

JODI

What's that got to do with Mo? It was nowhere near here.

(NICK kisses her)

NICK

If you're quitting on me, I'll run with Mo. Rick can't keep up and Jerome says I slow him, so Me and Mo might be about right. If I can get him up to speed. It's tough trying to get you out of bed.

JODI

You used to try and get me into bed.

NICK

I will again soon, after the third week in April.

JODI

How about now? I'll give you a massage if you want.

NICK

Perfect, feet are killing me.

(JODI exits. NICK relaxes on floor, legs apart. JODI enters with towel and lotion, puts a seductive hand on leaps)

his leg. He

NICK

Don't do that.

JODI

Sorry, thought you'd like it.

NICK

Caught me off guard.

JODI

If I was nicely relaxed, I like a hand on my crotch. Wouldn't make me jump.

NICK

Difference between us.

(JODI begins massage)

Don't you love Sunday? Nothing to do all day, except look forward to tomorrow.

JODI

Wonderful.

NICK

What are we having for dinner? I perform better on root vegetables.

JODI

Have to get you more root veg then. Oh, were you talking about running?

I was thinking...maybe I don't love you enough. Maybe that's why you run.

NICK

You don't love me?

JODI

I'd like to love you more.

NICK

Have more sex?

JODI

No, have, give you more LOVE! In general. I'm speaking out of my insecurities but then who isn't? No, I'd really like to be more loving.

NICK

Ouch!

JODI

Sorry, tension in my hands. You don't want me to love you more?

NICK

No, you do fine.

JODI

Fine, what's that? C? B? A minus? I want to be good at love, extremely good! That's probably why I want a kid, to prove I can love someone for as long as it takes.

NICK

And you're saying you don't love me like that?

JODI

How could I?

NICK

Wait a minute...wait a minute...

JODI

And what about you loving me?

NICK

I thought we were talking about you. Of course I love you. You don't want a kid, at least that's what you said. Don't tell me you've changed your mind

JODI

Not really.

NICK

What? I thought we agreed. You're not doing an Adelaide on me.

JODI

Oh shush, I'm not Adelaide.

NICK

I thought we loved each other just the way we are.

(JODI gets up)

JODI

I may have put you off, talking about having a baby.

NICK

Because this is what happened with Adelaide.

JODI

I know, and you're not exactly flattering me.

NICK

pills? Why? What do you mean? You have been taking your

JODI

Don't worry, I won't get pregnant without your permission.

NICK

I hope not.

JODI

You know so.

NICK

That's okay, then.

JODI

Perfect!

NICK

about you. Come back here. I love you. You know I'm crazy

JODI

I know.

NICK

No 'buts'.

JODI

No 'buts'.

(THEY kiss. NICK has a leg cramp)

JODI

Now what?

NICK

Usual leg cramp. Nothing. Come here you gorgeous woman.

(HE grabs her for a backward bend, stops)

JODI

What's the matter now?

NICK

Arm cramp! People don't realize the strain that's put on runners' arms. They use them more than you think.

(HE flaps his arms)

JODI

Arm cramp? You could be having a heart attack!

NICK

On thanks!

JODI

How do I know? You have this aneurysm.

NICK

That's nothing. Come back here. Where are you going? What are you doing?

JODI

Watering the grass for you. I don't know why I'm doing it.

NICK

I've watered to-day. Twice. Now where...

JODI

Your heart is never going to take the strain of a marathon and an orgasm. You better save yourself. I'm going for a walk.

(SHE exits, leaving him on floor)

END OF SCENE ONE

Scene Two

Sunday evening. MO and NICK holding cocktails contemplate a dinner out.

NICK

Dancers never wear glasses. They're boss of their bodies. I went out with a dancer once. You've got to, at least once. She was the slave of some fake Russian or Ukrainian who'd hypnotized her not to eat, she spent hours honing her limbs into hard wood. There wasn't much left of her to hypnotize. For three years I was in love with a broom. But when she broke an ankle I realized I didn't want to chauffeur her around. It was her dancing I loved. But after we split I never saw any dancing, so what was that all about?

MO

I don't know.

NICK

This was before I took up running.

MO

My dad says running on concrete pulverizes the knees worse than a trip to Mecca.

NICK

Oh your dad...

MO

What about him?

NICK

But He's your dad. I never say, my dad says... It's not something I'd say. go ahead. What does your 'dad' say?

MO

It wears down the cartilage.

NICK

An eighty-six year old woman runs the Marathon. If she has enough, then you should. And there's a man who runs with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

MO

How far? I was roadkill out there, they don't see me.

NICK

You need arm reflectors.

MO

I need flashing head and tail lights. In Barbados no one even thinks of running.

NICK

You've never been to Barbados.

MO

'Bout time I went.

NICK

Have you ever tried Speedfeed - with Vita-aid.

MO

Working out at the Gym's much safer. If you collapse on the Stair master, someone's going to step on you eventually.

NICK

The Gym, where's the thrill in waiting for the Stair master?

MO

I can get very dangerous waiting for that.

NICK

Dangerous, there's no danger in Health Clubs.

MO

They can be very dangerous. You can meet someone.

NICK

Have you ever had a second wind? Nope? I've had three or even a fourth...a FIFTH wind! I'm talking about a mind-blowing rush of euphoria. Let me tell you something, running changes the brain, completely dematerializes certain cells, reduces not only fat but brain cells. Think about that.

MO

In the brain? Do we have any control over which ones.

NICK

Unwanted ones.

MO

Can I erase things like the Stuart case?

NICK

We've got to, haven't we?

MO

Where is Jodi?

NICK

On this walk I told you about. (Gives him flier) Sponsored walk for hunger. If they took that energy people waste walking and actually did something about poverty and hunger.

MO(reading brochure)

Like what? Move people to where the food is.

NICK

Right, something like that. War on Hunger! Hunger's a weapon of war, isn't it? If we're honest. We had words over why there was so much hunger. I said it was due to famine because of over-population. A chance remark and she flipped.

MO

Isn't hunger more like - due to not distributing the food there is.

NICK

You're right, you're so right! It's our fault. We consume most of the world's resources so if there's any over-population problem it is in this country. She wasn't listening. PMS! Pissed Off Men Syndrome. Can I tell you something confidentially, about Jodi and me without taking advantage of our friendship...

MO

No, perhaps not.

NICK

Because I don't want to involve you if you don't want to be.

MO

No, I don't want to know.

NICK

Confidentially, scrap that...officially and unofficially off the record, JODI wants...to be a mother. Have you any idea what a disaster that is? I can see you don't. She's doing an Adelaide on me. Talking, talking kids and that means that pretty soon I'm going to be dumped.

MO

Because you don't want kids. But at least that's a good reason.

NICK

No it isn't. What do you mean? It's just an excuse. An excuse to get out

of relating to me and start relating to a bunch of kids, that I don't want.
How's that?
How about you? You've never said, do you want them?

MO

I'm still working on getting a girlfriend.

NICK

I can't believe it's happening to me again.

MO

Women do like to have kids.

NICK

Not all women.

MO

In general.

NICK

But we talked about it...

MO

I'm not saying they like looking after them.

NICK

Jodi's not going to give up work, so what...drop them in day care for eighteen years. What's the point of that?

MO

As I said, women like having kids.

NICK

Will you stop saying that!

MO

And if a woman wants kids, there aren't many ways of stopping her from having them unless you refrain entirely like I do.

NICK

Sure, you...ha! You pretend to be celibate to turn women on.

MO

It's a hard thing to prove but I've forgotten how the dang thing works.

NICK

Get her back from Nigeria.

MO

Or even if it's still attached.

NICK

Get Olachi over here if you miss her.

MO

Now why would I miss a woman who makes me feel like a king? They're doing ceremonies over there to make me into a king.

NICK

Doesn't sound very American. And I can see now, that's a crown you've been wearing.

MO

I'm not objecting.

NICK

Get her over here. What have you got to lose?

MO

Half my salary for the rest of my natural life?

NICK

Now you're talking.

(MO exits to kitchen area for ice)

NICK

You know what's happening in China? They've limited kids, one per family, or is it one each person - I can never remember. What about that?

MO

I can't speak for the Chinese.

NICK

Why not?

MO

I don't want to. Course it may be the old trick to take her up the aisle, halter to the altar. She wants to be a bride and has a plan to get you tied.

NICK

She doesn't want to get married, she's just become a senior v.p. She's moving up the ladder faster than I am.

MO

Umm...

NICK

And still complains about hitting a glass wall.

MO

She's done it again? Hurt herself?

NICK

I mean glass ceiling. She complains about not being offered a stab at the big new contracts, like the Soaz. And I don't know why she wasn't offered one, Henderson likes her more than he likes me. Were you offered a stab at it?

NICK

The Soaz contract?

MO

What about it?

NICK

You must know about it.

MO

I know.

NICK

So? You're interested too, aren't you?

MO(from Kitchen area)

People's 'fridges are interesting, you've got cake behind the cranberry juice.

NICK

Have some.

MO

Two-year-old-cake!

NICK

Ate some yesterday and it tasted great. Think how our bodies can use the kind of preservatives that must be in that cake.

MO

I don't think JODI's making an empty threat about wanting - youknowwhat. There's something in the freezer.

NICK

What?

MO

I saw it when I was getting out the ice-tray...

NICK

What is it?

MO

I recognized the name because I saw a piece about them on Sixty Minutes.

NICK

SIXTY MINUTES? This must be something of news value then.

(NICK exits to 'fridge to look
and returns with packet)

NICK

What clinic is this? Some health thing? (feels packet) Tubes.
Comes from California.

MO

Yep, I can guess what it is.

NICK

I can't. Unless it's that gel she uses on her face. I'll have to open it up
and have a look. (HE opens envelope, and reads)
Dear Miss...Please find enclosed the specimen you requested... Do you
think, are you thinking what I'm... What are you laughing about? Do you
know what this is?

MO

No, but I can guess.

NICK

Have a good laugh, enjoy yourself, but I'm not convinced, I'm certainly
not sure.... It can't be... In OUR 'fridge.

MO

The 'fridge, yes, cuts to the quick. Freezer to be exact.

NICK

Mo, say something. Say something here. I'm having a coronary.

MO

I love women. I like men but there's something about women that gets
me every time. Goddamn GETS me!

NICK

I already have an aneurysm now I'm having a heart attack.

MO

I love the way women, no matter what, get away with it.

NICK

But it must be a joke.

MO

They get away with everything. That's why I love women.

NICK

That's why you love them? What's Olachi getting away with?

MO

I don't know yet.

NICK

Jodi's not getting away with this. Not that I want to interfere with her life-plan but if it really is...we need to thaw it out then, to be sure.

MO

Don't know about that.

NICK(crossing to Microwave)

What number?

MO

Number of what?

NICK

On the microwave?

MO

I put everything on 2.

(HE exits to kitchen, we hear Microwave.)

MO

Is this a good idea?

(NICK returns)

NICK

I put it on 'thaw'.

MO

Is all this...okay?

NICK

What's wrong?

MO

Never thought, never entered my mind I'd be doing this. (HE picks up

letter and reads it) Says 'specimen' which to me implies experiment...

NICK

That's what it is then.

MO

So we shouldn't be...

NICK

I can't believe she'd do a thing like that to me. I'm talking about Jodi, the woman of my dreams. And now I find out she's sent off for stuff and that she is going to dump me.

MO

You can't say for sure.

NICK

She's planning to leave me.

MO

Maybe there's some other explanation. Maybe it's for a friend.

NICK

She hasn't got any friends that I don't know about.

MO

Ask her. Ask her.

NICK

I will. But she knows how I feel, she knows I'm dead set against having kid.

MO

But you can't change your mind about that?

NICK

I can, but I'm not GOING TO.

MO

Of course men often don't have a choice in matters like this.

NICK

Pro choice. I am pro choice.

MO

Right. But sometimes, things happen.

NICK

Like what? Do you have any children you don't know about?

MO

No. None that I know about.

NICK

Then why has she done this?

MO

Because she wants kids and (beat) You haven't had it? That little snip we hear so much about these days?

NICK

What little snip? Not such a little snip, I don't think... But anyway I don't think...I will if Jodi wanted me to, of course, but she seems fine with me the way I am.

MO

Not that there's anything wrong with having one. Don't get me wrong.

NICK

Don't get me wrong. I am not that crazy to let a doctor anywhere near me.

(NICK goes to kitchen, gets tube out of microwave)

NICK

Look at this.

MO

Do I have to?

(THEY both look at tube in light)

MO

Yeah that looks like it. The right amount of viscosity.

(NICK gets magnifying glass)

MO

What are the ethics on this?

NICK

Don't go moral on me.

MO

I don't know. I do still go to Church.

NICK

It said in the letter it was an experiment...specimen, implies experiment.
(beat) She's coming!

MO

Now I had nothing to do with this.

NICK

You found it. Are you backing out on me?

MO

Yes...

NICK

You can't, you agreed with me.

MO

I don't, I don't agree with anything you've done or said in the last ten minutes but I don't have to - to be your friend.

NICK

Of course not (corrects) but PRETEND TO!

(JODI enters, exhausted.

NICK hides envelope and tube behind cushion)

JODI

Hi there, what's been happening?

MO

How was the walk?

JODI

Exhausting. And boring.

NICK

Walking's boring.

JODI

That's why you eat. And they push drinks on you, orange juice, coke, run after you as you walk by and then hamburgers and hot dogs. French fries with ketchup, while you're walking.

MO

Maybe it was a Walk for the HUNGRY?

JODI

Not it wasn't. Hunger.

MO

I'm sure they appreciate it.

NICK

If they did something political with that energy people put into walking and did something about hunger...

JODI

Like what?

NICK

Buy a couple of poor countries.

MO

That's bad.

JODI

Thank you for your check, Mo. I paid it in, and actually walked more than my pledges. I appreciate the donation.

(MO gestures, 'nada')

NICK(to JODI)

How many miles did you walk then? How many?

JODI

You can't donate now. The walk's over.

NICK

I can't donate?

JODI

It's too late!

(JODI exits)

NICK

It's too late, that's what she said. About donation, donate. With that look... Does that mean she's already done it?

MO

She can't have, the package wasn't open. I wonder where she found out about it.

NICK

She must have gone on the wacky web.

MO

I suppose so, if they were advertising. That must be it, maybe it's an advertisement.

NICK

Don't try and make me feel better, this smells of purposeful research.

MO

I suppose it does. Takes the usual randomness out of it.

NICK

What usual randomness?

MO

From all I hear, it's usually an accident.

NICK

Makes it hard call something that arrives by mail an accident.
An accident I could tolerate. An accident.

MO

You mean, an alcoholic accident or something?

NICK

That's right. If she'd come and confessed she'd made a mistake, you know after a night of zombies at the club and perhaps a cozy nightcap....you know, we all make mistakes, that's how most of us came to be here in the first place.

MO

You mean while she was drunk, or while you were drunk?

NICK

Not me. When I get drunk, I'm out for the count. No, but if she'd had some date drops or something, or been raped, or even had a great time with someone else...some famous person. You know it happens.

MO

Doesn't sound like Jodi.

NICK

No, but everybody's HUMAN. All I'm saying is I'd rather anything than this....this cold betrayal with a scientific instrument.

(Beat)

(JODI enters with Speedlink)

JODI

Are we going out to eat, because I have to get dressed, and have we got any painkillers?

NICK

What's the matter?

The usual.

JODI

What?

NICK

Cramps...

JODI(not wanting to say)

Oh, really? That's interesting. Yes...sorry about that.

NICK

That's cramps, not PMS.

JODI

Right!

NICK

Having a baby helps apparently, re-aligns the uterus.
Where are they?

JODI

NICK

Why should I know where the painkillers are?

JODI

Because you practically kill yourself every week.

MO

Every week?

JODI

Jogging!

NICK

RUNNING!

(JODI exits)

NICK

You see what's bugging her.

MO

But periods bug most women most of the time.

NICK

She's never complained about them in public before.

NICK

Don't look at me like that.

MO

I'm thinking about something else.

NICK

Don't feel sorry for her.

MO(Falsely obedient)

Okay!

NICK

I've been through all this before with Adelaide. That's what happened there, another one agreed not to have any kids and changed her mind on me. They can't seem to keep to 'no kids' even if they agree in the beginning. They don't get it. I don't want someone to come up to me and say, hey Nick this is going to be your life from now on, day care, car pooling, you know. I don't think anyone has the right to do that.

MO

But why don't you...

NICK

I've seen it happen to friends of mine, time and time again. They get suckered into it. How about a ferret, they're affectionate? I could live with a pet...parrots, snakes. Rabbits. We could let them have the run of the place, as long as they don't get out.

(JODI returns)

MO

That's a very nice...what is it?

JODI

Wrap! Thank you for noticing it. What do you think NICK?

NICK

Oh, nice...not like you is it...to wear something like that. What's that? A shawl?

JODI

Yes, it's a shawl. I can take it off though.

MO

I like it. Feminine.

JODI

That was the idea.

NICK

I think it's...vague, very vague. You gonna sit on the beach wearing that?

JODI

In the summer, yes. With mothers and kids.

(SHE exits to kitchen)

JODI

How is it going, Mo? The running?

MO

I'm out the race, I may have got the nomination but the latest news is I'm out of the running race. And I can see why you worry about his heart.

JODI

I try not to, but I've seen him crawl past the finish line.

NICK

Finishing is what I call winning.

JODI

I've seen him winning. And I'm worrying about myself because if anything happens, I'll have to look after him. I can't be a good nurse.

NICK

Yes you would be.

JODI

Don't want to be.

NICK

Olachi will give you nursing lessons.

MO

I'm sure Jodi'd be a good nurse, if she wasn't a great software engineer.

JODI

Thank you Mo. I have no intention of nursing anyone over the age of...you know, a baby.

NICK

Oh is that right? Really? Don't mind coming out and saying it? Go ahead, what are you waiting for? HAVE ONE!

(HE goes behind JODI's back and gets out
tube.

Places it on table. MO removes it, in order
to hide it. JODI sees him with tube.)

JODI
What's that?

MO
Something NICK gave me.

NICK
Yes, for your...running, a tube of...

MO
Protein!

NICK
Right! You know that stuff the bees make, you used it...royal jelly,
that's it.

MO
Royal jelly?

NICK
YES!

(MO gives it to NICK)

NICK
I put it in my drink...

(MO gives NICK his drink
and he empties tube in his drink)

JODI
Excuse me a minute, I have to check the fridge.

tray (SHE exits, and NICK empties glass into dirt
while MO has turned away.)

MO(turning back & seeing empty glass
draws wrong conclusion)
Now I've seen everything, now I know why I come here - to see
everything.

(JODI returns)

JODI
That was my property, wasn't it?

NICK
Not exactly yours...

JODI
Yes, exactly mine!

MO
Nutrient supplement...

JODI
That was mine. My property. You deliberately destroyed that

sperm.

MO

Excuse me, I'll go and order...get a table.

NICK

Don't go now!

MO

You don't need me...

NICK

Because I'm going. I've come over with this urgent desire to run a few miles.

JODI

I wasn't going to use it.

NICK

So that's why you sent away for it, because you weren't going to use it.

JODI

I wanted to see how easy it was, and go through the process to find out.

NICK

Whose is it? Or dare I ask.

JODI

I don't know him. I know things about him. He's dead, I thought it'd be easier that way.

NICK

Dead, do you hear that Mo?

MO

That must make you feel better. I suppose.

NICK

Some poor dead guy's stuff What was he a soldier?

JODI

No, it was donated thirty years ago.

NICK

So this was old stuff then, discounted.

JODI

More valuable, less polluted with radiation.

MO

I knew it, ours is getting weaker with every nuclear leak.
It's was just a joke, wasn't it Jodi? A kind of joke.

JODI

I never thought I'd actually use it, it was an experiment.

NICK

I'm cracking up. My girlfriend, the one and only woman in my life
sends away for some poor dead guy's sperm, and really thinks this
is a great idea. To have a kid with a ghost.

MO

I'll go on ahead. See you later.

(MO exits)

JODI

You didn't want to be involved, I don't want us to split
So, it's the best solution. And there'll be no complications if we do
split.

NICK

Oh I see, great. Well, then go ahead. Order
some more. Send the bill to me.

(MO exits. JODI slumps)

JODI

I wish I could...I wish you could...understand what it's like to be me in
this body. Get up to the alarm every morning, shower, go to work all
day in a suit and jacket, forgetting about my breasts. I was as well be a
man. A man does swim out of my vagina when I get to the desk, it's he
who deals all day in the office and when I come home I want...I want to
go back to being a real woman.

NICK

The trouble is we live in a block that doesn't allow animals.
We go to shopping malls that don't allow them. I'd like to have a dog or
a cat.

JODI

I don't think it'd make it any better.

NICK

You see...you're doing it to me. Same as Adelaide.

JODI

I'm not. I'm not trying to break it off.

NICK

I don't think I'm being selfish, soon there won't be any room left on the

planet for the big animals, baboons, giraffes, there's only room now for them in zoos.

JODI

So what, they live in zoos, like we do. Glass booths.

NICK

Why don't we get a goldfish?

end of Scene Two

Scene Three

(MO is doing push ups, warm ups, he's in running gear.)

NICK (from offstage)

Been running without me?

MO

Beginning to feel the benefits. Get up with a glow in the morning, got springs in my feet.

NICK(Offstage)

I told you what running does.

MO

Could be, I've heard from Olachi.

NICK(offstage)

You going to run the Marathon with me?

MO

Boston is surrounded by Hills, Heartbreak Hill, Bunker Hill, Winter Hill.
I wouldn't mind running the Marathon next year.

NICK (off stage)

Great!

MO

But surely you aren't going to run it this year?

NICK(Off stage)

I sure am.

(NICK enters on crutches. HE is unused to

them and is exhausted by effort.)

MO

With your shin splints?

NICK

Worse than it looks. I could run with you now if didn't hurt so much.

MO

You're still going to run?

NICK

See, that's my number come.

(HE shows it to MO)

MO

Great, you can use some more safety pins.* In case you'll soon be diapering...

NICK

You know me, I usually do what I set out to do.

MO

That's usually a good thing. Usually.

NICK

I have a favor to ask you.

(JODI enters)

JODI

Hi there handsome. Any news of Olachi?

MO

Good news! She's coming with her cousin next week. Her cousin's pretty cute too.

JODI

That's not what I should be hearing from you, you're more poetic than that.

NICK

You are!

MO

Sometimes.

(JODI exits)

NICK

The Cal Mayo clinic has been bothering us, sending us stuff we didn't ask for, just because I made an innocent call about trying to replace the stuff. Since I felt I owed it to Jodi anyway. I

learned

some interesting facts.

MO

Go on.

NICK

You can bank your future. Your future, well, present stuff – for the future. To have your own banked in a sperm bank, that no one else can draw out of course. Safe in a locked vault.

Some of your own stuff. While we're still fit and healthy. Back up if anything happens to the crown jewels. Sounds a tad weird I know but it makes more sense than having your blood stacked up in some blood bank – which they do.

MO

Who does?

*(runners collect them)

NICK

It'd always be there, on tap

MO

Let me get this straight...say again?

NICK

And I'd also feel I was doing something for Jodi. Look at it like this, if... and only if mind...if I don't make it back from the race, Jodi will still have a chance to have what she wants.

MO

You're not serious! You aren't still going to run if there's any chance...

NICK

Run? Yes, I am, no stopping me.

MO

That is so...you are so...let me tell you, and you won't like it, reminds me of a joke. You know what the last words of a redneck are? The last words of a redneck are "watch this".

NICK

That is a sick joke at my race's expense.

MO

You got it.

NICK

Look, as I said I have a favor to ask.

MO

I'm not going to be able to run this year.

I'm not up to snuff.

NICK

No, no, I'm talking about...my donation.

I've done it to send off. It wasn't easy but I've got threesome wasn't as easy as you think. Getting it into the cone.

MO

You managed to fill a cup? Half a cup?

NICK

Then I had to instantly freeze it according to the Cal Mayo clinic but our freezer's not cold enough. They say 20 and mine's only 15. And I don't want her to find it. Because it's supposed to be a surprise if anything happens to me... You can do me a big favor if you take care of it and keep it in your freezer until I manage to buy some dry ice to mail it off?

MO(backing off)

I could buy some dried ice for you?

NICK

I've ordered it, should be delivered tomorrow. But what about overnight?

MO

In my fridge???

NICK

Freezer. Won't hurt anything in deep freeze. I have put it in the freezer, so if you can go and get it out now before she comes back. Go on. Or is this asking too much?

MO

No, no. Anything to help a friend out.

(HE exits to kitchen. NICK drops a crutch JODI enters to pick it up)

NICK

Don't fuss. I'm not completely helpless.

JODI

Trying to prove I'm a good nurse.

(JODI exits. MO slides in)

MO
Can't find it.

NICK
In the ice-cream container.

(MO exits and brings a pint tub in)

NICK
Buried in the ice-cream.

MO
Chocolate Almond fudge? Good choice! Can I eat the ice-cream? Just kidding.

NICK
Hurry home with it now and if you want to eat, come back for breakfast. If you don't mind...

MO
No, only too happy to oblige.

NICK
Thanks. I'd do the same for you anytime.

(MO exits. JODI enters)

JODI
Isn't he staying for your famous coffee and croissants?

NICK
He came for some ice-cream.

(SHE is puzzled and exits. MO re-enters)

MO
What temperature does the freezer have to be?

NICK
Fifteen, no twenty. It says in the letter...take the letter.

MO
I can't believe fifteen degrees isn't cold enough.

(JODI re-enters)

JODI
Early for ice-cream! I didn't know you were an ice-cream freak.

MO

This is my favorite. Wondering if my freezer's cold enough.

JODI

How cold does it have to be?

MO

15, no 20. Right NICK?

JODI

He won't know.

NICK

Ours is on the blink, which is why I'm giving it to Mo to keep for us.

JODI

Are you taking the whole lot? Because I like Chocolate Almond Fudge.

MO

Great, come over and have some.

JODI

I can't believe you're eating ice cream for breakfast.

NICK

If you must know, it's not ice-cream we're talking about.

MO

No, it's desert. Come over and have some coffee and desert at my place?
Later in the day.

JODI

What are you looking so guilty about? What's going on?

NICK

Look I may as well confess, I hate lying and deceit. It's....you know....it's....stuff. I replaced the stuff I destroyed. From the clinic. They've sent you more stuff.

JODI

From the Cal Mayo clinic? What's it doing in an ice-cream tub then?

NICK

To keep it cold.

JODI

You weren't going to tell me?

NICK

I was as soon as...you were busy at the office.

MO

How's that proposal going?

JODI

Fine, thank you.

MO

I hear you're up for the Soaz contract. And Nick too, of course.

JODI

Aren't we all? Isn't that what makes horse racing? And why is it in Chocolate Almond Fudge?

NICK

To make sure it stays cold. Storing it in Mo's freeze for safe-keeping because I've discovered that ours isn't cold enough.

JODI

So that's mine, then?

NICK

But I don't want you to have it. You know that.

JODI

There's something I'm not getting here.

MO

I think you ought to tell her the truth.

NICK

What's that? The truth?

MO

Isn't that what you promised?

NICK

Oh yes, I suppose so. The truth is...I lied. It's...I'm embarrassed now, but it is my....stuff.

JODI

Yours? You mean that is your donation and who are you going to donate it too?

NICK

Don't look like that.

MO

No, no, this is for you really.

JODI

Me? Where's it going then?

NICK

To the clinic, into permanent, freeze-dried storage. I've made a donation to you, actually. Although I never meant to tell you, I've made a donation to posterity.

MO

To have something to remember him by in case he doesn't make it back from the Marathon.

JODI(puzzled)

Not to me, to posterity?

NICK

Oh to you, really. I'll make a Will.

JODI

A Will?

NICK

Made it out to you, of course.

MO

That way you'll have something left of him if he doesn't make it back from the Marathon.

NICK

If you're going to use anyone's, you may as well use mine.

MO

No different from putting money in the bank, makes a lot more sense than having your blood stocked up in a blood bank. Because no one, no one's gonna be able to give you a transfusion of YOU!

NICK

If I don't make it up Heartbreak Hill.

JODI

How very thoughtful of you!

MO

We should all do it in case of accidents. (beat) And I better get to my freezer before the question's academic.

NICK

Yes, our freezer doesn't get cold enough. You better go then.

(MO exits with ice-cream tub)

JODI

Let me get this straight, you don't want to be a father but you won't mind donating if you aren't around to join the diaper brigade.

NICK

Something like that.

JODI

But there are conditions attached to this?

NICK

I suppose so. Something to remember me by.

JODI

Like I can only use it if you're DEAD?

NICK

Oh I see...yes, I hope that won't mean you'll be out to get me. Maybe that's not such a good idea. was thinking of you.

JODI

Thank you!

NICK

You're welcome.

JODI

You're going to run a Marathon with a chance you won't make it up Heartbreak Hill? And if you don't make it up, and drop dead of a heart attack on Heartbreak Hill, then you want to have a baby with me?

NICK

It sounds heartless if you put it like that, but I've run dozens of marathons.

JODI

But If you're dead you'd have no objection to me using a turkey baster?

NICK

I'd be dead, it'd be selfish to object. But I'm not planning to die

yet. I've run a dozen marathons and I only have a little aneurysm. I wanted you to...to give you, oh this is hard to say...this!

JODI

Contribution to your immortality.

NICK

I'm not immortal. That's the point.

JODI

And you want to run this marathon or die in the attempt?

NICK

I am an addict.

JODI

Not to me, not to us. If you insist on running this risk, I'm not going to encourage you. I have no intention of coming on Monday, and watching you drop dead. I'm not going to watch!

NICK

But I'm not being selfish, I've arranged for you to have something to look forward to if I don't make it back. You get what you want.

JODI

But if I do get what I want, you don't want to be around to see it.

NICK

And I'm sorry about that, but yes. Yes.

JODI

You know what? I'm sorry to be the one to tell you this. But for me, personally, that's not good enough. And don't mouth Adelaide at me!

End of Scene Three

Scene Four

(JODI is at the lap top. Mo enters from bathroom, hot, sweating and out of breath)

MO
Sorry, had to go.

JODI
Do you want something to drink?

MO
No, drank enough. Don't have time. Have to get to the airport.

JODI
I forgot! Ola chi's coming today, your big day.

MO
I did what I could.

JODI
More than I ever did if you went all the way to Hopkinton to see him start.

MO
He liked that, me seeing him start: because I knew by the time I'd found somewhere to park he'd be running by. But he wasn't. Ten o'clock went by, eleven, twelve, and I'm sweating. Hottest day for

a marathon on record!

JODI

Brutal for the spectators, they don't think about that.

MO

I am not used to standing on my feet. I got a migraine looking for him.

JODI

If you blink, you miss him.

MO

Helicopters, sirens, ambulances, school buses. I didn't understand school buses until someone said there were so many injured they ran out of ambulances and were using school buses. I thought I better check with the Red Cross and the Red Cross tent was strewn with bodies. No NICK, although he was on the injured list.

JODI

He's in hospital?

MO

I rang all the hospitals, nothing, then I saw him on the Finish Line.

JODI

Oh great, he finished then.

MO

I'm not saying that. He was having convulsions.

JODI

Oh that's nothing, they all have them. If he recognized you, he was doing better than last year.

MO

He was making sounds but not forming...

JODI

...sentences, words!

MO

Not even syllables... Drooling and shivering. I only had this tee-shirt on, so I couldn't help him there.

JODI

They give them a silver foil cape if they finish.

MO

I asked someone to lend him a silver foil cape but I got some pretty dirty looks.

JODI

They won't give those up. They cling to those silver foil capes - as if they had plans to cook a turkey in them later.

MO

Got him to a nice restaurant. He wasn't a pretty sight, but Marathon Day they're used to that. Nice easy chairs. Then I had to do what a man's gotta do, and when I came back he'd vanished.

JODI

Don't worry. He'll call.

MO

He can't. Doesn't have any money. I asked him at the start and he said running shorts don't have pockets in them.

JODI

Slows them down, loose change rattling.

MO

Couldn't tuck in a bill or two? What do you want me to do?

JODI

Nothing, you've got to get to the airport. You can't have her at Logan with no one to meet her....

(MO pulls out his cell phone and begins to dial)

JODI

NICK would say - get to that airport.

MO

That's what he'd say, oh my god - we're talking about him as if he's dead! (ending call) The plane's been delayed. I'll be able to make it.

JODI

I'll wait here.

MO

If you could have seen him...

JODI

I have. If he doesn't show in an hour or two, I'll call the police. You think I should go looking for him now, don't you?

(JODI gets headphones and tape deck)

JODI

But if I'm going to be stuck in traffic, I'm going to learn Spanish.

Oh, wait a minute I've done this lesson.

MO

What's that?

JODI

Sounds like...

(NICK enters from outside, in very bad shape after running a marathon, his shoes are bloody and he's wearing several silver capes)

MO

Thank god!

JODI

Welcome back!

NICK

How's it going?

JODI

My proposal? Almost finished!

NICK

Congratulations.

JODI

Thanks, it was hard work but...

(NICK is out of control, knocking into things)

JODI

...I had lot of time to get it right.

NICK

Good - congratulations. Did I say that? Because here's some bad news. But maybe not. I'm leaving you.

MO

Why don't you go to bed, get some rest?

JODI

Leaving me? Now? Today?

NICK

HAS to be today. Sorry about that. I'm sorry but I have to leave you right now.

MO

Talk about it tomorrow.

JODI

You have just run a marathon.

NICK

Right, while I was busting my gut, you were calmly sitting here eating potato chips.

JODI

I was working.

NICK

Trying to improve your chance of promotion.
While I was dead on the sidewalk.

JODI

That was your choice.

NICK

We are through!

MO

She was very worried about you.

NICK(smelling coffee cup)

She made herself hazelnut coffee. Divorce. If we were married.

MO

You have just run a marathon.

JODI

And blood's not getting to your head.

*(She takes advantage of his partial collapse to put his head
between his feet)*

MO

He doesn't look so hot.

NICK

I'm very hot!

MO

Do you think we should call a doctor?

JODI

He'll be alright. Give him some Speedlink and get him to rest.
Or I will, you go to the airport.

NICK

I don't want to stay with a woman who can't move her butt to cheer me on from the sidelines...

JODI

Oh please...

NICK

I'm leaving!

JODI

Yeah, for the hospital.

NICK

You can take me, Mo. If you don't mind.

MO

I have to get Olachi from the airport.

JODI

And he's already late. She's arriving to-day, and she won't know in Boston it's Marathon Day.

(NICK pulls trunk away from the wall and begins to pack his "valuable" items, trophies and the cape)

NICK

Can you give me a hand with this?

MO

What are you doing?

NICK

Can you help me with this?

MO

That's a heavy looking trunk.

NICK

I have to get it to the car.

MO

I don't think you're in a fit state.

NICK

You take one end, I'll take the other.

MO

I'd like to but I can't lift anything heavy.

NICK

Never mind. I'll do it myself. I'm not staying in a totally unsupportive relationship.

JODI (bring in drink for NICK who waves it away)
All this talk of support! We're not kids. You don't need anyone's support, do you Mo?

MO
Don't use me as an example.

NICK
You're a good example. You came to the race to support me. I'm counting on you Mo.

JODI
Okay, I'll drive you to the hospital.

NICK
No, no.

JODI
Why not?

NICK
I'm not having you do that. I don't want you to...

JODI
NICK!

NICK
Because I'm going to a hotel. We are through, get it!

(NICK collapses unconscious over the trunk, Mo rushes to him, JODI checks him out)

MO
Why are you doing this? Does anyone know? It doesn't look good.

(JODI crosses to the phone and dials 911 as lights begin to fade)

JODI (to phone, very sedately)
Hello, yes we need an ambulance. I know it's Marathon Day, but we need an ambulance. Thank you. How long! I'll wait.

MO
Don't take any notice of what he's saying. State of exhaustion. Temporary madness.

(Blackout as we hear an ambulance siren)

Scene Five

(Three weeks later. MO is bringing a carton of orange juice through the living room to the bedroom. HE is wearing an African shirt.)

NICK(offstage)

She sent you a video?

MO

Pictures. Pictures on the web. Wanna see them?

NICK(offstage)

Yes. Use the lap top.

(MO returns to kitchen to get glass)

NICK (offstage)

I thought you were getting me orange juice.

MO

I am!

(He returns to kitchen to get tray.
He considers and abandons tray)

NICK (offstage)

I don't see you for weeks. Where are you?

(NICK is in his dressing gown)

NICK

She didn't arrive then, not with the cousin?

MO

She's put up pictures on the web.

NICK

From Africa. Doesn't seem right, but there again...
(MO sits at lap top)

MO

You look okay.

NICK

Thanks to Jodi's nursing. She was good at it after all. When it came to the crunch, she crunched.

MO

I thought as much. And how's the aneurysm?

NICK

Grew a few inches. I'm fine. It wasn't a heart attack. Aneurysm yes but mostly dehydration. Seven bags of liquid in Intensive Care. I needed something to drink.

MO

I ordered you a vodka and tonic. But you left before it arrived.

NICK

Only way to teach waiters to hurry up next time.

MO

Come and see the pictures. It was the wrong thing to ask her to come here first. That letter - asking her to come here and I'll marry her - was all wrong, I ought to have gone there.

NICK

If you say so.

MO

Capture the bride.

NICK

Don't go over there. You don't have to look for uprooted roots. Suppose we all did that! You belong here.

MO(in a mocking tone)

Now why would you think that?

NICK

Because you do.

MO

Because my folks have been here five hundred years?

NICK

Something like that.

(NICK crosses to lap top)

NICK

What's that? Cheetahs? Fastest animals on the planet? What are you trying to do to me? Oh is that her? WOW she looks even more beautiful over there - in costume.

MO

Colors...yes. That's when we were in San Antonio. We went there for some festival, along the river at night, Olachi's shining face in the river lights. The smell of food in the air, and bad electronic music coming down with the floats. I broke those Mexican eggs over her head, glitter fell down her face and caught the light. I've never seen anyone smile quite like that. I wish I'd taken a photograph. I wish... I have her face in my head right now but that will fade, I'm afraid. If you could have seen her smiling face...

NICK

You have a good visual memory.

MO

The visuals were good.

NICK

I'd like to go to Africa. On Safari, take a long break!

MO

Sounds good, doesn't it?

(JODI enters from work, throws
briefcase down, does a war-dance)

JODI

WAY TO GO! I'm winging home, I'm hot, hot, hot. Give me one, give me two, forget it - give me FIVE. I'M IT! I'VE GOT IT! You won't believe this, I don't even...I do, why not? I'm worth it, I deserve it. I've got the Soaz contract.

NICK

You've got...

MO

I saw you put in for it.

NICK

THEY GAVE IT TO YOU!

MO

Congratulations!

NICK

Yeah, terrific!

JODI

Can you believe it? I can't. I can't even believe it.

NICK

Great!

MO

More than great, terrific! Couldn't happen to a nicer person.

JODI

Thank you, Mo. But that's not the best news yet.

NICK

No?

JODI

No, there's even better. Brace yourself. I'm pregnant. It's official, it's confirmed and I'm on top of the world.

NICK

How can you be?

JODI

Thanks to the miracle of modern medicine.

MO

Perhaps I ought to go.

JODI

(to NICK) Can't you guess? You provided me with it. You donated to posterity.

NICK

What's been happening behind my back?

MO

First I've heard about it. I know nothing about this.

NICK

You mean, no you can't use that. But it was safe in Mo's freezer. How did you...WHEN?

JODI

Fast when it happens, right? Doesn't take long in fact...That first long night in

Intensive Care, I was so mad at you...and I thought you weren't going to make it. Five o'clock in the morning I'm roaming around in the cafeteria and I have this thought... to do something for myself, put my feelings first - if I don't, who will? To be honest, I never thought it'd work.

MO

Why, that's wonderful. Larry, congratulations.

NICK

But that was for when I was... I didn't die.

MO

You lived to tell the tale.

JODI

And stupidly we were very pleased about that.

NICK

Mo, you let her into your fridge.

MO

No, believe me! We had breakfast.

NICK

Breakfast!

JODI

I don't understand why it didn't work when we made love but the doctor said an insertion is often more effective.

NICK

But wait a moment...

JODI

Be pleased for me!

NICK

You were on the pill, weren't you? You said, wait, wait...
How do I know it's mine? It was in Mo's freezer...

JODI

I know, we all knew where it was.

NICK

How do I know you didn't send away for more, different stuff? Nobel Prize winners. How do I know Mo wasn't there for the assist.

MO

What?

NICK

In more ways than one. How do I know...

MO(changing the subject)

I can't believe you've got the Soaz.

JODI

I'm going to have my work cut out juggling my time, but I can do both. I've thought it out and I can do the Soaz and motherhood!

NICK

I'm getting the picture, you two getting together over breakfast.

JODI

I'm going to have my work cut out trying to juggle the Soaz contract and motherhood but I can do both. I've thought it out and I can do both.

NICK

You two having breakfast over my injuries.

MO

I never saw her go to the fridge.

NICK

You were there for her.

MO

She was upset.

NICK

And you're so good at being there.

MO

Are you accusing me of being there? Are you trying to accuse me of BEING THERE? Walking down the street, as if I have no right to be here? Am I being accused of that, because someone gets pregnant and the husband kills his pregnant woman and points the finger at someone who looks like me? Is that what's going on here, the Charles Stuart case?

JODI

He wants to kill me?

NICK

What are you going on about? Why do you always bring up that Stuart case?

MO

Because you're not better.

NICK

I resent that.

JODI

Stop it, I was joking. I was joking. Don't, guys, don't...

MO

I've stood around and taken it for too long.

NICK

You're flipping your lid for absolutely no reason. I didn't accuse you, I just said you had the opportunity, I never said you had a motive.

MO

I'm sick of being FRAMED LIKE THAT!

(THEY struggle, JODI breaks them up)

MO

There's a line and you've crossed it.

NICK

Mo, I didn't mean...come back.

(MO exits)

NICK

My one friend, my one good friend and he's gone.

JODI

Who'd want to bring a kid into this world, no one wants kids anymore.

NICK

I don't know, I only know that I don't. So if you're determined to go ahead you have to understand I don't want to be involved.

JODI

You don't have to be.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

The year is now 2006, NICK and MO have grey hair but what is more obvious is

their dialogue change, their words are slower, the impression heavier.

JEANETTE,

the daughter of NICK and JODI, is startlingly beautiful and is in a wheelchair. At rise she is typing furiously and mouthing the words carefully as she types.

JEANETTE

"Her long hair flew in the fresh breeze as her boat skimmed the gray waters of Connemarra, but Carlene O'Connors knew it was a matter of time before they'd catch up with her and she felt a chill grip her ribs." (SHE erases 'ribs') HEART ' types 'heart'. Then SHE erases 'heart') THROAT (types 'throat'.)

(Telephone rings, it is connected to her computer. SHE types her replies but also whispers them

into

the computer)

JON's VOICE

Hallo darling.

JEANETTE

Love, love, love!

JON's VOICE

Finished the book?

JEANETTE

I'll finish in time, I'm determined.

JON's VOICE

I don't mind if you write on the honeymoon.

JEANETTE

I have other plans. Does your suit fit?

JON's VOICE

Sleeves are too short, but who's complaining. What about you?

JEANETTE

I'm going to wear nothing but silver stars pasted on my breasts.

JON's VOICE

I can't wait. You're picking up the bridesmaids, right?

JEANETTE

As soon as Uncle Mo arrives. Dad's out getting my pills but he'll dress me. Last time!

JON's VOICE

You're still sure about Uncle Mo giving you away? Not that I'm trying to make you change your mind. I'm sure it'll be fine. Don't want to interfere but, you know...

JEANETTE

I don't want Dad to give me away.

JON's VOICE

As long as he doesn't think I had anything to do with it. But does he know why?

JEANETTE

I told him.

JON's VOICE

Because you didn't want him giving the speech.

JEANETTE

This is our day, sweetheart.

JON's VOICE

I'm more set on enjoying the night.

JEANETTE

Me too.

JON'VOICE

I wrote another song last night. Couldn't sleep, they're just coming to me. You've inspired me, will you believe that?

JEANNETE

Can you play it for me?

JON'S VOICE

Later, when there's just the two of us. Not long to wait now.

JEANETTE

Not long to wait, darling. Sorry about the Big Fuss.

JON'S VOICE

Doesn't bother me! You're special, you deserve newspaper coverage.

JEANETTE

So do you!

JON'VOICE

As long as we can get away quietly afterwards.

JEANETTE

That's a promise. The first promise of the day

JON'S VOICE

I love you.

JEANETTE

I love you.

JON'S VOICE

If you change your mind about your father giving you away...no, you won't. Okay! It doesn't matter. I like your Uncle Mo, he's the best.

JEANETTE

You sure I can't hear the song?

JON'S VOICE

Okay, but it's just a work in progress.

JEANETTE

Of course.

JON'S singing voice, soft and seductive

Have I simply got the winter blues?
Am I waiting for the sun to change things
make me grin
when the earth's resting
there's no rest for me
no playground to play in
I gotta keep working

until cold chills my bones
I'm left alone with these lonesome winter blues
Yeah, I'm waiting, waiting for the sun to change things
I've simply got the winter blues

(JEANETTE carefully replaces phone, she has heard NICK.

NICK enters from outside, puts pills and deodorant in front of Jeanette)

NICK

Look at you! No one would ever guess you're getting married to-day. Writing! And the traffic, I don't know if we'll ever get to the church. Why you had to choose a church so far out of town... Sorry, sorry, I know, no negatives. Just let me say, what's going wrong now is GOING WRONG! I have no energy left. You'll be lucky if you have a cake, they seem to have lost it. At least Mo and family are on the way. All we have to do is your dress, find the driver of the car, and do the bridesmaids know I'm picking them up? Is that right for me to be picking them up? I'm not complaining, but I'll feel much better when thee day's over and done with. Sorry, no negatives. Why is there so much pressure if it's supposed to be a happy occasion... Because everyone expects it to be a happy occasion. That's too goddamn much expectation. I want it to go off all right for you. Don't worry, that's the important thing. Don't worry or you'll sweat. I won't get you dressed until the last minute. And I'll carry an extra roll-on in case we all sweat. You okay?

JEANETTE

(She types) "I couldn't be happier. Hope you won't be lonely."

NICK(reads the words on her screen, perhaps aloud)

Ha ha, me? I like lonely. If I find I'm too happy and want to make myself miserable, I can always get married. That'd be something if this makes me do something your mother could never do.

(JEANETTE wheels towards door)

NICK

Don't go just as we're having the last father daughter talk. I wish your mum was here to see how happy you look. Positive! Happy! Got to remember that!

JEANETTE

(She types) "Why are you so nervous?"

NICK(reading her screen maybe aloud)

I'm not nervous. Oh it may have something to do with the newspapers being there, not to mention the television. No, you're right, it's more than that. And

you not letting me give you away, but that's fine. I know you like to get your own way.

JEANETTE

(She types) "I don't want you to give me away because I know you don't really want to."

NICK(reading)

You think I don't want to give you away. Where did you get that idea? What father does, tell me that, what father does?

JEANETTE

(She types) "Normal fathers?"

NICK

I'm not that, then. Nothing normal or average about me. Average but not normal. I never...I'm not, what can I say, I can't keep apologising. I am what I am.

JEANETTE

(She types) "It's okay, just don't get nervous"

NICK(reading)

Easy for you to say. I want it to be great, for you. I want it to be perfect. Oh God, why do I want that so much? I don't know. That's what I'm like. And besides wanting it to be great, I don't want it to happen. I don't want you to go. No wonder I can't think straight.

JEANETTE

(She types) "You know why I wanted the publicity."

NICK

Yes, you're right. The publicity will help, press will help you sell, you've got to think of that. You'll soon be earning big bucks with those romances of yours which is just as well because Jon...no, forget I said that. He's not the commercial type, and you love him for it. But it won't hurt if you're both famous. It'll help his musical career, right? Okay, I'll shut the fuck up. Sorry. Had to vent. You know, just me.

(JEANETTE goes to wheel out but returns to her screen)

JEANETTE

(She types) "Just don't talk at the wedding, don't say anything!"

NICK(reads aloud)

I swear. I won't go to the wedding. No, I'll go and not say anything. I promise. I've promised you, I keep my promises. If I make them.

JEANETTE

(She types) "I'm not going far away."

NICK(reads)

I know you're not going far away. You're just going away. Forever. Never mind,

I've got used to the idea.

I think we're on course, Mo can take the garlands. It's not like we won't talk after you're married. Although it may not be exactly the same, nothing is. It all changes... I was going to say ...for the worse. Isn't that something? On your wedding day for God's sake, I'm still...I'm still me, I guess. We better hurry up. There is one more thing, about kids... have you talked about children?

JEANETTE

(She types) "Yes, we want them."

NICK(reads aloud)

With the doctor? He's okay with that? Good, good. One I suppose is okay, then how many?

JEANETTE

(She types) "Two."

NICK

I like Jon, I do, really. He's...sweet!

(NICK goes to exit, turns back)

You want the truth? I've tried to believe he's the right boy, man, for you. I wish I could believe it. Time will tell, time will set me straight.

(JEANETTE escapes from the dressing and wheels away from him in a fury. Doorbell rings. MO enters)

MO

Hallo my favorite God-daughter!

NICK

Oh, I forgot that!

MO

I can give her away legitimately as a god-father.

NICK

Don't go on about that, you're not even Italian.

(MO and JEANETTE fondly embrace)

MO

Let me take a look at you. You look more and more wonderful, like there's an angel sitting on your shoulder.

JEANETTE

(She types) "Mum!"

MO

Yep, your Mum's here, I can see her.

(MO and JEANETTE commune)

NICK

What's with the penguin suit?

MO

White tie!

NICK

Doesn't mean TAILS! Never mind, people know you live in Buffalo.

MO

Albany.

NICK

You look fine. We're supposed to look like stuffed birds.

JEANETTE

(She types) "Where's the family?"

MO

At the church already. Having a hamburger and going straight to the church.

NICK

If you're father of the bride, you can be in tails.

MO

I am not father of the bride. I'm playing the part.

NICK

Your bow-tie isn't straight.

(JEANETTE goes to exit)

MO

Do you have an extra tuxedo jacket?

NICK(not meaning it)

You can take mine. I don't really want to go and be stared at and laughed at and televised.

MO

You can't blame them.

NICK

Marrying my daughter in a church!

(JEANETTE exits)

MO

It's her choice.

NICK(yells after JEANETTE)

But does Jon believe? Jeanette does, but does Jon really believe in God? I doubt it. I doubt he believes in anything except... music.

MO

Face it, Jeanette's in love with him.

NICK

And you think he's in love with her? You know so, do you? Umm..well I'm not convinced.

MO

What would it take to convince you?

NICK

What's that remark supposed to mean? Okay, all right, they're in love; you and I know that doesn't mean anything.

MO

It doesn't?

NICK

You want a drink or something? Okay, what? They love each other. We all love each other. Means what? Sex! Specially good sex because you're in love but he can he really stand by her? I doubt it. A muso!

MO

I don't think that necessarily disqualifies him.

NICK

You wouldn't! But you married for love and you know it comes to the same thing in the end, compromise, you said so yourself. I don't want her making

compromises
with him. He's not worth it.

MO

Not your decision.

NICK

You and I know he's after something. And I'm not sure she's as in love you as think. Her wedding day and she's still writing that silly romance.

(MO goes into the kitchen for some water.
NICK reads from JEANETTE's novel.)

MO

You telecommute full time now?

NICK

Worked out when I took over looking after Jeanette. When Jodi handed me the task!

MO

When she died, you mean? Have you had anything to drink? I would if I were you.

(MO pours NICK a drink)

NICK

Can I tell you something? Looking after Jeanette for what more than ten years, a cinch, compared to to-day, to giving it up to...to giving her up to Jon!

MO

That's how it is I guess.

NICK

How do you guess, a man with three sons?

MO (has discovered a c.d.)

Is this one of Jon's?

NICK

His one song.

MO (Put it on)

Let's hear it.

NICK (Shouting through to Jeanette)

Is it all right if we play one of Jon's songs? (sotto voce) His one song.

JON's singing voice, soft and seductive

(But MO and NICK talk over it)

It's three am the moon is high
and I'm watching rats swim by
Steve's summer pond
surrounded by mysterious trees
there is no breeze
to stir the looking glass for stars
the night is quiet now
because where we go
rats will follow
no minnows toads or frogs to sing
no need to wonder why
the pond's busy mirroring
heavens silently spinning
I'm watching rats swim by
I'm watching rats swim by
Past my boat – not rocking
not daring to turn the page
I lie in wait with a hunter's smile
of getting something for nothing
putting out a hand to catch – Time
putting out a hand to catch – Time
while three rats in a line swim by
By, By.....

(NICK and MO speak the following over this)

MO

Jodi would be proud of you both to-day. Proud of her daughter and proud of you for looking after her so well.

NICK(fondly)

Shut up!

MO

It's the big occasions that you miss her most, isn't it? Graduation, weddings!

NICK

You are the heart of the party! How come you don't move back to Boston, what's keeping you in the boonies? Boston's a whole lot better, don't give up on your own city.
We've come a long way since the Charles Stuart case.

MO

You know what I object to in this place? That they changed the name of the river like that. Massachusetts is a great name for a river, why rename it The

Charles. You see, right there...

NICK

And if you'd been around then, in the time of George Washington, you could have complained. I wouldn't live in any other city, look how they've made a fuss of Jeanette! Taken her to their hearts.

MO

I can't talk to you, you're still running the Marathon.

NICK

One of us has to.

MO

There's still hope for her, isn't there? There's still hope she'll walk one day.

NICK

They're still working her over if that's what you mean.

MO

There's still hope, then, and they say there's no reason why she can't talk.

NICK

They can't find a reason, which isn't the same thing.

1. MO

Good song. Of its type. He may make it yet, you never know with show business. Wake up to a pile of money and a record contract.

NICK

A rock star! Nice! Never home and mobbed by pussy? If in music and you're a failure, it's bad, if you're a success it's worse. Three sons, and nothing but gorgeous daughter-in-laws to look forward to. Got it made, haven't you?. With your three sons and your beautiful wife, and your homespun philosophy from your race right behind you.

MO

Don't go there! And what do you know? Your daughter, I can see on her face...I swear your daughter is happier than my sons a lot of the time.

NICK

Yes, well we know that. Women! Can be happy about anything, thanks to a big dose of estrogen. (beat) How long do you think it'll last? How long do you think Jon will...be there for her?

MO

If it doesn't work out, you'll be there to pick up the pieces. You're not going anywhere.

NICK

What's in it for him?

MO

Let her have some happiness. Let her have to-day.

NICK

He'll get instant celebrity status.

MO

Is that right?

NICK

What has he got to lose? Newspapers coming! It's gonna be on cable television.

MO

Look, I can see what he sees in her. But I know it's difficult to let go. It'll be the same for us when the boys go. Olachi and I, all we ever talk about is the boys and we're already saying we won't have anything in common once they're gone.

NICK

At least you had time together.

MO

You've had time with Jeanette.

NICK

Did I ever show you these?

(NICK gets JEANETTE's enormous silver ski trophies from the cupboard)

MO

Yes!

NICK

Why she had to choose skiing, I'll never know.

MO

Bad things happen to good people.

NICK

Back and forth from Utah to Colorado, back and forth in winter conditions, who knows!

MO

She was happy to...

NICK

Chains on the wheels, they don't let you drive on some mountains without chains. I wasn't there!

MO

That's why you're having so much trouble letting go now. You weren't there for the beginning so you're trying to make up for that, feeling that you've missed something.

NICK

I know I told Jodi not to bother me but she sure took offense. Wouldn't take my help when I offered it.

MO

Don't worry, you'll be there for the gran-kids.

NICK

Don't say things like that.

MO

Besides Jodi enjoyed taking care of her, taking her on all those skiing trips. Never seen her happier.

NICK

But if I'd been there in those weather conditions. The roads in Boulder are worse than slalom trails, ice and straight down. Tell me one thing. If I'd been there she wouldn't have driven on in defiance of the road block and if she had, she'd have had chains on?
How could she have put chains on?

MO

The garage does it for you. Stop blaming yourself.

NICK

I'm not! I'm blaming THE UNIVERSE.

MO

Won't do any good.

NICK

Superior bastard!

MO

You know what I regret? Never landing you one fair and square when I was young enough to make it count.

NICK

You were never angry enough with me.

MO

I don't know why not...

NICK

I never really got under your skin. Guess you never cared enough.

MO

That's right.

NICK

The crowning insult! I got angry enough with you over Jodi.

MO

You're always angry, doesn't count.

NICK

Have another drink! We could both get drunk and slug it out.

MO

I'm not giving you an excuse for not going to the wedding.

NICK

I DON'T NEED ONE. I'm not going.

MO

Look, I'll refuse. I'll tell her I can't do that to you. That I won't take her down the aisle.

NICK

But this is your only chance, you haven't got any daughters.

No, I can't do it now. After she's made such a statement!

Thanks anyway.

MO

You're welcome!

(MO and NICK embrace)

NICK

Drink up! (NICK piles up pills) This is the last time I'll have to deal with that woman at the pharmacy. You'd think it was easy to get pills on prescription but not if the woman hates your guts and it's mutual. Every week I have to leech Jeanette's Pescalor from her crab claws. It's only a three time repeat, she says every single time. When she must know it's a life-time repeat! Can't she remember a little thing like that? Makes me wait in those lights, why do

those pharmacy lights have to be so bright?

(HE plays with pills he's stacked up)

NICK

Handing on the job to Jon now anyway. Do you think he'll keep up with it, day after day. Do you believe a man can do all that for her out of love? Be a nursemaid?

MO

Some men.

NICK

Could you? Tell me, could you? With Olachi? You'd do that?

MO

I think so, I don't know. Maybe I'd get a nurse in sometimes. But with a new love you do the craziest things, like the books and stories say. Then you look round and full-time monogamy, full-time maid service, they've become ordinary.

NICK

Do you think that's good?

MO

If it helps.

NICK

I'll write a note with the pills and mark the days with an 'x' in different colors, I've made it simple.

(Jeanette enters with wedding dress on her lap)

NICK

Look at this Mo, we've got the full regalia. We're going to give those photographers something to photograph, aren't we darling?

JEANETTE (Typing on her screen)

Glad you played the song.

NICK

Wasn't me, Mo wanted to hear it.

(Jeanette nods.)

NICK

What's the enemy? What's the TIME? Why doesn't the day stand still a minute, why doesn't the time slow down. Slow down time! Slow down!

MO

Never thought I'd hear him say that.

NICK(to Jeanette)

No offence, no offense meant.

(NICK exits)

JEANETTE

(She types) "Why doesn't he like Jon?"

MO(reads aloud)

He's not come out against, he's sitting on the fence. He's improved a lot, your dad. He sounds worse than...you know that, you must KNOW that? He used to be a lot worse. Helping you, helped him. That's the strange way these things work. Misfortune...

JEANETTE

(She types) "Sorry about the press, etc. Hope you're ready to be video-taped for television?"

MO

Can't wait! Celebrity status doesn't come my way too often. Olachi and the boys are impressed. Put on their best. See you on all the time, you're a favorite of that talk show host. And they always play the footage of your championship run. Every time, even in Albany. My sons know every minute of that race.

JEANETTE

(She types) He doesn't want to give me away."

MO(reads aloud)

Okay, so that's why you've got me.

(NICK enters in jacket, holding flowers)

NICK

Ready for the church.

MO

I have to take these. Is that right?

NICK

Put them in the car, you don't have to carry them in. She does, you simply lay them across her lap.

(HE lays them on Jeanett's lap to show him)

NICK

Has the car come? Oh yes, the car came an hour ago. Driver went for a drink, probably drunk by now. If I were you, Mo, I'd drive myself. But as it is, I will drive myself. Don't want another tragedy.

MO

Calm down! (to Jeanette) You okay?

JEANETTE(nods)

(She types) "Yes, thank you! How's your speech?"

MO (reads aloud)

I'm working on it.

JEANETTE

(She types) "Dad's promised me he's not going to say anything at the wedding. Not to speak at all.

MO (reads aloud)

You don't want him to do the Father of the Bride speech. You want me, is that right?

NICK

That's the whole point, that's why you're taking her down the aisle not me.

JEANETTE (Types)

That and the fact he doesn't believe in God.

MO(reads aloud)

Really? You surprise me!

NICK

What's that got do with the price of gas? Listen, what are you going to say?

MO

I've no idea.

NICK

You haven't got a speech written? You don't know this guy, he never knows what to say.

JEANETTE(Types)

I trust him.

NICK (reads)

Don't trust him. You must have some idea. Are you going to talk about me? Good, then concentrate on them. Do you know anything about Jon? He doesn't know anything about Jon. This is going to be a disaster.

MO

Don't worry. I can't say anything wrong.

NICK

I like your confidence.

(Doorbell rings)

That'll be the driver. Can you go down and give us a few minutes?

MO

Why don't I go down and write my speech in the car or something.

(MO exits with flower garlands)

NICK(helping JEANETTE put on her dress)

Can't believe Mo, he looks so attractive still. It's not fair. He could pass for twenty or so. And he's got a good job in Albany, so he won't have to come to Boston. Oh no, no friendship big enough for that. I know, I understand. And three enormous sons. Not that I mean...Olachi besides him still. Gorgeous woman, everyone says so, an African queen. Well, good for Mo. And if that isn't enough, he has his cause. You know what I mean, not politically correct to say so now but he's got his cause, the back-to-Africa, Bible-bangers, you know.

JEANETTE (typing furiously)

Don't bad mouth your best friend.

NICK (reads aloud)

He is my best friend that's why I can hate him. Look at his swagger, that attractive-to-women-and-know-it swagger, I hate that advantage he's always had. Me, who can't have a close relationship, except with you, I envy him. That's healthy. What's wrong with that? He can't put a foot wrong that man, that's what I've really got against him. He can't seem to put a foot wrong. And you two are the best of friends, aren't you? He seems to understand what you see in Jon, makes me feel like a complete idiot. Not that I'm going against either of you in this matter, I'm being the complete patsy here and time will tell. Time will tell whether Jon is the man we want him to be, but I to be honest, if you hadn't, just supposing, had your accident – would you in a million years, would you have even LOOKED AT HIM?

(JEANETTE wheels away from him in a fury, shouting)

JEANETTE

SHUT UP!

NICK

What? What? Come back here!

(HE grabs her wheelchair and pulls her back

JEANETTE

STOP TALKING!

NICK

But...you spoke. You can speak.

JEANETTE

You, you, you...promised to STOP SPEAKING!

NICK

But when did...how...the screen, you were using it this morning...how long have you been able to speak?

JEANETTE(Summons up her voice again)

You promised!

NICK

Have you been able to talk all along? Have you been deceiving me? Have you been talking to Jon, tell me, tell me, darling. Why did you keep this from me?

JEANETTE

I can't...always. I...sometimes...then...I...can't.

NICK

Does the doctor know? The doctor doesn't know, and Jon does. Only Jon? No one else. DARLING! I'm your father. I've been taking care of you. You know how hard it's been for me. For both of us.

JEANETTE

(She types) "Sorry."

NICK

I'm not going there again. Speak, tell me. Can you speak now and are refusing? What? What's going on?

JEANETTE

(She types) "I'd rather communicate like this."

NICK(reads aloud)

With me, you mean? Why do you hate me so much?

JEANETTE

(She types) "I don't hate you."

NICK(reads)

You do, I know. I know you'd rather I died than your mum.

JEANETTE

I...don't hate you!

NICK

Before then, did you hate me before the accident? I probably hated myself

enough for both of us, Does that make sense? Of course it doesn't make sense, nothing does. Is that why? Why couldn't you speak to me all these years? When did it come back? How long have you been able to speak?

JEANETTE

Not long It happened after I met Jon.

NICK

When he played the guitar and sang? Oh my god, I feel so ashamed. He did one thing right and I've done so many things wrong. Tell me, I don't understand what happened. Do you know? You're a smart girl, you've been through it, can you tell me what the fuck happened?

JEANETTE

Once upon a time there was a little girl, called...Jenny who was given the secret of joy when she was born. It had to be a secret because her mother was always worried about something and her father was more worried and no one knew why.

NICK

You're something of a writer, probably a good one.

JEANETTE

Jenny tried to share her secret joy with her parents, but she couldn't. Her life got better and better, more and more beautiful. But she wasn't able to share any of this beauty with her parents: she only had a small voice and they couldn't hear her. So she grew her hair and painted her fingers and toes and began to ice skate and ski. To have fun! Her parents, when they were watching her, seemed to be pleased, but when the skis and the skates were put away for the summer everything went back to being about worry again. Worry about winning every competition. Jenny was secretly not worried about anything. Because she was having fun, until the accident. After that she completely lost her ability to feel good and was afraid she'd never be able to laugh again until Jon came into her hospital room to play the guitar and her secret joy crept back and got bigger every time they were together.

(NICK has difficulty speaking)

NICK

If you feel like that, I'm happy for you and Jon. I'm sorry I had any doubts, I'm happy for both of you. I wish you all the happiness I never had.

JEANETTE

Oh Dad! It's not too late. You can still find someone to love.

NICK

You think? (beat) We better go. We're keeping them all waiting.

(NICK and JEANETTE embrace before

exiting)

END OF ACT TWO

Epilogue

(Noise of wedding reception. Glasses are clinked for silence. MO comes on stage to give his speech)

MO

We don't all have the same dreams. I used to have a dog that I wanted to call Truth.

But everyone thought that was very pretentious and called him Snap instead. In my dream the dog pulls at my pant leg and tears the coat off my back. And I'm scared!

Then suddenly, in the way of dreams, I'm sitting on a straw chair on a rotting porch a hot steamy Roxbury day, watching my Nan toil up Blue Hill Avenue like a blind woman because there's nothing she wants to see. My Nan's a moldy old woman with a passion for mangoes. She keeps 'em wrapped in newspaper and opens them by herself so we never learn the secret of cutting those perfect slivers, served ripe! But she got meaner by the year. Mango Time went from twice a week to once a month, then twice a summer. Bring out the fruit, Nan! She'd cut the ripe slivers ever so carefully and say, only the heart of the mango is whole. The rest of us humans, as soon as we get together as a Church or as a group, we can't help but divide. Divide ourselves into two. In my dream I was also the Mango, and that's what I think this wedding, this union of two people in love really means. We have come together, we are joined together, for once. Two people in love is enough to make the future, the rest of us are just over-ripe pulp. Anyway, I'm not made for making speeches. I'd like to ask the father of the bride. Come up, come up, Nick. Come on.

(NICK reluctantly stands in the lights, squints)

NICK

There's nothing more to say. He's said it all.

(HE lurches for the exit, MO claps, the wedding audience claps.

wheeling,
Projection of the back of JEANETTE

horizon.
JON walking by her side towards the

THE END

