

***CHRONIC COMPETITION
& WINTER HILL***

by

Eliza Wyatt

No more such wives, therefore no wife. One worse,
And better used, would make her sainted spirit
Again possess her corpse, and on this stage,
Where we offenders mourn, appear soul-vexed,
And begin, 'Why to me?'

The Winter's Tale

Copyright (c) 2002 by eliza wyatt

Setting

The living room of a high-rise apartment overlooking the shore of Boston, Mass. The kitchen is almost visible, stage left. Exit stage left, exit to bedroom upstage right

Cast

NICK - mid-thirties

MO - mid-thirties

JODI - mid-thirties

JEANNETTE - twenty-four

(JODI's daughter, can be played by JODI)

ACT ONE
Scene One

Act One, Scene

AT RISE: a depressed MO is being fed
many drinks by NICK

MO

I didn't waste to-day. I got ice, rented glasses, defrosted and baked five quiches. Vacuumed, cleaned the toilet, set out ashtrays, BOUGHT ashtrays. I had a very productive day.

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 the food off your plates? You invited them, they don't come...you're one up. Much better off.

MO

I now have three bottles of Bloody Mary mix.

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. What's your complaint?

MO

You don't want to know.

NICK

Tell me, you can be honest with me.

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 the same lowly fish from M.I.S. But Henderson's supposed to be the boss.

NICK

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

JODI

I hate him because he smiles too much.

MO

Don't hate anyone on my account.

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. Doesn't hold MY water!

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 it was because of the shooting.

NICK
What shooting? Another one. Nah! But I don't understand why Loopy Lucy never showed.

JODI(She does)
No? Ummm...

NICK
What?

JODI
Never mind!

NICK
She never stops trekking past his desk in that green mohair sweater.

JODI
Oh that sweater! Matches the mohair sculpture on her desk.

NICK
What is that supposed to be? Looks like a corset.

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

NICK

I don't get it.

(MO enters)

NICK

How come Loopy Lucy never showed up.

MO

Who?

NICK

The green mohair that trecks past your desk to the Ladies Room.

MO

Oh her. She says she has 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 anymore here anymore. When you've been away, you shouldn't come back. There's only a few homies left.

NICK

You liked L.A.?

MO

No.

NICK

I'm from here and everyone I know has gone to California.

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.

NICK

It's a sad fact but people are not only miserable bastards, they're HAPPY being miserable bastards. 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.

JODI

They come home from one job and have to go right back out to another. No wonder they don't have enough people up there to do the jobs.

MO

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

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 20 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. Thanks for inviting me over.

JODI

We were looking forward to your party. Sorry we were late.

MO

At least you came.

JODI

Marital quarrel at the last minute. Especially bad if you're not married yet.

(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 beginnng to sound kinky.

NICK

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

MO

Yeah, liking pain.

N ICK

Talking the right kind of pain.

MO

Let me sleep on it.

JODI

You don't have to go.

NICK

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

MO

I'll let you know.

JODI

I thought you were staying for supper.

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 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

End of April?

END OF SCENE ONE

Scene Two

Later than evening.

NICK is relaxing on floor, dressed in shorts and top, without shoes. JODI approaches, he does not wake. She kneels down and puts a hand on his crotch. He leaps.

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. Great dinner, what was it?

JODI

Pasta.

NICK

Interesting ingredients. They've done a number of my stomach. Or it's the past, I perform better on root vegetables.

JODI

We'll have to get you squash then, swedes and turnips. To root you.
I'll give you a massage. I've got oil!

NICK

Sounds promising.

(JODI gets towel and oil, begins

massage)

JODI(massaging)

Maybe I don't love you enough. 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 more LOVE!

NICK

Ouch!

JODI

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

NICK

You don't have to.

JODI

Fine then, perfect, happiness, bliss.

NICK

Now what? Tell me!

JODI

I want to be good at love, extremely good! That's probably
why I want a kid, to prove I can love someone as much and
for us long as it takes.

NICK

And you don't think you love me like that?

JODI

What about you loving me?

NICK

I thought we were talking about you.

JODI

I can't love by myself, alone, for God's sake.
Okay then, let's do it.

(THEY kiss. NICK has a leg cramp)

JODI

Now what?

NICK

Usual leg cramp. Nothing. My mind hasn't been where it should have been with the training...

JODI

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

NICK(wincing)

Could be! You have been taking your pills?

JODI

Of course! missed a period because I ran too much that month. Don't worry, I can't get pregnant without your permission.

NICK

I hope not.

JODI

You know so.

NICK

That's okay, then.

JODI

Perfect, yes, okay... I know you don't want kids now, but you haven't had a vasectomy without telling me?

NICK

No, how could you even think that?

JODI

Because you're so against the diaper brigade!

NICK

You've known that since we met. What happened to romance?

(HE kisses her again, crunches shoulder)

JODI

Now what?

NICK

Nothing. Arm cramp! People don't realize the strain that's put on runners' arms. They use them more than you think.

(HE demonstrates and has another cramp.)

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. Where are you going?

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 TWO

Scene Three

Sunday evening. MO and NICK have had a morning run together and have now met for dinner.

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 Ukranian 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 of a woman. 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 never saw any, so maybe it wasn't even that.

MO

My dad says running on concrete pulverizes the knees worse than a trip to Mecca. And he's right, those roads are hard. I don't have enough cartilage.

NICK

An eighty-six year old woman runs the Marathon. Then there's a man who runs with Rheumatoid Arthritis.

MO

How far?

(NICK enters)

MO

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(Handing him drink)

Speedfeed - with Vita-aid.

MO

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

NICK

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

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

And you've never had a second wind? I've had three or even a fourth...a FIFTH wind!

MO

I may have had that...

NICK

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? 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, I mean yes.

NICK

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

MO

I hope not.

NICK

Confidentially...no, scrap that...the world knows, why not you? JODI, she wants...to be a mother. I take a hard line with mothers, of course you live with yours. I know, saves on the rent.

MO

She can't have PMS if she's pregnant.

NICK

We're not having kids. Because I don't want them. How about you?

MO

I'm working on the girlfriend.

NICK

In Africa? Pretty safe sex.

MO

Women do like to have kids.

NICK

In general.

MO

I'm not saying they like looking after them.

NICK

Drop them at daycare for eighteen years, she won't vie up work. 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 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

You think so? But she doesn't want to get married, she's just become a senior v.p.

MO

Umm...

NICK

She 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?

(MO enters)

NICK

The Soaz contract?

MO

Maybe. 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? GOD...

(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)

NICK

Dear Miss...Please find enclosed the specimen you requested... 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.
I love women. I like men but there's something about women that gets me every time.
Goddamn GETS me!

NICK

What?

MO

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

NICK

That's why you love women? 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(shrugs)

Won't hurt it.

MO

I can't believe...she'd send off for...unless...

NICK

She was planning to leave me.

MO

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

NICK

She hasn't got any friends that I don't know about. Have you got any children anywhere?

MO

No. None that I know about. (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...

NO!

MO

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

NICK

Don't get me wrong.

MO

I don't see how we'll ever find the time to have kids! I don't have time to date.

NICK

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 behind cushion, tube on floor)

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. 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

What I don't like is the purposeful research. Doesn't that take all the...randomness out of it.

MO

I see that.

NICK

The excitement, the accident.

MO

Makes it hard to call it an accident.

NICK

I wouldn't mind that.

MO

No?

NICK

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. If she'd made some terrible mistake with someone else. I know that doesn't sound like Jodi, but I'd rather that 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?

What's the matter? NICK

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

Why should I know where the painkillers are? NICK

Because you practically kill yourself every week. JODI

Every week? MO

Jogging! JODI

RUNNING! NICK

(JODI exits)

You know what's bugging her, because she's not on the short list for the Soaz contract. NICK

The short list. Umm. You think that's her problem? Are you short-listed? MO

Are you? Don't look at me like that. NICK

I'm thinking about something else. MO

Don't feel sorry for her. NICK

Okay! MO(Falsey obedient)

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 though 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

Who me? 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 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 puts it in)

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

(SHE exits, and NICK
empties tube into cactus.
MO has turned away.)

NICK

That was quite tasty!

MO(turning back & seeing empty glass)
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, and pay good money... you didn't want to be involved so if I wanted a kid, and I don't see why I can't have one, there'll be no complications if we split.

NICK
Oh I see, great. Well, then go ahead. Order some more. Send the bill to me.
(MO exits. JODI slumps)

JODI
I don't want to come on heavy and put my feelings first but if I don't, who will? I'm not just the mind of a man who swims out my vagina every morning to deal at the office. I have breasts and I'm looking forward to them getting bigger. Even Loopy Lucy's pregnant now, her Dream Catcher worked. She doesn't even care who the father is. If someone told me I'd be sitting in front of a screen eight days a week I'd have dropped out and had ten kids.

NICK
It's time we had a pet. If we don't control ourselves 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.

NICK

We're more like insects.

END OF SCENE THREE

Scene Four

One week later. NICK is doing his push ups. The speaker phone is giving a ringing signal. NICK goes over to talk to them. We hear from the Speaker.

VOICE

Thank you for calling the Cal Mayzo Clinic, please press 1 if you... (NICK does so) Please choose from the following eight menu options.

NICK(*pressing Zero*)

Give me a person.

VOICE

The person at extension 0 is not answering, to leave a message...

NICK (Pressing Zero)

A person.

VOICE

Please choose from the following eight menu options...

NICK(Pressing Nine)

I'm calling long distance!

VOICE

You have reached the office of Carol Street, Clinic Director, I am not currently in the office. Please leave a message after the beep and I will return your call as soon as possible [BEEP].

NICK(holding brochure)

My name is NICK Pine. Client reference 67321. Look, I'm complaining about this unsolicited advice you junk up my mailbox. STOP with these fiendish plots to provide us with children, we are talking children after all. If you communicate with us ever again.....I will take you to court. As it is I'm putting this in the hands of our lawyer, and I AM OUR LAWYER.

(machine beeps)

(MO enters from running)

NICK

Been running without me?

MO

Beginning to feel the effects. Get up with a glow in the mornings. Got springs in my shoes.

NICK

Let me guess, you've heard from Olachi.

MO

I've written her.

NICK

That's what you and Jodi were hunching over yesterday.

MO

That if she comes over here, I'll marry her.

NICK

And you've committed this offer to paper? She doesn't have e-mail? Fax?

MO

Her cousin's coming here to school. Her cousin's pretty cool too.

NICK

YOU!

(MO has picked up brochure)

MO

This from that clinic?

NICK

I told them, it's disgusting. They'll be sending free samples soon. Women will be able to go shopping for their next kid, pick them up in the Supermarket, aisle three sonny-jims, aisle two peggy-sues.

MO
Spooking me out! Let's go run!

End of Scene Four

Scene Five

One week later, JODI enters from work, she has collected the mail and is puzzled by a package. SHE opens it as NICK enters from his run.

JODI
I thought you were going to take it easy.

NICK
I am. I only did ten K. Without my inhaler! What's that?

JODI
I don't know...a sample of some sort.

NICK
Sample?

JODI
From California, oh I'm sure it's not...

NICK(covering)
Let's see...

JODI
Must have made a mistake. They couldn't be sending me a free sample...

NICK
Anything's possible.

NICK(taking package)
That's right, I forgot.

JODI
YOU?

NICK
Yes, me. I...I...called them up, and I sent away for another specimen for you.

JODI
When?

NICK(lying)
When you were so mad at me for spoiling the...stuff. I sent away for a replacement because you had every right... It was your property, and I was wrong to microwave it.

JODI(taking it back)
It's for me then.

NICK
You paid good money and I would have been equally angry if you'd destroyed...if you'd done the same to me. If the situation was reversed....if that was possible.

JODI (Shaking box)

I wonder if it's from the same donor. They're efficient like that.

(taking packet)

NICK

It's addressed to me.

JODI

But you sent away for me. I mean, it has to be properly frozen, we don't want to keep ruining the poor dead man's....contribution.

NICK

I'll put it straight in the freezer.

(JODI gets paper knife)

JODI

We throw the dried ice away first. You ruined the last lot, let me take care of it.

(SHE stabs at box)

NICK

You wanna take care of it, that's different.

(SHE pulls out folded box, NICK unfolds it. Bio-Hazard labels decorate.)

NICK

Bio-hazardous?

JODI

Yes, that was on the last packet.

NICK

Bio-hazardous, who'd a guessed?

JODI

Could be to the handlers and such like...

NICK

Of course yes, to handlers and such like. Imagine that!

JODI (reading)

They seem to have made a mistake and sent the wrong package anyway, this is a donor kit. See, the sample's empty.

NICK(puts empty container back into package)

Ah good, yes that's just as well. Makes it less bio-hazardous. At the moment. So we'll send it back.

JODI

You can, since you sent for it in the first place.

NICK

I'll send it back. Give it me, I'll send it back.

(SHE gives it to him. NICK looks for tape, finds it, bins it)

NICK

Can't find any tape. We're out of tape, I'll get some later.

(HE limps across stage)

NICK
What are we going to do tonight?

JODI(sarcastically)
I thought we could go dancing.

NICK
Okay, if that's what you want.

JODI
Only you look like you're into the 'agony of defeat'!

NICK
They're recovering. Rick told me about a cure for blisters, before the race you spray them with rubber cement.

JODI
Won't that affect your ankles?

NICK
You can brace your ankles, and you're knees. I

JODI
That only leaves the...

NICK
Thought we might go out for a bite and a romantic stroll along the beach.

JODI
If we're feeling romantic. Aren't you in training?

NICK
Not tonight.

(THEY seal the decision with a kiss as lights fade. NICK holds onto packet)

END OF SCENE FIVE

Scene Six

NICK enters on crutches. HE is unused to them and is exhausted by effort. HE collapses on couch.

Telephone rings.

NICK

(whispering) Where are you? Come on up. But don't expect me to move.

(HE then tries to get up, gives up.

MO enters in jogging gear)

NICK

What are you wearing?

MO

I've been round the block.

NICK

Running without me?

MO

Only a couple of blocks. I heard about your shins splintering. Sounds bad.

NICK

Not really. I could run with you now if didn't hurt so much.

Are you going to do the race? Come on, it won't be that bad. You won't be official, but thousands run along for the ride.

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...

*(runners collect them)

NICK

Ha ha!

MO

You're still going to run with the aneurysm.

NICK

I want you to do something for me.

MO

What?

(JODI enters in dressing gown)

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! You are...

MO
Sometimes.

(JODI exits)

NICK(whispers)
It wasn't easy, but I'm done jerking off.

MO
You need my help or something?

NICK
It wasn't as easy as you think.

MO
You want me to show you how?

NICK
Getting it into the cone, and then...

MO
You managed to fill a cup? Half a cup?

NICK
Our freezer's not cold enough. They say 20 and mine's only 15. And I don't want her to find it. So can you do me a favour and keep it in your freezer until I manage to buy some dry ice?

MO(backing off)
I could buy some for you?

NICK
No, just store it for me.

MO
In my fridge?

NICK
Freezer. Won't hurt anything in deep freeze. Go in the kitchen 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.

NICK
You're making me feel worse.

(JODI makes a face. NICK makes one back)
MO slides in)

(JODI exits.)

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. How cold is ours?

NICK
15. 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's going on?

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

JODI
From the Cal Mayzo clinic?

NICK
Yes, you remember they sent you an empty container. They realized their mistake and sent you the real thing.

JODI
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.

NICK
We're storing it in Mo's freeze for safe-keeping because I've discovered, through reading the letter, that ours isn't cold enough.

JODI
So that's mine, then?

NICK
I saved it for you, yes, and Mo really ought to take it now.

JODI
But why the deception? There's something I'm not getting here.

MO
I think you ought to tell her the truth.

NICK

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

JODI
Yours? Where's it going then?

NICK
Nowhere. At least into storage. 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. That's in the Will.

JODI
The Will?

NICK
I made it out to you, of course.

MO
That way you'll have something left of him if he...

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
Yea, my essential essence – isn't it? 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. I want kids, and I'm seriously considering backing some up. (beat) And I better get to my freezer before the question's academic.

NICK
Yes, our freezer doesn't get cold enough.

JODI
You better go then. Is that where it is? In the ice-cream?

MO
It was going to be a surprise for you.

JODI
It is.
(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
So there are conditions attached to this?

NICK
I suppose so.

JODI
Like I can only use it if you're dead?

NICK
In a manner of speaking. 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.

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
Sort of, yes. But I've run a dozen Marathons, well, almost...

JODI
You don't understand, do you? There's something very simple here that you're not getting.

NICK
I understand your needs. Try and understand mine.

JODI
You're addicted to marathons and like all addicts you'll go on with them until you drop dead.

NICK
If that's what it takes.

JODI
Don't you think that's a tad suicidal?

NICK
No.

JODI
Textbook.

NICK
So what? It's my life. But I wanted you to...to give you, oh this is hard to say...this!

JODI
Contribution to your immortality.

NICK
I'm not immortal. I realize that, and I want you to be happy. I'm getting what I want, running the Marathon, but you should have what you want too.

JODI

I'd like to feel touched, but I don't. I'm trying...

NICK
It was all I could do.

JODI
Thank you!

NICK
You're welcome.

JODI
But...but...I don't want you to die. I don't want a dead
father of my child.

NICK
No chance of that.

JODI
You must think there is, or you wouldn't have... Will you consider, for one moment, will you
consider not running this race?

NICK
No. Sorry, no.

JODI
Don't let me stop you, but don't count on me. I watched you
crawl home once too often. If you're into jeopardizing your health that's your business but
I'm not going to be there to watch.

END OF SCENE SIX

Scene Seven

(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! Olachi'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

But then you found him!

MO

I saw him at the Finish Line.

JODI

Oh great, he finished then.

MO

I'm not saying that.

JODI

If he recognized you, he was doing better than last year.

MO

At least I think it was him. He was making sounds but not forming...

JODI

...sentences, words!

Mo

Not even syllables... He was having convulsions.

JODI

Oh that's nothing, they all have them.

Mo

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 her eating potato chips.

JODI
I was working.

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

JODI
Because that was your choice, where you wanted to be.

NICK
We are through!

MO
She was very worried about you.

NICK(smelling coffee cup)
Oh yes, oh yes, she made herself hazelnut coffee.

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
He doesn't know what it's saying, State of exhaustion. Temporary Madness due to over-exertion.

(Blackout as we hear an ambulance siren)

*End of Scene Seven
Scene Eight*

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. Like 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

Oh, you mean...Mo, come back here.

MO

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

JODI

That first night in Intensive Care, I was sure you weren't going to make it. Five o'clock in the morning I'm roaming around in the cafeteria and I'm hot and angry at you and decide to do something for myself, to put my feelings first - because if I don't, who will? To be honest, I just experimented, I never thought it would work. I never thought it'd work.

MO

Why, that's wonderful. NICK, congratulations. Scored in one, means you've got good stuff!

NICK

But I didn't die.

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 more effective.

NICK

But wait a moment...

JODI

Be pleased for me!

NICK

How do I know it's mine? It was in Mo's freezer...

JODI

I knew where it was.

NICK

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

MO
What?

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

MO
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? Like guys who get accused of walking down the street, as if they have no right to be here? I don't NEED To be here.

JODI
Don't blame Mo, I did it all by myself. BE PLEASED FOR ME.

NICK
I can't. I don't like this. My heart dances but not for joy, not joy. No, stay - you can't go now my friend, if you are my friend. How come you're so thrilled at JODI's news and I'm not? How come your eyes light up at her pregnancy and then her job? When I should be the one that's glad?

(MO exits)

JODI
Why aren't you?

NICK
You betrayed me. I did that as a favor for you.

JODI
You didn't have to, I could have gone back to the bank.

NICK
I was trying to help you out.

JODI

Oh yeah, I think you wanted the trip. The power trip. (beat)
If you want me to abort, I will.

NICK

Let me think about it.

JODI

Why not? Who'd want to bring a kid into this world, where husbands take pot shots at wives when they get pregnant with their babies. POW! For the insurance money, and then blame it on someone of another race.

NICK

SHUT UP and let me think.

End of Scene Eight

Scene Nine

NICK enters, followed by MO who is returning running gear.

MO

I think that's it, I never wore the mask.

NICK

Mo, come in, sit down. I want to apologise. I lost it. Let me make you a cup of coffee.

MO

Do you know how to make 'humble coffee'?

NICK

I'll get down on my knees and serve it, will that do?

MO

If you do it for the next twenty-five years.

NICK

I've got news, Jodi's going to have the baby. It's going to be a girl.
Her folks will help her out. She'll be fine, and I'll visit.

MO

I hear you're taking the Soaz contract.

NICK

Jodi passed it up because she wants to concentrate on doing the baby thing, giving up the prozac. I was next in line. And what about you, going to Nigeria? But you'll come back, right. Nigeria, Appalachia! (HE shrugs)

MO

Congratulations on the kid, anyway.

NICK

We've got to be good for something, right? I didn't want to take advantage of her quitting but, look at this way. I suffered first. I suffered first.

END OF ACT ONE

Act TWO

AT RISE: MO enters in white tie
and tails.
He addresses the audience, like
the father of the bride.

MO

In my dream of the past a snarling dog, Truth, pulls at my coat tails, tears the coat off my back and I'm sitting bare-legged on a rotting porch on 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 mouldy 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! She climbs the stairs, sagging with heavy bags to pitch those mangoes on the table, to fix us with her watery eyes and tell us humans divide, they have to divide. Find humans, you'll find two tribes. She'd take the hatchet and thwank the yucca, or the onion, divide by greed and by envy divide.

(Lights fade on MO, and we are in NICK's place.
JEANETTE is writing on her lap-top computer.
By means of a screen we see what she's typing.)

JEANETTE

(SHE types "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', types 'heart'. Then SHE erases 'heart', types 'throat'.))

(Telephone rings)

JOHN's VOICE

Hallo darling.

JEANETTE

(SHE types, "I love you")

JOHN's VOICE

Me too! Finished the book?

JEANETTE

(SHE types, "almost")

JOHN's VOICE

Down to the wire!

JEANETTE

(SHE types, "I'll finish in time, I'm determined")

JOHN's VOICE

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

JEANETTE

(SHE types, "I have other plans. Got your suit?")

JOHN's VOICE

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

JEANNETTE

(SHE types, "I'm wearing nothing, and have silver stars pasted on my breasts.")

JOHN's VOICE

I can't wait.

JEANNETTE

(SHE types, "see you at the Church. Mo will be here soon")

JOHN's VOICE

I guess I gotta leave it to him to bring you in. BYE my lover.

JEANNETTE

(SHE types, "You're going to have to prove that soon.")

JOHN's VOICE

You bet. Bye sweetheart.

(NICK enters from outside)

NICK

Thank God this is the last time I'll have to deal with that terrible Medics woman. She hates my guts, and it's mutual. Had to drag your pills out of her, leech your Pescalor from her sweaty grasp. She thought she had me because it was a three time repeat, how about a life-time repeat? Thinks because she calls the doctor to check, she's got some sort of power over me. Of course she has because then she makes me wait.

(HE stacks pills up)

NICK

Your wedding present! I'll give John the paper-work, marked the days with an 'x' in different colors, I've made it simple. Not that I'm saying he is, but watch! I mean on the days he's tired. There will be those! Tired and tired of YOU! Don't forget.

JEANNETTE (typing)

I'm going to get dressed.

NICK

I haven't had breakfast yet.

JEANNETTE (typing)

I can get dressed alone.

NICK

Since when? I know you've been practising but...okay, I've got to get used to being useless now that you've turned me in for a husband. Hey, Jeannette

(JEANNETTE exits, NICK packs her pills into a case, drags out another case and packs her clothes, scattered over chairs)

NICK

Jeannette! One question. Have you talked about children?

JEANNETTE (typing)

Yes, we want them.

NICK
How many?

JEANETTE (typing
Two.

NICK
One each, in case you split. Why am I even worrying? Don't I have better things to think about?
Obviously not.

(Doorbell rings. MO's face appears on screen.)

NICK
Your uncle's here, much too early!

JEANETTE(Typing)
He wants to talk to you.

NICK
I'm not talking to anyone to-day, to-day of all days.

(MO enters in suit and tails)

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
Come in and sit down, she's preparing herself for the altar. You look fine. You're supposed to look like a stuffed bird!

MO
If you have a needle and thread, I could sew 'em up.

NICK
I can't run around providing needle and thread. Okay, I'll look. It won't stop people sniggering.
Jeanette, where's the needle and thread?

JEANETTE (Typing)
Top drawer, Bridge Table.

MO
So, the uterus IS a tracking device.

NICK
And she wants kids, she has her ovaries. I suggested she have them out considering the trouble every month but she wants a couple of kids first. I know it's ridiculous. I don't get it.

MO
There are some things it's best to not even discuss. Many things.

NICK (throws jacket down)
Go and be laughed at, you'll never catch up with the laughs on me!

MO

Give it here.

NICK

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

MO

I am not father of the bride. I'm playing a part, you won't play.

NICK

Your bow tie isn't straight.

MO

Do you have an extra tuxedo jacket?

NICK

You can take mine.

MO

You're not coming at all. Not even to take photographs?

NICK

They ordered a professional photographer.

MO

You can't blame them.

NICK

No, they can't rely on me.

MO

She HAS relied on you.

NICK

SHE can rely on me, not him. A Roadie!

MO

A drummer.

NICK

A lousy drummer, got thrown out of six bands because he couldn't keep the beat.

MO

A good Roadie!

NICK

Marrying my daughter's something else. In a Church!

MO

Her choice.

NICK

He doesn't believe.

MO

You have that in common.

NICK

He's a trucker! Not that I can fault him for that. Only for marrying Jeannette for reasons I hate to think.

MO

You don't believe in marriage, or religion.

NICK

I don't want to hear about them from you.

(beat)

MO

You telecommute full time now?

NICK

Worked out when I took over, after Jodi baled out.

MO

When she died, you mean?

NICK

Now I'll be holed up here with nowhere to go, alone. Son-of-a-bitch!

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

You weren't angry ENOUGH, I never really got under your skin.

MO

That's right.

NICK

The crowning insult! Do you want a 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 puts a CD in the player)

JOHN's singing voice, barely audible above drum and base

Have I simply got the winter blues?
Isn't it insulting to think sunshine can alter 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

JEANNETTE types
Thanks Dad!

NICK(yells back)
Wasn't me, Mo wanted to hear it. (to MO) One song, he's written one measly song.

MO
Written one, he can write others.

NICK
Wasn't ever recorded by anyone. He's a Roadie, good at CARRYING things.

MO
He may make it yet, wake up to a pile of money and a record contract..

NICK
A rock star for my daughter! Nice! Never home and mobbed by pussy?

MO
I have three daughters, I know what you're saying. I've got to go through this three times.

NICK
Not the same. Your daughters are perfect. Olachi wouldn't have it any other way.

(JEANNETTE enters, MO kisses her cheek, holds her hand)

NICK
You haven't dressed? Changed your mind? Can't wait to hand over my bathroom duties.

(HE does a mock hop, and trips. MO laughs)

JEANNETTE(Types)
I can't do it without Mum.

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

JEANNETTE (typing)
Mum!

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

JEANNETTE (Typing)
I can't.

MO
She's sitting right over there, nodding her head, tapping her foot, way ahead of us.

NICK
Like the Angel of Death!

MO
Your Dad, your Dad... told me he's gonna be there, right beside us. When we all three walk down the aisle.

NICK
She was carefully brought up without religion.

JEANNETTE (types)

Thanks Dad. I!

NICK

Nowhere near a church.

(JEANNETTE exits)

NICK

It'd be a terrible disservice to my daughter to pretend I believe in the sanctity of what she's going to do in a church, and afterwards.

MO

I have trouble with the consecration thing but if that's how they want to declare their love...

NICK

Ha ha! Her love maybe. What's in it for him? A woman who can only move half an arm, and only has the use of her face.

MO

She's positive. Let her have some happiness.

NICK

I'll tell you why, besides the novelty, don't forget celebrity status, a mention in Who's Who in America?

MO

Is that right? Who'd a guessed!

NICK

How long do you think it'll last?

MO

You're not going anywhere. You'll be there to pick up the pieces.

NICK

How can I let him mess with it?

(MO goes to cabinet containing trophies)

MO

Who's Who, eh? She's really made it.

NICK

Four years sliding on bone-breaking ice and...ruthless competition, cut-throat championships, and she's crushed because she goes to help someone...someone who...

MO

Someone else! You girl's a hero.

NICK

And that's why John...

MO

Don't say it!

NICK

That's why...

MO

It's gonna big a great big wedding.

NICK

That's why John...what a name, John...that's why John...

MO

She's a beautiful person who's done a beautiful thing for someone.

NICK

Risking your life in a hopelessly burning building is not...

MO

Something you'd ever have done.

NICK

No, I have more brains!

JEANNETTE (Types)

Stop it!

MO

Can she hear what we've been saying?

NICK

Over a certain decibel. (Yells) Do you want any help, darling?

JEANNETTE (types)

Take a hike.

NICK

She's still feisty.

MO

That's why John...

NICK

Don't talk about him.

MO

When we heard she was trapped, we piled into the car and headed straight to church to pray for her.

NICK

Church? Don't talk to me about that. Olachi and the missionaries have got to you.

MO

Whatever.

NICK

You don't believe in God, you hypocrite.

MO

I prayed to a non-existent God.

NICK

Your non-existent God and a few firemen saved her. Praying? You prayed! Make you feel superior or something?

MO

Not meant to.

NICK

You make me sick.

MO

You are sick! I don't know how Jeannette survived. She nearly didn't.

NICK

She did fine, thank you. Even though I say so myself. Olympic Medals, Who's Who, men wanting to marry her. I'd say she was a big success.

MO

Strong sense of survival is probably what John loves most about her.

NICK

You think so? You he envies her survival instincts?

MO

I said love, not envy.

NICK

Oh sorry, I forgot. You're the love-God type now. Thanks to Olachi, or are they one and the same, is that how it works? You trot along to church with your women in tow like you're not living in this century and it's based on a lie, you lie every time you go into that church.

(JEANNETTE enters)

JEANNETTE (types)

Will you stop shouting?

(Telephone rings)

FLORIST'S VOICE

Hi there.

JEANNETTE (types)

Jeannette here.

NICK (to MO)

Don't look!

FLORIST'S VOICE

Can we come by with the flowers now?

JEANNETTE (Typing)

No, you're supposed to deliver them to the Church, I have my bouquet.

NICK(to MO)

Okay, not a personal call. Gets a bit embarrassing when she's talking to John but I need the screen big enough so that I don't have to find my glasses every time.

MO

Isn't anyone helping you with the make-up?

NICK

Please.

JEANNETTE (typing)

I can do it myself. Let's go when I'm ready, I want to go early.

MO

You got it!

(JEANNETTE exits)

NICK(cynically)

Make-up? (covers himself) She'll be fine. You'll soon see the dress. As big as a Burkha to cover the chair.

MO

In white, not black though.

NICK

I suppose you're gonna love the guys who carry off your daughters.

MO

I'll be so happy to see the back of them.

NICK

Because you have three! AND Olachi! I hate you.

MO

I know.

NICK

But really.

MO

That's how you get your kicks.

NICK

Superior bastard!

MO

If you say so.

NICK

The worst thing I hate about you is your homespun philosophy, got from your homefolk, those folk of yours, your homebodies, right? And that's not all I hate about you, I hate that swagger, oh yes, you have it, that assured attractive-to-women-and-know-it, you bastard, I hate that, because you fool everyone with your age, don't you? They don't know the signs, and I hate that advantage. Which goes hand in hand with your laid-back male domination bit. Oh I can't get away with it, but you can. May you rot in hell. And that's not all I hate about you, there's your beautiful wife who believes in you and God, in that order, and hates me, and if that's not bad enough you have three daughters who idolize the ground you walk on, three healthy I may say, I do say, who not only love you and their mother but love each other! That's really fearsome. What those three young women could do together. Watch out Earth once those three graduate. Because you're so happy in your home and that's how you want it, you cheap bastard. You have to be happy in your home, don't you? I hate THAT HAPPY HOME! Worst of all. No, not there's one thing more, I hate to have to say it...

MO

So you will.

NICK

...I hate your CAUSE, whatever it is. That cause running in your veins, the back-to-Africa, affirmative action, Gospel Oscars, I hate the whole smug, suffering-on-your-sleeve, I hate to have to say this but I hate your whole RACE.

(long pause)

MO

You want me out the way. So you can walk Jeannette down the aisle yourself, there'll be no one else.

NICK

Cancel the wedding. Jeannette, cancel the wedding. Mo's going home.

(JEANNETTE enters)

NICK
Because I'm not giving you away to that...man

MO
Don't worry darling...

JEANNETTE (Typing)
When will you stop abusing...

MO
We've been having a philosophical discussion.

JEANNETTE (continues typing)
...your best friend, the friend who cares the most about you?

NICK
No longer true.

JEANNETTE(types)
My friend too!

NICK (not looking at screen)
What does she say?
(Telephone rings, clicks.)

JOHN'S VOICE, singing
Don't lean on me, I'm a straw in the wind
Don't lean on this reed in deep water.

JEANNETTE (Typing)
I love it, I love you! Get me outa here!

JOHN'S VOICE (concerned)
What's wrong, darling?

JEANNETTE (typing)
Sound off!

(NICK goes to speaker and
turns sound down, but very low)

JEANNETTE (typing)
Sound off!

(JEANNETTE exits)

MO
Stop driving that hate train, get off it.

NICK
I'm enjoying the ride.

JOHN'S VOICE (Low)
What's he been doing this time?

JEANNETTE (typing)
Abusing Mo.

(NICK laughs and points to himself and MO)

JOHN'S VOICE
Won't be long now, a hundred and three more minutes, approximately.

JEANNETTE (typing)
Too long.

JOHN'S VOICE
A guy called who used to work for Life, Life Magazine, wants to do a video. I told him, no way.

NICK (Mouthing)
Jerk!

JEANNETTE(typing)
After the ceremony, he can video then.

JOHN'S VOICE
On our honeymoon?

JEANNETTE (Typing)
At the Reception.

JOHN'S VOICE
Oh right, that's what I told him. I don't want you upset!

(NICK mimes cutting his own throat)
JEANNETTE (Types)
Tell me about the song?

JOHN'S VOICE
Came to me when I woke up. Words and music, out of nowhere.

NICK (to MO)
Probably stole them.

MO
Didn't she mean you to switch the sound off?

JEANNETTE (Typing)
You wrote a song this morning?

JOHN'S VOICE
Almost, got first four lines...

MO
Come on, switch it off. This is embarrassing.

JEANNETTE (typing)
Must be happy.

JOHN'S VOICE
Must be!

NICK
Sure he's happy, to-day he's gonna be a celebrity.

(JEANNETTE enters in a fury)

NICK (Surprised)
Isn't that the truth? He wants to be a celebrity, face it!

JEANNETTE (Summons up a screaming voice)
I HATE YOU!

(Pause)

NICK
What? What did you say?

JEANNETTE (typing)
I hate you.

NICK
No, no, what did you say you little stiff?

JEANNETTE (Summons up her voice again)
I HATE YOU, I've always hated you. Why didn't you die instead of Mum. Mum! I can talk, where are you? I haven't lost my voice.

MO
Is this the first time...since the fire?

JOHN's VOICE perplexed
You hate me?

MO
No, no.

JEANNETTE
The phone, I want to talk to John. Get me the phone.

NICK
Oh mine, yes, wait a minute.

(HE looks for his phone)

MO
He's gonna get a shock.

NICK
Wait for it. Here you are!

JEANNETTE
John, John...

JOHN's VOICE
Is that you...Jeannette?

JEANNETTE
My voice has come back. (to NICK) Sound off.

NICK
Sound off, I promise.
(HE goes to switch)

JOHN's VOICE
Darling, I can't believe it....

(NICK switches sound off. JEANNETTE exits, cradling phone)

NICK

Hope he doesn't mind a wife who talks now.

MO

She must have been shocked into silence by the injury.

NICK

I shocked her back. You heard her first words? I hate you, Dad. I hate you. I'll never forget those four beautiful words.

MO

She's been through an earthquake. And somehow lived to tell the tale.

NICK

A triumph! To-day of all days.

MO

Let's go to a wedding.

NICK

Maybe she doesn't want to get married now that she can speak.

MO

Don't get your hopes up. She wants it. She needs it if she wants a couple of kids. Who are you to stand in the way?

NICK

I wish Jodi was here to see her speak like that. To hear her SPEAK after all that.

MO

She is here!

(JEANNETTE enters)

JEANNETTE

I can't wait, let's go.

NICK

You're not going to get into your finery?

JEANNETTE

Don't need a stupid dress. I'm fine as I am.

(NICK nods and kisses her)

MO

I think your Dad should give you away.

JEANNETTE and NICK

No. No, you!

(Lights up on MO, addressing the wedding)

MO

My Nan got meaner by the year. Mango Time went from twice a week to every other month, then twice a summer. Bring out the fruit, Nan, we'd yell at her and she'd sneer like the old dog called Truth, thwank the yucca in two, and say envy divides, greed divides but not the mango, and she'd serve us perfect slivers of mango without a smile because there wasn't much love left in her.

THE END

PAGE1