

MISANTHROPE

(a new play based on Moliere's classic comedy  
about a man who hates the world)

written by

Gary Graves

in collaboration with Darren Bridgett, Deborah Fink,  
Roberto Robinson, and Gregory Scharpen.

Revival Post-production Draft: June, 2009

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P.O. Box 9771  
Berkeley CA 94706  
510-558-1381  
Info@centralworks.org

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALAN MOORE: a very serious journalist.

PHIL FOX: a well-to-do artist.

CELIA BEJART: a wealthy young widow.

SETTING

The action takes place in the downstairs "Patio Room" of Celia's home, "Poquelin," a lavish estate overlooking the ocean.

The time is the present.

*MISANTHROPE* was developed by Central Works and first performed at the Berkeley City Club. The premiere production opened on November 2, 2002, with the following team:

Darren Bridgett\*.....Alan  
Roberto Robinson\*.....Phil  
Deborah Fink\*.....Celia

Gary Graves: director  
Gregory Scharpen: sound design  
Lauren Kaplan: costume design  
Mike Curtis: lighting design

The revival of *MISANTHROPE* was presented by Central Works at the Berkeley City Club, opening on May 23, 2009, with the following team:

Darren Bridgett\*.....Alan  
Michael Navarra\*.....Phil  
Deborah Fink\*.....Celia

Gary Graves: director  
Jan Zvaifler: producer  
Gregory Scharpen: sound design  
Tammy Berlin: costume design

\*member Actors Equity Association

## A NOTE ABOUT THE PLAY

When we sat down at our first workshop meeting on this project, the group began by reading through Richard Wilbur's translation of Moliere's original play, *The Misanthrope*, written in 1666. Before beginning workshops, Central Works decided to do a contemporary updating of the play, that it would be a comedy, and that we would reduce the action to a three-character play, two men and one woman: the Misanthrope (Alan), his best friend (Phil), and the wealthy widow (Celia), with whom the Misanthrope is deeply in love. After assembling the collaborative team and reading the original play, as a group, we proceeded by asking what thematic issues are present in the original, and how might we translate those issues into contemporary terms? As workshops progressed, we brainstormed about ways in which we might play out these thematic issues in the on-stage interaction of just our three central characters. In some cases, we have "distilled" certain aspects of Moliere's original scenario, in other cases we have adapted various components, and in still other cases we have altogether invented circumstances with a particular view toward the original. Our play, in these diverse ways, resonates with Moliere's, and in some instances, I hope, even represents a kind of "dialog" between the two. In the end, we have retained the basic premise put forth by Moliere in the first scene of his play, which is articulated by the Misanthrope—"If it were up to me," says Alceste (Alan), "we would all speak from the heart or say nothing at all"—and we have tried to follow that premise to its logical conclusion, given certain newly invented circumstances. What we have here is a new play, but one which is clearly based on, or "inspired" by, Moliere's comedy—both of which, I think, ask what limits, if any, honesty might have in the course of human affairs?—particularly in affairs of the heart.—Gary Graves

(Night. Sounds of a party, voices laughing and gossiping.

Lights up in an elegant estate by the ocean.

ALAN MOORE enters, seeking refuge from the party.

He lets out an angry roar at the partygoers upstairs, then he is overcome by an acid stomach. He withdraws a bottle of Pepto Bismol from a pocket in his suit coat, downs a dose of the bright pink elixir, and broods alone, sourly.

A church bell tolls eleven in the distance.

PHIL FOX enters, wearing a bizarre wig, cocktail in hand.)

PHIL

What's the matter with you?

(no answer)

Your stomach giving you trouble again?

(no answer)

Have you had anything to eat?

ALAN

I'd like to be alone, if you don't mind.

PHIL

What's the matter? Not enjoying the party?

(no answer)

That doesn't surprise me.

ALAN

I'd like to be alone.

PHIL

Is it me?

(no answer)

Is it Celia?

ALAN

How do you live with yourself?

PHIL

What?

ALAN

You heard me.

PHIL

What do you mean?

ALAN

The way you play the game. How can you stand it?

PHIL

What game? What are you talking about?

ALAN

I watched you. You were talking to that fool with the toupee. Laughing at his idiotic jokes, complementing his suit, smiling, smiling, smiling. Then I asked you his name, and you didn't even know who he was. How can you stand to be that way?

PHIL

You should try it, Alan. It's not as difficult as it looks.

ALAN

I'd rather hang myself.

PHIL

Ah, yes, your favorite pastime.

ALAN

It's not a joke, Phil. There's something deeply wrong with you. It's corrupting to behave like that. It withers the soul.

PHIL

That's absurd. It's a party. What do you expect?

ALAN

Sincerity. Is that too much to ask?

PHIL

It's a party.

(He removes the outlandish wig.)

ALAN

If it were up to me, we would all speak from the heart, or say nothing at all.

PHIL

You're not serious.

(no reply)

That's impossible. You couldn't live that way.

ALAN

Why not?

PHIL

We have to be...polite. We say things out of courtesy, Alan. "Hi, how are you? I'm fine, and you? I'm fine, too, thank you. Have a nice day."

ALAN

Have a nice day. That is the single most sickening phrase in the entire language.

PHIL

It's just a convention of speech, for God's sake.

ALAN

It's a corruption of the soul. It's the height of dishonesty. It's the normalization of insincerity. It's a vapid conformity to the dehumanization of discourse. It's false. It's hollow. Like the people who speak that way. It is the mode of the flatterer. Those bugs that buzz about these parties hugging everyone, kissing both cheeks, fashionably. It disgusts me to hear these fools showering one another with praises; then they turn their compliments on me. If you praise everyone you praise no one.

PHIL

What?

ALAN

If you insist on being polite, as you call it, then you mustn't consider me your friend anymore.

PHIL

Don't be an ass.

ALAN

I mean it. I'm sick of this. I'm sick of this whole mess. The whole thing. All of you can go to hell.

PHIL

That's a little extreme, don't you think?

ALAN

I just want people to be honest with me. Is that too much to ask?

PHIL

And would you, in turn, be honest with everyone else?

ALAN

Absolutely. I see no reason ever to be otherwise. We should speak from the heart, not mask our true feelings in familiar pleasantries.

PHIL

Sometimes it's better not to speak the truth.

ALAN

Never.

PHIL

In fact, it's often best to keep your true feelings to yourself.

ALAN

Then you prefer to lie.

PHIL

You leave no room for the complexities of life, Alan. Emotions are volatile, unpleasant things. They need to be reined in, not unhinged.

ALAN

I disagree.

PHIL

The whole fabric of society would unravel. If everyone started saying everything they really felt inside, it would be...

ALAN

It would be a breath of fresh air.

PHIL

It would be chaos. Employees would tell their bosses to go piss off.

ALAN

That's a step in the right direction, I'd say, wouldn't you? Or would you? Have you ever worked for anybody?

PHIL

Salespeople would insult us.

ALAN

Good, you deserve it.

PHIL

Can you imagine if the waiters at Jacques' actually said what they thought of us?

ALAN

You might treat them differently in that case, don't you think?

PHIL

I don't want everyone speaking from their heart, for God's sake. We'd be fighting with everyone. It would be anarchy. It would be the death of civilization.

ALAN

Exactly. And good riddance.

PHIL

You're being ridiculous.

ALAN

I'm as serious as a ticking time bomb. This world would be better off dead. There's not a single soul worth saving out there, if you ask me. Oh, I know there are darling children, and poor unfortunate millions, but really, what's the good of it all? Those darling children will grow to be treacherous, cowardly frauds, everyone. And those millions will always be miserable, so long as this rotten, corrupt world remains as it is. Nary a one deserves to survive. I shall be done with them all. The whole detestable race of Man.

PHIL

What are you saying? You're taking this a bit too far, Alan.

ALAN

Leave me alone.

PHIL

That's enough of this. Come on. Snap out of it. Really. Don't talk like that. You sound like a nut. People think you're a nut, Alan.

ALAN

What do I care what people think. Let them think I'm a turnip, or a gerbil, or a starfish. What does it matter?

PHIL

You're not thinking of doing anything...drastic, are you?

ALAN

I'm not going to kill myself, if that's what you're asking. I just want to get away from all this. These people. Those people. Up there. They disgust me. I can't stand them. I need a change. I want to be...

(looks out at the ocean)

Out there.

PHIL

On the ocean?

ALAN

I want to be on an island. Where none of this exists. No more high society parties. No more publishers. No more press agents. No more adoring readers. No more god damn critics. No more politicians. No more lawyers. No more television talk show hosts. All of it. I'm sick of it. I just want to be alone.

PHIL

All alone?

(no answer)

What about Celia?

(ALAN looks up, where the party is.)

PHIL (CONT'D)

You two not getting along?

ALAN

It's difficult to be alone with her. I mean, she's always got so many people around her.

PHIL

Well, she's a busy woman, isn't she.

ALAN

Yes. A very busy woman.

PHIL

Is that what's bothering you?

ALAN

No. It's definitely the world that's bothering me. Celia... Celia is...apart from all that.

PHIL

Ah. Do you love her?

ALAN

Yes. I do. Very much.

PHIL

Mm. So maybe you won't be running off to your island escape anytime soon.

(no reply)

You have to take people as they are, Alan. Or else let them be. The world won't change for you. You have to make the best of it, as it is.

ALAN

Doesn't anything ever turn you to piss?

PHIL

Nothing is worth losing your temper over, if that's what you mean.

ALAN

Nothing?

PHIL

Nothing.

ALAN

Suppose someone you really trusted--suppose a good friend treacherously conspired to swindle you out of your trust fund.

PHIL

I don't have a trust fund.

ALAN

All right, your inheritance, whatever, your patrimony, your father's estate--your brand new BMW-whatever-it-is.

PHIL

It's a Z4 Roadster.

ALAN

Fine, your brand new Z4 Roadster, that big blue penis you drive around in. Suppose your best friend stole your car and started spreading vicious rumors, outrageous lies about you--that you worked for a living, for instance, in manual labor even. Wouldn't that make you angry? Wouldn't you lose your temper over that?

PHIL

I wouldn't lose my temper, I'd simply pay someone to kill him. That car is more than a car--it's a reason to live. People are unscrupulous, Alan; they're greedy, and deceitful; they lie, they cheat, they steal, they are cruel and unkind. That's human nature. We can't change that. Vultures dine upon the dead. Wolves are vicious killers. Apes don't appreciate good breeding.

(beat)

Are you still being sued?

ALAN

Yes. Why?

PHIL

Who's your lawyer?

ALAN  
I don't have a lawyer.

PHIL  
Why not?

ALAN  
I've decided to defend myself.

PHIL  
You're joking.

ALAN  
Why shouldn't I?

PHIL  
Why? Well, to begin with, you don't know anything about the law.

ALAN  
This is a very simple matter. I don't need a lawyer. The whole thing is a fraud. And that can easily be explained. Logically and coherently. It's obvious.

PHIL  
Let me recommend a good lawyer.

ALAN  
No, I've decided. If I lose, I lose. I don't care. I just want to have my say. I just want to tell that scoundrel to his face what a fraud he is. The whole thing is a scam to bilk me out of a settlement. I won't do it. I refuse.

PHIL  
Can you afford to take that risk?

ALAN  
I don't care. Some things are worth more than money.

PHIL  
You'll lose. He'll get some high-priced lawyer to dance circles around you, find some technicality, and you'll lose.

ALAN  
Then I'll lose. But I'll have my day in court.

PHIL  
Does Celia know about this?

ALAN  
Why?

PHIL  
Just wondered.

ALAN  
Why?

PHIL  
Well, she's being sued, isn't she?

ALAN  
Of course, she's being sued--why?

PHIL  
Well, she's got a fantastic lawyer--what's his name?

ALAN  
I haven't the faintest idea.

2 SCENE TWO

2

(CELIA BEJART hurries in, wearing a beautiful party outfit, cocktail in hand. She doesn't see Alan.)

CELIA  
(to Phil)  
There you are. I thought I saw you sneak away.  
(discovers Alan)  
Alan. I didn't see you there. What are you two boys doing in here all by yourselves?

PHIL  
Philosophizing.

CELIA  
Come back to the party. Everyone's dancing. Come dance with me, Phil.

ALAN  
Celia. Can we talk for a moment?

CELIA  
Now? The party. I want to dance. Don't you want to dance? Come on. The three of us.

ALAN  
Please. I'd like to talk to you.

CELIA  
Oh, you. Of course, you don't want to dance. You hate dancing. Aren't you enjoying the party?

PHIL

Why don't I leave you two alone.

CELIA

No, wait. I want to dance.

ALAN

Celia. Please.

PHIL

Later. We'll dance later. I need a refill.

(PHIL exits.)

CELIA

What is it, Alan? What is so urgently important that we have to talk right now? I'm hosting a party, Alan. Doesn't that mean anything to you? It's a fabulous party. Everybody's dancing. The food turned out wonderfully. Francois did a fantastic job. Have you eaten anything? What are you doing down here? You're not enjoying yourself, are you? You hate parties. I knew this would happen. You're brooding again, aren't you? Why are you always brooding?

ALAN

Stop. Please. I want to talk.

CELIA

This is not the time for an important talk, if that's what you have in mind. I don't want to talk. I want to dance and sip Cosmos and laugh. Do you like cocaine?

ALAN

What? No.

CELIA

Have you ever tried it?

ALAN

No. Have you?

CELIA

I hate the stuff. But there's some up there, if you're interested. Maybe you should try it.

ALAN

No, I'm fine without cocaine, thank you.

CELIA

Are you drinking Pepto Bismol again?

ALAN

My stomach is...

CELIA

Oh, God, I can smell it. Why do you drink that stuff?

ALAN

I don't drink it; I wear it as an aftershave.

CELIA

It's horrid. It's ghastly.

ALAN

I'm sorry. I happen to need it. It coats the stomach.

CELIA

Why don't you see a doctor? I think you have a serious problem.

ALAN

I've seen a doctor. It's the acid. The acid in my stomach builds up and makes me...ill. This helps.  
(he takes a sip)

CELIA

Uh. It's diabolical.

ALAN

Celia. Sit down. Please.

CELIA

Why?

ALAN

Because I have something I want to say to you.

CELIA

Why can't I stand?

ALAN

Will you please sit down.

CELIA

I don't want to sit down. I want to dance. I have guests upstairs, Alan. This is no time to talk.

ALAN

I have been trying to get a moment alone with you for four days. It's impossible. Why do you constantly surround yourself with all those people up there? There's always someone coming and going around here. Every day its a different social event. Your life is one long party. You never stop.

CELIA

Is this what you wanted to talk to me about?

ALAN

No. No, not at all. I wanted--

CELIA

We have spent plenty of time alone, Alan. You don't remember any of the times we've spent alone together?

ALAN

Of course, I do. And those moments have been the most beautiful...magical--

CELIA

Then why are you suddenly declaring that my life is one long party? That is so unfair.

ALAN

I'm sorry. I didn't really mean that. What I meant was--

CELIA

If you don't like the way I lead my life, then perhaps we should reconsider our relationship.

ALAN

I'm sorry. I didn't mean that to sound...I just...I've been a little frustrated trying to find a moment when we could talk together.

CELIA

You couldn't have picked a worse time than this.

ALAN

All right. All right. Nevermind. This is not the time. You're right. Bad time. My mistake. You're hosting the creme de la creme of society up there, your coterie of adoring worshippers; they'll probably all wander off and die of grief in your absence.

CELIA

Now you're getting mean.

ALAN

I just wanted to talk to you.

CELIA

All right. We're talking. Go ahead. What?

ALAN

(tries to formulate the words)  
Oh, nevermind.

CELIA

What? After all that?

ALAN

This really isn't the right time.

CELIA

That's what I've been saying all along. You mean we went through all this so you could say nevermind?

ALAN

No, no, no. Damn it, this isn't what I meant to happen.  
(sighs)  
Oh, God, what am I doing?

CELIA

Alan. What's wrong?

ALAN

What's wrong? What's wrong is that...I love you.

CELIA

You love me? What's wrong with that?

ALAN

Nothing. I mean...

(looks out the window)

Look. Look at the moon out there. See how its reflecting on the waves. A glittering pathway, all the way into the distance. A shimmering pathway into the dark horizon beyond.

CELIA

Yes, it's beautiful.

(They kiss.)

ALAN

Celia.

CELIA

Yes, darling?

ALAN

I know it hasn't been very long. These past few months have simply flown by like a whirlwind. Caught me up in a whirlwind, it has. You've caught me up. Your smile, that little twinkle in your eye, the graceful way you move, your laugh. Your laugh rings in my ears all day long. And your kiss, those lovely lips of yours. Your kisses remain on my lips for days on end. I adore you, Celia.

CELIA

And I adore you. You're such a poet. You say the most beautiful things. I admire you, Alan. I do. I wish I could write the way you do.

(MORE)

CELIA(cont'd)

Of course, you have a tendency to say outrageous things, and make everyone angry at you... But that amuses me, I suppose. I think you're funny.

ALAN

Funny? You think I'm funny?

CELIA

You make me laugh.

ALAN

Yes, I do, don't I?

(CELIA laughs.)

ALAN

Yes. Funny. Do you think I'm funny because I say clever things that make you laugh? Or do you think I'm funny...because...you're laughing...at me.

CELIA

Oh, what does it matter? You make me laugh; that's what's important.

ALAN

I can't bear to be apart from you.

CELIA

Apart? Why?

(He kneels.)

ALAN

Celia, will you marry me?

CELIA

What?

ALAN

I want us to be together, always. I want us to be husband and wife. Will you marry me?

(presents her with a ring in a box)

CELIA

Oh, my God. It's...beautiful. Alan. I...I...I don't know what to say. This is such a shock.

ALAN

A shock? A complete shock?

CELIA

Yes, a complete shock.

ALAN

You mean, it hasn't occurred to you that we might...

CELIA

I was married for ten years, Alan. I'm only just beginning to adjust to life without...Armand.

ALAN

Yes, I know. And I'm sorry if it seems like I'm hurrying things. Only Armand has been dead for--

CELIA

(a faint gasp)

Ah!

ALAN

I'm sorry. Armand has been...gone for nearly a year now. I only thought you might have...you might be...well, isn't that long enough?

CELIA

This is all rather shocking, Alan. I don't know what to say.

ALAN

Yes, you said that.

CELIA

Well, I don't know what to say.

ALAN

Say yes.

CELIA

But...

ALAN

But what?

CELIA

I just don't know what to say.

ALAN

All right, then don't say anything.

CELIA

Now you're getting angry.

ALAN

I'm not angry. I'm just... What am I doing here? What was I thinking? I feel like a fool.

(takes a hit of Pepto Bismol)

CELIA

I wish you wouldn't drink that stuff.

ALAN

So, I take it the answer is no.

CELIA

I didn't say that. I said it was all a bit of a shock.

(beat)

I'll need a little time to think it over. Is that all right with you? There's so much to think about.

ALAN

Of course. Of course. You need some time to decide. It's an enormous decision, I know. And I suppose I have rather sprung it on you...somewhat. I thought you might be...

CELIA

What?

ALAN

Well, I thought you might...appreciate the formal touch. But I suppose... How long?

CELIA

Hm?

ALAN

How long will you need to decide?

CELIA

I don't know.

ALAN

You don't know. A day?

(no answer)

Two days?

(no answer)

A week?

(no answer)

Two weeks?

CELIA

I don't know. It's terribly complicated.

ALAN

I'm utterly miserable without you. When you're away, I think of nothing but...being with you. When you're here, everything's different. My world blooms when you walk in. You are everything to me. I want us to be together. As close as close can be. I want us to take shelter from the world together. Just you and I. We could leave all this behind.

CELIA

All what?

ALAN

I love you. I can say no more. Marry me.

(A cell phone rings.)

ALAN

Is that you?

CELIA

I don't think so.

ALAN

It's me. Who the hell is--?  
(withdraws phone, checks  
number)

Oh. Hm.

CELIA

Alan, I think I should tell you--

ALAN

(phone keeps ringing)

Wait. I'm sorry. I have to take this. It's my publisher.

CELIA

Now?

ALAN

Can you wait just a moment?

(CELIA turns and looks out into the  
garden.)

ALAN (cont'd)

It'll only be a moment.

(into phone)

Moore here. Jack? What the devil are you doing calling me at this hour? What problem? What about it? Why not? Of course, I can. I've shown you all that. We've got the documents. But it's all true. Well, that's not my problem. They can't sue; they wouldn't stand a chance; it's all true. We've got the facts. Who? What does he want? Yes, I know who he is, what does he want? That's impossible. Now? That's impossible. Are you threatening me? Hello? Hello?

(disconnects)

He hung up.

CELIA

Alan...I've been meaning to tell you... Alan?

ALAN

(distracted)

I'm sorry. I'm afraid I have to leave. I have to go down to the Journal. I've been called into a meeting with Elroy Bourbon.

CELIA

Who?

ALAN

The President of MediaCorp. They own the magazine. Bourbon wants me to re-write the City piece.

CELIA

Why?

ALAN

I guess the scandal's just a little bit too close to home.

CELIA

What are going to do?

ALAN

The story stands. I won't change a word.

CELIA

The president of MediaCorp has a lot at stake, Alan. They may not take no for an answer.

ALAN

I'll hang myself before I change a word of it. Shouldn't take too long. I'll come back as soon as I can.

CELIA

Not tonight. I think we need a little time apart. Just a little while. A few days. I need to think things over. Do you mind?

ALAN

My God, I love you.

CELIA

(offering him back the ring)

Here. I shouldn't keep this.

ALAN

Please. Keep it. Until you've made your decision.

(He kisses her.)

I'll see you in three days.

CELIA

I do love you, Alan.

ALAN  
Three days, my love. Au revoir.

(ALAN exits.)

Alone, CELIA looks at the ringbox and thinks. She hides the ring in a box on the mantle.)

3 SCENE THREE

3

(PHIL enters with a bottle of Champagne and two glasses.)

PHIL  
Shall we dance?

CELIA  
Phil.

PHIL  
Don't worry. He's gone. I just saw him leave the house. Seemed in a hurry. Bit of a huff?

CELIA  
No. Phil.

PHIL  
What's wrong?

CELIA  
We need to talk.

PHIL  
Talk? What do we need to talk about? I've been trying to get you alone all night. Have some Champagne. You look absolutely stunning tonight. What's the matter?

CELIA  
We have to talk.

PHIL  
You're feeling guilty. Did Alan say something? Does he suspect us?

(she shakes her head, no)

Then what?

(beat)

Beautiful night. Wonderful party. As usual. The golden caviar bleenies are delicious. I was talking to Orin Mueller, from the Gould Gallery. He's interested in my work. Thought I'd bring him one of my montage pieces.

(MORE)

PHIL(cont'd)

You know, the one with those Portuguese onion farmers and the sex shop pics. You know, the one you like so much. You think you might mention that to him? You know, just in passing. You know the one I mean?

CELIA

Don't you feel anything?

PHIL

I feel all sorts of things. What do you mean?

CELIA

He's your best friend.

PHIL

What's your point, Celia?

CELIA

I've been thinking things over.

PHIL

Really.

CELIA

I can't stand this anymore. It's become...intolerable.

PHIL

I agree.

CELIA

You do?

PHIL

Mm-hm. The question is...what are we going to do about it?

CELIA

We have to stop.

PHIL

Why?

CELIA

Alan...

PHIL

Alan what? Where is Alan? Alan is gone. He's hurried away with a sour look on his face. He was disgusted with your party. Did he tell you that? He was down here stewing in his own bile, nursing his bottle of Pepto Bismol. He despises everyone up there. He despises you and me, too.

CELIA

No, he doesn't.

PHIL

Oh, yes, he does. Alan hates us. Deep down inside he loathes everything we are. Because we are everything he is not. We live life. He hates life. We enjoy ourselves. He loves only misery. We laugh. He scowls. We make love. He broods alone. He's a nut. And everybody knows it. He's anti-social, for God's sake. He doesn't understand people like us. No one can stand him, Celia. He's impossible.

CELIA

He has a good heart.

PHIL

He's an excellent journalist, I'll give him that. Everyone respects him as a writer, but no one can stand to be around him. People laugh at Alan behind his back. Haven't you noticed that? They're all laughing at him up there. Sergio does the most hilarious imitation of him--have you seen him?  
(imitates Alan)

CELIA

Stop it.

PHIL

You and I understand each other, Celia. We're comfortable in this world, together. We share the same...interests. Our tastes are...similar. I'd even say...we taste the same. Don't you like my taste, Celia? Your taste is...delicious.  
(arm around her waist)

Doesn't that feel right to you? We feel right together, Celia. We belong together. We're perfect for each other.

(She pulls away.)

CELIA

There's a lot you don't know about me, Phil.

PHIL

I know that you love me.

CELIA

I can't stand hiding anymore.

PHIL

All right. Then let's bring it out in the open.

CELIA

What?

PHIL

Tell him.

CELIA

You don't understand, Phil. I love Alan.

PHIL

No, you don't.

CELIA

Yes, I do.

PHIL

No you don't. You don't want to choose. But you have to choose, Celia. A toad has fallen in love with you. He thinks. And that touches your heart. Because everyone loves being loved. The toad loves only you. Because you're beautiful, and you're kind to him. Kindness is something foreign to the toad, but he recognizes it as something other than the enmity and scorn which is what he has come to expect from a world repulsed by his grotesque appearance. He has confused your kindness with love, and now he clings to you like a child to its mother's breast, starved for the milk of human kindness. To tear yourself away now will wrench his heart painfully, I know. No one wishes to inflict that kind of pain, but choose you must. Because we cannot go on this way. It isn't kind in the end. The time has come, Celia. Forgive me for saying it, but you must be cruel, only to be...

CELIA

I have to get back to the party.

PHIL

I love you, Celia.

CELIA

Leave me alone.

PHIL

Do you love me?

CELIA

I don't know. I don't know! I don't know!!! Go away.

PHIL

I don't want to go on hiding any more either. I want the world to know I love you. I want us to be together, freely, all the time. I detest this scurrying among the shadows. I don't want to hurt Alan, anymore than you do. But I love you. I love you. I love you.

CELIA

Shh!

(she sits)

PHIL

When I was a little boy, I had a goldfish. Her name was Annabelle. I used to gaze at her for hours and hours. After some time, I came to believe that she could actually recognize me, and that she had developed a certain fondness for me. A mutual affection. I came to believe that she loved me, as I had grown to love her. Then one day, my mother informed me that Annabelle had turned up...well, floating in her little bowl. I asked where she was, and under pressure my mother revealed that she had flushed Annabelle down the toilet. She was gone. Forever.

CELIA

Why are you telling me this?

PHIL

I'm not sure. I forget where I was going with that.  
(he withdraws a ring box from his pocket)

CELIA

What's that?

(he kneels)

Oh, God.

PHIL

Marry me, Celia. I want to tell the world, I love you.

CELIA

(cries out)

Ah!!!

(moves away)

PHIL

Not exactly the reaction I was hoping for.

CELIA

You don't understand. I was just--

PHIL

I believe people spend their whole lives looking for the one person who's out there. The right person. And I believe there's only one right person for each of us. So once you find that person, you have to seize hold of them, and never let go. Or you're liable to spend the rest of your life in misery, or solitude, or both. Some people never find that person. Some people find them right off the bat. I found you, here, Celia. And I don't ever want to let go of you. Marry me.

CELIA

I...I...I need some time to think this over. I have so much to think about. My head... You don't know me, Phil.

PHIL

Of course, I do. I know you better than even you know your self.

(He kisses her. She melts into the kiss, finally embracing him, then pulling away once again.)

CELIA

Please go. I need to be alone.

PHIL

You want me to leave? What about the party?

CELIA

The party's over, Phil. I need to be alone.

PHIL

What's your answer?

CELIA

I need to think things over carefully. I'll let you know in a few days.

PHIL

(offering her the ring)

Take this. Please.

CELIA

I can't.

PHIL

Take it. It belongs to you. If you decide the answer is no, you can give it back to me. Until then, I'd like you to keep it.

(CELIA takes the ring.)

PHIL (cont'd)

I love you.

(He kisses her and goes, stopping at the door.)

PHIL (cont'd)

The party doesn't have to end, Celia. We have our whole lives ahead of us.

(PHIL exits.)

CELIA looks at the ring. She puts the second ringbox in the box with the other ringbox. Alone, she thinks. Sound of waves in the distance.

Blackout.)

4 SCENE FOUR

4

(Lights up. Three days later.  
Sunlight beams into the room at noon.  
ALAN peeks his head in at the door.)

ALAN

Hello? Celia?

(He enters, a bouquet of flowers in  
hand. He looks around, waits.

His cell phone rings. He answers the  
call.)

ALAN (cont'd)

(into the phone)

Moore. Fran? What's wrong? Why are you whispering? Afraid  
of what? Calm down, Fran. I can't hear you; will you stop  
whispering. Yes, I've seen it. No, it's not true. None of  
it's true. The whole thing is a lie. It's a smear--what?  
Who? What was his name? What did he want? Well, what's the  
message? A dead fish? Where? What kind of fish? Oh,  
Jesus. What did you do with it? Well, you can't leave it  
there. I don't know, just get it off my desk. What do you  
mean, you quit? Fine. No, I understand, I understand.  
You're scared. Don't be scared, Fran. Yes, I'll mail your  
paycheck. Just get rid of the fish, all right? I'm sure it  
does; I don't want it stinking up the whole building. Thank  
you.

(He disconnects. Feels his stomach.  
Sits. Withdraws his Pepto Bismol and  
takes a hit.

CELIA enters, urgently, in sexy night  
clothes. She has a satchel in hand,  
stuffed full of jewelry.)

CELIA

(startled)

Alan!

ALAN

Hello, darling.

CELIA

What a surprise.

ALAN

Didn't you get my message--es?

CELIA

What message--es?

ALAN

I've been calling all morning.

CELIA

No.

ALAN

I couldn't wait any longer. I had to see you.  
(gives her the flowers)

CELIA

I'm sorry. I've been...terribly busy. I'm just--

ALAN

It's been three days.

CELIA

Three days?

ALAN

We agreed. Three days. For you to decide.

CELIA

Oh, yes. Of course.

ALAN

You've forgotten.

CELIA

No. I haven't forgotten. Did we agree to that?

ALAN

Yes, we said three days. You needed some time to think things over, and we agreed on three days. Have you made a decision?

(she hesitates)

The answer's no. You were deliberately not answering my calls.

CELIA

No, no, no. Please. Sit down, Alan. Yes, I've thought long and hard about your proposal. I've thought long and hard about a great many things in the last three days. So much has happened. Three days. I can hardly believe it. It seems like an entire lifetime.

ALAN

What's wrong?

(CELIA withdraws a ringbox from the box on the mantle and offers it back to ALAN.)

ALAN (cont'd)  
(taking back the ringbox)  
So. Your answer is no.

CELIA  
My answer is yes.

ALAN  
What?

CELIA  
I haven't been entirely...honest with you, Alan. There are a number of things I think you should know about me. I have some explaining to do. If you still feel the same when I'm done, my answer is yes. But I'll understand if you change your mind. I wouldn't blame anyone for changing their mind...in your position.

ALAN  
I don't understand.

CELIA  
I received a phone call this morning. From a friend of mine. He's a lawyer. I won't mention his name, it isn't important. He had lunch with another lawyer, a woman who works in the District Attorney's office downtown. Evidently, the D.A.'s decided to reopen the investigation into Armand's death. They're going to exhume his body.

ALAN  
What?

CELIA  
There was a review of the autopsy. I know this was Franklin's idea. He went to the insurance company--

ALAN  
Franklin?

CELIA  
Dick Franklin. He's the attorney in the Stanko suit against me. He knows his suit is going down in flames, so he's trying to destroy me with this. He's a ruthless, vindictive bastard! Anyway, the D.A. believes a review of the autopsy has revealed "inconsistencies with the determined cause of death."

ALAN  
What sort of inconsistencies?

CELIA

Rather than slipping and falling in the tub, they believe Armand may have been struck on the head with a blunt object...and deposited in the tub...afterwards.

ALAN

They think he was murdered?

CELIA

Yes, I'm afraid so.

ALAN

By whom?

CELIA

I've been named as a primary suspect. The insurance company's out to get me.

ALAN

They think you murdered Armand--why? For his...money?

CELIA

I know, it's preposterous, but yes, that's what they think. I may not have been madly in love with Armand, but I certainly didn't kill him... You don't believe me, do you?

ALAN

What?

CELIA

I can see it in your eyes. You think I killed him, don't you?

ALAN

No, of course not. I could never believe such a thing about you. Never. I love you, Celia. I love you. This is... How could they--? What...proof have they got?

CELIA

Nothing. Nothing at all. But the insurance company is out to get me. The claim is worth millions, and they don't want to pay. They've had it tied up in the courts ever since...it's been almost a year now. Almost a year. I can hardly believe it. What a mess I've made of everything. Why should you believe me? Why should anyone believe me? I've been such a fool.

ALAN

No, stop. I won't let you say such things about yourself. I'm sure we can find a way out of this. You've got an excellent lawyer, haven't you?

CELIA

There are problems, Alan. Very serious problems. I don't know what I'm going to do.

ALAN

Don't be afraid.

(CELIA bursts into tears. ALAN tries to comfort her.)

ALAN (cont'd)

Now, there, mustn't cry. Don't be afraid. We'll find a way out of this. I promise we will.

(when the tears have passed)

You've never told me very much about Armand. About you and Armand.

CELIA

Armand is a very painful subject for me, Alan. Even now. Especially now. I can't bear to think of him. Our life together...was a living hell for me.

ALAN

A living hell. Hm. How old was he exactly?

CELIA

A week before he died, he turned seventy.

ALAN

Seventy? I didn't know he was seventy. I knew he was older, but I didn't know exactly...

CELIA

We celebrated his seventieth birthday right here. Just Armand and I. He hated parties, you know. Hated crowds. Didn't like anyone else in the house. Armand lived only for his work. Business and money were everything to him. He wasn't walking then. But he'd grown to accept the wheelchair. We had a quiet evening together. Like every evening we spent together. Of course, he couldn't speak very well after the stroke. I fed him some cake. He loved chocolate cake. I only wish he could have chewed it better. It was a bit of a mess, actually.

ALAN

You were married for--how long?

CELIA

Ten years.

ALAN

Ten years?

CELIA

I was twenty--he was sixty--the year we were married. It was foolish, I know. But I was only twenty. And he was...Armand Delsarte. I never dreamed of such wealth. I lived in a trailer until I was nine, Alan. Armand promised me the life of a royal princess, if I married him. The life of a princess. I was twenty. What did I know? He was dignified. And courteous. People treated him like a king. I was in awe of Armand when he proposed to me. So I said yes.

ALAN

Were you ever...happy together?

CELIA

Happy? No. I became just another one of Armand's possessions. He never loved me. Armand was incapable of love. Literally.

ALAN

Hm?

CELIA

On the day we were married I learned--Armand and I were never lovers. That is, we never made love. He wasn't able to...well...

ALAN

You mean, you never--?

CELIA

Never.

ALAN

And you were twenty years old?

CELIA

Twenty.

(she sighs)

ALAN

Did that create any...resentment on your part?

CELIA

It almost drove me insane. But I was faithful to Armand. Entirely faithful. For ten years. Ten long years. Alone.

ALAN

Really.

CELIA

So you can imagine, when he--when the accident came, a whole new world opened up to me. I went mad, I think. I was free. Suddenly anything was possible. And I...

(MORE)

CELIA(cont'd)

Oh, how stupid I've been. How utterly irresponsible. You were right. This whole year has been nothing but...one long party. On and on and on. It's as if I've been in a stupor, a drug-induced haze...a long, strange dream. That's the woman you met, Alan--when? How long has it been?

ALAN

Three months. Since we...

CELIA

Three months. I've lost all sense of time. And then the other night...at the party...it was all too much. I have emerged from a long sleep, and awakened to some very harsh realities.

ALAN

Where exactly were you the night that Armand--had his accident?

CELIA

Right here. I was sewing.

ALAN

Sewing?

CELIA

Yes, Armand liked me to do needlepoint. I detested it, but he demanded I make the place homey, according to his tastes. We used to have framed samplers all over the house. They're all gone now. Since I redecorated. I redecorated the entire estate. You can imagine what that cost. That's part of the problem, actually.

ALAN

What problem?

CELIA

Well, I've been spending rather freely since Armand--I've squandered everything. And now the bills have come due. Oh, God, the bills. I've made such a mess of things, Alan. I only know I want to change all that now. I want to make up for all my mistakes somehow. I want a chance at a new life. A real life. A life that gives something important back to the world. I want to help people. Especially children. I want to help children. I want to do good things for people. I want to help in any way I can to make this world a better place. I don't know how exactly. There must be a way. Somehow. I have to find a way. Otherwise I'll never be able to live with myself. To give meaning to my life. And I so desperately want that. I don't know if you believe me, Alan. I'll understand if you want to rethink our...your proposal. It won't be an easy life. When this investigation hits the papers, the press will descend like a swarm of hungry flies.

(MORE)

CELIA(cont'd)

The tabloids will hound us relentlessly. It'll be horrible. I thought it only fair I warn you, before we...I mean, if you still wish to... I'll understand.

ALAN

Yes, well, I admit, this is all a bit of a...bit of a shock. Is there...anything else?

CELIA

Well, yes. There is. I can't go on hiding it from you.

ALAN

What?

CELIA

I'm completely and utterly...bankrupt.

ALAN

Bankrupt? You mean the bills you mentioned?

CELIA

It's worse than that. I'm completely and utterly bankrupt.

ALAN

You? How is that possible?

CELIA

As I said, Armand's whole life was his work, his business. It's true he amassed an extraordinary fortune when he was a younger man. But I wasn't aware, until after his death--he never discussed financial matters of any kind with me--his business interests, his investments, were all, without exception, I'm told, disastrous adventures in the end. He lost millions in the last few years of his life. What little there was when he--at the time of his accident--has all been tied up in probate ever since.

ALAN

You mean he didn't leave a will--at his age?

CELIA

Oh, yes. He left a will. But I wasn't included in it.

ALAN

What?

(she nods, yes)

But you were his wife. He didn't leave you anything at all?

CELIA

Not a penny?

ALAN

But why--did he have any children?

CELIA  
No.

ALAN  
Another wife?

CELIA  
No.

ALAN  
A mistress?

CELIA  
I was the only woman in Armand's life.

ALAN  
And he left you nothing? Why? You were faithful to him, dutiful--good God, you were in your twenties. If you were such a good wife to him, why didn't he leave anything behind to care for you?

CELIA  
I don't know. Armand could be very cruel. And he got a little kooky there at the end.

ALAN  
Kooky--how do you mean?

CELIA  
Well, I haven't told you this, because I've been so afraid it would get out. I'm terrified the tabloids will get a hold of it.

ALAN  
Get a hold of what?

CELIA  
The only beneficiary named in Armand's will...was Bucky.

ALAN  
Bucky? Who's Bucky?

CELIA  
His dog.

ALAN  
His dog?

CELIA  
Bucky.

ALAN  
He left his entire inheritance to a dog?

CELIA

A small black Cocker Spaniel.

ALAN

Is that--can you do that?

CELIA

Evidently, you can.

ALAN

But where is he now? I've never seen a dog around here.

CELIA

We don't know exactly.

ALAN

What do you mean?

CELIA

Bucky ran away. He just...disappeared. I think Armand's...going was too much for him. Bucky was devastated. I've never seen an animal grieve the way that dog did. And then the will was read. Somehow I don't think Bucky was able to fully appreciate the magnitude of the fortune he came into. Or perhaps he did, and it just didn't matter to him. Afterall, he was a dog. What does a dog do with an inheritance? It was just a few days after the will was read that Bucky disappeared, and we haven't seen him since.

ALAN

You mean, he might still be out there somewhere?

CELIA

We keep hoping. In the meantime, all that's left of Armand's millions has been tied up in court. Even with the best lawyers, sometimes... It's been a hideous ordeal. Absolutely hideous. I know money has never been a concern of yours. You don't seem to care about it very much. I noticed that about you the first night we met. You were never interested in me...for the money. Were you?

(beat)

Alan?

ALAN

The money? No. No, of course, not.

CELIA

I know. But I thought I should let you know. Just so you don't have any false illusions about me. I'm penniless, Alan.

ALAN

Penniless. What about the house? You were his wife, for God's sake. The house must be yours. You could mortgage this place for millions. Couldn't you?

CELIA

I'm afraid not. Unfortunately, the current mortgage hasn't been paid in six months. The bank is repossessing Poquelin. Soon this will all be gone--as far as I'm concerned. You see --this really is terribly embarrassing--for the last year, since Armand's...I've been living almost entirely on credit. I can't tell you how much I've spent. As I said, I've never had to concern myself with financial matters. And now. My debts are quite astronomical. Quite astronomical. You can imagine what this financial state has done for my legal difficulties. Without the money to pay all these lawyers, my hopes in court are doomed. They'll destroy me. It's all come crashing down, hasn't it. Why? Why was I such a fool? Madness. Am I sick? Am I a bad person? I am. I'm horrible.

ALAN

Celia.

CELIA

I've squandered everything, Alan. Like a spoiled child. They'll destroy me.

ALAN

No. They won't.

CELIA

I'm destitute, Alan. I'm ruined.

ALAN

There must be a way. Something...

CELIA

I have an appointment with a jeweler friend of mine. This bag contains all my jewels. This is all I have left. My friend has promised to give me a good price for them. I'm hoping to stave off annihilation for a time...with this. As I said, Alan, I understand completely if this...all this...if you wish to change your mind.

ALAN

Yes. I see. Is that all then?

CELIA

Hm?

ALAN

Is that everything you have to tell me?

CELIA

Isn't that enough?

ALAN

Yes, I suppose it is. Thank you for being honest with me. Yes, I'm glad you told me all of this...now. Before... Look at me, Celia.

(she does)

Is there any truth to this accusation about Armand's death?

CELIA

No, I swear to you. I was good to Armand. In spite of everything, I was good to him. His death was an accident. I swear to you on my soul.

ALAN

I believe you. You're a good person, Celia. Yes, I can see you've made some mistakes, but so has everyone. To err is human, to forgive...well, you know. It seems we've been assailed by fortune, you and I both.

CELIA

What do you mean?

ALAN

It's not important now. What's important is that we find a way out of this, together. There must be a way. Somehow. I know there is. So long as we have each other. So long as we're true.

(He kneels. Opens the ring box, and offers it to her, once again.)

ALAN (cont'd)

I renew my proposal, Celia. I should count myself the luckiest man on earth, if you will consent to marry me.

CELIA

Oh, Alan.

ALAN

Wait a minute--this isn't my ring.

CELIA

What?

ALAN

Where did this come from?

CELIA

Of course, it's your ring. What do you mean, it's not your ring?

ALAN  
This is definitely not my ring. Who's ring is this?

CELIA  
Whose ring? I--I--I--

(PHIL enters, urgently, breathless, his stylish suit ragged and dirty, his thumbs thickly bandaged. All stop.)

CELIA (cont'd)  
Phil!

PHIL  
What's going on here?

ALAN  
What the hell happened to you?

PHIL  
What? Oh. This. Uh, I had a little...accident...some bad luck...with a...

ALAN  
Are you all right?

PHIL  
What's going on here?

CELIA  
Phil. Not now.

ALAN  
I was just proposing to Celia.

CELIA  
Alan.

PHIL  
You what?

ALAN  
Yes, if you'll just give us a minute, we can all celebrate with a glass of Champagne. We seem to have mislaid the ring.

PHIL  
You can't propose to Celia.

ALAN  
What--why not?

CELIA  
Phil, will you please wait outside.

PHIL  
Because she doesn't love you.

ALAN  
What? What do you mean?

CELIA  
Stop it.

PHIL  
Celia's in love with me.

ALAN  
In love with you?

CELIA  
Get out!

PHIL  
Hasn't she told you?

ALAN  
Celia. Is this true?

CELIA  
No. It's not. I swear it's not.

PHIL  
We've been in love ever since you first introduced the two of us.

ALAN  
No.

CELIA  
Alan.

PHIL  
I'm sorry to tell you this way, but it can't be kept a secret any longer. We've been lovers for quite some time now. In fact, I asked her to marry me three days ago, and she's promised to give me her answer today.

(CELIA turns away.)

PHIL (cont'd)  
She doesn't love you, Alan. She loves me.

ALAN  
You? How could she? How could you--? I can't believe this. How did this happen? Where am I?

PHIL

Are you going to faint?

CELIA

Alan!

(ALAN faints. CELIA runs to him.  
PHIL laughs.)

PHIL

He fainted.

CELIA

Alan, are you all right? Alan? Can you hear me?

ALAN

(recovering)

Celia? How is it possible?

PHIL

Is it really such a shock, Alan? Celia and I are alike as two halves of an apple. We belong together. Isn't that obvious? Here. In this world you so despise. This world you don't really belong in. You don't fit in here, Alan. You're out of place. You're not wanted here. I suggest you leave. Go away. You're brooding bores us. You're just not any fun. You're a misanthrope.

CELIA

Stop it. It's not true. I mean, it is true. Part of it's true. But it's over with Phil and me.

PHIL

What?

CELIA

I've decided to end it, Phil. It's over.

PHIL

Don't be ridiculous.

CELIA

I intended to tell you this morning, but you didn't answer my message. I swear to you, Alan. I intended to break things off this morning. I'm so sorry.

ALAN

How could you? Both of you. I thought you were my best friend. And you. Why didn't you tell me?

CELIA

I couldn't bear to hurt you. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

ALAN

You're sorry. I would have torn the world to pieces for you. I would have done anything. You are...the world. You are the essence of humanity. You are a liar. A traitor. A treasonous, treacherous, conniving, manipulative, brilliant, gilded liar. You are deceit. You are misery. You are the ill of existence. You are a plague. You're a savage. You have ripped my heart out and eaten it with fiendish accomplishment. You Gods, witness this outrage, this crime against... I curse you. I curse you both. I hope you eat your own children. No, worse, I hope your own children--and may you have many of them together--I hope your own children eat you. Cook you up and eat you. No, I hope you drown in your own vomit. No, no, no...may you be deceived into believing...into believing...in love.

(ALAN sits and cries. Long pause. The tears pass.)

PHIL

Did you just cast an evil spell on me?

CELIA

Phil. Get out of here.

PHIL

Do you really think you can be happy with Alan? With that? That Pepto Bismol-guzzling crank. Have you seen the morning papers? He's been disgraced. He's a hack for the Mirror. The secret's out. He's a fraud.

ALAN

It's not true. None of it's true. I've been slandered by Toynbee. It's all a lie.

PHIL

Of course, it's the lie. You hypocrite. You holier than thou, sanctimonious prick. You disgust me. I am so sick of listening to you go on and on and on about how inferior everyone else in the world is to you. The great Alan Moore, the last--the only honest man in the world. You are a liar. Admit it. You pretentious ass. You're a pompous, puritanical fake. He's ruined. He'll never work in this town again.

ALAN

It's all lies. I've been slandered.

PHIL

It's me you love, Celia. You know you do. We're made for each other. Be my wife. Say you'll marry me.

ALAN  
Does he know all about your...

PHIL  
Her what?

ALAN  
He doesn't know. Does he?

PHIL  
Know what?

CELIA  
Alan, please.

ALAN  
I'm not the only one you've been keeping secrets from, am I?

PHIL  
What secrets?

ALAN  
Celia's about to be indicted for the murder of Armand  
Delsarte. Were you aware of that?

PHIL  
What?

ALAN  
I hope you don't imagine you'd be marrying a millionairess in  
Celia. It isn't by any chance her money that lies at the  
root of your passionate attraction to her?

PHIL  
Her money?

ALAN  
She's "completely and utterly bankrupt"--have I got that  
right, darling?

PHIL  
Bankrupt?

ALAN  
Not that a man such as yourself would let wealth color your  
affections. Being from the class you're in, I'm sure you can  
see beyond all that. She's penniless. Worse than that, her  
debts are...astronomical. I wouldn't be surprised if she's  
in even deeper debt than you. But then, as I say, I'm sure  
that's not a concern for you. Love will find a way--hm?

PHIL  
Is this true, Celia?

ALAN

Oh, I forgot. The house. The fabled estate of Poquelin. She's lost the house. The bank is repossessing it. She's destitute, Phil. Bankrupt. Homeless. And up for murder. Congratulations. I'm sure you two will be very happy together.

PHIL

(to Celia)

Is this true?

(beat)

All true?

(she nods, yes)

Murder?

(she looks at him)

Hm.

CELIA

Get out. Both of you. Get out! I hate you both! Get out before I call the police! I never want to see either one of you again! You can both go to hell!

(CELIA grabs her satchel of jewels, and exits up to her bedroom.)

5 SCENE FIVE

5

(ALAN sits, and takes a hit of Pepto Bismol.)

PHIL

Well. You wanted honesty.

(ALAN withdraws Phil's ringbox from his pocket, and examines it.)

PHIL (cont'd)

Is that my ring?

ALAN

I don't know, is it?

(PHIL gestures for ALAN to hand over the ring.)

ALAN (cont'd)

This is your ring?

(beat)

Huh.

(slight chuckle)

You proposed marriage to her. That's funny. When exactly?

PHIL

The night of the party.

ALAN

The night of the party. That's funny. So did I. Did you know that?

PHIL

No, she didn't mention that.

ALAN

I'm not surprised. It's all very funny, isn't it.

(ALAN laughs, long and hard. The laughter passes.)

PHIL

Yeah. Very funny. Gimme the ring.

ALAN

I want an explanation.

PHIL

An explanation of what?

ALAN

I want to know why you did this to me, Phil. I want to know what motivated you to betray me with such boundless abandon. Who are you anyway?

PHIL

I don't have time for this.

ALAN

Make time.

PHIL

Gimme the ring.

ALAN

You want to try and take it from me? Go ahead.

(PHIL looks at his bandaged thumbs.)

ALAN (cont'd)

What happened to your thumbs?

PHIL

That's a long story. I'd rather not get into that right now, if you don't mind.

ALAN

I thought you were my best friend.

PHIL

You don't have any friends, Alan. You thought I was your only friend.

ALAN

What a gargantuan idiot I've been.

PHIL

We both made a few mistakes, I suppose.

ALAN

You suppose?

(beat)

Were you in a car accident?

PHIL

What?

ALAN

You said you had an accident.

PHIL

Did I?

ALAN

A car accident?

PHIL

Not exactly.

ALAN

Well, what then? What happened to you?

(beat)

You want the ring--or not?

PHIL

I got a friend, who...well, he's not exactly a friend. He...lent me some money. I spent the money. He...wanted it back. I...didn't have it. So he...had a few of his friends...

(holds up his bandaged thumbs)

ALAN

You mean, a loan shark?

PHIL

I suppose you could say that. He's not very fond of that term though.

ALAN

How much do you owe him?

PHIL

Uh...eighty thousand.

ALAN

Eighty thousand dollars?

PHIL

Plus interest.

ALAN

Why in the world did you borrow eighty thousand dollars?

(beat)

For the ring?

(beat)

You paid eighty thousand dollars for this?

PHIL

Are you kidding?

ALAN

The car. You borrowed the money to buy that car from a loan shark?

PHIL

Do we have to go into detail about all this?

ALAN

You can sell the car.

PHIL

Actually, no, I can't.

ALAN

Why not?

PHIL

It's in no condition to be sold.

ALAN

What are you talking about, it's brand new. What did you pay for that thing?

PHIL

It's was...well, all totaled...sixty thousand. Give or take a few pennies.

ALAN

Wow. Well, I'm sure you could get most of that back, if you sold it.

PHIL

I told you, it's in no condition to be sold.

ALAN

You mean--you wrecked it?

PHIL

No. I didn't wreck it.

ALAN

Well, what's wrong with it then?

PHIL

This is really aggravating.

(ALAN tosses the ring in the air,  
waiting for an explanation.)

PHIL (cont'd)

(finally giving in)

The money was due. I asked him for more time. He said he wanted the car. I said, no. That's my car. I love that car. That car...is a magical car. That car flies. I wasn't going to give that up...not to him, or anybody else. It's mine. My magical car. I've broken the sound barrier in that car. Numerous times. Sammy--that's his name. My friend, Sammy, said gimme the keys. I said...something...rather flamboyant. Something about him kissing my ass. That turned out to be a mistake. Sammy's very sensitive to remarks of that sort. He has quite a temper. I'm learning.

ALAN

What did he do?

PHIL

I'm having lunch with an art dealer friend of mine yesterday, at Sganarelle's, and when I come out, he's waiting for me. There in the parking lot. Sammy. With the keys to my Roadster in his hand. And a smile on his face. He says something about my remark--about him kissing my ass. I can't remember exactly how he put it. But it was rather clever, I have to admit. Suddenly there's two really ugly guys on either side of me. And before you know it, I'm sitting in the back seat of a large black car, and one of these really ugly guys is sitting next to me with a gun in his hand. Up ahead, I can see my Roadster. Sammy's driving my Roadster. I ask where we're going. Nothing. Not much conversation with those two. One of 'em keeps chuckling. The other keeps burping. We drive...quite a while. You can imagine what I was thinking. Finally, we come to an old wrecking yard. Full of thousands and thousands of junk cars. You ever think about that? Where all the old cars go. There must be billions of 'em out there.

(MORE)

PHIL(cont'd)

When you see 'em all there, lined up in stacks as far as the eye can see, waiting, waiting to meet their final destiny. It kinda makes you think. There's a machine. Sammy showed me how it works. They make me kneel in the dirt and watch the whole thing. A fat guy with a cigar in his mouth works a crane--wheels the thing around, and a big steel claw drops down from above and slams into my Roadster. The claw closes--tearing into the white kid leather interior--gears turn--and the crane lifts the whole thing up, into the air, and it hangs there for a while, just swinging gently, like a giant pinata, airborne...my magical car. It does look like a big blue penis. You're right. The crane swings around again, the claw opens, and the mutilated corpse drops down into a yawning steel bed. A massive constricting coffin with powerful steel sides that slowly close in, first this way, then that way, closing in, smaller and smaller--hydraulic pistons hiss, steel plates press in, the great relentless jaws grind down on a body of steel, and leather, and fine walnut trim, chrome, flesh and blood. And finally, release. One last grunt, and out it comes, the result of these Herculean efforts, a small, steel cubical turd, drops out into the dirt, a monstrous act of defecation... That was for insulting Sammy. Big mistake on my part. Then his friends took a baseball bat, and...

(holds up his thumbs)

For being late with the money. I loved that car.

ALAN

But why did you need to borrow the money in the first place? You're rich.

PHIL

You might think so, but actually I don't have any money at all. I've never had any money. I've always been around it. My friends all have it. Most of them anyway. But I haven't got a penny to my name.

ALAN

I always assumed you had lots of money. You've always acted like you do. You've always acted like you were filthy rich.

PHIL

Well, I suppose you could say that I am rich, in every respect but one--I haven't got any money. That ring is all I've got left.

(ALAN tosses him the ring.)

ALAN

What are you going to do with it?

(beat)

They won't kill you, will they?

PHIL

Maybe it's time I took a little trip. Off to...somewhere far away. Make a new start of it. A new name. A new person. Try a different approach. Maybe even get a job somewhere.

(looks at the ring)

Down payment on a new life... Too bad about that bit in the newspaper this morning.

ALAN

You don't really believe that malignant concoction of lies, do you?

PHIL

Why shouldn't I?

ALAN

It's a hatchet job. I did a story on the downtown real estate scandal. It touched a nerve upstairs at the Journal. Elroy Bourbon called me in and told me to re-write it. I refused. They fired me. I promised to take the story to the Mirror. So they got Toynbee to do a hatchet job on me. It's all lies. He did everything but call me a child molester.

PHIL

Elroy Bourbon told you to re-write the story, and you refused?

ALAN

That's right.

PHIL

You're nuts.

ALAN

It's the truth. They're stealing millions from the taxpayers in that deal.

PHIL

Oh. Right. The truth.

(starts to go, stops)

Hey, you don't really think Celia murdered Armand, do you?

(beat)

Adieu, mon ami.

(PHIL exits.)

Alone, ALAN sips Pepto Bismol--thinks.

CELIA enters, dressed for business.)

CELIA

You're still here. Good.

(She withdraws Alan's ring box from the box on the mantle.)

CELIA (cont'd)

I forgot about this. I'm sorry.  
(gives him the ring box)  
Good-bye.

(ALAN starts to go. Stops. Looks at the ring.)

ALAN

I can't do this. Celia. I don't quite know how to say this...but...I've thought it over...and...I don't understand it...but...I find I still love you. I see your face...and I can't help it. I love you. What Phil said. About the story in the papers today. It's true. I'm ruined. They've done it with lies. Vicious, baseless lies. But effective, none the less. I won't go into the details. The fact is, my reputation has been destroyed. I don't know how I'll ever work again. However, I have a small bit of savings. Enough to get out of the country. I have in mind a small island in the Pacific. In Micronesia, to be specific. There are thousands of islands out there. You fly into the Philippines, and from there charter a boat. A private arrangement. One that can't be traced. They take you to an island in the Dulong Archipelago, and from there you're on your own. Your own island, if your lucky. It can be done. I have it from a very reliable source. I'm leaving, Celia. I'm leaving it all. I can't stand it anymore. I despise this world too much. I'm just sick of it. It's... irretrievable. I want to go somewhere far away, away from these people, and their society. Escape. I want to live again.

CELIA

You really think that's possible?

ALAN

Come with me. Just the two of us. Back to the garden. To rediscover who we really are, and what it is that really matters. Just you and I. In our own world, a world of our own making, a paradise, for just the two of us.

CELIA

You're dreaming, Alan.

ALAN

I'm not. Or I am. Yes, it's a dream, but we could make it happen. We could make this dream come true.

CELIA

No, Alan. That's no escape. Not for me. Not for any of us, really. We have to live here. We have to repair the damage. As best we can. Somehow. I can't go with you. Not if you want to run away. If that's your choice, you'll have to go alone.

ALAN

Then it's good-bye.

CELIA

If you insist.

ALAN

I will love you...always.

CELIA

I love you.

ALAN

Au revoir, my love.

CELIA

Au revoir.

(ALAN exits.)

Sound of the waves.

The church bell rings in the distance.

CELIA sits and cries.

And cries.

Lights fade--nearly to black.

ALAN bursts in at the door--lights back up.

CELIA stands.

All stop.)

CELIA (cont'd)

Are you--?

ALAN

Yes.

(They rush together and embrace tightly.)

CELIA

Don't ever leave me again.

ALAN

I promise you, I'll hang myself first.

(They kiss.)

Slow fade to the sound of waves, and a church bell clanging in the distance.)

THE END