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P.S. Your Cat is Dead!

A Comedy in Two Acts

James Kirkwood

A SAMUEL FRENCH ACTING EDITION



**SAMUEL
FRENCH**
FOUNDED 1830

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P.S. YOUR CAT IS DEAD! by James Kirkwood, was first performed on April 7, 1975, at the John Golden Theatre in New York City. The play was produced by Richard Barr, Charles Woodward and Terry Spiegel in cooperation with the Buffalo Studio Arena Theatre under the direction of Vivian Matalon. Setting and lighting by William Ritman, costumes by Frank J. Boros, and associate producer was Neal Du Brock.

CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

VITO *Tony Musante*
KATE *Jennifer Warren*
JIMMY *Keir Dullea*
FRED *Peter White*
CARMINE *Antony Ponzini*
JANIE *Mary Hamill*
WENDELL *Bill Moor*

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

PLACE

Jimmy Zoole's loft apartment in New York City on New Year's Eve.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Late evening

SCENE 2: Thirty minutes later

ACT TWO

Later the same night

P.S. YOUR CAT IS DEAD! by James Kirkwood was performed at the Westwood Playhouse, Los Angeles, California from February 25 through March 28, 1976, under the direction of Milton Katselas. The play was produced by Margy Newman in association with Arthur Whitelaw, Michael L. Grace and Susan Bloom. Stage setting by Robert Zentis, lighting by Charles Schuman, costumes by David Graden and associate producer was Donald Phelps.

CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

VITO *Jeff Druce*
KATE *Claudette Nevins*
JIMMY *Keir Dullea*
FRED *William Jordan*
CARMINE *Ronny Graham*
JANIE *Roberta Callahan*
BOBBY *Al Mancini*

This current rewritten version of **P.S. YOUR CAT IS DEAD!** was presented Off-Broadway at the Promenade Theatre by Haskell/Spiegel Productions beginning February 1, 1978 under the direction of Robert Nigro. Stage setting by Judie Juracek, lighting by Michael Watson. It later transferred to the Circle In The Square Downtown where it ran through December 10, 1978.

CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

VITO *Vasili Bogazianos*
KATE *Claire Malis*
JIMMY *Peter Simon*
FRED *John Shearin*

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The time is the present. It is New Year's Eve.

Jimmy Zoole's loft-apartment is unusual in construction, being the third and top floor of an old factory building in the West Village over by the Hudson River.

The apartment has actually been constructed over a period of years out of a loft. The bathroom is the only separate room. A dandy kitchen, with a free-standing butcher block sink unit, has been installed to be near the available plumbing—the reason for its not being up against a wall. Most of the walls have been stripped of plaster and are of old brick. One is still half-plastered. There is a large bed, raised somewhat on a platform (with enough room under the bed for someone to hide). Over the bed is a large skylight, which is practical and opens upward. This skylight and part of the adjoining roofs' heating or air-conditioning ducts or part of a chimney, should be seen above the set itself. There are two smaller skylights, no more than two-by-two feet, one over the bathroom area, the other over the kitchen. There is a small Christmas tree with lights on placed either on the desk, if there is room, or else on top of one of the cabinets in the kitchen. The furniture is comfortable and mixed; there is Jimmy's writing desk, a chaise or sofa, an easy chair, a footlocker trunk which is used as a coffee table, throw cushions on the floor, area rugs, book shelves, record cabinets, posters and theatrical pictures and other theatrical mementoes go toward making this an individual home out of a space in New York City.

There are four or five different locks on the front door and also one fox police lock—a contraption

featuring a metal bar that is grooved into the floor and fits into a slot on the door. It slides back and forth when opened and the bar itself can be removed when not in use.

The loft has been done with pride and loving care, although it is not quite finished. And never will be.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: Evening, New Year's Eve.

SCENE 2: Thirty minutes later, leading to midnight.

ACT TWO

Midnight to an hour later.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JIMMY ZOOLE: Attractive, thirty-eight-year-old actor who has not made it, but has not, so far, given up trying. In his attempts to achieve success he has kept himself as square as possible, that is—he has played the game according to the puritan ethic rules, jumped through the hoop, played “good dog” for about as long as one can play good dog without turning rabid. His sense of humor has often saved him from flipping out. If, on this New Year’s Eve, he had not caught the burglar—he undoubtedly would have had a quiet nervous breakdown at home.

VITO ANTONUCCI: At twenty-seven, he’s been through more than his share of scrapes. Humpy, in an off-beat scroungy tom-cattish way, Vito would do and has done anything to get by. Despite a tacky life and his wiseguy toughness, he is an optimist, a part-time romantic and a soft touch. He is also a congenital fuck-up—but with a flair and his own unique style.

KATE HOUGH: Pretty, sassy thirty-two-year-old liberated fashion photographer with a mind and a life-style of her own. A girl with very few hang-ups, she is candid and even opinionated, but not without warmth and caring. She has decided to cut off the relationship with Jimmy because the time has now come wherein the hassles of the relationship are outweighing the joys.

FRED GABLE: Good-looking teacher in his mid-thirties, well-dressed, well-educated, thinks of himself as with-it and really tries, but he is actually a bit *behind* it.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Brief notes about *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead!* Because it was published as a novel in hardcover by Stein & Day and later by Warner's Paperback, some people assume *P.S.* was written as a novel first and then made into a play. I first wrote the story as a play; it was only while waiting for a production to materialize, that I began thinking in terms of a novel. I felt close to the story, I knew the characters well, so the book was written and published. The play has had a strange and unorthodox history. It was first done at the Buffalo Studio Arena Theatre where it played a month's pre-Broadway engagement to completely sold-out houses. The Buffalo audiences took the play for what it was meant to be—an entertainment about two losers who meet at a certain crucial time in their lives. Will they help each other? The play also deals with the question: can we arrive at a point mid-way in our lives and change directions, if the career we've been pursuing is no longer satisfying to us? I believe we can, if the desire to climb out of a rut is strong enough and there is sufficient will power to back up the scramble. I began as an actor and it was only after years as a performer that I began to write. And happily so, it turns out.

I was surprised at the reaction of some of the New York critics who found so much more in the play than was meant to be there. For instance, it is not a play proselytizing for bisexuality. Vito, the hustler-burglar, uses his sexuality as a commodity with which to trade in return for a place to stay, clothes, food and, most importantly, companionship. Some of the language is frankly rough, but Vito is a street person and to have him speak any other way would be false; four letter words are not sprinkled in for shock value or local color. The character of Kate is in no way the result of an anti-feminist mind. She is not a villainess. She is bright, warm and perky—if opinionated. It is only because she believes their affair has reached the point of diminishing returns that she leaves Jimmy, knowing if their relationship continues they will surely be inflicting small hurts and punishments upon each other with increasing regularity. It is only out of affection for him that she tells him what she believes is wrong with his life.

The two leading characters, Jimmy and Vito, should both be

played with utmost humor; it is this quality that enables them to get by as well as they do. They must be warm and vulnerable; if the audience does not have a love affair with both of them, the play is damaged. Most of all, it is a play to have fun with and Jimmy and Vito are characters that should touch the audience. I doubt there are few people walking around who, at one time or another, have not thought of themselves as losers. This should be the common denominator that makes the audience root for them.

The script, as published here, is the result of not only the New York production directed by Vivian Matalon with tender loving care, but of two other productions, one in San Francisco, the other in Los Angeles, the latter two directed with incredible energy and enthusiasm by Milton Katselas, to whom I am extremely indebted. It was Milton who nudged me into extensive rewrites, all of which made this a better play. I am also indebted to all the actors and actresses who have appeared in the productions so far for their contributions which have been considerable. A word of thanks also goes to Arthur Whitelaw who picked the play up immediately after it's New York run for production on the West Coast. No matter what, I do not consider this a critics' play, but then we don't write solely for the critics; we write for audiences and in the four cities in which this cat has played, the audiences have been warmly and openly responsive.

I hope whoever does *P.S. Your Cat Is Dead!* in the future will find this to be true.

Finally, this play is dedicated to Sal Mineo, who was a perfect Vito in San Francisco and who was rehearsing again for the Los Angeles production at the time of his tragic death. He is greatly missed.

P.S. Your Cat Is Dead!

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

Loud jazz music plays as the house lights gradually dim. When the curtain rises, or—in the event there is no curtain—the stage lights are up, the music fades, the SOUND OF WINTER WIND BLOWING is heard and the PHONE RINGS in the empty apartment as we see VITO ANTONUCCI coming into sight on the roof. VITO shines his flashlight down through the skylight, then gradually and carefully pries it open. Snow drifts down from it into the room. VITO drops his airline (or tote) bag down onto the bed. THE PHONE STOPS RINGING, having rung seven or eight times by now.

VITO eases himself down through the skylight, surveys the drop to the bed below, as he hangs from a crossbar.

VITO. Holy shit! (He closes the skylight after him; SOUND OF WIND BLOWING QUICKLY FADES. He makes the drop to the bed, quickly freezes in a crouch, glancing around and shining the flashlight to make sure there's no one else in the apartment. He pulls a small revolver out from a pocket and holds that in his other hand, crosses to the kitchen area, spots a large crock jar on top of the kitchen cabinet,

goes to it, takes the lid off, forages around, holds something up.) A fuckin' cookie! (He pops it in his mouth, scrounges around the kitchen area until he crosses down left, finds a small portable TV set, makes appreciative sounds as he picks it up, walks to the desk, sets it down. He goes to the closet, slides the door open, runs a hand across the clothes on hangers, finds a good fur coat, takes it out, holds it up, rubs it against his face in appreciation of its value and tosses it on the bed. He finds a cassette tape recorder in the top desk drawer, takes it out, picks up the TV set, but his hands are too full and he puts the gun down in the typewriter carriage, crosses right, near the front door, and sets the TV set and cassette down. Just then a **LIGHT BY THE SOFA** goes on; VITO whirls around, crouches, frightened. He peers around the sofa, sees that a **TIMER** has gone off, activating a light on a long-neck lamp near the sofa. VITO sighs in relief, goes to the timer, unplugs it, wraps the cord around it. Muttering.) Cute—bought himself a little timer! (Goes up to the bed, holding the timer, looking at it, then places it in his tote bag.) —oughta be worth five bucks. (Turns, starts toward the desk again when he hears footsteps approach the front door, feet scraping off snow on the mat, the jangle of keys.) Oh, shit . . . (Quickly grabs his tote bag from the bed, scurries into the closet and slides the door closed after him. The front door is a bastion of locks, at least five, including one fox police lock—the kind with sliding metal bar that is grooved into the floor, supporting the door. All these locks click, the bar slides to the side and KATE HOUGH enters. She carries an empty suitcase, is nervous, flicks a **LIGHT SWITCH ON** near the front door, lighting that area. She glances down, notices the TV set and cassette player, looks

around, crosses up to set her suitcase on the bed, sees her fur coat lying there. She stops, picks it up, looks at it, confused as to why it should be out like that, glances about, shrugs, puts it back on the bed. She takes off her winter coat, walks to the kitchen, *SWITCHES ON MORE LIGHTS*. She looks at her watch, walks quickly to the closet and is just sliding the door open when *THE PHONE RINGS*. This gives her a start; she turns, looks at the phone which is on the sink unit. She hesitates, makes up her mind to take a chance and answer it, walks to the sink and picks the phone up tentatively as *THE CLOSET DOOR CLOSES, SLIDING QUIETLY BEHIND HER*.)

KATE. (*In a fake nasal accent.*) Allo, buenas dias . . . (*Then, in a natural voice.*) Ah—no, no, he isn't . . . Yes, wait a second. (*Crosses to the desk, gets a pad and pencil, returns to the phone.*) Yes, go ahead . . . Oh, the animal hospital . . . Sure, yes, his—Oh, no, not his cat! . . . Oh, Bobby Seale is dead! . . . Oh! (*The CLOSET DOOR QUIETLY SLIDES OPEN A CRACK, Vito peeks out, THE DOOR CLOSES AGAIN.*) Oh, Lord, he just adored that mangy cat . . . Ah, no—no, I'm just on my way out. I'll leave him a note and have him call you and you can tell him . . . Yes, I will . . . Thank you. Good-bye. (*Quickly finishes writing on the pad, then looks up at "Him."*) Oh, Lord—God-Almighty . . . You really know how to pull 'em, don't you? (*Takes the pad and pen to the desk, puts them down, starts to walk toward the bed, stops, then gets the phone book from the desk, takes it to the counter, quickly looks up a number and dials.*) Hello, Fred— Kate. Listen, his cat's dead! The animal hospital just called. Maybe I shouldn't leave, not tonight. He loved that cat, it's

New Year's and he's had such a rough time lately . . . Well, he was robbed twice in a row and they even took the only copy of the book he was writing, it just seems like such a dirty— . . . Yes, he does have the play . . . Yes . . . I just thought maybe I should wait until— . . . Fred, don't shout, you don't know me that well! . . . I guess you're right, if I'm going to do it, do it . . . Yes . . . Okay, see you in about an hour. (*Hangs up, goes to her purse which is on the bed, takes out an envelope, holds it up and walks toward the phone with it.*) Dear John—I mean . . . Jimmy! (*Props the envelope against the phone.*) Oh, yes . . . (*Goes to the desk, takes the message she's just written and sets it down next to the phone.*) — P.S. your cat is dead! (*Clenches her fists, walks toward the bathroom door.*) Well, onward and downward. Hit 'em while they're down! (*She enters the bathroom, closes the door behind her. The CLOSET DOOR SLIDES OPEN CAREFULLY, VITO peeks out, quickly tip-toes to the bed, snatches up his tote bag and KATE's fur coat and heads for the front door. Just as he nears it, he hears sounds of someone else approaching the front door, the stamping of feet and the jangle of keys. VITO wheels around, dashing for the bed.*)

VITO. (*Frantic whisper.*) Shit—what's goin' on here! (*VITO tosses the coat on the bed, then slides quickly under the bed, with his tote bag as: A distraught JIMMY ZOOLE opens the door, immediately notices the fox police bar is not in place, freezes, glances down, spots the TV and cassette machine by the door, jerks his head this way and that, checking out the apartment quick to be alarmed. He slips in the door, eyes wide, on the alert, picks up the police lock bar which is leaning against the wall behind the door, tip-toes*

upstage by the bed, heading for the closet and also to peek around the kitchen corner. He is just even with the bed when he hears a drawer being slammed shut in the bathroom, wheels around, facing that door. He raises the metal bar, takes a deep breath and speaks:)

JIMMY. Okay . . . I caught you, you dirty son-of-a-bitch! Come out—hands up! *(A rattled VITO lifts the bedspread and peeks out timidly—but he sees JIMMY is facing the bathroom door and he carefully drops the spread and disappears just as: A confused and frightened KATE manages to open the door and appears, hands full of things, hair-dryer, etc. JIMMY and she are both startled, speak at once:)*

KATE. Oh—Jimmy! JIMMY. Kate!—Oh . . .

JIMMY. *(Heaving a sigh.)* Oh, Kate— Ohh! God, for a second there I thought I was being ripped off again! Christ, I must be going bananas, it couldn't happen a third time! *(Another deep breath.)* Oh, wow . . . *(Then.)* Hey, I thought we were spending New Year's apart? *(Going to her, still holding the bar.)* Oh, lady—am I ever glad to see you. Am I ever! *(Hugs her, only then, in his confusion, does he put two-and-two together, realizing that someone indeed is packing up, glances at the articles in her hands, at the things on the bed, then back at her.)* I think I am . . .

KATE. *(Backing away from him slightly.)* I thought you were going right up to Claire's.

JIMMY. I was, but—something came up. I decided to . . . I take it you're going someplace, too. *(KATE does not reply.)* Well, aren't you? *(No reply.)* Aren't you?

KATE. *(Quietly.)* Yes . . .

JIMMY. *(Hit hard.)* Yes . . . yeah . . . *(Crosses downstage, leans the fox bar against the wall, goes to the coat-rack downstage entrance platform, takes off his*

coat, hat, hangs them up.) Well— Oh, boy, yeah . . . great! . . . Nifty! . . . Neat . . . ! (*Walks back, looks down at the TV and cassette player.*) Look, I don't mind you taking back your own Christmas present, but I bought the cassette.

KATE. (*Shocked at this accusation.*) I gave you the TV for Christmas. What a terrible thing to say! I wasn't taking either one of them.

JIMMY. (*Picking them up.*) What—they've got dates for New Year's Eve. (*Talking directly to them.*) You two stepping out again! I thought I told you about that!

KATE. Don't be ridiculous!

JIMMY. (*Crossing to counter in kitchen with them.*) I'm not in the habit of unplugging them and setting them by the door every time I go out.

KATE. I told you I wasn't taking them. Don't you believe me?

JIMMY. No, I don't believe you.

KATE. (*Continues packing.*) Oh, well I . . .

JIMMY. Oh, Kate—lookee here! (*Walking to telephone downstage end of sink.*) Whaddaya know, the mailman's come! (*Picks up envelope.*)

KATE. No, Jimmy, don't—not now!

JIMMY. Christ, it's addressed to me, isn't it?

KATE. Jimmy, please don't . . .

JIMMY. Please don't! You— For God's sake, you're leaving, obviously you're leaving. This is obviously— a Dear John, and you don't want me to *open* it! Who knows, I might even have a reply for once!

KATE. (*Walking to him, reaching out for the letter.*) I'd rather you read it after—

JIMMY. Well, you've been out-voted. (*He opens the unsealed envelope and reads:*) "Dear Jimmy"— Well,

so far so good. It's not a laugh riot, but—you know, it's got a nice *homey* touch!

KATE. (*Walking away.*) You said you were going right up to Claire's from rehearsals. How did I know you weren't? How did I—

JIMMY. (*Crossing to trunk-coffee table.*) How did I know I was going to be *fired*? (*Sitting on trunk.*) I'm sorry, my plans changed. I—

KATE. Jimmy! (*Going to him, putting her hands on his shoulders.*) Oh, Jimmy! Oh, angel . . .

JIMMY. I just didn't feel like rushing up there and putting on a paper hat.

KATE. Jimmy—I had no idea. Oh, Jimmy, I'm so sorry! (*Embraces him; he does not respond.*) Jimmy?

JIMMY. Get away—please! I really don't want to cry, not in front of Miss Strength and Guts, not in front of Our Lady Photographer. If you maul me, I will! (*Rises.*) Please! (*Walking away from her.*)

KATE. And what would you be crying about? Would it be *me* or the job?

JIMMY. Oh, terrific! Can't I just play it across the board? Do I *have* to pick a category?

KATE. Jimmy, I'm sorry about the play. Why did you get fired?

JIMMY. The *why*? (*Crossing to the refrigerator in the kitchen.*) Oh, honey—you won't believe the *why*! Miss Hollywood Star wanted her boyfriend to play my part in the first place, but he was starting a picture in Spain. (*Taking out ice tray, then going to downstage counter unit.*) Yesterday, he got into an argument with the director, that English Sir Waldo-what's-his-name, on the set, in front of the entire cast and crew, and called him "a dizzy cunt!" (*Giving it a stage-reading, even a bit of "camp," he fills the ice bucket.*) "What was *that*?" asked Sir Waldo. He repeated it, with em-

bellishments. Sir Waldo kicked him off the picture. (*Making a drink.*) Boyfriend gets on the phone to Miss Hollywood Star, Miss Hollywood Star gets on the phone to our producers and lays down the law. Know what gets me? Some flipped-out actor calls a director a "dizzy cunt" in *Madrid*—and I get fired in New York!

KATE. (*Crossing to sit on kitchen stool, stage right of sink unit.*) Rotten— It's rotten.

JIMMY. Well, stay tuned for the rest of the news. The soap opera's kaput, too.

KATE. Kaput?

JIMMY. (*Sitting on stool opposite her with his drink.*) Kaput!

KATE. I thought they were just writing you out while the play was out of town.

JIMMY. The ratings have been way down lately, so they made one *little* change in the storyline. Instead of writing me off on that two-month expedition up the Amazon, from which they were going to bring me back with some mysterious disease, they've decided to—just let me *drown* in the goddam Amazon! (*Downs drink in one gulp, holds his glass up.*) Drink?

KATE. (*Shaking her head: no. JIMMY walks to bar-counter.*) But, Jimmy, I thought you signed a three-year contract.

JIMMY. (*Making another drink.*) It can be cancelled every thirteen weeks.

KATE. So how can it be a three-year contract?

JIMMY. The network can cancel, but not the performer.

KATE. Great! What kind of clause is that?

JIMMY. (*Walking back to sink unit.*) We call that—the Fuck-You Clause!

KATE. Ohh! Acting—what a tacky business!

JIMMY. (*Crossing around, upstage of KATE, kneading her shoulders with his hands.*) At least it solves our problems, doesn't it? You won't have to put up with all of that jazz: No more soap opera, no more learning lines every night, no more working on the book, even. Now we can really *play house*.

KATE. Jimmy, stop it—you're being mean.

JIMMY. *I'm* being mean? Who's walking out on who New Year's Eve?

KATE. (*Breaking away from him to up right of sofa.*) I picked tonight because I knew you'd be at Claire's, also because I thought you'd be so tied up with the play it wouldn't matter that much. Oh, Jimmy, it's not as if it were news. We both knew it was coming. We said we'd skip New Year's and—

JIMMY. (*Pointing a finger at her.*) You said, you said, *you* said! You were the one who said we'd spend New Year's apart. You were invited, same as last year.

KATE. To sit around with that back-biting aunt of yours and watch her dangle you on a string? "You're my only family, Jimmy, and when I die . . ." and on and on. Promises, promises. Wind the Aunt Claire Doll up and it promises to die—but doesn't!

JIMMY. Let's not get into that again.

KATE. Because it's the worst possible form of blackmail; it's disgusting and demeaning. And you know it. You know what the annoying thing is about you?

JIMMY. (*Big.*) Whoa-hoh! You've been holding back? You mean there's some *ONE* thing you haven't told me? (*Crossing down right.*)

KATE. Yes, about a dozen, if you really want to know.

JIMMY. I don't. (*Sits on sofa.*)

KATE. Good, I'll tell you. You're thirty-eight years

old and maybe you're really a good actor—I mean, could be if—

JIMMY. That's the most encouraging thing you've ever said.

KATE. But you play it so almighty safe! All right, I'm going to tell you something else—

JIMMY. (*Hands to his head.*) Oh, Jesus . . .

KATE. Yes, well, oh Jesus, I am. Two people were talking about you at a party once, and one of 'em said, "That Jimmy Zoole, he's such an attractive guy. Say, are his front teeth capped?" You know what the other one said? "*Jimmy Zoole's whole life is capped!*"

JIMMY. (*Laughs, then does a take.*) What does that mean?

KATE. It means you have absolutely no imagination, not a fresh idea in your head about how to present yourself. You're always so busy playing "Good Dog" for everybody. You roll over, sit up and bark! An actor? Honey . . . you conduct yourself like some dried-up ad agency squeak! (*Walking to the bed to finish packing.*) You won't even take any chances. You cling to the safe things: that tired soap opera, your occasional summer tour in—God help us!—"Call Me Madam!"

JIMMY. (*Walking up near her.*) I'm sorry, I don't get offered every choice role that comes along on Broadway, you know.

KATE. Then you must be doing something wrong! For God's sake, Jimmy, you're attractive, you're bright, you're—

JIMMY. And you are an All-American, three-dimensional, supreme pain in the ass! (*Does a proud take for this assertion, cocks his head, almost struts downstage, sits once again on the sofa, pleased with himself.*)

KATE. (*After a beat.*) Funny, that's just what my horoscope said today. Let's leave it at that, shall we? (*Walks to the bed, begins to zip her packed suitcase, then suddenly wheels, steps down toward JIMMY.*) And one more stupid thing: two consenting adults in 1978 keeping separate apartments. And don't think I don't know why—Aunt Claire would have changed her will if we'd have—

JIMMY. (*Standing, shouting.*) Stop it, stop it, stop it! Level with me, do you have *one*, just *one*, *un-uttered* opinion?

KATE. (*Silenced for a moment.*) Uhhhhh, no—I guess I don't. (*Then, crossing to the counter-bar in the kitchen.*) Oh, what the heck. One for the breakup. (*Pouring whiskey into setup glass.*) Here's to the good times. We had some rocky ones, but we had some good ones, too. (*Walking to the chair opposite the sofa.*) Funny, for anyone as basically old-fashioned, filled-to-the-brim with the Puritan Ethic, you really do make the wildest—hugglebunnyburgers. (*Sits in the chair.*)

JIMMY. (*Laughing.*) Jesus, that is brutal. Who made that up? Did you?

KATE. No, my angel, you did. Actually, I've grown rather fond of it.

JIMMY. Hugglebunnyburgers! (*Then.*) Were they really that good?

KATE. Tops in town. Actually, I think that's what hooked me on you, least at first. I mean when we'd be out, you're so—oh, opening doors, Boy Scoutish, helping old women and blind people across streets, never giving a cab driver back any of the lip they give out. Then we'd get home and . . . Wow, it was like some dusty Italian workman.

JIMMY. (*After a long pause.*) Really?

KATE. Really. (*Then.*) Jimmy, all those unuttered opinions were uttered . . . because I care about you. Don't you know that? Listen, I realize it's a sore point, but I hope you'll get back to your book. It was so good.

JIMMY. To start all over again! It's hard to get steam up.

KATE. But please don't give up on it, just because—

JIMMY. (*Reaching for her hand.*) Listen, you can move your things back to your place, but—why don't we spend New Year's together? I'll call Claire up and tell her I can't make it.

KATE. No, I can't, Jimmy. Honestly, I—if I'd known that all this, I mean—but it was agreed we'd spend New Year's apart and—well, I made other . . . plans.

JIMMY. Plans?

KATE. Yes.

JIMMY. Oh, you made *plans*. Well, that's different. (*Stands up.*) Plans, huh? Would these be *Johnnie Plans?* Or *Joe Plans?*

KATE. I'm—we're going to a party tonight, then tomorrow up to Vermont for some skiing . . . (*Rises, crosses up toward the desk.*)

JIMMY. You mean, you made a date with some guy, then you suggested we skip New Year's so—

KATE. No, it didn't happen like that! Please, baby—give me that much credit!

JIMMY. Please, baby, my ass! (*As KATE goes to sink unit, snatches up vitamin bottles and then crosses up to her suitcase.*) No wonder Claire was catching such hell. You had to dump it on someone. You're probably in the middle of your next affair. Why the hell didn't you just tell me, instead of letting me beg and—

KATE. Jimmy, I was just doing a foto lay-out up at—

JIMMY. Umm—layout. *Lay-out!* I'll bet!

KATE. —up at Columbia, it's only someone I met through work and he asked me and I—

JIMMY. And you just— Oh, get out!

KATE. Jimmy, stop it! (*Walking to the bed.*)

JIMMY. Just—get out! (*Crossing down toward the sink.*)

KATE. (*Picks up coat from bed, begins putting it on.*) I will, I will!

JIMMY. (*Grabbing letter from the sink, heading toward the bathroom as he tears it into little pieces.*) Christ, I'd rather read the entire collected works of Harold Robbins! (*Exits into bathroom; KATE gathers up her things as we HEAR THE TOILET FLUSH. When JIMMY emerges from bathroom, he carries a small blue plastic case, KATE's diaphragm, holds it up.*) Here—you'd better take your "equipment." (*Tosses it on the bed, walks down toward sink unit.*)

KATE. (*Hurt.*) Keep it, I won't be needing it. (*Beat.*) I bought a new one.

JIMMY. Please leave!

KATE. (*Walking toward the door.*) Goodbye, I'm sorry we had to have this little squabble, I wish—

JIMMY. If you'd just been honest with me from the beginning, we wouldn't have. What a dirty, sneaky, low-down—

KATE. Enchanting! (*She walks back, puts the keys to the apartment down on the trunk, then heads for the door with her things. She turns; JIMMY and KATE look at each other, then.*) Goodbye. (*She exits.*)

JIMMY. Good luck. (*Tips a small salute with a hand to her. After a moment, he rushes to the door, opens it, looks down the steps after her.*) Skiing, huh? As we say

in the theatre, break a leg! Break both of them! That way you'll have an excuse for staying on your back! (*Slams the door, steps back into the room; suddenly a hand goes to his head in reaction to what he's said.*) —Oh, my God . . . (*Still, after a moment, he rushes back to the door, opens it again and shouts:*) Mazeltov! (*Slams the door shut once more, steps back into the apartment. Glancing around, he spots the diaphragm on the bed, runs to it, picks it up, then hurries to the window in the kitchen, opens it, glances out and to his left, waits a moment for KATE to appear in sight to him.*) Kate? . . . Oh, Kate??? Lacheim! May all your orgasms turn to stone! (*Ducks back into the kitchen, amazed at himself, goes to the fruit bowl on sink unit, picks up an apple in each hand and speaks to them.*) My God—what's happening to me? (*Goes back to the window, leans out and pegs one apple down at her.*) There you go— Hey! Hah! That's right, hustle it up! (*Pegs the other one at her.*) Oops—almost *did* get her! Wheeee! (*Giggles.*) Dropped her goddam fur coat! (*Hurries to the refrigerator, takes a large head of lettuce from it, tears back to the window.*) Here yah go, baby—have a little salad! Tossed salad—natch! (*Giggles again, tosses it at her, then closes the window, steps away from it.*) Jesus, maybe I am flipping! (*Crosses to chair, sits, pulls off his galoshes.*) So—well, life is a shit sandwich and every day we have to take another bite! (*Then, flexing his fingers.*) I wonder if you can type a suicide note? (*Gets up, walks to the desk, puts his fingers on the typewriter, does a take, lifts the gun VITO has left out of the typewriter carriage, holds it up in the air in wonderment.*) Maybe they're trying to tell me something. (*Looks up.*) Are you trying to tell me something? (*Shudders.*) Spooky . . . very spooky.

Now *this is spooky*. (*Picks up a pillow from sofa, holds it out, then, testing the gun, is just about to fire a bullet into it when THE PHONE RINGS. JIMMY is startled, jumps around, facing the phone, a hand to his heart. He walks to the phone, picks it up, clears his throat.*) Hello . . . Oh, Claire— (*False energy.*) Ah—I was just going to call you . . . Claire, I'm sorry but I can't come up . . . No, it's just—listen, can I level with you and will you try to understand? . . . Good . . . No, I'm not spending it with Kate . . . (*Walks with phone toward sofa.*) No, I'm— Claire, you haven't let me *explain* . . . No, I'm not sick, but I'm— . . . Claire, for God's sake, stop talking a second and listen! (*Sits on trunk.*) All right, that's better. Look, I've had a really bad day. I got— Claire, I'm not *finished*! Jesus, you just refuse to *listen*! (*Slams the phone down, picks up his galoshes, takes them near the door by the coat-rack.*) Pussy! Deaf Goddam Pussy! (*THE TELEPHONE RINGS; JIMMY groans in annoyance.*) Uhhhh! Ah! (*Goes to it, picks it up, sits on arm of easy chair.*) Hello . . . I know it's not like me, but I made my point, didn't I? . . . Look, I've been fired from the play, I'm being written out of the soap, Kate's walked out, my cats sick with a kidney infection. I'm thirty-eight years old and I've been robbed two times in the last three months—and one little thing you didn't know—I was writing a novel and as far as I'd gotten, 162 pages, was in a small metal box and *that* was taken in the last robbery. I am a deeply—*depressed* person! . . . (*Listening, then.*) Paranoid? What do you mean paranoid? You'd be paranoid, too, if the whole world was out to get you! Happy New Year! (*He hangs up.*) Deaf old witch! (*Picks up phone, walks to the desk with it and sets it down, starts to walk away, then wheels around*

and talks to it.) Go ahead, ring. See if I care. Go ahead! (*THE PHONE RINGS.*) Ring away. Ring your bells off. Ring till Doomsday! (*Then.*) Christ, that's today! (*JIMMY fires point blank at the phone, the gun merely clicks. He backs away from the phone, then fires a second time: click. Then he backs away a step farther, fires a fancy shot back around between his legs. THE GUN FIRES THIS TIME. JIMMY falls back, almost to the floor, braces himself with one hand against the wall near the bathroom door.*)

VITO. Jesus! (*He slides out from under the bed; his duffle bag gets caught under the bed; he tugs at it, trying to get it out.*)

JIMMY. (*Dumbfounded.*) What? Who—the—what the—?

VITO. (*Hands up.*) Okay, don't do nothin'. Don't do nothin' now. (*JIMMY opens his mouth to speak, but no words come out.*) Take it easy! Take it easy! Okay, it's a draw! Just let me outta here. (*Leaving bag, he moves stealthily downstage backing up, hands out in front of him, indicating: "Take it easy!"*)

JIMMY. (*Aiming the gun at VITO.*) Let you out! What the—who the hell are you?

VITO. Forget it, there was only one bullet!

JIMMY. Where the—where did you come from?

VITO. Keep the gun—it's empty. Easy . . . Easy . . . I'm not into violence, man.

JIMMY. Who are you?

VITO. The Avon Lady— (*He heads for the door; JIMMY throws the gun toward the bed and is after him.*) So long and good luck!

JIMMY. (*Rushing to the door, grabbing VITO, pulling him backwards.*) You—fucking robber! You— (*Pulls him, trying to throw him down. VITO grabs out, reaching for anything to get a grip on.*) You son-of-a-

bitch! (VITO grabs hold of a small steam radiator between the bathroom and the entrance platform. It's hot and he screams in pain, also jerks away from JIMMY.)

VITO. Ahhh!—Jesus! Oh . . . (He shakes his burned hand, then makes a mad dash in front of the sofa, toward the kitchen and the window—with the idea of opening it.) You maniac—you're a maniac! (But JIMMY is right after him and VITO knows it, so he runs upstage of the sink unit as JIMMY comes running around the downstage end toward him.)

JIMMY. Oh—no you don't! (VITO makes a lunge for the bed, and tries to jump up and catch one of the bars to hoist himself up—the way he entered the apartment through the skylight.)

VITO. Holy . . . Uhhh!

JIMMY. (Coming around the upstage end of the sink unit, watching him jumping on the bed, then speaking in outrage at his bed being messed up.) Get off the bed! (VITO turns, picks up a large pillow and throws it at JIMMY, who ducks back allowing VITO to jump off the bed and run into the bathroom. JIMMY, holding the pillow, which he caught as it hit him in the face, runs toward the bathroom door just as VITO emerges brandishing a large bathroom plunger in front of him, like a sword.)

VITO. Ah-hah! Back . . . back . . . (JIMMY shields himself with the pillow, against VITO, thrusting with the plunger as VITO gingerly works his way toward the front door, careful to avoid the hot radiator. Just as he's backing up to the door—JIMMY pulls a dodge and pretends KATE is coming in.)

JIMMY. No—Kate, don't come in—watch out! (The ruse works, VITO turns around and in this brief time JIMMY grabs the end of the plunger, trying to wrest it

from VITO's grip. He pulls VITO around so he's backing into the room downstage of the sofa—then as VITO is tugging at the plunger with all his might—JIMMY suddenly lets go. VITO falls backward onto the floor, letting the plunger go as he attempts to scramble up, but JIMMY is right after him, down on the floor wrestling him, getting him in a headlock with his arm.)

VITO. Jesus, what is this? Quit it! Quit—let me outta here!

JIMMY. Let you outta here! Why, you dirty bastard! You— *(Now JIMMY has him in a good solid hold.)*

VITO. *(Gagging.)* Hey, quit it! *(Pounding the floor with one fist, holding the other arm up in surrender.)* Uncle! Uncle—I give up. Quit it!

JIMMY. *(Now choking him.)* Quit it? Why should I quit it—you no-good dirty little bastard!

VITO. For the main reason—it hurts!

JIMMY. Good! Good! You miserable son-of-a-bitch!

VITO. Quit it! Quit it! Jesus—help! Help! Hey, wait a minute—your cat's dead!

JIMMY. *(Incredulous.)* What??

VITO. Your goddam cat's dead!

JIMMY. *(Stops dead, sitting atop VITO.)* What do you mean? *My cat?*

VITO. *(Quickly.)* Your lady friend, she got a phone call from the cat hospital!

JIMMY. Cat hospital?

VITO. Cat hospital—dog hospital—what do you want? Animal hospital. *(Sliding out from under a stunned JIMMY.)* Anyhow, the fuckin' cat's dead! *(Runs stage left of the sink unit, near the counter-bar.)*

JIMMY. *(Up on his feet and runs up stage right of the counter, snatches up a broom and swings wildly at VITO, missing.)* Why you son-of-a-bitch!

VITO. (*Snatching up a large pot-lid, a Wok-lid, to shield himself.*) Hey, cool it, cool it, I didn't kill it!

JIMMY. (*Turns broom into a spear, holding it ready to thrust at VITO.*) What are you doing here! (*Thrusts at him.*) Ah-hah! (*VITO ducks, using his shield.*) Jesus, I'll bet you're the same bastard that robbed me before! (*Once again, poising the spear.*) Are you? Are you?

VITO. No. No, and I wouldn't now. (*Drops Wok-lid to the floor, holds hands up.*) Honest—not after what I heard! Now just—just take it easy. (*VITO runs stage right on the way to the door. JIMMY swings the broom and hits him in the mid-section with the sweeping end. VITO doubling up, starting to fall upstage to the floor.*) Oew! Right in the nuts! Ohhh! (*Now he is on the floor. JIMMY quickly runs to the stage right side of him, to block him from getting up and heading for the door. JIMMY smacks his hands together, makes fisticuffs, assumes a mock boxing stance.*)

JIMMY. Okay . . . Ah-hah! Get up and fight!

VITO. (*Scrambling to his feet, unsteadily.*) What are you—crazy?

JIMMY. (*Feinting toward him.*) Crazy? (*As VITO raises his hands to shield his face, and backs away.*) I'll show you crazy. (*Gives him a hay-maker punch to the jaw. VITO screams, then groans, falls backward, turning slightly, hits his head on the sink, rolls his eyes and falls down stage right of it. JIMMY yowls, too, shaking his punching hand as if it's hurt. Then JIMMY looks down at the inert form for a beat, goes to VITO, grabs his ankles and pulls him downstage a foot or two. JIMMY, raising his hands in victory.*) I got him, I got him! (*He rushes to the coat-rack, puts on his coat.*) I caught him, I got him! I got him! (*Opens the door, runs out, shuts the door behind him, shouting.*) I got him, I caught him! (*In another beat, the comes tear-*

ing back in, breathless and confused.) What am I doing? (*Looks around, sees the phone, hurries to it, picks it up and dials.*) Hello, operator . . . Ah-ah—what's the . . . ah—police emergency number? . . . 911, thank you! (*Hangs up, dials again.*) 9-1-1! (*He glances down at the burglar while waiting for police emergency to answer. Nothing. He looks at the receiver, bobs his head, as if to say: come on. Then paces stage right, then back stage left, looks down at the burglar once more. Again looks at the phone. Finally out of patience:)* Come on, come on! Police emergency, my ass! (*Waiting for the phone to be answered, he suddenly gets a flash, then slowly, deliberately hangs up. He looks at the burglar again.*) Oh, no. No, no, no. Uh-uh. Ah . . . ah? (*Glancing around, he notices the closet door open, looks in, sees all the hangers, goes to the closet, forages around, then takes out a hanger with neckties hanging on it.*) Yes . . . yes . . . (*Takes off several neckties, tests their strength with both hands, then starts toward the burglar.*) Oh, boy—did you ever drop down the wrong chimney tonight. (*LIGHTS DIM as JIMMY kneels by the burglar. MUSIC COMES UP LOUD AS LIGHTS BLACKOUT. END—Scene 1.*)

(It is important to have the tying up of VITO done in the least amount of time possible; this should be rehearsed and orchestrated by the stage crew so that it takes no more than thirty seconds.)

SCENE 2

(Optional)

Toward the end of the blackout, after stage assistants have had time to strap VITO to the kitchen sink— if there is a place for slides to be shown, there

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