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Samuel French Acting Edition

The Crumple Zone

by Buddy Thomas

|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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MARCUS KETTLES PRODUCTIONS

Presents



A New Comedy by

BUDDY THOMAS

Starring

MARIO CANTONE

with

JOSHUA BÍTON
STEVE MATEO

GERALD DOWNEY
PAUL PECORINO

Set Design

DAWN ROBYN PETRLIK

Costume Design

DAVID MILLS

Sound Design

LAURA GRACE BROWN

Lighting Design

ED McCARTHY

Choreography

PETER KAPETAN

Fight Consultant

B.H. BARRY

Production Stage Manager

GAIL EVE MALATESTA

Casting Director

PAUL DAVIS

Assistant Stage Manager

MICHAEL BIONDI

Technical Director

JEFF DUER

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THE PETE SANDERS GROUP

Directed by

JASON MOORE

Actors appear courtesy of Actors Equity Association

Characters

- TERRY Late 20's — Early 30's.
A manic ball of energy with a scathing sense of humor.
Absolutely neurotic, with a tendency to hit the bottle.
- BUCK Late 20's — Early 30's.
Extreme GQ good looks, and just as charming. Love-
sick, and somewhat obsessive.
- ALEX Late 20's — Early 30's.
Constantly on the verge of a nervous breakdown, his
questionable choices get him into trouble.
- ROGER Early 30's — Mid 40's.
A big tank of a blue-collar man, sexy and dangerous.
- MATT Late 20's — Early 30's.
Boyishly good looking, somewhat naive and innocent.

Time

Not long ago.
Just before Christmas.

Place

An absolute dive of an apartment,
somewhere on Staten Island.

ACT I

Scene 1

(Almost 9:00 p.m.

The phone is ringing as lights rise.

The apartment is dimly lit, with only Christmas tree lights and the glow of the television, which plays "How the Grinch Stole Christmas."

BUCK and TERRY lounge on the sofa, stringing popcorn, completely ignoring the phone. The answering machine picks up.)

MACHINE. *(Voice of ALEX:)* Hi. Terry and Alex aren't here right now. Messages can also be left at this number for Matthew, who's on tour until April. *(Beep. Voice of MATT:)* Hey it's Matt. We just got here. Iowa. Iowa somewhere, some little potato patch from the depths of hell. We're supposed to be in Duluth, which at least has a traffic light, but the snow got so bad we had to stop —

BUCK. *(As message plays on:)* Okay, that's enough.

MATT's VOICE. — we're at The Blue Moon Motor Lodge, if you can believe it, um, 712 —

BUCK. That's it, turn it off Terry.

(TERRY turns it up.)

MATT's VOICE. *(Continued from before, no break:)* — 626-3484, room, hey, what's the room number...? Fifteen, room fifteen. Alex I really need to hear from you —

(BUCK has reached over TERRY and smashes down on the volume button. The voice ends.)

TERRY. What're you, nuts?!

BUCK. This guy calls ten times a day but I'm nuts.

TERRY. Buck, that answering machine is clingin' to life by a very thin thread, you don't need to be smackin' it and crackin' it every time you have some jealous titty attack, uhhh, look at this, would you look at this?

BUCK. ... wha...?

TERRY. I hate the endings of Christmas specials.

BUCK. Why?

TERRY. They're always happy.

BUCK. Whadaya want, a homicide?

TERRY. I always resented the fact that the Grinch turns into this totally adorable, cuddly little pushover.

BUCK. ... 's'a kid's show.

TERRY. Great, so, so, why can't he, you know, steal Christmas, huh? It's called "How the Grinch Stole Christmas," let him steal the God-damned holiday and get off my TV screen!

BUCK. String your popcorn.

TERRY. I'm stringin', I'm stringin'... look at him! Laughin' it up with the dog! (*To the TV set:*) You're a villain! KILL SOMEONE!

BUCK. Bloodthirsty.

TERRY. I'm done, my fingers are tired.

BUCK. I bet you say that to all the boys.

TERRY. Only to you, Buck.

BUCK. What the hell is this? This is your string? Six pieces?

TERRY. LOOK at this ... that's it. I'm writing a letter to Dr. Seuss.

BUCK. You ate that entire bowl of popcorn?

TERRY. For psychologically warping the brain cells of every kid in America. This happily ever after stuff has gotta stop, I, I, mean, I want property stolen, and, and pets hit by garbage trucks, and little Whoville couples battling in divorce court, and, and I want Christmas stolen, just as is promised in the title!!! I'm sayin' ... and incidentally, when Frosty melts, let him stay a PUDDLE! All this singin' and life is la, la, la, la, just, it's bound to set you up with expectations that can never come close to being met!

BUCK. What's wrong with you?

TERRY. I don't know, I don't know, life, I just, Christmas, I just-

BUCK. You just —

TERRY. I hate my life.

BUCK. You do not.

TERRY. Don't contradict me while I'm having a nervous breakdown. I hate my life, I hate Staten Island, I hate the ferry, the landfill, this apartment, my job, what job, my Bachelors degree rottin' at the bottom of a stack of old *People* magazines, everyone famous but me, while I earn two bucks and very few tips an hour sloppin' pork chop platters around a diner that should've burned to the ground a hundred and fifty years ago, and, and, and, and —

BUCK. Relax.

TERRY. — and I just want that phone to ring, okay, once in a while, okay, for me, someone, anyone, phone sex, a serial killer, I don't care, and I don't mean Matthew either, fillin' up that answering machine all day, from Iowa or Omaha, wonderin' why Alex hasn't been writin' or callin' or —

BUCK. I don't know what you're goin' on about.

TERRY. Of course you don't, that's perfectly understandable, perfectly, your perfect face and body and your hair from the Final Net Hall of Fame, you've never been alone in the world —

BUCK. I've been alone plenty.

TERRY. Always a shoulder to lean on, never a desperate moment in a bar at three in the morning.

BUCK. Where's Alex, I thought he got off at eight ...

TERRY. Alex, Alex, Alex.

BUCK. He should be —

TERRY. So look at me.

BUCK. I mean —

TERRY. Look at me.

BUCK. Yeah, so?

TERRY. So so what I was actually leading up to here, wondering about, um ... what do you think?

BUCK. What do I think?

TERRY. About me.

BUCK. Which personality are we referring to?

TERRY. Shut up, look, just ... just say it, basically, do I have a chance ever, at all, in any way, ever, the key word is ever —

BUCK. Ever.

TERRY. — of — taking our relationship beyond the friendship level, ummmmm, onto, a, you know, more intense level, just, ahh, feel free to smack me at any time before I make an even bigger fool of myself, and —

BUCK. Come on, Terry, you know the situation.

TERRY. I “know the situation.” What, what is that? I “know the situation.”

BUCK. I’m in love with Alex, Terry. You know the situation.

(TERRY has begun fooling around with the answering machine. Rewinding it, stopping it. During the following, he will press play several times.)

TERRY. Yeah, well how ‘bout a situation where you’re not gonna end up in a puddle of tears and Budweiser under a barstool.

(TERRY has pressed play:)

MATT’S VOICE. *(Machine:)* — I really miss you Alex. Tonight I was looking at the stars and I thought —

(TERRY stops it. Rewinds some more.)

BUCK. You know how I feel.

TERRY. You know Alex is unavailable.

BUCK. Well, Terry, he’s been pretty available, I hate to break the news —

TERRY. — as in attached, as in “happily ever after”, as in married, as in hhhhh, it’s disgusting, the more I think about it —

BUCK. Don’t think about it.

TERRY. — the entire ... the whole ... don’t think about it???

BUCK. Don’t think about it.

TERRY. DON’T THINK ABOUT IT?!?!?

BUCK. Why are you getting hysterical??

TERRY. Hey. Hey. Hey. There has got to be — I know you’re a little, um, infatuated —

(TERRY pushes 'play':)

MATT's VOICE. *(Machine:)* — don't return phone calls any more but I love you anyway —

(Terry stops it, rewinds some more.)

BUCK. Love.

TERRY. There's gotta be one microscopic moral squiggling around in your body somewhere! Some slight hint of guilt ... Anything ... ANYTHING??? Come on, speak, Buck. Prove to me YOU'RE NOT A MACY'S MANNEQUIN!!!

BUCK. You can't help who you fall in love with.

TERRY. Yeah, well too bad, baby, cause you fell in love with the most married man in the universe, and all the while, the vacancy sign in my bedroom window's been blinkin' like a neon light.

BUCK. I'd never be any good for you, Terry.

TERRY. I'd never be any good for you, Buck. My heart is as black as a coal. I'd be forced to cause you misery.

(TERRY presses 'play':)

MATT's VOICE. *(Machine:)* — love you Alex — *(Stops it.)*

BUCK. *(He's had it.)* Terry if you fuck with that again I'm gonna smash it over your head!

TERRY. Oh, nice, well, one more thing, then I'll never mention it again, I swear, I ... You're my friend, Buck. But so is Matthew. And so is Alex. And Alex will never ... ever ... leave Matt not even for someone as perfect as you.

BUCK. So what, okay?

TERRY. It's true.

BUCK. You don't know. You don't hear what Alex says to me.

TERRY. I don't wanna know, I don't wanna hear. God help me. I live in Knots Landing.

BUCK. Matthew's been on this tour for almost a year. Gone. Okay? How can you keep holdin' onto someone who's not even around to, to, you know, hold?

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TERRY. What is that, your business?!

BUCK. Is any of this your business?

TERRY. It's my business, all right when my best friend calls me from God-damned Duluth at six in the morning and wants to know how his lover is doing, and I politely remember to forget that his lover is ten feet away in the other room with a cock in his mouth!!!

BUCK. Everything's about sex to you, right?

TERRY. You don't get it.

BUCK. No you don't get it, Terry. Stay out of it.

TERRY. Great. Great! That's just —

BUCK. — cause Terry —

TERRY. No, I'm OUT!

BUCK. — it's none of —

TERRY. — you're right!!! You're right!!! My life is pure soap opera and I'm not even a main character in it!!! I'm a supporting character in my own life!!! And you know what, Buck? That's just the way I like it!!! (*ALEX enters, wearing a Santa suit, a heavy jacket.*) Right, Alex?

ALEX. Right Terry, just don't start raving, my head'll pop.

BUCK. He's been raving for hours, his battery's gotta die soon —

TERRY. But I'm out of it, Alex.

ALEX. Out, great, just —

BUCK. Where ya been?

ALEX. Where've I been?

BUCK. You got off at eight.

ALEX. Buck, at eight o' clock, the line to my throne stretched half a mile through the mall. I felt like an attraction at Disney World.

TERRY. Only two shopping days left —

ALEX. — til the unemployment line, I gotta get outa this thing, it's like being buried in a big wool coffin.

(Through the following, ALEX is in and out of his bedroom, changing into a robe.)

BUCK. (*Unzips him:*) You smell like a toilet.

ALEX. Yeah? You bounce five hundred diapered asses on your

lap and see what happens.

TERRY. Still scarin' the shit out of em', I see.

BUCK. Come on Santa, come sit on my lap.

ALEX. Later, I gotta relax, I gotta just-

TERRY. Ya work tomorrow?

ALEX. Don't ask stupid questions, huh?

TERRY. The, Al, hey the national tour thing, the *Anything Goes* audition's tomorrow —

ALEX. — so whadaya want? You want me to pay the rent or you want me to get my ego destroyed for the ten thousandth time?

TERRY. You haven't been to an audition since October!

ALEX. Terry, when you can't even get hired for a Japanese industrial laundry detergent show, it sorta crushes any last remaining visions of your name in lights at the Helen Hayes.

TERRY. So what're you? Giving up?

ALEX. So what're you, my agent?

TERRY. Maybe I should be. You're going with me tomorrow. You can sing that thing from *Carnival* you always —

ALEX. Sorry, Pollyanna, the landlord waits for no one. And how'd you get outa work?

TERRY. I didn't.

ALEX. Good plan. Both of us as bag ladies'll be lots of fun.

TERRY. You're calling me in sick, and don't give me any shit about it cause —

ALEX. Call yourself in sick, I'll be over at the gingerbread hut, gettin' pissed on.

TERRY. Tell him, Buck. He listens to you. Your career is melting!!!

BUCK. Yeah, Al, actually, I was gonna talk to you, see, there's sort of a good position opening up in my office, it's —

ALEX. What fuckin' career, Terry?

TERRY. What?! No, hey, sorry —

ALEX. What position?

TERRY. Wait, hey, hello, it is time for Alex to learn the magical art of self sufficiency, okay, ever since he met you, he's had every job

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the Staten Island mall has to offer.

BUCK. I got pull. I can't help?

TERRY. You've got
*PULL?! In the Staten Island
MALL?!? This is something
to be proud of?!?!? This is
something to ADMIT?!?*

ALEX. And I've got a
mother already, Terry.

BUCK. Hey, just—

TERRY. Operator, inventory, SANTA CLAUS?!? Ya gonna play
the Easter Bunny too?!

BUCK. Those were temp jobs, TEMP, this is a real position, a
good position —

TERRY. There is *NO* good position at the Staten Island Mial!!!

BUCK. — was gonna talk to you —

TERRY. Ughh.

BUCK. — guy's leavin' in the mall administrative office —

TERRY. That's your office, Buck.

BUCK. It's twenty-six five a year —

TERRY. His desk squeezed right up against yours, of course —

ALEX. Okay, enough.

TERRY. Maybe your destiny, Buck, is to wrinkle up and grow a
goiter in the fluorescent haze of office light —

BUCK. You don't know what you're talking about.

TERRY. — Staten Island MALL office light for Christ sake, ugh,
hey, this, *THIS* man is a man of talent, you never saw him act, you
never saw him flyin' all over a stage with sweat and drool and angst
spewin' outa his mouth —

BUCK. Sounds pretty.

TERRY. — throwin' himself against the walls, tearin' at his
hair —

ALEX. Terry.

TERRY. I'm sayin', all I'm saying is that this man is one day
gonna have about nine Academy Awards marching across his mantle,
so I'll thank you for not dragging him down to your level.

ALEX. No one's draggin' anyone anywhere, Jesus Christ —

BUCK. And Terry. Get yourself a fuckin' life. You got your nose

so far up everybody's ass, I'm surprised we can still hear your bitchin'.

TERRY. Yeah, well, the bitch is going to bed, so try to keep the moanin' and groanin' to a low roar tonight, huh, I need to not have black bags under my eyes for once —

ALEX. Terry!

TERRY. —and do NOT forget to call me in sick tomorrow —

ALEX. Sick with what?

TERRY. A heart attack. Cancer. Tuberculosis.

ALEX. Great.

TERRY. Better. A death in the family. My mother died.

ALEX. I refuse to tell them your mother died so you can go tap dance for the road tour of Anything Goes!!!

TERRY. Hellooo, it's a diner, not a worldwide corporation, death and disease are the only things these people understand, okay? What do they care if I drip snot all over the tuna melt deluxe, as long as their cash register is ringin', they could give a shit, so KILL my God-damned mother, she got hit by a garbage truck, her large intestine exploded, she jumped off the Statue of Liberty! I don't care! Just kill the old lady and let me audition in peace!

(He storms into his bedroom and slams the door.)

BUCK. Move in with me.

ALEX. Cut it out, Terry's great.

BUCK. Move in with me anyway.

ALEX. What's with this job?

BUCK. I'm serious.

ALEX. Twenty-what? Twenty-six somethin'? Pretty sad when that sounds like a gold mine.

BUCK. Listen, I wanna —

ALEX. Do I have to type?

BUCK. Al, shut up, huh, I'm serious. I wanna, I been wantin' to talk to you, it's the perfect way I wanna start the new year.

ALEX. What are you babbling about?

BUCK. By starting our lives together.

ALEX. Buck, it's been a rough day.

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BUCK. I want you to move in with me.

ALEX. Let it go, huh?

BUCK. It's stupid. You live in this rat box, I'm always here, you're always there, it's —

ALEX. Not tonight, okay,
I'm not in the mood.
..... Didn't your mamma
ever tell ya not to nag Santa
Claus?

BUCK. (*Continues from
above, no break.*) — it's stupid,
Alex, all the money you waste on
rent, you could —

BUCK. You're not listening to me!

ALEX. Look. I got stuff to figure out, I gotta go to bed and dream about blowin' up the North Pole.

BUCK. Wanna hear one of my dreams?

ALEX. I don't know, you're on a roll tonight.

BUCK. You. Me. A huge deserted beach. Ocean and sand forever. Just for us.... You. And me.... You gotta swim underwater through a cave to find it. Stars all over when ya get there. Moon makes the water like glitter.

ALEX. Ya had a few beers with Terry, didn't ya?

BUCK. You don't like my beach?

ALEX. I love your beach. Let's hit it. I gotta get outa here.

BUCK. So let's get out of here. That's another one of my dreams. You. Me. A road that doesn't end-

ALEX. Why, um, why do all these dreams begin with ... you ... me...?

BUCK. Why not?

ALEX. Cause, um —

BUCK. I'd do that, too. Get in a car and just drive. I always wanted to be going somewhere, anywhere, just away ... away from wherever I was. When I was a little kid, I used to get on the phone, middle of the night when everyone was asleep, call up every bus line, airline in the book. Make all these reservations to every single place I could think of. Hawaii, Alaska, South America, all these "exotic" places. New York ... tall buildings. Bright lights. Huh ... I was gonna save all my pennies, all my allowance until one day I could actually get on one of those big silver planes and fly right out of my sad little life, onto, into ... something ... anything else ... my great escape ...

huh. Look where I finally escaped to ... Staten Island. Crazy, right? This is a place people escape FROM.

ALEX. Okay. Listen.

BUCK. I love you.

ALEX. (*As if he were slapped.*) Stop, sh—, j-what's the rush?!

BUCK. I —

ALEX. Huh? Just —

BUCK. What's wrong?

ALEX. Nothing! I dunno. Just —

BUCK. What?

ALEX. I've been thinking.

BUCK. Thinking.

ALEX. Yeah, and —

BUCK. See, everyone is always "thinking" around here. Hey. Come on. Don't think.

ALEX. Buck.

BUCK. Don't think. What's it do, huh? Gets your emotions all tangled up in a hundred knots and —

ALEX. Cut it out, fuck, all right?! I have something to say.

BUCK. Al. I know what you're gonna say.

ALEX. No you don't.

BUCK. You miss Matthew.

ALEX. Just stop.

BUCK. I mean a lot to you but this can't go on —

ALEX. Yeah, great, you've made the point —

BUCK. It can't go on, it can't go on and then we kiss for an hour and rip each other's clothes off and —

ALEX. Fine. You've got me all figured out.

BUCK. I just thought I could save us some time and we could cut straight to the kiss.

(The phone starts ringing. They ignore it.)

ALEX. Look, we both need to think about how this got started —

BUCK. — shoulda thought of that five months ago —

ALEX. — the fact that if we actually thought about what we were doing, this never would've started in the first place!

(The answering machine picks up.)

MATT's VOICE. *(Machine:)* Hey it's me. Thought I'd try you one last time before I —

(ALEX has scrambled to the machine and turns the volume down as fast as he can. An awkward moment. BUCK stares at ALEX, furious.)

BUCK. Alex. Wake up. Regardless of your “thinking” and shit, it did get started.

ALEX. So what is that? Good?!

BUCK. Of course it's good! I love you!

ALEX. — throw that expression around like it's salad dressing! I've been with Matt four years! That all gets to crash to pieces now?!?

BUCK. It crashed the first time you flirted with me at the mall.

ALEX. Don't be an idiot, huh. I wasn't flirting, I was lost.

BUCK. You got that right.

ALEX. I just wanted directions, okay?

BUCK. To my bedroom?

ALEX. Forget it! I can't do this!

BUCK. The boy's been gone a year, Alex, face it! If it wasn't me, someone else woulda picked your ass up at the Orange Julius!

ALEX. I can't do this Buck! It's over!

BUCK. You're kidding, right? You gotta be kidding here. What have I asked you for?

ALEX. Oh, just to move in with you, nothing major.

BUCK. We have good times! You make me happy! That's more than enough for me!

ALEX. You said —

BUCK. Whatever, Alex, fine, ya know? You don't want me in your life, just say it. I been dumped before.

ALEX. If you have to hear the words —

BUCK. You bet I do.

ALEX. Then here they are.

BUCK. Drum roll, please.

ALEX. Buck ...

BUCK. ... Alex.

ALEX. I..... love you ...

BUCK. Oooooohhh, that sounded painful, you need to go to the emergency room?

ALEX. (*Ignores him:*) Some — somehow it seems somewhere I fell — fallen — fell, in love — fu, you know, words, they're just words is all, no one knows what they mean, everyone just says 'em cause they hear 'em on the radio and on TV and at the movies and the whole world wants to be Julia Roberts and Richard Gere in the setting sun, love, it's just a word, okay, everyone says it so that makes it okay and —

BUCK. You're in love with me.

ALEX. Whatever it means, I don't know what that means. My heart always beats a little faster when I think you're about to walk into a room, and ... when I first see you ... I, um ... I get a feeling like a, a, a well ... and if I ever think you're in trouble or unhappy or something bad, um, I just, I mean, I don't know what I mean ... I, I know what I mean but I don't know how to, to —

BUCK. Alex. I know what you mean.

ALEX. I just mean that if that's what love is, then, yes. I'm very, I guess very much in love with you. But ...

BUCK. ... but. I'm still in love with Matt. And I've been in love with him for a long time, I'm sayin' for years, okay? He's deep inside my heart. I've only known you a few months and yeah, sure, things end, people change, but when you put a few months next to a few years, and, and the emotions invested and —

BUCK. Okay, fine.

ALEX. — and the —

BUCK. It's fine, forget it.

ALEX. I've only got one life. Not two.

BUCK. What did I just say? Did I say it was fine??

ALEX. It's sensible.

BUCK. Sensible, Alex? Now love is supposed to make sense?

ALEX. I'm sorry —

BUCK. Tell that to every single person who ever walked the face of the earth. Love is supposed to make sense. They'll laugh you right off the planet.

ALEX. I don't know what else to do, I don't know what —

BUCK. It's fine, Alex. It's fine. *(He goes to the door.)* Have a nice life. You and your sensible love. Flyin' around Jupiter and Saturn and all the stars in the Milky Way.

(BUCK smiles sadly at ALEX and exits, leaving the front door wide open. Alex stares after him a moment, shaky and lost. A moment passes and he goes to the answering machine. Rewinds a moment, then presses play.)

MATT's VOICE. *(Machine:)* — my phone bill at these hotels, but Alex, I just wanted to say, that, you know, whatever the reason is that you've been avoiding me, and you have been avoiding me, it's, it's, pretty obvious and all, but whatever the reason is ... I um, I still love you ... and just don't give up on me yet. This tour is almost over, and, okay, enough already. I just don't want you to forget about me ... okay? Okay. Annnnnnnnd ... to insure that you won't forget about me, I'm gonna run that answering machine tape right into the ground with a little schmaltzy selection dedicated especially to you. You're tuned to W.M.A.T., and this one goes out to Alex ... the love of my life ... with all my heat and soul

(Music begins. It is a sentimental Christmas song. As it starts to play, BUCK appears in the open doorway. Knocks on the door softly. ALEX turns, sees him. They stare at each other as the music continues to play. BUCK crosses into the apartment to ALEX. They stand very close. BUCK touches ALEX's face. ALEX hesitates, pushing his hand away. BUCK pauses a moment, and then turns to go, but ALEX pulls him back. They hesitate, and then, they kiss, softly at first, and then with great passion, as the music plays on, and the lights FADE TO BLACK.)

Scene 2

(The next day. Twilight.

There are several large and obnoxious bouquets of flowers on various tables. The apartment is dark. The tree is off. Momentarily, a key turns in the front door, and TERRY enters, home from his audition. Outside, it is pouring snow, and he is covered in it. He turns on a light, throws his dance bag down, and ROGER enters, a big tank of a man, a few years older than TERRY. He is just as ice-covered.)

TERRY. What the hell's the matter with these people, they got the heat set at like ten degrees —

ROGER. Seems okay —

TERRY. Shut the, come on, the, the door, it's the fuckin' Alaskan tundra out there, Christ, I'm gonna, I can't even —

ROGER. Cool tree.

TERRY. Huh? What?

ROGER. The —

TERRY. Oh, yeah, you know, I never knew snow fell horizontally before, before today. Fell, right, more like blew, gusted, um, whipped, smacked —

ROGER. Interesting words.

TERRY. Interesting day. What the fuck are all these flowers?! Excuse me, I don't usually talk like I'm in a rap video, but snow turns me into a raving foul-mouth pig!

ROGER. *(Moving toward him:)* Mmmmmmm, sounds good to me.

TERRY. And, uh, I don't usually bring home strays —

ROGER. Strays?

TERRY. — so hang out over, sort of over there, in case you turn out to be an axe murderer, I have time to jump out the window.

ROGER. My weapon of choice is the ice pick.

TERRY. Great, I'll see if we got one handy. *(He heads to the kitchen.)* Whadaya drink? Do you drink?

ROGER. I —

TERRY. You live on Staten Island, of course you drink, I'll mix you up somethin', I work wonders with fifty-nine cent vodka, what are

all these hideous flowers?!

(TERRY exits.)

ROGER. They look like, aren't they like, those, uh, funeral, uh, you know, flowers, uh ... you don't think someone died, do you?

TERRY. *(Kitchen:)* Nobody died. Everyone I know is too bitchy and hateful to die.

(ROGER has been looking at the flowers ... at a card.)

ROGER. Aw, wow.

TERRY. *(Kitchen:)* Yeah, I hope you like really, really, cheap vodka mixed with really, realiy cheap orange juice, I mean hey, the way I look at it, booze is booze, if it knocks you on your ass, it's done its job, right? And in a way, what more can you ask for?

ROGER. Hey there, Tony, you maybe need to come out here a second —

TERRY. Probably only alcoholics talk like this, but good. Fine. Great. Let me be an alcoholic. I, in fact, hope I am an alcoholic. My life is pure unadulterated hell, and now, Staten Island has turned into Siberia and my apartment has turned into daytime television, not the game shows, although a few people do seem to be after the same prize, not me, I don't mean me, nobody's after GOD-DAMNED ME in this apartment or this galaxy but I'm just saying, fuck it! I have no intention of dealing with these events sober, I have no intention of dealing with my life sober, and if that damns me to Hell with a pitchfork up my ass for eternity, then hot-damn hallelujah! That is just fine with me! Betty Ford, baby, here I come!

(He enters, two drinks.)

ROGER. These um ... seem to be, for, um ... you.

TERRY. Yeah? Someone finally sends me flowers and they're sympathy flowers? Who thinks I'm dead? My ex-lover. Oh wait. I forgot. I don't have an ex-lover!!! Silly me.....You wanna be my ex-lover, Roger?

ROGER. No, um, some — someone else seems to have, uh, you know. Died. Uhhh, you better — uhhh —

(He thrusts the card at TERRY.)

TERRY. Yeah?... From my boss? *(Reads:)* “Dear Terrence, from all of us ... our deepest sympathies on the sudden passing of your ... MOTHER?!?”

ROGER. *(Quickly:)* Aw, man, aw, I’m so sorry, what a way to, to find out, really, I should go, I —

TERRY. *(Finally, annoyed realization:)* Awwwwwww fuck. Ju — great. Just great.

ROGER. Um ... what?

TERRY. Great. Unbelievable. Do you know what it’s like to live with a roommate, a brain the size of a turnip seed?!

ROGER. But —

TERRY. I mean what do they think, huh, what —

ROGER. — wait, your, your mom-mother’s dead, and —

TERRY. — she’s not dead —

ROGER. But —

TERRY. She’s alive and kickin’ but I’ll give these to my roommate after I kill him.

ROGER. I don’t get it.

TERRY. This audition today, this waste of good oxygen today, I’m scheduled to work, right, you follow me? So I jokingly, jokingly, the key word here is jokingly, okay, I jokingly say to my roommate, Alex, I say, “Alex, please call me in sick today”, and here comes the jokingly part, get ready, I say “make it serious”, that’s not the jokingly part, it had to be serious because my boss is the Anti-Christ, but Alex doesn’t get it, doesn’t know what to say, so, here comes the jokingly part, pay attention, I jokingly say for him to call me in sick by saying that my mother died. Jokingly.

ROGER. So you, umm, you didn’t want him to call you in sick?

TERRY. Um, am I speaking in a strange Creole language here? He could’ve said the flu, he could’ve said, I dunno, I fell down a flight of stairs, instead he says my mother died.

ROGER. But you told him to, I, I don’t get it —

THE CRUMPLE ZONE

TERRY. Not to mention the fact that he probably put a curse on the old lady, she's prob'ly fallin' down a manhole even as we speak. This is great.

ROGER. It's sick.

TERRY. You got that right. Now I gotta take days off to mourn, to view the body, do the funeral, I mean I'm sayin', I got bills due, rent, the landlord don't wait for imaginary funeral processions!

(ROGER has taken a drink. He nearly gags.)

ROGER. Jesus, what is this, Clorox???

TERRY. I like my drinks the way I like my men. Strong and cheap.

ROGER. Jesus Christ.

TERRY. Aw, lighten up, I don't really. I just like to say that line.

ROGER. Are you sure you're not on some kind of special release program from the mental ward?

TERRY. Yeah, well, I gotta be crazy to live in this hellhole, spend forty, fifty hours a week runnin' around with fried eggs and French fries in my hands, an extra twenty hours draggin' out to these auditions, hopelessly, hopelessly hoping that one of these times, they might actually look up from their bagel and coffee and watch me sing! "Thank you, NEXT!!!" I gotta be crazy. With a Bachelors degree. A forty-thousand dollar fucking Bachelors degree!!! Do you have a Bachelors degree???

ROGER. No, um, but, uh, I got my G.E.D.

TERRY. Yeah? You make a living?

ROGER. I, uh, manage a factory outlet for —

TERRY. Perfect, that's really the best! I go to college four years, sign my life away to the student loan companies of America, ruin my credit, all chances I'll ever own a car, a house, a plane ticket, slave until I'm dead in a grease hut, perfect! You drop out of school in kindergarten, prob'ly, and you're in management! WHO MAKES THESE RULES!?!?!

ROGER. Why, uh, why —

TERRY. Crazy, sure I'm crazy! Staten Island?! Be SANE and live on Staten Island?! With the fumes from the landfill seeping into

your brain cells and turning them every color of the rainbow, the toxic air mutating your body step by step by step so that by the time you're forty, you look like a car accident! Me, sane? Please don't make me laugh.

ROGER. I like the way you talk.

TERRY. That means you're pretty screwed up too, fella.

ROGER. I think you're cute.

TERRY. Yeah, sure, ahhh, so ... soo ... um, what, you live on Staten Island, right, I mean you must, you were on the ferry, you, huh, stupid question, huh ... um ... you work here?

ROGER. Manhattan.

TERRY. Yeah? Where?

ROGER. Suddenly, I'm on the Barbara Walters interview.

TERRY. Well all I know about you is you like the window seat on the ferry, what do you want me to do?

ROGER. What do I want you to do?

TERRY. Yeah.

ROGER. Dangerous question.

TERRY. Not so dangerous. I'll do anything.

ROGER. Anything?

TERRY. Anything safe. Anything totally and completely and without a shadow of a doubt safe, which I guess means nothing. My life is a living hell, true, but the masochistic side of me intends to drag it out at least until I'm eligible for senior citizen discounts.

ROGER. You have a masochistic side?

TERRY. Why, do you have a sadistic side, is that what we're getting at here, Roger?

ROGER. I don't know.

TERRY. You don't know??? Well, whatever, just keep it hidden there Roger, the last thing I need is a body cast.

ROGER. I was just —

TERRY. Roger. Roger? This is actually your name or did you just make it up? Nobody is named Roger, Roger.

ROGER. I am.

TERRY. What's your last name?

ROGER. You ask a lot of questions.

TERRY. Yeah, so?

THE CRUMPLE ZONE

ROGER. So are you with the F.B.I.?

TERRY. Are you on the run from the F.B.I.?

ROGER. Are you gonna kiss me or do I have to get sadistic?

TERRY. I'm not kissin' a guy won't even tell me his last name.

ROGER. What difference does it make?

TERRY. I don't do one night stands.

ROGER. Maybe it won't be a one night stand.

TERRY. Maybe it will be.

ROGER. Maybe New York City's gonna crash into the ocean in fifteen minutes.

TERRY. Don't get my hopes up.

(ROGER kisses him. Long. TERRY does not resist.)

ROGER. *(Mid-kiss:)* Ramone.

TERRY. ... huh...?

ROGER. — my last name —

TERRY. ... oh ... good stage name ... Roger Ramone ... you sound like an action hero ...

(They are kissing urgently through the following, and ROGER is ripping TERRY's clothes off like he's opening a present.)

ROGER. ... action hero, huh? *(He peels his shirt off.)* ... more like the psycho bad guy, makin' love to you and kickin' your ass all at the same time ...

TERRY. *(In a sexual trance, but clicking out of it, slightly:)* ... sounds, um, rough ...

ROGER. ... yeah, you like that, Joey?... You like rough guys?

TERRY. Um ... Joey?

ROGER. You like that chest, you ever been with a guy as big as me?

TERRY. *(Snapping out of it now:)* Oookay, I'm thinkin', I'm kind of thinkin' maybe we should —

ROGER. Shhhh, you talk too much, why don't you show me what else you can do with that mouth ...

(He slams TERRY's head onto his nipple.)

TERRY. (*Tries to object:*) — b — I — ju —

ROGER. ... yeahh, that's it, just suck on that, give you a preview of comin' attractions.... (*ROGER picks TERRY up and carries him over to the couch like a sack of potatoes.*) Yeah, that's it, boy ... worship that body....

TERRY. I'm worshipping, I'm worshipping. (*This is too much. TERRY has been stripped down to nothing but underwear and ROGER is about to get rid of this too. Just as his head is about to make contact with ROGER's open zipper, TERRY struggles wildly up:*) Wait a minute, what do I look like, Marilyn Chambers?!?

ROGER. (*Grabs TERRY, pulls him easily down:*) You know you want it, you know you gotta have it, Joey —

(*TERRY is basically face down in ROGER's lap at this point. ROGER pulls down the back of TERRY's underwear.*)

TERRY. (*Struggling like a hooked fish:*) Who the fuck is Joey?!?

(*ROGER slaps TERRY's ass hard enough to burn. As TERRY is about to react, the front door flies open and BUCK bursts in, just back from work ... sharp clothes, suit and tie, slightly hysterical, and freezing. Startled at the interruption, ROGER stands up, sending TERRY sprawling off his lap and onto the floor.*)

BUCK. (*As he enters:*) Freezing, Jesus, God, it's like — (*Stops. Sees ROGER. Confused:*) Oh, uh. Hey.

ROGER. (*Instant attraction to BUCK. Forgets TERRY ever existed:*) Hey. Howsit goin' man?

(*TERRY pops up from the floor like a jack in the box.*)

BUCK. (*Baffled; to TERRY:*) What are you doing?

(*TERRY has been scrambling to throw on whatever clothes he can find, but he can't find much. He has put it on anyway: a scarf, a coat, a boot, etc. He looks ridiculous.*)

TERRY. (*Pure ice:*) He's not here. Get out.

(BUCK brushes past ROGER as if he weren't even there.)

BUCK. Terry. I gotta talk to you. I mean now.

TERRY. Excuse me? Wait, excuse me, what am I hearing?

BUCK. I'm goin' crazy here, you don't understand.

TERRY. Yeah, well I'm not your guidance counselor, and this ain't the time for —

ROGER. *(Goes over to BUCK, hand out:)* Howsit goin', man? Name's Roger.

TERRY. Heel, Roger, heel! He may be good looking, but his brain couldn't power an electric juicer.

BUCK. I gotta talk to you.

TERRY. I. AM. BUSY.

BUCK. He hasn't called me all day long.

TERRY. He's had toddlers on his lap all day long!!!

BUCK. He always calls, stops by, we go to lunch, he calls, I think it's over, Terry, fuck, I really do, last night we had this big blow out, you heard —

TERRY. Yeah, thanks for the black bags, bitch!

BUCK. — and then sure, it was bad, real bad, but I couldn't leave it like that, I couldn't, I came back, we kissed, went to bed, but he was cold or distant or somethin', shit, Terry, I don't know what he's thinkin'. I don't know what to do.

TERRY. So I'm supposed to know.

BUCK. Cause —

TERRY. Great, I'll tell you what to do. Go rent Fatal Attraction and play it fifteen times, full blast, cause Glenn Close had the same look in her eyes that I'm seein' now, AND I DON'T THINK I'M READY TO DEAL WITH BARNYARD ANIMALS FRYIN' IN MY SPAGHETTI POT!!!

BUCK. I need somethin' to drink —

(BUCK heads to the kitchen.)

TERRY. *(Chasing him:)* No ya don't, Buck, cause you're not staying!!!

ROGER. Buck? Your name is Buck? Cool, man. I'm Roger. Get

it? Buck? Roger? Buck Rogers??

TERRY. Holy shit, I think we just had a meeting of the minds.

ROGER. You live around here?

TERRY. That's okay, Roger Ramone. Flirt away. I'm not insulted.

ROGER. Cool.

TERRY. Cool. Um, actually, I think, let's call it a night, huh?

ROGER. You, um, want me to go?

TERRY. I gotta put on my Dear Abbey dress. It ain't pretty.

ROGER. Well, uh, Buck, it's nice meeting you man, maybe we could —

TERRY. No you couldn't. (*Opens front door:*) Merry Christmas.

ROGER. I mean if you'd want —

TERRY. Happy New Year.

ROGER. (*Hands a card to BUCK.*) — my card, s'got my beeper number on it —

TERRY. (*Swipes the card*) That's sweet Roger, two men an hour, is it hard being shallow as a puddle?

ROGER. Call me.

(*SLAM! He is gone. TERRY collapses against the door. Glares at BUCK.*)

TERRY. (*Tearing the card into a zillion pieces:*) Never. Ever. Ever. Come here again.

BUCK. Where the hell'd ya meet that one?

TERRY. The Staten Island Ferry. He was reading *The Village Voice* Men Seeking Men. He had a tie and a briefcase and a bottle of Bud.

BUCK. Love at first sight.

TERRY. Huh.

BUCK. Hey, thank me. He was a scumbag.

TERRY. Buck, I have not had a kiss in two years! At this point, I'd fuck Don Rickles!

BUCK. Look, I can't even —

TERRY. Quiet!

BUCK. — function or —

TERRY. Function your way out that door, how bout it?! The Staten Island Ferry?!? I picked up a man off the STATEN ISLAND FERRY?!? This is what my life has sunk to?!?!?!?!?

BUCK. Big shit, Terry, at least you're not in love with —

TERRY. What?! Love?!? Fuck love!!!

BUCK. Ughhh ...

TERRY. You can have any one you WANT, get it?!? LOOK AT YOU! G.Q.! Ken Doll! You're perfect, even with dirty snow in your hair!!!

BUCK. I want —

TERRY. You can have any one! What does that feel like, what about me, huh? What future do I have, ever, of finding anything slightly resembling happily ever after when the only men who want me are a very small handful of seventy-five year old pedophiles!!!

BUCK. You don't get it.

TERRY. Buck, you knew he was seein' someone, okay, you knew he was married, I have absolutely no sympathy for you!

BUCK. Fine.

TERRY. You knew it was serious.

BUCK. Huh.

TERRY. You knew they were —

BUCK. — so God-damned serious, how come he's been sleepin with me???

TERRY. Let it drop! Let it die, can you?! They are in love!

BUCK. And so am I.

TERRY. You're in love with Santa Claus, great. Is he in love with you?

BUCK. He said —

TERRY. Did he bake ya a chicken yet?

BUCK. What?!

TERRY. Flowers? A teddy bear? You got a stuffed animal, right, Buck?

BUCK. Give me a break, huh —

TERRY. No, I won't give you a break, Buck, cause I've known that corny queen a long, long time, and lemme tell ya somethin! It ain't love til he gives you a big fat teddy!

BUCK. Yeah but —

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