

Suave Succubus

a new comedy by
Clint Jefferies

Contact:

Clint Jefferies

c/o Wings Theatre

154 Christopher St.

New York, NY 10014

(646) 548-1416

cjeffer@brainlink.com

<http://wingstheatre.com/clint.html>

For script sales, rights and royalties contact:

Original Works Publishing

4912 Tujunga Ave. Suite 4

North Hollywood, CA 91601

jgoldberg@originalworksonline.com

<http://www.originalworksonline.com>

CAST OF CHARACTERS

- Betsy Taylor: An attractive woman of 35 or so. Rich and pampered. Not terribly nice.
- Mark Taylor: Her husband. 30's, good looking. Built. Easy going and pleasant. Loaded.
- Mr. Thomas: 40 - 60 Born and bred New England with the accent to match.
- Mrs. O'Riley: Salt of the earth Irish. Charmin' accent. A flair for the dramatic. 40-60.
- Howard: A broker, 30's or 40's. A bit chubby. Definitely slimy. An S & M M.
- Renard: A roue. A rogue. A rake. Devilish and charming. An 18th century swashbuckler with a taste for the cabin boys. Looks to die for, but then, he's dead. An English accent.

Act I
Scene 1

(The front room of a charming New England home, built in the early 1700's. R is a door to the outside. L is an archway leading to the kitchen and dining areas. Up of the outside door is an angled wall with a fire place sporting a large mantle. Center is a sofa, behind the sofa, a hall tree and table. In the UL corner of the stage can be seen the first few steps and landing of the stairs to the second floor. On the landing, hangs a large portrait of a sea captain. All the furniture is draped with sheets. Cobwebs are decoratively festooned here and there. The place is isn't a wreck, it is, in fact, quite charming, but it hasn't been lived in for a while...)

(Enter from R Betsy and Mark Taylor, Mark toting what seem to be about a zillion bags and bundles. Betsy carries a handkerchief. Betsy stops dead, leaving Mark struggling, half in, half out of the doorway.)

Mark

Ta Da!

Betsy

Oh, my. Oh my, oh my - oh my - oh my.

Mark

(Edges past her and drops baggage)

Well, what do you think of...

Betsy

(Cutting him off)

Mark -- darling -- you're so cute. My little boy will have his little jokes. Now where are we really staying?

Mark

But honey, it's Maine! We're surrounded by romantic woods! You can almost hear the roar of the ocean.

(coming around behind her to nibble her neck)

What better place to spend our first cozy, relaxing, and very intimate, summer together?

Betsy

Don't nibble dear, it makes my skin all prickly.

(She moves slightly away)

Mark

Isn't it great!? Look at this hardwood! These banisters! God, even a beamed ceiling! I've always...

Betsy

Oh, my, I just knew I should never have let you come up here by yourself. You're so -- impulsive.

Mark

But we're going to love it here it's...

Betsy

Oh, I told mother before we left, Mark is such a dear, sweet little simpleton, I should have just taken a couple of days from my own hectic schedule and come up here to see about summer homes.

Mark

Betsy -- honey -- just think of the long summer nights -- think of the privacy -- think of
(He is nuzzling her again.)

Betsy

Mmmmmm sex before noon is so declassé

(She detaches herself.)

Ooooooo! Look at the dust. Just like a MAN. Don't give you're pointy little head a thought about practical things.

Mark

Like?

Betsy

Like there's NO place to shop for miles, and Pierre, my masseur will have to travel for HOURS, and... Oh, Newport's so nice this time of year...

Mark

Come on, honey, don't you like it -- really?

Betsy

Oh... It's so... Quaint...

Mark

I knew you'd love it. Wait till you see the view from the Widow's walk.

Betsy

Widow's Walk? How Gothic...

Mark

Gothic! Mysterious! Romantic!

(Dramatically)

Just think of the generations of lonely women - standing hopelessly up on our widow's walk - waiting for their men to come home from the sea... Then, when all hope was gone, flinging themselves into the ocean below...

Betsy

Ocean? Let me see.

(She exits out the arch) (off)

Oh! Look at that cliff... Straight down into the water!

Mark

I knew you'd love the view.

Betsy

The view is precious dear, but I had no idea we were so close to the water. All that damp air blowing through this door.

(she reappears)

I'm sure there's not a bit of insulation... What else is out there?

Mark

Kitchen, breakfast nook, dining room, pantry...

Betsy

Mark, When you said, "a summer cottage", I thought you meant something a little - cozier.

Mark

(Nuzzling her.)

Cozy you want - cozy you get.

Betsy

(Absently)

Don't nibble dear. Oh, I knew I should have come with you to look for a place. I mean, you're terribly sweet to find something so - imposing - but really, Mark! It's the middle of nowhere!

Mark

Just ten miles out of town. Like I said, Distance enough for plenty of privacy.

(He moves to her again.)

Betsy

(Evading him)

Oooooo! And look at the dust! How on earth could anyone keep this mausoleum clean?

Mark

Fear not, fair one. As soon as I picked it out, I hunted up a maid so your pretty little hands wouldn't get all out of joint having to deal with house work. I just couldn't see you in a Dior gown and dust mop.

Betsy

YOU picked a maid? Really, Mark. I can just imagine! Some enormous black woman, I suppose who'll rob us out of house and home. I should never have let you out by yourself.

Mark

No darkies at Vassar?

Betsy

It was Radcliffe, and no. Now, you know I'm not prejudiced. I just don't want one around the house. It's so - Gone With the Wind.

Mark

Not to worry. Mammy is not going to appear at the door. At least I don't think so.

Betsy

What do you mean?

Mark

I just went to the Agency in town. They promised they'd send up someone very reliable. I think they said Irish, actually.

Betsy

You mean you haven't even met this woman???

Mark

No, but I'm sure...

Betsy

While you're off in the city, I'm going to be here alone with some crazed ne'er-do-well bent on rape and pillage and God knows what else?

Mark

I doubt rape. I did specify a woman.

Betsy

Unless it turns out to be one of those awful lesbians. I just can't bear all those flannel shirts.

Mark

At least then you wouldn't have to worry about my running off with the hired help.

Betsy

(With a little laugh.)

Oh, Mark, really. You? Run off with someone? What a thought.

Mark

I guess you're right. One look at those scintillating lips of your's and my loins turn to Jello.
(Approaches her for a kiss)

Betsy

I know. Isn't it lovely.

(allows a brief caress.)

Now.

(breaking away)

When was this museum last inhabited, anyway?

Mark

The agent told me it had been vacant for quite a while. That's how we got such a good deal.

Betsy

And this furniture!

(removing a dust cover)

It can't have been cleaned in aeons. I hope you brought my allergy pills.

Mark

(reaching in his jacket pocket)

Right here, my dovelett.

Betsy

And my vitamins?

Mark

(supplying same)

Presto!

Betsy

Now you take one of yours too.

Mark

They taste like Kool-aid mixed with chalk!

Betsy

No argument. Here. Be a dear and get us some water. You're still not over your cold.

Mark

Betsy, I sneezed once in the car. One sneeze hardly a cold makes.

Betsy

Well take them anyway. Be a dear and get some water.

(Mark shrugs and exits.)

Now I talked to the doctor myself. He told me you were very run down and it could be VERY serious. Honestly! I have to take care of you every minute.

Mark

(reentering)

Betsy. I feel fine. I'm NEVER sick.

Betsy

Not another word. I'm here to take care of my little suggams.

Mark

Whatever you say.

(Phone rings)

Who could that be? I didn't even give the office this number.

Betsy

NO! I'll get it!

(Sweetly)

Hello-you-must-have-the-wrong-number.

(hangs up)

Mark

You didn't even ask who it was.

Betsy

Don't be silly, dear. No-one of our friends even has this number. So it had to be someone else, didn't it?

Mark

Whatever.

(car door is heard)

That must be the maid.

(heads for the door to look)

Betsy

Who's out there? The Crazy, black, Irish, lesbian, axe-murderer you hired?

Mark

I don't know, the drive's on the other side of the house.

Betsy

Then why are you looking out there?

Mark

(reentering)

I guess I got turned around.

Betsy

You're often a little turned around, dear. Never mind. You stay here and try not to hurt yourself and I'll go out and see who it is. I've just got to do everything for you.

(She exits. Mark wanders around for a moment or two - removing dust covers, shaking out drapes... Finally he removes the cover from a portrait hanging from the wall over the landing. It is of a rather handsome, rakish looking young man in nineteenth century nautical garb.)

Mark

Would you look at that!

(Miss. O'Riley enters with bags followed by Betsy.)

Miss O'Riley

...and I don't do windows and I get every Thursday off for my bridge club. Other than that I'm here for the duration. Of course, you'll have to get a room ready for me. I don't intend to take that drive into town every morning and every evening. Not many would come out here, you know

(looks around)

Good day to you. You must be Mark. That was the only name the agency gave. You can call me Miss. O'Riley. I don't hold with people flingin' around my Christian name unless it's a social event. I'll be wantin' the first two weeks in advance if you please.

Mark

Very pleased to meet you Miss O'Riley. And this is my wife, Betsy.

Betsy

Enchanted. Mrs. Taylor to you. We wouldn't want too many Christian names flying around, now would we?

Miss O'Riley

Pleased to meet you Betsy.

(Turns to Mark)

And when will you be going into town for things. I'm not keen on driving, so I'll do a list up of what I need for meals.

Betsy

How thoughtful. Actually, Why don't I get a list together of what we'd like for the week.

Miss. O'Riley

Because I don't do fancy stuff. Meat and potatoes, that's my cooking and you'll go far to find better. Now, which is my room?

Mark

Miss. O'Riley, I didn't know you would be -- well -- live-in.

Miss O'Riley

Oh, it's not that I like it -- not one bit -- what with the reputation this place has. But my knees are just too bad to make the drive every day.

Betsy

Well, I don't think every day will be necessary.

Miss O'Riley

You're paying for every day, so every day you get. I don't take anything less. I'll not be going house to house like a common maid.

Betsy

And here I thought that's what you were. How silly of me.

Miss O'Riley

I'm a household technician. And don't you forget it. Maid, humph. I'll settle for housekeeper if that's easier on the tongue, but nothin' less. Now, Mark, about those first two weeks???

Mark

(fishing in his wallet)

Oh, yes, of course.

Betsy

Why on earth should we give you two weeks pay in advance?

Miss O'Riley

Because otherwise I'm leavin' this minute, and I'm the only household technician available this week.

(She slaps the sofa and a cloud of dust rises.)

Betsy

Give her the money, Mark.

Miss O'Riley

Now don't be thinkin' I'm difficult. No indeed. I'm the sweetest person you'd ever want to meet about most things. But I've been out here seven different times now with seven different tenants. And what do you think? Poof! All of 'em gone within two nights, and me left holdin' the bag. Now that won't do, will it? Summer folk!

Mark

Two nights? What happened?

Betsy

Perhaps one of those door to door maids drove them off -- or maybe a bit of good sense...

Miss O'Riley

No, indeed no. It weren't any PERSON drove them off, I'll warrant.

(a beat)

Betsy

No?

Mark

Yes?

Miss O'Riley

No indeed.

(a beat)

Betsy

Well, wolves? Bats? Bigfoot? What?

Miss O'Riley

(Turning dramatically to point to the portrait on the landing)

Him!

Betsy

What on earth is that thing?

Mark

I uncovered it while you were outside. Isn't it great?

(To O'Riley)

Who is it?

Betsy

What is it?

Miss O'Riley

It's HIM.

Betsy

Him who.

Miss O'Riley

Speak respectfully of the Captain. There's many that say he's still here.

Mark

A ghost? God, that's wonderful

Betsy

Fabulous.

Miss O'Riley

Faith and Begorrah, 'tis a tale fraught with horror. The salty sea was a-pitchin' and the whaling winds was a-wailing.

Betsy

What was that?

Mark

(to Betsy)

What are whaling winds?

Betsy

No, what the hell did she say?

Miss O'Riley

Oh, he was wicked he was.

Betsy

(Totally disinterested.)

Do tell.

Mark

(Missing it.)

Yes, do. He looks so -- nautical.

Miss O'Riley

T'was on a dark and stormy night...

Betsy

Oh my God. I hate cliche.

Miss O'Riley

If you don't want to hear then...

Mark

No, go on, please.

Miss O'Riley

Well, then: Twas a dark and stormy night. The clouds were rollin' in. A nor-easter was blowin' up to a fury. An' the captain there, he was bringin' his load of ill-gotten gains in from the old country. Some say he was a trader, some say a pirate, others allow that he just come up from hell for a visit. They say he was half-witch even then.

Mark

Why, what did he do?

Betsy

(Kicking him, sotto voce.)

Do you have to encourage her?

Mark

Go on, why did they think he was a witch.

Miss O'Riley

More than just a witch. A sodomite he was. He enchanted the handsome young lads from the village to go off to sea with him. And every time they come back, it was wilder and wilder goin's on here. Clear down at the mill they could hear them singin' their drunken sea-songs, and carousin' and fornicatin' and God-knows-what worse, whenever they was in port -- every night! The black eagle was his ship, and so fast she was, that no other clipper could touch her. She carried thirteen guns and he'd slip her in and out of port so quiet not even the devil himself could hear. But that very night...

Betsy

The dark and stormy one...

Miss O'Riley

The same! That night, everybody knew the ship was comin' in 'cause she'd been spotted rounding the southern point. The ladies, they were gettin' in their carriages to meet him at the dock. They were goin' to buy the laces and frills and fancies he always brought back. Half of them were just goin' to see him -- he cast a spell on the ladies too. But Jeremy, he was the pastor's son, he'd just turned seventeen, and he'd runned off --- and the pastor knew where. Jeremy'd runned off to join that unholy band of sailor men.

Well, the pastor, he'd got the town whipped up to a near fury. He knew his boy was in this house, just waitin' to take up with that lot. He raises a crowd, and all with torches, they come up here to rescue the lad from the sins of Sodom. The wind is howlin' and the rain is whippin' them as they get to the cliff just above the house. And there they see the Black Eagle comin' in. She's pitchin' and a-rollin' in the waves and the captain's at the bow, his black hair whippin' back off his handsome devil-face.

The captain, he hollars for the men to haul in the sails -- no one else would have even tried to come in in a storm like that --- and he might have made it too, with the help of Belzebub -- but the lines foul, way up the mainmast. The sails are billowing in the storm, and the ship's headed straight for the rocks just below this house!

The captain, he heads straight up the rat-lines, a saber in his teeth, trying to hack the sail free. The crew is trying to bring the Black Eagle about. But it's too late. The whole town's watching from the cliff as she hits the rocks with a great crash. And tangled in the webbing of the mast, the captain goes down with his ship to his doom! Then, the preacher, him and the men start up here to burn this house to the ground.

(she stops)

Betsy

Yes? So? Why didn't they?

Mark

And what happens to the preacher's boy?

Miss O'Riley

How should I know? That was 1710. It's not like I was there.

Betsy

Great. Half a ghost story.

Miss O'Riley

But there's them that say he's still here. Haunting his old den of sin. I've not seen him, but there's them that have. Ask any of 'em that have stayed here the night, and were gone by morning. And town's ten mile off. There's nobody to hear you -- not even if you scream.

Mark

Haven't I heard that somewhere before?

Betsy

Shirley Jackson, dear.

Mark

So why would you stay, Miss O'Riley?

Miss O'Riley

Me? Why in hell not? I'm not daft enough to believe in ghosts. Now, I'll be headed out to start in the kitchen. Here's the list for you, Mark. Mind you, get the lean bacon. I won't be eatin' that fatty slop.

(To Betsy looking pointedly at her chest)

Wouldn't hurt to fill you out some though. I'll think on it. Dinner is at eight sharp. Don't be late.

(exit)

Mark

Wow. When I get a maid, do I get a maid.

Betsy

Maybe I can get that nice fag boy who does our apartment in New York to come up here.

Mark

But I love Miss. O'Riley, my pet. She has such -- atmosphere.

Betsy

Rather like a storm at sea.

Mark

Besides, you're the only maid I want.

(moving in close)

Betsy

Mark, it's still light out. I haven't even seen the upstairs.

Mark

Couldn't we break in the living room first.

Betsy

All good things come to good boys who sit and wait. Sit. Wait.

Mark

Did I retire at thirty by letting things wait?

Betsy

No, but you didn't do it by my letting things lay either. Now, find something to putter about while I -

Mark

Betsy, let the whole place sink, but come here and bide on the captain's lap.

Betsy

Bite?

Mark

Bide was what I said, but have it your own way,

Betsy

Oh Mark I can't, not with that ugly portrait staring at us.

Mark

Ugly?

Betsy

Isn't it?

Mark

I don't know, he looks right dashing to me.

Betsy

Apparently he had an eye for the deck-hands.

Mark

We must place pansies in front of it regularly.

Betsy

No way am I going to have that sodomite sea dog leering at us in our own living room. He goes down right now.

Mark

Not for the first time, I suppose.

Betsy

Mark, your sexual obsession is getting too all-encompassing.

Mark

I meant his ship went down, with his ship he went down. Don't take your breasts away.

Betsy

Really, Mark, you've got to learn to enjoy leisure.

Mark

I was trying.

Betsy

Well, don't be. Help me remove this eyesore.

Mark

No. I like it. He looks like he never took "No" for an answer. Or gave it, for that matter.

Betsy

Well, I'm giving it -- no that is. Now get your gym-toned buns out to the store. If I have to live here, I don't want to have to starve here.

Mark

Don't you want to go with me?

Betsy

No, I'll just stay here and clean up a little.

Mark

Clean? You, my pet? You mean with a mop and sponge and bucket, and dirty rags???

Betsy

Don't be disgusting. Of course not. I meant I'll take a bubble bath. Besides, I haven't even seen upstairs yet.

Mark

There's a big bedroom up there, with a big bed, and ...

Betsy

Get your mind out of the gutter and your body into the car. Now.

Mark

But baby...

Betsy

March, sailor.

(He exits. She checks her watch)

God, I thought I'd never get rid of him.

(She stands and takes stock of the room.)

First, that thing goes...

(She takes picture down, and places it face against the wall. She brushes the dust from her hands.)

Oh, the bags. I should have had him take those up for me.

(She heads for the bags by the door, bends over and retrieves a cosmetic kit.)

Just great. No lipstick. Stuck a hundred miles from nowhere, no lipstick, in a house with an antique faggot ghost.

(There is a gust of wind as she bends for her purse. The front door whooshes open and whacks her in the ass.)

Ouch!

(The phone rings.)

Hello! Hello!

(suddenly all sweetness)

Oh, Hello, Howie... Kissie, kissie. ... No, it's fine. He just left. So how's my Howie-bear? ... Ooooooo! When will you get here? ... I can't wait. ... No, he still thinks you're in California playing golf. ... Well, you're his broker aren't you? Where else would a broker be? You can't wait for me to do what to you? ... Ooooooo! With neckties! But, sugar-touche, If you're, all tied up, how can I do the... Hello!

(Behind her, the portrait is slowly levitating, rehanging itself.)

Hello! Oh, there you are sweetie... No, it's this fucking phone line... Well, hurry. As soon as Mark's out of my life, we can do that all the time... Mmmmmmm that too. ... no, wait... call me angel-tits just once before we hang up. I love it when you call me that. ... OOOooooooo I just melt. I'll be waiting for you -- python! What was that? There's all this static... Hello? Hello???

(slams down phone)

Shit! Now, for that bath.

(she grabs the cosmetic bag and purse and heads for the stairs -- then stops dead.)

I could have sworn I took that down...

(She shrugs and exits. A knock at the door)

Miss O'Riley

Faith and begorrah, I'm coming.

(Another knock)

Mother Mary! Hold your blasted horses!

(She opens the door.)

Why, Mr. Thomas!

Mr. Thomas

Miss. O'Riley!

Betsy

(reentering)

Who is it?

Miss O'Riley

It's Mr. Thomas, it is.

Betsy

Mr. Thomas?

(noting his hat)

You're the sheriff?

Mr. Thomas

I am this minute.

*(whips a painter's cap out of his back pocket
and switches)*

Now I'm the handy man. Your Mister called last week and asked me to come over for a look at the roof.

Betsy.

That's one of the sheriff's duties here? How quaint.

Mr. Thomas

No, I'm only the sheriff on Tuesdays and Fridays, the rest of the time I'm Mr. Thomas' fix-it-all.

Betsy

Oh. It's Wednesday. Just a workman. Well, do what you need to do. I don't wish to be disturbed. Oh, and Miss. O'Riley, could you please see that this portrait is out of my sight before I come back down?

(she sweeps off)

Miss O'Riley

Well, Mr. Thomas...

Mr. Thomas

Miss O'Riley...

Miss O'Riley

(messing with her hair)

Well, it's quite the surprise to see you here. I'm such a mess.

Mr. Thomas

But Miss. O'Riley, you always look just charming.

Miss O'Riley

But aren't you the flatterer.

Mr. Thomas

Not at all, Miss.

Miss O'Riley

Well...

Mr. Thomas

Well...

Miss O'Riley

I saw you at the cover dish supper. You looked quite dapper in your new overalls.

Mr. Thomas

Well, I've just got these old things today. I save the new ones for special occasions.

Miss O'Riley

And well you should. You wouldn't want the new ones getting mussed.

Mr. Thomas

Oh, no, that I wouldn't. So... You're helping them out here at Widow's Walk House?

Miss. O'Riley

That I am.

Mr. Thomas

Well, they couldn't do no better than you, I've tasted your pot roast.

Miss. O'Riley

Have you now!

Mr. Thomas

Oh, yes! After Homer Winchell passed on. Your roast was the talk of the wake!

Miss. O'Riley

How kind of you to say so...

Mr. Thomas

I would'a liked to have visited with you more then. But with old Mrs. Chalmers spilling the widow's baked beans in the coffin and all... Well, it didn't seem like the proper time at all...

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, no indeed.

Mr. Thomas

But I have been wantin' to, well, perhaps, see a bit more of you. We've known each other quite a spell now.

Miss O'Riley

Faith! It must be onto twenty-five years! My, how the years fly, Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Thomas

I know you don't think it's proper me callin' at your house, you bein' a single lady alone and all. But...

Miss. O'Riley

Yes?

Mr. Thomas

Well, Miss O'Riley, couldn't you see your way clear to going to the Easter service with me on Sunday. I'd consider it quite the honor.

Miss O'Riley

Now, Mr. Thomas, I... But, no... I couldn't possibly....

Mr. Thomas

But just the service, Miss O'Riley. Nothing more. I'll bring you right back here.

Miss O'Riley

Mr. Thomas, you make my heart flutter. Well, maybe Sunday, we'll see...

Mr. Thomas

Oh, thank you, Miss O'Riley.

Miss O'Riley

You're so welcome

Mr. Thomas

Well...

Miss O'Riley

Well...

Mr. Thomas

Well, I better get out to get my tools.

Miss O'Riley

And I better get back to work.

Mr. Thomas

Well, good-bye Miss O'Riley.

Miss O'Riley

Good-bye Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Thomas

Till Sunday?

Miss O'Riley

Till Sunday.

(Thomas exits.)

Miss O'Riley

Oh my. Oh my. Be still my Irish heart.

(She heads for the kitchen, then sees the stairs.)

Miss O'Riley

Oh, I better take care of that picture, or the missis will have a hissy fit.

(She takes down the picture.)

Renard

(Entering from top of stairs.)

I wouldn't do that if I were you...

Miss O'Riley*(Backing down stairs.)*

Who said that... Who's there...

*(Renard snaps his fingers... A tinkling sound is heard... Suddenly, O'Riley sees him)***Miss O'Riley**

AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!!!! Help! Mr. Thomas! It's the ghost, the sodomite, the pervert the...

*(O'Riley runs screaming. To the rescue, comes Mr. Thomas through the front door. O'Riley mows him down on her way rolling out the door. Renard comes down the stairs.)***Renard***(Snapping his fingers again.)*

Poof!

(There is that strange tinkling of chimes again. Renard points to the picture which levitates back into place. He laughs. Blackout.)

Scene 2

(The same. The next morning. Little has changed except that all the covers are now off the furniture. At rise, Renard is lounging, unseen, on the mantle. Mr. Thomas, his arm now in a cast, is talking on the phone.)

Mr. Thomas

It was darn nice of you to call, Miss O'Riley, excuse my French... No, the mister took me right to the hospital and they fixed the arm right up... Now, don't take on so. You'd had a bit of a fright. It wasn't your fault my old bones got in your way. I should 'a watched where I was goin'...

(Betsy is coming down the stairs.)

I hope I'll be seeing you again soon. I don't mind confessing I was looking forward to us... well... working in the same house for a spell...

Betsy

Mr. Thomas, who are you on the phone with? I am not paying you to carry on your social life.

Mr. Thomas

Just a second, Miss O'Riley, the misses just came down.

(to Betsy)

It's Miss. O'Riley, ma'am, calling to say she won't be coming back.

Betsy

Won't be back! Servants just aren't what they used to be. How on earth am I supposed to take care of all of this?

Mr. Thomas

(into phone)

The missis says you've been such a help she just doesn't know how she'll get along without you...

Betsy

I said what!?

Mr. Thomas

(into phone)

Well, yes. I see... Yes, I'll tell her.

(to himself)

Sort'a.

(to Betsy)

She said it's more pleasure than she's had in years, working for a lady with such a rare combination of charm and beauty. But after what happened yesterday, she's had to go to the doctor for her nerves. And there's the bills you know, and dear Miss O'Riley's income isn't what it was...

Betsy

Well you can tell "dear Miss O'Riley" that she's not extorting another cent out of me...

Mr. Thomas

Hmmmm. Well... Yes.

(into phone)

The missis says... Oh, you heard... Oh, you've already called the agency to send up a replacement.

Betsy

That's the best news I've heard all day.

Mr. Thomas

There's no one at all available...

Betsy

What? I can't possibly...

Mr. Thomas

The missis is asking if a little raise wouldn't be a help to you? Yes... Yes...

Betsy

OK. How much?

Mr. Thomas

An extra hundred a week.

Betsy

Twenty-Five.

Mr. Thomas

Eighty.

Betsy

Thirty.

Mr. Thomas

Seventy-Five. Think of it as hazard pay.

Betsy

I think I'm getting screwed. All right. Seventy five. But I expect her here and working within twenty minutes. We may be having guests.

(She sweeps off to the kitchen.)

Mr. Thomas

(into phone)

The missis says the fifty you asked for isn't near enough for what you've been through. She insists on seventy-five... Yes... Oh, that's just her manner, I'm sure she's really a fine lady... Yes. Whenever you can get here will be fine with her... Oh! Miss O'Riley, I'm still looking forward to Sunday... Good... Well, I'll be here. Good-bye.

Mark

(Entering down the stairs in pajamas.)

Good morning, Mr. Thomas! How's the arm?

Mr. Thomas

Doin' fine, thank you sir. It takes more than a little compound fracture to stop an old Yankee like me. I'll be headed up for that roof.

Mark

You're kidding. You can't work up there with your arm in a cast. It's steep. It's dangerous.

Mr. Thomas

Oh, it's no problem at all, son... I'll just use my south paw. I've got the new shingles in the pickup.

Mark

You're worried about money, right? Well, it's no problem. Of course, we'll keep you on salary

until you're mended. The roof will wait. Just think of it as sick leave.

Mr. Thomas

No, indeed. A Thomas don't take money for work he ain't doing. Now just don't worry about me any. I'm just as good with one of these as I am with two. Now, I'll just be getting me some coffee, then I'll go topside.

Mark

You're great. Coffee! Betsy made coffee? Just what I need.

Mr. Thomas

(Snorts)

I made coffee. She drank it. I'm just going out to make some more.

Mark

Well, never mind for me. I should get my jogging in before breakfast anyway.

Mr. Thomas

Suit yourself. I'll just go out the back way. I left my ladder out there yesterday. You mind your knees now. That jogging business can be hell on the knees.

Mark

Thanks. I will.

Betsy

(Entering from kitchen.)

Well, you're up!

Mr. Thomas

Humph.

(Exits to kitchen.)

Mark

Do you know where my jogging suit is?

Betsy

Well, I'm sure I don't know. I assume it's still packed. Now Mark, I have to go into town to get some... things. While I'm gone, would you PLEASE get all those bags upstairs? And Miss.

O'Riley isn't here yet. You can start lunch. I'm sure you can find something.

Mark

You're wish is my command, hon. But why don't you relax? I got plenty of food yesterday, and I can go into town later for you...

Betsy

No! I mean, why should you bother yourself? I haven't anything special to do this morning.

(Renard, still on mantle, begins to do an impression of Betsy as she speaks.)

It's my wifely duty to take care of you and see you have everything you need. I just love taking care of you.

Mark

(moving in)

Mmmmmm. Why don't you take care of me right now? I just love being taken care of...

Betsy

That particular wifely duty will have to wait. You're going jogging?

Mark

Uh-huh

Betsy

About how long will you be?

Mark

Oh, I don't know. I usually do three miles. Why?

Betsy

Oh, no reason. No reason at all. Just curious. I wouldn't want you to overexert. I have to take care of you.

Mark

Everyone's so concerned about me this morning.

Betsy

Now the suitcases are all right here. I just took what I HAD to have upstairs.

Mark

(As Peter Lorre.)

I'll see everything gets put in it's proper place, mistress.

Betsy

Ooooo. I don't like mistress. It's so lower class.

Mark

Mistress and slave might be fun.

Betsy

Hmmmmm. We'll think on it.

(Gives him a peck on the cheek.)

I'll see you later.

Mark

Bye, hon.

(She exits. Mark chooses a suitcase from beside door and opens it. He rifles about for a moment, then pulls out jogging suit, towel, and jock, tossing each over his shoulder. Most land behind the sofa. As Mark starts to unbutton his pajama top, Renard (who has been bored stiff) starts to perk up.)

(Renard, catlike, springs down from mantle and circles DS of the couch, enjoying the show. Mark pulls off the pajama top. Renard appraises for a moment, grins, and gives a silent whistle. Mark drops the pajama pants, and stands in his briefs for a moment, stretching. Renard stops, checks out the basket, shrugs, and makes a so-so motion with his hand. Renard lounges back against the table L as Mark goes in search of his jock, which has landed behind the couch.)

(Behind the sofa, his back to Renard, Mark bends over to pull off his underwear. Renard checks out the butt, gives a pleased, evil little leer, and then makes a motion for Mark to turn around. Mark folds the underwear and

stretches again. Renard taps his foot with impatience. The ghost gets an idea. Marks back is still turned. With a big grin, Renard points his finger, and levitates the jock. It floats from behind the sofa to a spot where Renard will have an unobstructed view of Mark's -- assets.)

(Mark turns around, hidden from the waist down by the sofa, and searches for the suddenly-missing item of clothing.)

Hell, it was right here.

(He shakes out the jogging pants and top. Nothing. Then he spots the jock sitting DC.)

How the hell did it get over there? I could have sworn...

(He walks in front of the sofa -- revealing all. Renard is delighted with his trick. The ghost checks out Mark, up and down, shrugs and gives a little sigh as if to say, "Well, size isn't everything." Mark puts on the jock.)

OK. Warm-ups.

(Mark puts a leg up on a chair and starts doing stretches. Renard comes up behind him. Every time mark bends over, Renard makes it clear what he'd like to be doing. The ghost starts to put his arms around Mark's chest from behind. Considers, stops himself, and saunters away, frustrated. Mark finishes stretching and gets down for some push-ups. Renard stands over him -- looks down -- looks up "Lord give me strength not to rape him this second." Renard pops down beside him, leaning up on an elbow. He makes as if to grab Mark's ass as it bobs up and down with each push-up. He stops himself. Finally, the ghost can't stand it any longer and gives Mark's bare butt a little pinch. Mark reaches back...)

Ouch! Hell, what was that!?

(He stands and rubs his butt.)

We have bugs?

(Renard is insulted, makes as if to swat Mark, thinks better of it. Mark shrugs.)

I guess that's enough.

(Mark goes back behind sofa, slips on jogging pants, ties them, zips himself into jogging top,

Well, I'm off and running.

and jogs toward door.)

(Mark opens door, exits, and closes door behind him, jogging all the while. Renard wanders for a second, frustrated and bored, then spots Mark's discarded briefs. He picks them up, swirls them around as if doing a wine tasting, then gives them a delicate little sniff. He gives a big grin and sighs, leaning back against the sofa. Heaven.)

Renard

It has been centuries...

(The door swings open. Betsy and Howard, a chubby man in his 40's, enter quickly. Renard drops the briefs on the spot. Betsy and Howard stop dead, looking at a pair of underwear dropping out of nowhere.)

Betsy

Mark?

(calling)

(Betsy moves to stairs. Renard, unseen, sidesteps so as not to be run over.)

Mark? Are you up there?

Howard

I thought you said he was out jogging.

Betsy

I'm sure he is.

(Calling.)

Miss. O'Riley?

(Nothing.)

I'm sure she can't be here yet...

Howard

(Whispering.)

Well, somebody had to throw those things from somewhere.

Betsy

They must have dropped from the couch.

Howard

By themselves?

Betsy

The vibrations as we opened the door... You know these old houses...

Howard

No, and I don't want to either. God, look at this dump.

Betsy

I know. Isn't it awful.

Howard

Once everything's settled, we can tear down this heap, and put in a nice high-rise.

(Renard reacts.)

Maybe a health club, or lodge or something.

Betsy

Lovely! Mark would never think of anything CREATIVE like that. He's so -- middle class.

Howard

People who don't really know how to use money shouldn't have it.

Betsy

And he has soooo much!

Howard

It was just luck.

Betsy

And all that WORK! My God, he put in twenty hour days. Money acquired that way seems so dirty some how. It's only really proper to inherit it.

Howard

Like your daddy?

Betsy

Of course! If only there hadn't been that silly congressional investigation.

Howard

And then the tax evasion trial...

Betsy

Let's talk about more pleasant things: like putting Mark out of his plebeian misery.

Howard

There's always divorce...

Betsy

We've discussed that, silly. I'd only get half that way!

Howard

True. And this property will make lovely condos.

Betsy

I don't care what we do with it, as long as I don't have to come out here with the peasants again.

Howard

(moving in close)

Don't worry honey-buns, nothing but big city, caviar and champagne for you once this is over.

(he reaches around and squeezes her buns.)

Betsy

Ooooo Do that again. I love it when you do that.

Howard

(squeezing again)

Better?

Betsy

No, not that,

(removing his hands)

Tell me about our life of luxury.

Howard

Caviar for breakfast, hors d'oeuvres for lunch, perhaps broiled falcon for a light supper.

Betsy

Ooooooo! I love endangered species, Howie.

Howard

Oh, my sweet, you're so... so... Park Avenue.

Betsy

No, Sutton Place.

Howard

A brownstone... with huge rooms

Betsy

And a huge bed...

Howard

With silk sheets...

Betsy

Satin!

Howard

And sturdy bed posts...

Betsy

Oh Howie! We'll buy yards and yards of soft, sturdy ropes for you!

Howard

(grabbing her)

You make my knees weak, you vixen!

Betsy

Oh Howard! I can't wait

(They kiss, passionately.)

Howard

(Throwing his head back as she bites his neck.)

Take me! Ravish me, you she-devil!

(Renard looks like he might be ill. They back up, still kissing and groping, till Howard is lying on the sofa, Betsy on top of him.)

Betsy

(sitting up and using his jacket collar like reins)

Oh, what is that cologne? It turns me into a beast! Grrrrr! Grrrrr!

Howard

(throwing his arms up, wrists crossed, as if to be hog-tied)

Quick! The neckties! Please...

Betsy

(Standing, one spike heel in his stomach, she pulls off a long scarf and lashes him with it.)

Are you going to do everything mommy asks for? Take that...

(lash)

and that...

(lash)

Howard

Oh! Use me, you tigress, I'm at your mercy!

Betsy

(coily wrapping the scarf around his wrists)

All in good time, sweet lips, all in good time. We've got something to do first...

Howard

Anything! Anything!

(His hands now tied, she starts to remove his

belt -- Howard looks up, breathless.)

Do you think we could use the clothes pins?

Betsy

Maybe...

Howard

Or even the safety pins!

Betsy

(slapping his belt against her palm)

All in good time. What do you have to do first???

Howard

Or the cigarette, just one little cigarette burn, please, sugar tits?

Betsy

But I'm a married woman! We have to do something about that!

Howard

Yes, yes! We will. I brought the axle grease!

(She stands up, Howard turns over)

Now, just a little of the belt???

Betsy

I guess that's good for one.

(She swats him playfully with the belt.)

Howard

Oh, yes, mommy. And when I spread the axle grease on the stairs?

Betsy

Then you get two.

(another little swat)

Howard

Oh god I love discipline!

Betsy

And when he slips and breaks his neck, mommy will chain smoke on the soles of your feet if you want her to!

Howard

(sitting up and nuzzling her cleavage)

I can't wait. The pills you're feeding him are just too slow.

Betsy

(running her fingers through his hair)

I checked it all out. These stairs are perfect: Steep and treacherous.

Howard

(slipping his hands out of the scarf)

We've worked it all out. I've already got most of his bonds in your name.

(They are side by side on the sofa now -- toying playfully with each other as they conspire -- Renard is leaning on the sofa behind them...)

Betsy

And then it's Rio!

Howard

The Riviera

Betsy

Nice

Howard

Nice is nice.

Betsy

An apartment in Rome and another in LA

Howard

A Villa in Capri

Betsy

Him insisting on this drafty old rat trap worked out perfectly! Even a fag-ghost story -- a legend about some dusty old queer to scare away the help.

(Renard makes as if to hit them with a lamp.)

Howard

My office thinks I'm in Chicago

Betsy

And I'll make sure one of those old fools is with me when he takes the big dive.

Howard

I'll wipe the axle grease off the top stair, and make a getaway.

Betsy

While I keep everyone busy calling for the ambulance.

Howard

And if the fall hasn't gotten him?

Betsy

(Pulls a syringe from her cleavage)

There's enough in this to stop an elephant! I'll get him while he's helpless, and everyone will think it's the fall! And with that fool of a sheriff, there won't even be an inquest.

Howard

Perfect! It's brilliant!

Betsy

Yes, aren't I.

(They embrace. Then, a knock at the door.)

Betsy

Quick, out the back!

Howard

Where?

Betsy

There! Through the kitchen! Hurry!

(Howard exits, Betsy goes to the door. It is Miss. O'Riley & Mr. Thomas.)

Well, it's about time!

Mr. Thomas

Well, hello ma'am, I just passed the mister, he said you were going into town.

Betsy

(flustered)

Oh. Yes... I was... I just forgot my... purse. Yes. I forgot my purse. I can't find it anywhere.

Miss. O'Riley

It's sittin' right there on the table, miss.

Betsy

Oh. Well. Yes it is. Silly me!

Mr. Thomas

You sure you're all right, ma'am? I thought I heard voices in here. That ol' ghost ain't givin' you no trouble is he?

(He chuckles.)

Betsy

Oh... Ghost... Yes -- I mean, no. The phone. Rang. Yes, just a wrong number on the phone. Well, I must be going now that I've found my purse.

(Renard makes a choking gesture at her neck and, still unseen, follows her out.)

I'll be back shortly...

(Betsy and Renard exit. Miss. O'Riley & Mr. Thomas, suddenly alone, just stand for a moment.)

Mr. Thomas

Well...

Miss. O'Riley

Well... I guess I better get to my job.

Mr. Thomas

I s'pose I should too.

(neither moves)

Mr. Thomas

Miss O'Riley, I'd like to...

Miss O'Riley

Faith, Mr. Thomas, I wanted to...

(Both stop)

Miss O'Riley

Oh, I'm sorry, I...

Mr. Thomas

No, go on... I interrupted...

Miss O'Riley

Well, thank you. I just wanted to tell you what a blessin' it was, I mean you gettin' me that raise and all. The poor bit of money my sainted mother left me don't stretch too far. The extra will truly be a help.

Mr. Thomas

Don't speak of it. It was nothin'. I just hate to see you have to struggle so.

Miss O'Riley

No, it was too kind of you. And after I, well, broke up your arm. I am SO sorry. Lord knows I'll never forgive myself.

Mr. Thomas

No, now don't go on about it. It wasn't your fault a bit. I just got myself in the way.

Miss. O'Riley

It must be my nerves. I could have sworn I saw that old captain -- standin' right there.

(she points)

Clear as I see you now.

Mr. Thomas

Well, if anything else should happen, you just call on sheriff Thomas.

(He whips a badge out of his pocket.)

I'll be more than happy to take care of you.

Miss O'Riley

I do admire so the way you be holdin' such an important job. And you still find the time to do your handy-work. It's a marvel, Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Thomas

Oh, now it ain't nothin'.

Miss O'Riley

But it must be so dangerous for you!

Mr. Thomas

It's just all in a day's work, ma'am.

(almost blushes)

Aw, it really ain't much. There was a murder back in thirty-six. But that was before my time. The road through town's too curvy to speed on, anyhow. I just check up on the summer places -- make sure nobody's bothering them.

Miss O'Riley

But there was that armed robbery last year. I heard about it!

Mr. Thomas

Well, that was a bit of a scare. But Jimmy was only nine. And it turned out to be a water pistol. I probably shouldn't have bothered calling in the state troopers...

Miss O'Riley

No, you did exactly right. You never can tell about young people these days. I do know I feel much safer with you here.

Mr. Thomas

You know Miss O'Riley, I'd like to take care of you all the time

Miss O'Riley

(coy)

Why, whatever could you be meanin' Mr. Thomas?

Mr. Thomas

Well, you must have noticed, miss, that -- well -- I think you're quite a woman.

Miss O'Riley

Oh, Mr. Thomas!

Mr. Thomas

And -- uh -- this is what I've been wantin' to say all mornin'. That fall I took, well, it got me to thinkin' how short life is. Well, and what I wanted to say is, if you'd ever have me... Aw, heck, I ain't no good at this...

Miss O'Riley

(encouraging)

You were saying, Mr. Thomas.

Mr. Thomas

Could you sit down right here, Miss. O'Riley. I'd sort'a like to do this proper.

Miss O'Riley

(sits)

Of course. Whatever you'd like.

Mr. Thomas

(getting down on one knee)

Miss. O'Riley. Someday... If you ever think it'd be proper... could you consider... well... Sometime, could you just think about marryin' me, Miss O'Riley?

Miss. O'Riley.

Why, Mr. Thomas! What a beautiful proposal! You're such a kind gentleman. There's nothin' in God's world I'd like more than to become your missis.

Mr. Thomas

You would?

Miss. O'Riley

But, I'm afraid there's some things that were never meant to be. You see, Mr. Thomas, there's somethin' I've been keeping from you.

Mr. Thomas

You don't have to tell me nothin' you don't want to now...

Miss O'Riley

You see, dear Mr. Thomas, I'm already married!

Mr. Thomas

What?

Miss O'Riley

It was years and years ago... Well, maybe not that many... I was just a wee lass of seventeen. I was back in the green country of Ireland. I married a sailor boy -- the sweetest lad you ever set two eyes on. But then come my shame!

Mr. Thomas

What on earth happened, Miss O'Riley

Miss O'Riley

The lad was a sailor boy, in the American navy. He left with his ship, promisin' to send for his blushin' bride the second he got back into port. I waited a year for that call -- but he never called. He never sent any word at all. Finally, my mum gave me some money, and I came here to look for him. But it was like he took and vanished from the face of this earth. I'll never know if he was killed, or lost at sea, or if he -- well -- just didn't want the young Irish girl he took as a bride.

(She dabs at her eyes with a hanky.)

But you see -- he's my husband.

Mr. Thomas

But after all this time! Surely you could have a divorce...

Miss. O'Riley

You just stop right there. Johnny and I were married before God. I'm a good catholic girl. When I got married, I got married for good and always... for better or worse... Of course there's been precious little better, and a whole lot of worse, but that's just a woman's lot in this world. Yes, that's the whole truth of it, Mr. Thomas. I'm really Mrs. Johnny Jones. And I'll be Mrs. Johnny Jones till the day I die. So, I'm afraid that as much as I may feel toward you, and despite your kind feelings toward me, we can never be but friends. I've got'a wait for my Johnny.

Mr. Thomas

Oh, Miss O'Riley -- or Mrs. Jones -- I certainly admire a woman who sticks to her principles. You're a fine lady.

(He takes her hands.)

I'll be proud to have you as my friend.

Miss. O'Riley

Mr. Thomas. You're a dear man.

(They move in closer -- about to kiss. A beat. Then, at the last moment there is a sound from the front porch. They both jump up. Mr. Thomas goes to the window.)

Who is it?

Mr. Thomas

It's the mister. He's stretching himself out on the front porch.

Miss. O'Riley

Oh...

Mr. Thomas

Well now... ahem... I guess I better be gettin' on to some work.

Miss. O'Riley

Yes indeed. And I've got lunch to work on.

(They start to leave in opposite directions, Thomas R, O'Riley, L. They both stop at their respective door.)

Mr. Thomas

Miss O'Riley?

Miss O'Riley

Yes!

Mr. Thomas

Are we still a date for Sunday?

Miss O'Riley

Of course, Mr. Thomas. I'm looking forward to it.

(They both smile shyly at each other. O'Riley exits.)

Mr. Thomas

What a woman!

(Mr. Thomas opens door to exit. As he does so, Renard slips in, unseen. Thomas gives one last look to where O'Riley just left, sighs, and exits. Renard plops on the sofa. Mark enters, breathing hard from his jog. He wipes his face with towel. He tosses it. It lands on Renard. Mark goes to suitcase to get fresh clothes, back to sofa. Renard snaps his fingers. Those strange tinkling chimes are heard. Renard deftly rolls the towel, and gives Mark a snap on the ass.)

Renard

Did we loose this?

Mark

(wheels around and stares, stunned)

What the... Where the hell did you come from?

Renard

Plymouth -- England -- originally. Why?

Mark

Don't be cute...

Renard

(posing)

You think I am? I prefer debonair... rakish...

Mark

Listen, cut the shit. What the hell are you doing in my house?

Renard

I'd be a wee bit careful about your use of possessive pronouns.

Mark

What? And why are you dressed like that?

Renard

(standing)

You like it? I always thought the tailor could have made the sleeves a little puffier...

Mark

Either you tell me who you are this second, or I go for the cops.

Renard

(Springs to the stairs, pops a pipe in his mouth and poses next to the portrait. He waits. No response. He pulls out the pipe)

Well? I'd offer to paint you a picture, but it's been done...

(Pops pipe back in and poses again.)

Mark

Oh... Oh! I get it. You're the one who's been cooking up this ghost business. I won't call the cops, I'll call the funny farm. Now get out.

Renard

I can't. Oh, I can leave the house, but not the grounds. I never could figure out why...

Mark

OK. That's it. You're probably dangerous.

(a light-bulb)

You're the one Miss. O'Riley saw! You're the reason old Mr. Thomas has a broken arm! You're a sick man, you know? Trying to make people believe there's a ghost here.

Renard

Why would anyone believe that?

Mark

If you're not out by the count of five, I'm getting the police.

Renard

I love a man of action.

Mark

OK. 1... 2...

(Renard lounges back on the sofa and lights his pipe)

3... 4... Well?

Renard

Modern education! Five! Five comes next.

Mark

Oh. Are you asking for it...

(heading for phone)

Renard

Asking for it! I'd beg for it. You know how long it's been since I've had any?

Mark

(dialing)

Probably a rapist too.

Renard

(eyeing Mark)

Rape? Hmmmm... Well, it's a thought if you insist...

Mark

Hello.... Operator? Get me the...

(Suddenly, Renard points his finger. There is a small puff of smoke and a pop from the phone. Mark jumps back.)

What the fuck... Hello? Hello?

(he turns to Renard)

It's dead!

Renard

I prefer "passed-on."

Mark

OK. Fine.

(He spins and heads for the door. Renard

points again. The door slams shut. There is the sound of a lock snapping home. Mark wheels around.)

Did you...

Renard

(gives an innocent shrug)

I've been sitting right here. You're the one running about like you were touched.

Mark

Oh... Oh, I see. I don't know what your game is, but you've got the place rigged, don't you? Little wires here, little buttons there...

Renard

Just be calm lad.

(pats the sofa)

Sit yourself down. We need to talk.

Mark

I have no intention of talking.

(heads for kitchen arch)

Renard

I've done the back door too...

(Mark heads for stairs.)

The windows are too high up there.

Mark

(pulling himself together)

OK. I can't leave. Not this second anyway. What do you want?

Renard

(Putting his feet up)

Well, you looked awfully fetching in that little white strap affair. We might start there?

Mark

What? Would you get to the point?

Renard

All right. Care to copulate?

Mark

What! I mean, NO! Of course not. I don't even know you. You're a housebreaker -- a male housebreaker.

Renard

Oh, come now.

(He cocks his sailor hat rakishly.)

I'm not that bad am I?

Mark

Listen. Even if I was into that -- which I'm not-- I don't go to bed with people who break into my house... lock me in... scare my maid to death... dynamite my phone...

Renard

All right! All right. Just asking. You're so tense.

(one last try)

Sex is marvelous relaxation... You look a little... frustrated... shall we say, and I certainly have nothing better to do at the moment...

Mark

Read my lips

Renard

Hmmmm

Mark

I don't do that. OK? Never. You want to go now? This is insane.

Renard

(with a sly wink)

Never's a long time. Never had the nerve to try it, Hmmmm?

Mark

What!

Renard

Not back in your impetuous youth... a little fling perhaps.

Mark

How did you know about... Look that was years ago. I was drunk. Why am I telling you this? Listen, If you're not out of here in three seconds, I'm starting to tie bed sheets together and climb out one of the windows.

Renard

All right. All right. I've just become a wee bit fond of you lad, so I thought I should warn you...

Mark

Warn me! No, I'm warning you. My wife will be home soon. Or the maid. Or the roof man -- he's a sheriff. You'd better get out of here.

Renard

Your wife. Yes. She is the problem.

Mark

You leave my wife out of this.

Renard

I'm afraid she's going to leave you out of -- everything...

Mark

Would you just say what you have to say and get out?

Renard

All right. Sit down

Mark

I'd rather stand.

Renard

Have it your way. You have a broker?

Mark

Yes.

Renard

By the name of Howard?

Mark

Yes. So?

Renard

He's having an affair with your wife.

Mark

Be serious.

Renard

I'm seldom serious. It's so tiresome. But I assure you, they are.

Mark

OK. All right. My wife and my broker are having an affair. I don't believe it for a minute, but you've told me. You can go now.

Renard

I'm afraid there's just a wee bit more.

Mark

Yes? Well?

Renard

You've more than a bit of money I take it?

Mark

Ah Ha! Now we get to it! Bribery... extortion? Blackmail? What?

Renard

Try murder.

Mark

(backing up nervously, looking for a weapon)

Murder? Hmmm Well... I think I liked it better when you were talking rape.

Renard

(rolling his eyes to heaven)

Not me, you mare's behind... Her! Your wife and Howard are going to murder you.

Mark

That is the most ridiculous...

Renard

And while having some company about for a few centuries wouldn't really bother me, I really thought I should do the unselfish thing and...

Mark

Company, for centuries... Boy you are a real whacko.

Renard

If you weren't so cute, I'd find you a damned boor. I'd better keep you alive. Who would want to spend eternity with the sexually stagnant -- not to mention brain-dead...

Mark

Brain-dead! Now look here you...

Renard

(Commanding, his voice suddenly reverberating through the house.)

Enough! It will be axle grease. On the upper stairs. You stand warned. I think I'll float off to someplace more pleasant.

Mark

Float off? Oh... the ghost bit again. OK, ghost, why don't you just walk through a wall. Or disappear. That would be perfect. Just disappear why don't you?

Renard

Why are the pretty ones always so dense? Very well. I'll go.

(He rises, then gives a wicked little grin.)

But if you should change your mind about the other... Oh never mind. Take care lad.

Mark

Would you stop calling me... (lad)

(But Renard snaps his fingers. The tinkling of tiny bells is heard. Mark gapes. Renard, now unseen, sidesteps just as Mark takes a couple of swipes in the empty air where Renard disappeared.)

What... The... Fuck... Gone! He's totally gone! I'm loosing it. It must be overwork. Or the sun... I haven't been drinking have I? Dreaming? That's it. I'm not here. I'm upstairs. Asleep. She told the gay ghost story, and I'm having gay ghost dreams. Wake up.

(He slaps himself.)

Wake up!

(again)

OK. I'm not asleep. There was a burglar here. I must have looked away for a second. There's a trap door or something.

(Halfheartedly he looks around for a trap door - he know's there's not one. He sits on the floor with a thud.)

I'm bonkers. I've got to call somebody...

(He springs up and jumps for the phone.)

It works! But...

(Suddenly he heads for the door. It opens easily. He swings it shut, then open, a couple of more times.)

Maybe I should stop jogging... the exertion... Or maybe... NO! There are no such things as ghosts... Stupid...

(Suddenly, the door swings shut again...)

Oh shit....!! Betsy! Miss. O'Riley... Mr. Thomas...

(no answer)

I've got to get out of here.

(Mark starts for the front door, decides not to touch it, turns and heads out the kitchen door.)

A little walk. By the beach. Something to clear my head. Yeah. I'm not really crazy... Just a little crazy...

(He exits mumbling. Renard follows. Miss. O'Riley enters down the stair.)

Miss O'Riley

Hello! Now I could have sworn I heard that nice boy a-callin'! Hmmm.

(She shrugs.)

I'll just go see if he's in the kitchen...

(Betsy pokes her head in the front door, checks

that the coast is clear, then motions Howard in.)

Betsy

(whispering)

I just saw Mark heading down for the beach. I don't see the maid.

(Off we hear the clink of dishes and Miss O'Riley's voice... "When Irish Eyes are Smilin"...)

Quick, upstairs! She's doing dishes.

Howard

I've got the stuff right here!

(He pulls a can of axle grease from under his jacket.)

Betsy

Good! You take care of the stairs. I'll get Mark up there. Hurry! Wait! When you're done, go down the servants stairs and let me know...

(Howard sneaks up the stairs as Miss. O'Riley enters.)

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, There you are now...

Betsy

(in front of stairs)

Yes indeed! Here I am! Don't you need to finish lunch or something?

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, heavens no. The pot's on the stove. I'll just go up and make up the beds.

Betsy

No! I mean, I hate made beds. Unmade beds are so much more... casual... don't you think?

Mrs., O' Riley.

Whatever you fancy, miss. I can do some dustin' then! The upstairs hall is just caked with it.

Betsy

Dusting... Well yes... Dusting is... good... But I really think you should start down here.

Miss. O'Riley

But I just did down here yesterday

Betsy

Well more dust just settled. Do it again. I'm going upstairs, and I don't want to be disturbed.

Miss. O'Riley

Well, whatever you like, miss.

(Howard's face appears at the window O'Riley's back is to it, but Betsy sees.)

I suppose I could do the windows.

Betsy

Windows! No!

(taking Miss. O'Riley by the shoulders and holding her so she can't turn around)

I mean, you've been working much too hard. Just sit down! Relax.

(Howard gives the high sign through the window. Behind O'Riley's back, Betsy signals back.)

Oh! I feel like some fresh air! When Mark comes in, be sure to tell him that I'm upstairs on the widow's walk. He's to come right up. OK?

O'Riley

Of course, Miss. I'll give the mister the message. Would you like me to bring lunch up.

Betsy

NO!

O'Riley

Well it was just a suggestion! You're so jumpy.

Betsy

I need to speak to Mark privately. Now you stay right here so you can tell him the moment he comes in.

O'Riley

As you wish, ma'am.

(noises off)

But I think that's him now. You can tell him yourself...

Betsy

(nearly shoving O'Riley toward the kitchen)

No, you send him up. I've got a little... surprise for him.

O'Riley

Well! Isn't that sweet.

(Patting her on the shoulder and whispering)

I'll give you just a wee moment, then send him right up.

(She hustles off to kitchen)

Betsy

I'll be damned if I'm going up any greased stairs.

(Betsy, being careful to make not a sound, lets herself out the front door. Mark enters agitated. O'Riley follows.)

Mark

I tried to walk. I can't concentrate. Do I look sick, Miss. O'Riley?

Miss. O'Riley

Well, you do look a mite flushed, dear.

Mark

Where's Betsy? I really need to talk to somebody.

Miss. O'Riley

She told me to tell you she's waiting up on the widow's walk for you.

Mark

Widows walk. Right. Betsy!

(Calling, he heads up the stairs. O'Riley shakes her head, signals (crazy) and exits to kitchen. The door opens a crack, and Betsy and Howard's heads peer around the door, listening...)

Betsy

(whispering)

He'll be up one flight now...

(a couple of beats)

Howard

Now two. I slicked up the bad step at the top of the third.

(a couple of beats)

Betsy

Any second now...

(another beat, then offstage, there is a long, male scream followed by a series of thuds.)

Betsy

We're rich!!!

(Betsy and Howard kiss passionately. Blackout)

ACT II

Scene 1

(The following evening. The stage is empty at rise but voices are heard off R.)

Miss. O'Riley

(off)

Now take care there. Mind the steps... You know, it's a wonder your neck wasn't busted in twain!

(Enter Miss O'Riley and Mr. Thomas. Mr. Thomas now sports a second cast, this one on his leg. He walks with a crutch on one side, Miss O'Riley on the other.)

Mr. Thomas

Well, it might'a' been if the mister hadn't been comin' up and broke my fall. I thank you, Miss O'Riley. You've been awful kind, waiting with me at the hospital like that.

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, 'twas nothing really. And you're not to worry about a thing. The mister -- he's such a nice young man -- he said he'd take care of all the bills!

Mr. Thomas

I just can't figure how I could'a fell like that. That top step seemed slick as a greased pig.

Miss. O'Riley

The mister and me, we checked it all out after we came back from the hospital last night. It wasn't slick a bit. In fact, it looked clean as a whistle, it did!

Mr. Thomas

Well, I'll take more care with them stairs in the future, believe me! Where's the missis? Never caught sight of HER at the hospital.

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, she looked awfully upset! She was running about like a wild thing! She said her nerves were gone up the spout. She had to stay here and lay herself down. If you were to ask me, she didn't look all that frail. She could have come and at least checked in on you.

Mr. Thomas

Now, it wasn't all that bad. I can still get around fine. I'll be all mended up in no time.

Miss. O'Riley

But ever since then, the mister has been actin' so strangely!

Mr. Thomas

How do you mean?

Miss. O'Riley

Well, he...

(looks around, whispers)

Well, he never came home last night!

Mr. Thomas

No! Not -- another woman?

Miss. O'Riley

Not a bit! Oh, he drive home with me all right, but he wouldn't even come inside. And the car never left! I saw him now ant then out my window, just walking up and down, back and forth, he was, along that roc ky shore! Not a wink of sleep!

Mr. Thomas

You don't say.

Miss. O'Riley

But that's not the half of it. Early this mornin' while I'm gettin' breakfast, he comes in, all done in he was... and mumblin'! Somethin' about ghost and car axles... Turrible strange he looked, too!

Mr. Thomas

Well, even the nicest city folk can be a mite peculiar.

Miss. O'Riley

Then, he heads straight up for his room and locks himself in! All day long he was there -- at least till I left to get you! And I think -- I think he's been...

(whispers)

Drinkin' up there!

Mr. Thomas

No!

Miss. O'Riley

But, Lord knows, it's none of my business. It's you needs taking care of.

Mr. Thomas

Oh, posh.

Miss. O'Riley

That's why I want you right here. I'll just get you on upstairs and into bed! Someone's got'a look out for you, Mr. Thomas!

Mr. Thomas

Aw, I'm all right. But I'm awful grateful for your helping me out.
(They start for stairs.)

Miss O'Riley

Now, come along. Just lean on me. That's right. We'll get you all comfy up in the guest room.
(As they head up, Mark is coming down, a glass in hand. He is about 2 out of 3 sheets to the wind.)

Faith! Sir! You startled me!

Mark

Ah! My dear Miss O'Riley... My dear, dear, dear Miss. O'Riley.
(He plants a kiss on both her cheeks, and then a big smack on her lips.)

Miss. O'Riley

Mr. Taylor! You forget yourself!

Mark

(draping an arm around Miss. O'Riley)
Ah! You know what we have here Mr. Thomas? A virtuous woman! Do you know the value of a virtuous woman, Mr. Thomas?

Mr. Thomas

I'm not entirely sure, sir...

Mark

Her weight in gold! Yes sir, worth her weight in gold. Now our little Irish blossom here... at that rate she's worth a good deal, I'd say.

(gives Miss. O'Riley a tweak on the chin)

Miss. O'Riley

(giggling)

Mr. Taylor! Behave yourself. Faith and begorrah!

Mark

Faith... Hmmmmm Begorrah. I never new what that meant... Faith and Begorrah!

Miss O'Riley

It means...

Mark

(breaking into song)

My Wild Irish Rose!
The sweetest flower that grows...

(forgetting the rest)

Uh... Toora Looa Looa, Toora Looa Lie!!!

(On the high note, he raises his glass, falls backwards down the stairs and lands on his butt on the floor.)

Miss O'Riley

(Trying to grab Mark, she lets go of Mr. Thomas. O'Riley tries to help Mark up.)

Sweet Jesus! Mr. Taylor!

(Thomas is trying to keep his balance on the steps. His arms flail once, twice, but on the third, he goes down with a thud. O'Riley has Mark half way up when she sees Thomas go.)

Mr. Thomas!!!

(She unceremoniously drops Mark (splat) and goes for Thomas. She tries to help up Thomas but half way up she loses her leverage and

goes down on top of him. Both roll down the stairs and land on Mark. At this point, Betsy enters from kitchen.)

Betsy

Well! Are we all having fun?
Mark

(muffled from beneath Thomas and O'Riley)

And we're climbing a stairway to heaven...

Betsy

(as Thomas and O'Riley help each other up)

You children can play these games upstairs.

Miss O'Riley

Miss! I was just helpin'...

Betsy

And as for you...

Mark

(from the floor)

Do you think you could bring me another little nightcap?

Betsy

Up! Now. I have to drive all the way into the city tonight and I don't have time for this nonsense!

Mark

(Crawling up to her like a puppy)

Are you worth your weight in gold, sugar???

Betsy

Considerably more. Now, up we go...

(dragging him to his feet)

Mr. Thomas

Ooooooo! My thumb!

Miss O'Riley

Let me see... Oh dear me! I think it's sprained!

(Indeed, the thumb is sticking up at an odd angle.)

Mr. Thomas

Oh, now... Don't fret. It's nothing... Good night ma'am... sir...

(O'Riley helps him up stairs and off.)

O'Riley

(as they exit)

Nothing you say! It could be broken! We'll get some ice right on that...

(She frets as the sound fades up the stairs.)

Betsy

Now you! Off to bed too!

Mark

A little nookie before bedie???

Betsy

Maybe tomorrow. Now. I'm just going to check on the apartment, pick up a few things I forgot, and I'll be back around noon tomorrow.

Mark

The sun'll come out tomorrow,
bet your bottom dollar...

(slaps her ass on "bottom")

Betsy

Mark! What's gotten into you? I've never even seen you tipsy! You lock yourself in your room all day and then come out like this! Now go upstairs and get in bed. Sleep it off.

Mark

Goin' where?

Betsy

(over innocent)

Oh, just to the city. I DO have responsibilities, you know.

Mark

Wouldn't you rather...

(winks)

Let's bungle in the jungle...

(Betsy stares him down. Mark droops his head and heads for the landing. He stops and turns...)

Betsy

Go!

Mark

OK. OK.

(He turns and starts up.)

You can't hide those lyin' eyes...

*(etc. and off)
(Betsy doesn't move until Mark is completely out of sight. Renard, unseen, enters from arch and leans, watching. When Mark is safely gone, Betsy switches out lights, rushes to the door, quietly opens it, and looks out"...)*

Betsy

Pssst Pssst.... Where are you?

Howard

(poking his head around kitchen arch)

Pssst! Pssst! Betsy?

Renard

(moves center grinning. He puts a handkerchief to his mouth -- muffled...)

Over here...

Betsy

Howard? Is that you?

(moving C)

Howard

Betsy?

(moving C)
(Quietly, Renard moves back, away from where they are converging. When they are almost to meet, he suddenly clicks on light switch. Howard and Betsy jump out of their skin and grab each other.)

Miss. O'Riley

Everything all right down there?

(off)

Betsy

Yes! Yes, fine. Go back to bed.

(rushing to stairs)

(While Betsy and Howard are turned toward stairs, Renard swipes Betsy's purse from where she dropped it, and slides it under sofa. Betsy whispers...)

Where the hell were you?

Howard

I came in the back way... Come on. We'd better get out of here before somebody comes down.

Betsy

Wait... I can't find my purse....

Howard

I've got keys. Come on...

(Hurriedly, they start for door. As Howard passes Renard, the ghost deftly lifts a set of keys from Howard's coat pocket. Exeunt Howard and Betsy.)

Mark

How dry I am... How dry I am... Nobody knows...

(coming down stairs)

(Renard places himself directly in Mark's path to the kitchen. He snaps his fingers. A tinkling

Oh. It's you.

of bells. Mark stops dead in front of him.)

(Unconcerned, Mark detours around Renard and heads for kitchen)

Renard

Oh, it's you??? I do my best trick and all I get is "Oh, it's you?"

(at arch, talking to Mark off)

Aren't you just a wee bit interested in what's going on around here?

Mark

(reentering with full glass)

No.

Renard

I'm a Ghost! That, at least, should elicit some reaction.

Mark

You're a ghost. I'm getting drunk.

Renard

A paltry little correction. You are drunk.

Mark

Not drunk enough.

Renard

(a grin)

For what?

Mark

(dirty look)

Never mind.

(starts for stairs)

Renard

Your wife just left with your broker. Not two minutes ago.

Mark

(turning)

I don't believe you.

Renard

Why would I lie?

Mark

How should I know? You're a ghost! A fiend! A sex fiend. Get rid of the skirt, make way for the boys!

Renard

I told you what they were going to do. I even told you about the axle grease on the stairs. You're lucky to be alive.

Mark

I'm not so sure.

(takes a swallow)

Betsy would never... You must have done it. Yeah. Right. It was you. Not them... her... you.

Renard

Drink enough and maybe you'll even believe it.

Mark

I DO believe it. Just go home -- or blip off -- or do whatever you spirits do at night...

Renard

I think not, laddie. We're going to stay here.

(Reaching for Mark)

Mark

(as Renard pilots him back down stairs and behind sofa)

No we're not. I'm staying right here.

(They make a circle.)

Renard

Shhhh! They're coming back!

Mark

(stopping the weak struggle)

Who?

Renard

You know who...

Mark

Why?

Renard

(dangling keys)

They can't leave...

(a sound is heard at the door)

Mark

Bets...

Renard

(clamping a hand over Mark's mouth)

Hide, you idiot!

(Renard pulls him down behind the sofa. Betsy and Howard enter stealthily from front door.)

Howard

This is ridiculous! I know the keys were right here.

Betsy

Well, obviously they weren't.

Harold

Darling, you can't find your purse either.

Betsy

Hell.

Harold

They've got to be here.

Betsy

Maybe I just shouldn't go...

Harold

But poopsie! I've got the motel... I've got my snuggle bunny... I even bought some pomegranate joy jelly...

Betsy

Ooooo. Well then, maybe...

Harold

And soon it'll be just my little snookims and me!

Betsy

All we need now is the saw.

Harold

And a little shove...

Betsy

That widow's walk was made to order!

Harold

Why mess with stairs when we can watch him tumble all the way down a cliff!

Betsy

He'll go SPLAT!

Harold

Squish!

Betsy

There'll be nothing left...

Harold

Except the Swiss Accounts!

Betsy

And the Trump Towers Condo!

(They are feeling up each other, getting hotter by the dollar.)

Harold

And the speed boat...

Betsy

And the Porshe!

Harold

And the parties...

Betsy

And the Pearls...

Harold

And the stocks...

Betsy

(reaching ecstasy)

And the smooth, sleek, slutty silk stockings!

(They kiss passionately. Mark appears from behind the sofa, ready to go for the throat. Renard's arm appears and pulls him down.)

Betsy

(breaking embrace)

But first the keys.

Harold

Right

Betsy

Let's try the kitchen.

(They exit. Renard and Mark pop up behind sofa.)

Renard

Seen enough?

(Incoherent growling sounds come from Mark's throat as he makes choking gestures toward the kitchen.)

Believe me now, cute stuff?

Mark

I'll kill them. Now. with my bare hands.

Renard

Bad idea. Bad.

Mark

Why?

Renard

Read Blithe Spirit.

Howard

(off)

Well, they're not in here.

(Mark would head for them, but Renard quickly clamps a hand over his mouth again and drags him down. Then, Renard's hand appears, and drops keys on sofa. Howard appears at the arch with Betsy.)

Howard

Where else could they be?

Betsy

Did you look behind the sofa?

Howard

No. I'll try there.

Betsy

(Plopping on sofa)

Ouch!

Howard

(about to discover Mark, turns)

What?

Betsy

(standing, rubbing her butt)

I sat on them.

Howard

They weren't there a second ago. I looked!

Betsy

Well, never mind. Let's just get out of here. This place spooks me.

Howard

Right.

(They head for the door, but just as they get there Renard's hand appears above the sofa, gesturing. The front door swings open.)

Betsy

The... Wind! It was just the wind...

Harold

Right. Big... wind...

(They look at each other, look at the door, look at each other again...)

Howard and Betsy

Let's go out the back!

(They do. Slowly, Mark and Renard rise from

behind the sofa.)

Mark

They're planning to kill me. They really are.

Renard

I noticed that right off.

Mark

My wife and Howard.

Renard

Same ones I saw, matey.

Mark

They're lovers or something.

Renard

Or something... Poor boy! You'll have to look elsewhere for affection.

(Sigh. Gives Mark's butt a little pinch.)

Mark

Stay away from me.

Renard

Not a chance. And that's gratitude for you! I put you on to their plot!

Mark

You really are a ghost.

Renard

You're so quick.

Mark

And my wife is trying to kill me

Renard

Alex Trebec would be so proud...!

Mark

And she's having an affair with my best friend.

Renard

Did I hear that somewhere before?

Mark

I thought if I drank enough it would all become an alcoholic hallucination.

Renard

I'm not going to try to think that through.

Mark

Oh shit.

(He sits. Renard begins to rub his shoulders.)

My wife's a would-be murderess, she's laying my broker -- with joy jelly no less... there's a gay ghost rubbing my shoulders. I'm drunk... What the hell am I goin to do?

Renard

Nothing like a little romp in the hay to make a man forget his troubles!

Mark

You're impossible. Besides, I'm straight.

Renard

Well, there was that once in college...

Mark

Allen.

Renard

Allen?

Mark

He was a gymnast. We were drunk. I didn't enjoy it. Well, I mean I guess I enjoyed it, but since I'm straight I couldn't really enjoy it. Isn't that right?

Renard

Your wife is cheating on you, you're about to be murdered, and you're worried about your manly image???

Mark

She doesn't love me.

Renard

(Renard is unbuttoning Mark's shirt.)

It would seem unlikely.

Mark

She doesn't even like me.

Renard

Did Allen?

Mark

Well, he didn't try to kill me...

Renard

Then stick to men, mate. Women aboard ship are bad luck...

Mark

She wants my money for herself.

Renard

(to heaven)

He is so quick!

Mark

Don't be cute - my life is over.

Renard

Now there's an idea.

Mark

I might as well be dead

Renard

(Renard massages his chest)

That would solve things for everybody, wouldn't it?

Mark

(Jumps up)

My god, you're dead - I'm letting a corpse play with my pecs.

Renard

Corpse is so -- ghoulish. I think I prefer... Succubus?

Mark

But you're a man... And you ARE dead.

Renard

(glancing at Mark's crotch)

Looks like something else is quite alive though.

Mark

NO!

(checks)

Well, yes... I mean, it's just that I'm drunk... Listen, just stay back for a second... Back! I've got to think things through.

Renard

(Sits)

So think.

Mark

I can't.

Renard

Try.

Mark

Help me.

Renard

I thought I was.

Mark

I could call the Police.

Renard

With what evidence?

Mark

I could kill them.

Renard

And have all three of us popping in and out?

Mark

I could set them up.

Renard

How?

Mark

By getting a witness when they try to do it.

Renard

Who?

Mark

You could hide and listen... watch...

Renard

Oh, I'd be great before the dock.

Mark

Oh... Right.

Mark

If I could just let them go through with it without getting killed.

Renard

It's not as bad as all that.

Mark

(getting excited)

It could work!

Renard

What?

Mark

They're going to push me off the widow's walk, right?

Renard

Right.

Mark

(Grabbing Renard's hands)

So you'll be there.

RENARD

(a grin)

I'm right here, lubber.

Mark

(Grabbing RENARD'S upper arms)

As I fall...

Renard

I think you're falling fast...

Mark

you appear under me...

Renard

What an idea...

Mark

And then you catch me in your arms

Renard

(Obliging)

Like this.

Mark

Like that!

Renard

And I kiss you...

(He does.)

Mark

No... You'll have saved me. Then we go to the police...

Renard

No. I Liked the kissing you business better.

(He does again.)

Mark

God I'm drunk ...

Renard

And nibble your neck...

Mark

...probably I'm just dreaming...

Renard

...and work my way down your stomach...

Mark

Anything can happen when you're under a great strain...

Renard

(At zipper)

Looks like a great strain to me.

Mark

Besides, it's not like this is really happening.

Renard

(Mark's shirt falls to the floor.)

Of course not -- just a drunken delirium.

Mark

So there's nothing to feel guilty about...

Renard

(Renard places Mark's hands on his derriere)

You can feel anything you like, matey...

Mark

Wait... What if I like it?

Renard

What if you do?

Mark

I'm straight. I couldn't like it that much...

Renard

(Kissing Mark's nipple as he unzips Mark's pants.)

(kiss)

How much?

(kiss)

This much?

(kiss)

That much?

(kiss)

More?

Mark

More... No! I mean... It's just that I'm too drunk to fight you...

Renard

(loosening Mark's belt)

And you're putting up a valiant struggle...

(Mark's pants drop.)

Mark

I can't wait... No! I mean: I can't! Wait! I'm married! What would it do to Betsy if she found out? My wife? It'd kill her!

Renard

(steps back)

Think on that a moment

Mark

(He does, then very deliberately steps out of his pants.)

I see what you mean.

(He kisses RENARD passionately. They are falling back on the sofa as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 4

(Early the next morning. Mark lies naked on the mantle, lazy, half asleep, with a big grin on his face.)

Mark

(He is just waking up. He stretches, yawns, then sings lightly...)

And up he rose and donned his clothes,
and dupped the chamber door.
Let in a maid that out a maid
never departed more...

(He giggles. He stretches with another big grin and a purr.)

Renard

(entering with a cup of coffee, wearing only his trousers and eye-patch.)

Good morning.

Mark

(nearly jumps out of his skin. He snatches Renard's shirt to cover himself... He is a bit confused.)

Oh my God.

Renard

No, just dead, not deified. Though it is a thought.

Mark

Then you're real??? I thought...

Renard

Seems I was real enough for you.

Mark

God! Then it's all real. You -- Betsy -- Howard -- Last night...

Renard

Especially last night.

Mark

Oh, Jesus, what a hangover...

Renard

Coffee?

Mark

For me?

Renard

Well, I hardly need it.

Mark

Did we really...?

Renard

Indeed we did.

Mark

No... We...

(rises to take coffee cup)

(He suddenly winces, then rubs his ass gingerly.)

Mark

Oh, God. Was I drunk last night.

Renard

Not that drunk.

Mark

(turning his back to drop the shirt and slip on underwear)

Oh, come on, I must have been.

Renard

Which time?

Mark

How many were there?

Renard

Count.

Mark

Three?

Renard

Four.

Mark

No...

(counts on fingers)

One, two...

(Smiles)

three.

Renard

No. That was four. Three was the time I smile thinking about.

Mark

(blush)

Oh. Right.

(He stops and looks at Renard fencing with the air.)

My god. You're really a pirate. You've been hanging around here for three hundred and fifty years!

Renard

Nonsense. I'm not a day over three hundred - eleven.

Mark

But a pirate! Jesus... Like "Batten the hatches... bring her about... walk the plank... run 'em

through... !

(realizing the implications.)

Oh... That sword isn't just for... un... show, is it?

Renard

'Fraid not, mate.

Mark

Right. Board the ship. Rum 'em through... Cut their throats... Scuttle the ship... Rape the women...

Renard

Well, perhaps not the women...

Mark

(turning on him)

Jesus Christ! You're a murderer, a cutthroat...

Renard

Avast there! I don't entirely mind pirate, but I take serious umbrage at cutthroat.

Mark

But isn't that what you did?

Renard

I NEVER cut a throat.

(shruggs)

I ran a few blokes through. What of it?

Mark

(incredulous)

What of it???

Renard

Odd's Bodkin's, man, we were at war! When you saw a ship with a fleur de lis, you fired on her! My abject apologies that we didn't have your fancy cruise missiles to do 'er in with, but once the shot was out of your flintlock, you best be damned handy with one of these or you'd find your milky-white neck swingin' off a French yardarm.

Mark

I'm sorry. But I thought she said pirate... Like Blackbeard... Long John Silver...

Renard

No, no... Not pirate Privateer.

Mark

There's a difference?

Renard

(to a very dense child)

Listen now. And try to pay attention. In Calais they would have stretched my neck for a buccaneer quick enough. But in London? Hell, I might have been up for a bloody knighthood if I'd lasted a bit longer. My ship was my own. My men were my own. We traded for England, but if we saw a French Barque? Well, we'd take her quick enough or she'd take us. That's just how the game was played. Why, for a grand enough take, I'd be handed a tidy sum from James' own coffers by Marlborough himself.

Mark

You knew the Duke of Marlborough?

Renard

Biblically?

Mark

Never mind. Then how come you have a French name?

Renard

My mother was French. My father was English. I was just a bit too -- intemperate shall we say -- for Oxford. So midway into my first term there was a bit of a row over a cockney boy, and my dear old father turned me out without a tuppence. So I went to sea. Four years up and down the Barbary coast.

Mark

Gee. Makes real estate sound a little dull.

Renard

By the time I was twenty-six I had my own brig. God, a beauty she was! Square-rigged on the

foremast with a fore an' aft on the main...

Mark

You miss her, don't you.

Renard

(shrugs)

Aye. But in three hundred odd years you learn a bit.

Mark

Like?

Renard

Like: You don't look back. You look forward. You watch the ships come and go. You watch the radio come in -- then the television. Nothin' lasts forever, mate. Nothin'. You find that nothin' much really matters in the whole great scheme of things. So you just learn to enjoy whatever's there. You, for instance, were quite enjoyable.

Mark

Uh... Thanks. I guess it had been a long time, huh? You were pretty... wild.

Renard

Time is relative. It all depends on how much of it you have left.

Mark

Maybe not much.

Renard

All right by me, lad.

Mark

Listen, I don't want to hurt your feelings... I mean last night was a little... spectacular... But I'm just not ready to go yet.

Renard

Sigh. Then it seems you have plot to thwart.

Mark

Right. You'll help?

Renard

Could I refuse such a delectable little colonial morsel?

Mark

Haul in your jib, Renard. Wait! Quiet... I hear something...

Betsy

(Off)

I wonder if Mark is up yet?

Howard

(Off)

I'll check out here, you go upstairs.

Mark

They're back!

Renard

So it would seem. Gotta go!

(He snaps his fingers and blips out. Bells. Frantically, Mark shoves the rest of Renard's clothes under sofa.)

Mark

But...

Betsy

(entering)

Oh Mark!

Howard

(off, calling)

Betsy!

Betsy

In here - with MARK. Mark, darling, look who came to see us.

Mark

Why Howard. What a surprise.

Harold

Mark! How are ya old chum?

Mark

Fine. Old chum.

Betsy

Mark, be polite. Get up and shake hands.

Mark

Oh, sorry, it was a... uh... rough night.

Renard

I'll say.

Betsy

Mark, what's wrong? You're walking so strangely.

Mark

Oh, just a kink - in my leg.

Renard

Something in somewhere anyway.

Mark

I don't know how it happened...

Renard

Try number four.

Mark

Now I remember.

Renard

I thought you might.

Mark

(trying not to grin)

Oh, shut up.

Betsy

Mark!

Mark

No not you. Shut up - in the door - I shut my leg - up - in the car door.

Betsy

Oh, poor baby, I hope it feels better soon.

Mark

I'm sure it will.

Betsy

But why on earth were you sleeping on the sofa?

Mark

Oh, I just sort of fell asleep here...

Renard

Eventually...

Mark

Would you be quiet?

Betsy

You're so excitable today, dear. It must be the hangover. Well, we'll go into the kitchen and have some coffee while you dress.

Howard

Really good to see you buddy.

Mark

I'm sure it is.

Betsy

Come along Howard.

(They exit.)

Mark

I'll kill them.

Renard

(snaps his fingers and pops in. Bells.)

Don't be too hasty.

Mark

The letter opener, that's it. I'll sneak up behind them...

Renard

No, definitely not.

Mark

Why?

Renard

I can't leave this house. If you think I'm spending eternity with the two of them, you've got another thing coming.

Mark

Oh. So what do we do?

Renard

I have some suggestions.

Mark

No not that again. Not now anyway.

Renard

Then it's you at the helm, mate.

Mark

Wait. You remember what we talked about last night?

Renard

Talking is not what I remember about last night.

Mark

Be serious. Remember, As they push me off the widows walk, you'll be hovering around out there and catch me before I can get hurt.

Renard

And then what?

Mark

Then? ...Wait! I know! We'll get the maid up to watch -- or Mr. Thomas... He's the sheriff. We'll have a witness to their murder attempt.

Renard

You're so cute when you're scheming. Wouldn't you rather just float around here with me.
(nuzzles)

Mark

Cut it out. By the time I'm on your plane forever, I'll probably be a bald old blimp.

Renard

How unattractive.

Mark

Unless we fail to foil my fickle wife.

Renard

That's very true...

Mark

So is everything set?

Renard

No, wait.

Mark

For what?

Renard

You can't make me responsible for your life.

Mark

Why not?

Renard

The temptation would be too great.

Mark

What temptation?

Renard

To just let you go.

Mark

WHAT?!

Renard

Don't you see? Then you could be here with me forever. Still young. Still with those pillow wrinkles on your face.

Mark

Just a minute...

Renard

If you just happened to slip through my fingers - you'd never grow old. Last night could go on through the centuries.

Mark

Listen, I don't know about last night - I mean I don't know if that's even what I really want.

Renard

It seemed quite enough for you at the time.

Mark

Last night I was confused - and angry - and... well... Don't you see I'm not ready to die yet?

Renard

So you see? We want different things - you can't leave it in my hands, I don't want to decide. I might let you fall.

Mark

You wouldn't.

Renard

Wouldn't I?

Mark

Not after last night.

Renard

What?

Mark

After what we did last night - the way you looked at me - oh hell - what we had together. I trust you.

Renard

Oh bloody hell.

Mark

You wouldn't do anything to hurt me. You couldn't.

Renard

This is too much. I'm popping out.

(snapps fingers. Bells.)

Mark

I know you couldn't... Where did you go? Don't take off now. I'm sure you couldn't. I hope he couldn't...

(flails a couple of times through the air)

Damnit, where are you?

(But Renard has taken off up the stairs.)

Howard

(entering)

Dressed yet?

Betsy

Howard thought we could have a nice morning out on the widow's walk.

Mark

Could we?

Betsy

I'll have Miss. O'Riley bring up breakfast.

Mark

Wouldn't be nicer out on the porch.

Howard

Oh no, Mark. You've got to see the view up there. I hear it's wonderful.

Mark

I've seen the view.

Betsy

But it's so nice out.

Mark

No... No I heard the weather report. It's going to rain, in fact it's going to storm - badly - soon.

Betsy

Nonsense, there's not a cloud in the sky.

Howard

Yes Mark. The three of us get so little time to chat together.

Mark

Together... Yes Well, listen, Howard and I get to chat all the time. And you and I - well - we chat constantly don't we? And I'm sure you two would love a chance to catch up. Let's do this: You go up, and I'll join you later...

Howard

No. We wouldn't hear of it.

(taking Mark's arm)

Would we, Betsy?

Betsy

(Taking Mark's other arm, they start to motor him up the stairs.)

No indeed. A lovely breakfast with three best friends. What could be nicer?

Mark

(Looking frantically for Renard)

Nicer? Oh, there's lots of things could be nicer... Uh... I'll get the coffee! Or better yet, why cook? Just makes such a mess...

(passing the picture)

Oh! There's the

(calling)

SEA CAPTAIN! His name was

(calling again)

RENARD!

Betsy

You're acting so strangley. A little food will fix you right up!

Mark

I don't need fixing. Thanks. I'm fine

Howard

(They're at the top of the stairs by now...)

But we insist...

(All three are gone. There is a moment of silence. Then Renard enters, peeved from kitchen arch.)

Renard

Oh, all right, I'll do it. But we'll need a witness. Get Mr.... Mark? Mark, where are you.

(He realizes...)

Oh my God... Mr. Thomas! Miss O'Riley... Quickly...

(He rushes out but Miss. O'Riley is coming down the stairs.)

Miss O'Riley

All right! All right! Stop raising such a thunderous noise...

Renard

(hearing her dashes back into the room)

Quick, upstairs... To the widow's walk!

Miss O'Riley

And who in creation might you....

(looks at him... at picture... at him again...)

Sweet Jesus! Not the ghost!!!

(She starts to take off, but Renard grabs her.)

Renard

Listen to me! There's about to be a murder!

Miss O'Riley

No! Help! Help!

Renard

(covering her mouth)

Not you, you twit! Mark! Mr. Taylor! You've got to hurry!

Miss O'Riley

What...?

Renard

On the widow's walk, they're going to push him off...

(shoving her for the stairs)

Run, woman! Run!

(Miss O'Riley is confused but obedient, she rushes up. Renard just makes it to the kitchen door when a long scream is heard.)

Renard

Oh, my God... Mark! But I didn't know... Maybe it's not too late...

(He rushes off through arch. Betsy and Howard are running downstairs.)

Betsy

What are we going to do? The old man saw us!

Howard

I thought you said he was laid up in bed!

Betsy

How the hell did I know he'd be up fixing a roof with a broken leg, a broken arm and a bent thumb?

Howard

We've got to get him too...

Betsy

He was going down the back way, we'll cut him off outside.

(They rush through the front door.)

Miss. O'Riley

(enters through arch, panting)

Mr. Thomas! Mr. Taylor! What's happened? Where is everyone? I've been up the front and down the back... There's nobody!

Mark

(Entering through front door)

Miss O'Riley!

Miss. O'Riley

Mr. Taylor! Thank God you're all right! There was someone here. He told me...

Mark

I'm fine... But they're after Mr. Thomas!

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, my God! I heard a scream!

Mark

Stay here! I'll go!

(He rushes upstairs)

Mr. Thomas

(hobbling through at a dead run from outside to up the stairs)

Miss O'Riley! They're after me! I got one with my crutch! Call the State Police!

(He is gone. O'Riley heads for the phone. Betsy enters from arch, Howard from door. O'Riley ducks behind couch.)

Betsy

He's not out this way

Howard

(limping)

He just came in here. The old geezer decked me with a crutch

Betsy

Quick! You take the back stairs, I'll take the front! We'll get him!

(Betsy exits up stairs, Howard out arch. O'Riley pops up with phone.)

Miss O'Riley

Hello? State Police?

(Renard rushes down stairs)

Renard

He's nowhere! Where did they go?

Miss O'Riley

Oh God! The Ghost... No, I'm not some nitwit... Now listen...

(to Renard)

They hung up!

Renard

Who? Where is every...

Miss O'Riley

There going to get Mr. Thomas. I've got to stop them.

(She rushes up stairs. Thomas enters from arch Renard snaps his fingers and blips out. Mark enters behind Thomas.)

Mr. Thomas

Great idea you had, me doubling back like that.

Mark

You head for your truck. I'll keep them here while you get the police!

Mr. Thomas

(switching hats)

Wait! I am the police! Just let me get my gun. It's in the pickup.

Mark

Well, hurry!

Renard

(snaps his fingers and blips in)

Thank God, you're all right!

Mark

No thanks to you! Where the hell were you?

Renard

I'll explain later. We've got to...

(a noise upstairs)

Oh hell, here they come...

(Snaps his fingers, bells, blips out)

Mark

Betsy... Oh shit.

(He snaps his fingers... Bells are heard. Betsy enters down the stairs and sees neither of them.)

Betsy

Howard? Where are you...

(Renard looks at Mark in amazement. Mark shrugs.)

Mark

(to Renard)

Come on,

(He grabs Renard and pulls him out the arch.)

Betsy

(spinning around)

Who said that???

Thomas

(entering front with gun)

All right, you murderin' hussy! I got you now!

Betsy

No! It wasn't me... It was Howard... He made me!

Thomas

Bull Pucky. You just sit right there you... you... woman.

(Keeping her covered, he edges over to phone and dials.)

I'm gettin' the state troopers. They'll be here in just a few minutes. Then we'll see what's what!

(Unseen by Thomas, who's back is to stairs, Howard is creeping down.)

Hello, hello... Art? Is that you? Well this here's Sheriff Thomas. Yes indeed. Oh, the arm's mendin' up nice, thank you kindly. Listen, we've got us a murder down here.... Yup... It's out at the old...

(But it's too late. Howard has reached for a candlestick from the table, and bashes Mr. Thomas in the back of the head. Betsy jumps up. Howard runs to her.)

Betsy

We did it!

Howard

Now to get rid of the body...

Miss. O'Riley

(Entering from stairs)

Stop your murderin' butts right there, you sons of Orangemen! What have you done to Mr. Thomas??? Why you rotten Protestants!

(Howard goes for her with Thomas' gun, but in the most amazing display of Kung Foo since Bruce Lee, O'Riley whirls and kicks the gun from his hand.)

Miss. O'Riley

Hie Ya! Take that! And That!

(A few more twirls, a jump, a kick and a karate chop, and O'Riley has both the lovers on the floor, and is tying them up with her apron strings.)

There!

(dusts her hands together)

My sainted mama didn't tell me to learn some self defense for nothing! You two should be ashamed of yourselves.

(She spots Mr. Thomas)

Faith! Mr. Thomas!

(She runs to him and cradles his head in her lap.)

Mr. Thomas! Mr. Thomas! Speak to me!

(She pulls smelling salts from her bosom and holds them under his nose)

Mr. Thomas... Please...

(She starts to cry.)

Oh, Mr. Thomas, please don't be dead on me now...

Mr. Thomas

(coming around)

What... Where... Miss O'Riley, Katie! What's happenin'? I don't remember a thing!

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, my brave Mr. Thomas... Just keep still. You'll be all right. I'll get the ambulance for you!

Mr. Thomas

Thomas? Why do you keep callin' me that, Katie? Everything's so fuzzy! I can't remember... Wait!

Miss. O'Riley

What on earth is it?

Mr. Thomas

(rising dramatically)

No, Wait! I remember...

(grand pause)

EVERYTHING!

(He takes her hands)

Katie... Don't you even recognize me? I loved you so, but my ship was wrecked on the crossing back to America. I would have sent for you darlin', but during my rescue, a sailor, altogether by accident, hit me on the back of the head with an oar! It was amnesia, it was. I couldn't remember a thing! Not till now. I recon that thug clobbering me brought it all back.

Miss. O'Riley

You mean.... You mean...

Mr. Thomas

Yes, my dear! My name's, not Thomas, though that's what I've been goin' by for all these long years. Now I remember it all. I'm Johnny Jones. And you're my blushing bride.

Miss. O'Riley

Oh, Johnny. You looked so familiar, but I never dreamed... Oh, you came back for me!

(They embrace. Renard and Mark enter from arch.)

Now come into the kitchen. Come on now. I'll get an ice pack for your poor head...

(They exit to kitchen.)

Mark

I'm afraid that's all that's left of me washing up there on the rocks.

Renard

There's plenty of you left as far as I'm concerned.

Mark

They didn't see Mr. Thomas until they'd thrown me over and I was halfway down.

Renard

So I guess it's ... eternity.

Mark

(Equivocal)

Eternity. Yeah.

Renard

I'm sorry, Marcus. I truly am. I was too late.

Mark

I think I maybe could have stopped them, but...

Renard

(pinching his cheek)

You did it for me???

Mark

No. Well, I guess I...

Renard

Yes?

Mark

Well I was shouting and yelling, and they were pushing and shoving, and then, -- for one split second -- I flashed on what it might be like hanging out on the mantle with you for the next millennium... And that's all it took: One second of hesitation and there I was, going over the cliff like a fucking lemming.

(pulling a feather out of his hair)

I nearly wiped out some poor sea gull on the way down. But then, of course, I thought that a certain antique just might see fit to break my fall before I became fish food...

Renard

Marcus, I...

Mark

(a little laugh)

It's OK. Really. I know you tried. A little late maybe, but you tried. Besides, if I have anyone to thank for my current incorporeal status, it's my loving widow.

Renard

(fishing)

In all justice, if you were going to cast in with me, it should have been because you'd a mind to, not because they made the choice for you -- or me even...

Mark

Can't argue with that.

(beat)

Renard

(finally the admission)

Bloody hell, do I have to lay it all out for you? I want you to bloody be with me because you bloody-well want to be with me, not because of what somebody did to you. -- all right?

Mark

(amused)

Captain, are you blushing?

Renard

Of course not. It's brisk out, that's all.

Mark

Look at me. OK, granted, dying was not exactly what I had in mind for today, but it's done. I mean maybe I didn't take hemlock for you, but I'm here. Hell, maybe Betsy and Howie did me a favor.

Renard

Just maybe, though...

Mark

Would you bloody well shut up!

(grabs Renard by the shirt and plants a decisive kiss on his lips.)

Renard

(a whoop)

Yes, by God!!

(shouts)

There's gonna be a fire below decks tonight!

(Thomas and O'Riley reenter)

Miss. O'Riley

So we're really married, for good and all --- all this time.

Mr. Thomas

You're my Mrs. Jones -- and you always will be!

Miss. O'Riley

Well, I guess we better get them to the State Troopers.

Mr. Thomas

I'm going to hate to leave this old place, it's where we found each other again.

Renard

And I hate having to scare off a whole new slew of tenants...

Mark

(to Renard)

Wait, I've got an Idea...

(He picks up a pen and wafts it through the air. O'Riley and Thomas, stare in shock.)

O'Riley

Sweet Jesus!

(crosses herself)

Thomas

(putting a protective arm around her)

Ghosts!!!

(Mark scoops up a piece of paper with a flourish. Thomas & O'Riley jump. Mark sets down the paper and slowly lowers the pen to it. Cautiously, O'Riley and Thomas approach the table and read together as he writes.)

O'Riley and Thomas

I hereby bequeath my entire estate, stocks, bonds, and all I own -- including Widow's Walk House, to Mr. and Mrs. Johnny Jones.

O'Riley

Oh, faith, I don't know what to say.

Betsy

I do: Shit.

Howard

Well you got us into this.

Betsy

Oh shut up, thimble-dick.

O'Riley

You think it will be all right to stay here -- with the ghost and all?

Thomas

Maybe he'll calm down a bit -- now he's got the mister with him...

O'Riley

Well, I'm a good catholic girl... and they're... well...

Thomas

The church wouldn't approve... but...

O'Riley

But nothing. I guess Cardinal O'Connor can place it where the son don't shine! The old poop!
We'll stay here with those two boys.

Thomas

Katie! We'll all be so happy!

Mark

(grinning at Renard)

You bet we will!

Thomas

Mrs. Jones?

(He offers his arm.)

O'Riley

(She takes it.)

Mr. Jones...

Betsy

I may be ill.

Mark

(offering his arm)

Captain?

Renard

Mate?

(Takes it.)

Thomas

Breakfast while we wait for the troopers?

Miss. O'Riley

I'd be honored sir!

(They head for the door, O'Riley turns.)

Coming boys, wherever you are?

(She beckons, they exit. Arms about shoulders, Renard and Mark start for kitchen. Renard stops, and whispers in Mark's ear.)

Renard

1... 2... 3...

(Together, Renard and Mark snap their fingers... Lots of bells...)

Renard and Mark

BOO!

Howard and Betsy

Ahhhhhhh!

(Blackout)