

16 Routines

A Rhapsodic Comedy by Murray Mednick

16 Routines was first presented at 2100 Square Feet Theatre, Los Angeles, California, on April 6, 2001. It was directed by Wesley Walker and produced by Guy Zimmerman, with set by Jeffrey Atherton, lights by Rand Ryan, costumes by Bridget Phillips, original music and sound design by Robert Oriol, and the following cast:

Martin Greenspan: William Mesnik

Beryl: Maria O'Brien

Mrs. Graves: Peggy Blow

Max: Ryan Cutrona

Martha: Grace Zabriskie

Dr. Funk: Rene Assa

Shirley Greenspan: Tina Preston

Snooky: John Pappas

Characters *(in order of appearance)*

Martin Greenspan *an actor.*

Beryl Martin's former partner.

Mrs. Graves *a Black woman.*

Max *an actor.*

Martha Max's wife, *an actress.*

Dr. Funk

Snooky *Beryl's former husband.*

Shirley Greenspan *Martin's aunt.*

A Voice Off.

The Scene

A home for distressed actors.

Scene 1

BERYL, MARTIN and MRS. GRAVES.

Beryl Martin! You don't remember me? Martin! Come on!
Martin!

Mrs. Graves He just checks out. Bye, bye.

Beryl Martin!

Mrs. Graves I'll move his head.

Beryl Move his head. *(To MARTIN)* It's me!

Mrs. Graves There he is.

Beryl BERYL!

Martin Not you.

Beryl Your pal! Your partner!

Mrs. Graves He's nice, basically.

Beryl Twenty years on the stage, Martin!

Mrs. Graves Harmless.

Beryl Ha!

Mrs. Graves There he goes again.

Beryl In show business! Martin!

Mrs. Graves Bye-bye land.

Beryl You and me! *(To MRS. GRAVES)* He wasn't harmless,
I can tell you that. He could hit!

Mrs. Graves He couldn't lift a finger now.

Beryl He could hit!

Mrs. Graves Twenty years?

Beryl Oh, sure!

Mrs. Graves It's your longtime friend Beryl, Martin.

Beryl And before that!

Mrs. Graves What?

Beryl It was Greenpoint!

Mrs. Graves What was Greenpoint?

Beryl We lived in.

Mrs. Graves Oh. Where's that?

Beryl In Brooklyn, naturally!

Mrs. Graves Greenpoint?

Beryl On Gerry Street, what was.

Mrs. Graves He could hit, eh?

Beryl Oh, sure! He could hit!

Mrs. Graves Martin?

Beryl He had a lot of talent for hitting. Ha, ha, ha!
And he could fall down! Oh! He was very talented!
What a faller!

Mrs. Graves I'm not surprised.

Martin I'm not surprised.

Mrs. Graves Don't repeat me.

Beryl A professional!

Mrs. Graves That's funny.

Martin That's funny.

Beryl But violent, you know?

Mrs. Graves That doesn't surprise me.

Martin That doesn't surprise me.

Mrs. Graves Stop that.

Beryl They had to get Snooky.

Mrs. Graves Snooky?

Beryl Sometimes.

Martin He falls down and he gets up.

Mrs. Graves (To *BERYL*) Snooky?

Beryl No, Marty. Snooky was my boyfriend. He'd straighten him out. We were young then. I wasn't even married. So, Martin!

Mrs. Graves He went bye-bye again.

Beryl He's so funny!

Mrs. Graves He can be very funny.

Beryl I finally took the bus! And here I am! Are you glad to see me?

Mrs. Graves I'm sure he is.

Beryl Do you recognize me?

Mrs. Graves I'm sure he does.

Beryl It's *BERYL*!

Mrs. Graves You're his first visitor.

Beryl Oh, that can't be true.

Mrs. Graves That I know of.

Beryl Twenty years, Martin!

Mrs. Graves Except for us, Dr. Funk and me.

Beryl Ha, ha!

Mrs. Graves That's funny?

Beryl He won't go out in the cold.

Mrs. Graves He hates the cold.

Beryl It's not cold today, Martin.

Martin Brrr, brrr.

Beryl Not today! It's a nice day, today!

Martin Kill the poor.

Beryl Ha, ha!

Mrs. Graves Where'd that come from?

Martin (To *someone off*) Line?

Voice Off Nothing to go on!

Beryl He knows, believe me.

Mrs. Graves What?

Beryl What he's talking about, when it comes to poor.

Martin They have nothing to go on!

Beryl Ha! They have nothing to live on!

Mrs. Graves He's being taken care of, believe me.

Beryl Who's taking care of him?

Mrs. Graves We are.

Beryl I mean before.

Mrs. Graves Before?

Beryl Huh?

Mrs. Graves Before?

Beryl Him, before he got here.

Mrs. Graves Okeydoke.

Beryl That's right.

Mrs. Graves Well, I'll leave you two.

Beryl Huh?

Mrs. Graves I'll leave you two together for a while.

Martin No, no, no, no.

Mrs. Graves No?

Martin No, no, no, no. No.

Mrs. Graves Okay, in a minute.

Martin In a minute.

Mrs. Graves But don't go to China.

Martin In a minute.

Beryl It hasn't been that long, eh? Martin? *(Pause)* Uh, since we did our patter, and danced together, you and me? *(Pause)*

Mrs. Graves He's in China.

Beryl China?

Mrs. Graves Wherever.

Beryl Oh. The Chinks! Ha, ha! Remember, Martin? Remember the Chinks?

Mrs. Graves What's that?

Beryl Down the street! The Chinks! Once a month!

Mrs. Graves I see.

Beryl Food! Chinese food! Remember? She would take us.
(Pause)

Mrs. Graves Who's that?

Beryl His mother.

Martin Pissed on the children.

Mrs. Graves That's not nice, Martin.

Beryl He doesn't remember.

Mrs. Graves He's in a funny mood.

Beryl We would go.

Mrs. Graves This is a shock for him.

Beryl Then this happened!

Mrs. Graves What happened?

Beryl His memory went. His lines.

Mrs. Graves Yeah, well, temporarily.

Beryl He had 'em and I had 'em!

Mrs. Graves I know.

Beryl Sure! They evaporated! *(Pause)* We were right there in front of the audience. And he blacked out. He forgot his lines. There was a long hiss, and then the curtain fell. Down. Certain things I can't remember. But my children accuse me.

Mrs. Graves Wait a minute. He's trying to say something. Go ahead, Martin.
(Silence) See if the two of you can have a little conversation.
(Exits. Long silence)

Beryl I'm here, Martin! To see you! I took the bus! The weather's good! I'll take the bus! We'll enjoy ourselves! We'll have a

good old age, Martin! At last! (*MARTIN is silent and motionless. She stares at him, he stares vacantly into space. Blackout*)

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Scene 2

Reenter MRS. GRAVES.

Mrs. Graves So? How we doing?
Beryl I was talking.
Mrs. Graves I see. Dr. Funk will say hello.
Beryl Martin didn't speak.
Mrs. Graves Martin? That's not nice. Confused?
Beryl I'm happy. I'm so happy. (*Enter DR. FUNK*) Oh!
Mrs. Graves Here is Dr. Funk.
Dr. Funk How are you? Is it Massman?
Beryl No, Brannon.
Dr. Funk Mrs. Brannon.
Beryl His name is Greenspan. My partner.
Dr. Funk I've come to know your partner well.
Beryl Martin Greenspan.
Dr. Funk These many months and years.
Mrs. Graves Excuse me. (*Exits*)
Dr. Funk He keeps talking about Shirley.
Beryl Ha, ha. I don't know who he's talking about.
Dr. Funk It's Shirley.
Beryl Shirley?
Dr. Funk Yes. A lady named Shirley.
Beryl That's his aunt, Shirley.

Dr. Funk Ah.

Beryl And there's another Shirley, who was a Brannon.

Dr. Funk I see. Two Shirleys.

Beryl One and one.

Dr. Funk So it could be any Shirley.

Beryl I don't know who he's talking about. Which one.

Dr. Funk A Brannon or a Greenspan.

Beryl She's a psychiatrist, I think.

Dr. Funk Really?

Beryl I haven't heard from her in twenty years.

Dr. Funk An M.D.? A doctor?

Beryl That I don't know.

Dr. Funk Do you see her?

Beryl Shirley?

Dr. Funk Either one.

Beryl Me? Never.

Dr. Funk I understand.

Beryl I never see them.

Dr. Funk I really do. Understand.

Beryl They disapproved of me. First on one side, then the other.

Dr. Funk Meaning?

Beryl First my family, then his family, Snooky's, the Brannons.
The sonofabitch. And he used to beat up Martin.

Dr. Funk Why?

Beryl To straighten him out.

Dr. Funk Who is this?

Beryl Snooky, my ex.

Martin Pussy is good, too. Pussy, she likes.

Beryl Martin!

Dr. Funk This kind of thing I never heard from him.

Martin She's a dyke.

Dr. Funk Mrs. Graves!

Martin She's been one all her life.

Beryl Shirley?

Dr. Funk Mrs. Graves!

Beryl This is a laugh!

Dr. Funk I don't know who this person is at the moment.
(*Enter MRS. GRAVES*)

Mrs. Graves What's going on?

Dr. Funk Has he ever spoken like this?

Mrs. Graves Like what?

Dr. Funk Continue, Martin. (*MARTIN stares*) I should have taped it.

Mrs. Graves He's bye-bye.

Dr. Funk Say something, Martin. (*No response. To MRS. GRAVES*)
Has he ever spoken sexually?

Mrs. Graves Ha, ha. Sexually? Not really, exactly.

Dr. Funk To anyone?

Mrs. Graves Sure. In his head. In the Far East.

Dr. Funk Martin?

Mrs. Graves Who cares?

Dr. Funk You're right, of course.

Mrs. Graves I mean, the man is catatonic.

Dr. Funk Martin?

Mrs. Graves Bye-bye Birdie.

Dr. Funk Mrs. Brannon? BERYL?

Mrs. Graves *Beryl?* (*To DR. FUNK*) She's obviously drugged.

Beryl I'm resting for a minute.

Mrs. Graves He's been sitting like this for weeks.

Beryl He was a star, you know. Martin Greenspan. Before he deadpanned. He couldn't cope. Can he have an injection?

Mrs. Graves This is not a hospital.

Dr. Funk Well, it was nice of you to visit.

Beryl It was very nice.

Mrs. Graves This is a home.

Beryl Can I stay, too?

Dr. Funk Have a nice trip back, and hopefully we'll see you again.

Beryl Yeah, yeah. (*Exit Dr. Funk*)

Mrs. Graves You don't want to stay here.

Beryl I wouldn't, believe me. Let's take a picture.

Mrs. Graves I don't have a camera.

Beryl I have a camera. Here.

Mrs. Graves Okay. Is there film in here?

Beryl There's plenty of fillum.

Mrs. Graves Alright, here we go.

Beryl Move his head back, first.

Mrs. Graves Excuse me?

Beryl Move his head back where it was.

Mrs. Graves Why don't you do it?

Beryl I can't! I'm afraid!

Mrs. Graves Alright, I'll move his head. Come on, Martin.
(*Moves his head*)

Beryl Let's take a picture of this!

Mrs. Graves That's what I'm doing.

Beryl This is a laugh!

Mrs. Graves Watch the Birdie! Smile for the Birdie!
(*Flash, blackout*)

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Scene 3

MARTIN. Enter MAX and MARTHA.

Max Martin Greenspan?
Martin Yes?
Max Do you have lines?
Martin Lines?
Max You know, to say.
Martin I have lines.
Max Yes? And?
Martin *(To wings)* Line!
Voice Off Obligated!
Max Without offstage help, Martin.
Martin Am I obligated?
Max Was that a line?
Martin I thought so.
Max Say another line, Martin.
Martha That's enough of that. Max. There's a word for that.
Max What would be the next line?
Martin Now?
Max When else? There is no line in the future. There is no line in the past. Do you follow me?
Martin The character?
Max The character?
Martin For the lines. You know.
Max He doesn't follow me.
Martha What is it? What's the word for that?
Max He thinks there's a line in the future. He thinks there's a line in the past.
Martha No, no. Not that.

Max Character.

Martha Not that.

Max Delusion.

Martha No. Pursuing a person. Pestering a person.

Max He said, "Am I obligated?" Then what?

Martha You didn't answer him.

Max The answer is "Yes." The answer to "Am I obligated?" is—"Yes." Go ahead.

Martin Okay.

Max Go on.

Martin Beryl had a collapse.

Martha Beryl?

Max That's a disassociation. That's not even associated.

Martha Bullying. There's the word I was searching for. Bullying.

Max No. I'm helping him. How? Through an effort of reason. Simple reason, which is based on logic.

Martha Not delusion.

Max I said, reason.

Martha I know what you said.

Max You're not following me.

Martha Why should I follow you? You're not going anywhere.

Max We're talking present time here. If you can't be in present time, then you have no business participating.

Martha Participating? Participating?

Max If you're not willing to make an effort, then I think you should sit out. I think you should sit this one out. This man has a line and he is obligated to come up with it. Otherwise, we can't continue. Our work is stymied. For the moment.

Martha He said, "Beryl had a collapse."

Max And?

Martha Make an effort.

Max *(To MARTIN)* Where was this? Was it on a bus?
Did she collapse on the bus?

Voice Off She took the bus!

Martin She was on a bus.

Martha He said she was on a bus.

Max She fell out of her seat and into the aisle?

Martin I don't know.

Max Was she sitting up when you left the terminal?

Martin The terminal? The terminal?

Max The Port of Authority.

Martin I don't know.

Martha He's doing very well now.

Max What did she do when she collapsed? Did she babble?

Martha He answered you.

Max He said, "I don't know."

Martha "I don't know" is an answer.

Max Did she fall out of her seat and into the aisle and babble?

Martha I don't know.

Max Not you. *(To MARTIN)* Were you there? Were you there when she fell out of her seat and into the aisle and started babbling, or not?

Martin I'm worried about this now.

Max Did the driver stop the bus? Did the driver stop the bus when she fell out of her seat into the aisle and started babbling?

Martin Beryl?

Max Who are we talking about here?

Martin Because I don't think it's right.

Max Martin Greenspan.

Martin The character?

Max Did the driver stop the bus and call an ambulance when she fell out of her seat into the aisle and started babbling? And did the audience scream with delight?

Martin The audience?

Max The audience.

Martin I'm sorry.

Martha Most people have to go to work in the morning.

Martin I have a feeling of loss.

Martha Maybe you never had him. You know. The character. Some people imagine they have things, like a pocketbook, or a hat, or an account. You know.

Martin Then I'm all right, really.

Martha Yes. You imagined it.

Martin I mean, there isn't a question there, really.

Max Not really.

Martha You know, they go to the bank, they go shopping at Christmas.

Martin I saw that.

Martha At twilight they come home to their families.

Max They enjoy happiness and fulfillment.

Martha You don't know.

Max I'm just saying.

Martha Don't just say things.

Max That's the way it looks to me.

Martin I saw that, too.

Martha Sure, you saw it in a commercial. They shouldn't allow television in here. Where there are susceptible minds. Why? Because you never see unhappiness in a television commercial, unless it is resolved by a product.

Max What is resolved?

Martha The problem, Max. The problem.

Max It raises a question, really.

Martha No, there's no question, really. It is a perfect world. Happy, happy, happy. Even the diseased are happy, the halt and the lame, the sick and the dying. They are happy and they are beautiful and they have beautiful teeth, even their dentures are beautiful and their clothes are neat.

Max Is that what you lost? The feeling of normal?

Martin Yes.

Max Of beauty?

Martin Yes.

Max Of equality with the beautiful?

Martin Yes.

Max As a person in your own right?

Martin Yes.

Max *(To MARTHA)* His heart was broken by the audience.

Martin Wait a minute.

Max You could say that.

Martha What?

Max He went deadpan and he never came out of it. He remained there, deadpan. Why? Because of the audience.

Martha How is it the audience's fault?

Max It's not?

Martha No, I don't think so. I think it's his own fault. Poor Beryl.

Max What do you mean, Poor Beryl?

Martha His partner. When he went up.

Max He "went up"? I hate that.

Martha She was standing right next to him on the stage.

Max You're identifying with her now.

Martha I'm not identifying.

Martin Wait a minute.

Max What are you doing?

Martha I made an observation. (*Long silence*)

Martin Do I have a line?

Max Now?

Martin Do I have a line now? (*Pause*)

Martha (*To MAX*) This man is in trouble and I know why.

Max They'll think ill of us.

Martha We're not talking about that.

Martin Wait a minute.

Martha Worry, worry, worry. That's what you do. You worry, Do they like me? Do they respect me? Do they think I'm talented? Do they think I'm intelligent? Do they think I'm handsome? Am I authentic?

Martin When you said, talking about that, before—

Martha Before?

Martin What were you referring to?

Martha Just a minute. Where was I?

Max Authentic, or inauthentic.

Martha You're an actor. You can act. *Kvell*, why don't you? (*Pause*) You can't. Why? Because you're afraid to show pride. (*Silence*)

Martin (*Panicking*) I feel like I have a line now!

Martha Why?

Martin Do I?

Martha I think that's the question you have to ask yourself, Max, because it's affected your entire career.

Max What has?

Martha I'll tell you.

Max I didn't give permission.

Martha We signed documents.

Max I didn't realize.

Martha Realize? Realize?

Max You had the right.

Martha That's not my problem. My problem is not rights.

Martin Line? *(They look at him. He withdraws.)*

Martha What is worry? I'll tell you. It is the dutiful mental anticipation of bad things happening.

Max Is that a quote?

Martha That is a quote. And what is prayer?

Max Is it the dutiful mental anticipation of bad things happening?

Martha You should know.

Max Okay.

Martha My problem is not rights.

Max You should know.

Martha My problem is insubstantiality.

Max Exactly.

Martha I am an actor in a movie. That's why I'm so happy. Because life has a lustre then, life has a sheen. Why? Because it's not just life, it's more than life, it is a life as one has imagined it all one's life, as though it were a movie.

Max You said that earlier. That was all you needed to say.

Martha And I'm not going to give it up. I see no reason to give that up.

Max Well, then. Fine.

Martin Do I have—?

Martha In exchange for a dreary existence.

Max Well. Okay.

Martin A line?

Max No. Be quiet. *(Pause. Blackout)*

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Scene 4

MRS. GRAVES. *Enter BERYL.*

Beryl Where is he?

Mrs. Graves He's having a bath.

Beryl He's having a bath?

Mrs. Graves He's having a bath.

Beryl Oh. *(Pause)*

Mrs. Graves Excuse me, Missus. *(Exits)*

Beryl Brannon. *(Spits. Smiles broadly. Arranges her hat. Is sadly deluded by her appearance. Enter DR. FUNK)* Oh.

Dr. Funk Mrs. Greenspan.

Beryl No. Brannon. Martin is Greenspan. Because I never got divorced, you know. That idiot Snooky just shacked up with another woman, a crazy person, if you'll pardon the expression. He met her in an institution, if you'll pardon the expression.

Dr. Funk I see.

Beryl It was a prison, too, you know.

Dr. Funk No, I didn't know that.

Beryl Absolutely. Where he belonged.

Dr. Funk For what reason, Mrs. Brannon?

Beryl He was a rapist. *(Pause)*

Dr. Funk You mean...?

Beryl So then he meets Mary, a shiksa from a nuthouse.

Dr. Funk He was tried?

Beryl Ha, ha, ha.

Dr. Funk I mean, in court.

Beryl You can imagine.

Dr. Funk Where?

Beryl He was guilty and they locked him up, thank God. (*Spits*)

Dr. Funk Mrs. Brannon?

Beryl What?

Dr. Funk Use this. (*Hands her a Kleenex*)

Beryl Oh. (*Spits into Kleenex*) Thank you.

Dr. Funk About Martin.

Beryl Yeah, yeah.

Dr. Funk You seem to have a strange effect on him.

Beryl Well, he's not all there.

Dr. Funk Of course.

Beryl They knocked his head around and cut his wires.
I know what I'm talking about.

Dr. Funk I'm sure you do.

Beryl It's not my fault.

Dr. Funk I'm not suggesting—

Beryl Somebody's telling him lies.

Dr. Funk What lies?

Beryl You know, different things. Like splicing his wires, like Snooky and the fillum.

Dr. Funk Why, do you suppose?

Beryl I have enemies. I have people against me. They could be coming in here and changing his mind in the dark.

Dr. Funk How?

Beryl In the dark.

Dr. Funk In the dark?

Beryl You know, with the lights off.

Dr. Funk The lights are never off, Mrs. Brannon.

Beryl Never mind.

Dr. Funk The lights are never off. (*Enter MARTIN with MRS. GRAVES. He has taken an absurdly dramatic posture.*)

Mrs. Graves Here he is, John Barrymore the third.

Beryl Martin!

Dr. Funk Look who's here, Martin!

Beryl It's me! *(No response from MARTIN as he holds his position)*

Mrs. Graves He's had a nice bath. Haven't you, Martin?
(No response) Well, he has.

Dr. Funk It's your friend, BERYL! *(No response)* He can't stay like that.

Mrs. Graves You talking to me?

Dr. Funk Yes! Change his position. Make him comfortable.

Beryl Move his head.

Dr. Funk Right.

Beryl Move his head.

Dr. Funk Relax, Martin.

Beryl Move his arm.

Mrs. Graves I'm doing what I can.

Beryl Move his other arm.

Dr. Funk Let it go, Martin.

Beryl Move his other arm.

Mrs. Graves That's what I'm doing.

Beryl Push his leg down.

Dr. Funk Relax that apparatus, Martin!

Beryl Push it down.

Dr. Funk There you go. Much better. *(Pause)*

Beryl His head's not on straight.

Mrs. Graves Ain't nothin' I can do about that.

Beryl You moved his arm too much. And then the leg.

Mrs. Graves I don't think so.

Beryl Now his head's on crooked.

Mrs. Graves Stop that, Martin!

Dr. Funk Relax your neck, Martin!

Beryl It'll give him ideas.

Dr. Funk Drop your head!

Beryl That's why I mentioned.

Martin No, no, no, no. No.

Beryl See? See that? Did you hear?

Mrs. Graves He said, No. (*MARTIN drops his head. Pause*)
Now what?

Beryl You have to fix it. That's your job.

Dr. Funk Hold his head up.

Mrs. Graves You're a pain in the butt, Martin.

Beryl That's why I'm saying.

Dr. Funk Now keep it that way, Martin. (*Pause*)

Beryl Straighten him out. (*Pause*)

Mrs. Graves Where you been, Martin? Been to China? (*Laughs*)

Dr. Funk No jokes, Mrs. Graves.

Beryl They come in here and change his head.

Dr. Funk What?

Beryl Around.

Mrs. Graves Ignore her.

Dr. Funk Is he pretending?

Mrs. Graves I don't think so. But who can tell?

Dr. Funk I have work to do.

Beryl I feel very happy now, Doctor. (*Pause*)

Dr. Funk Good. (*Exits*)

Mrs. Graves He's just had his bath. He should be in a good mood.
(*Exits. A very long silence*)

Beryl Nobody's looking. (*Pause*) Nobody's looking, Martin.
(*Pause*) I'll do a dance for you. I'm so happy.
(*Does an absurd, childlike tap dance while trying to sing*)

"Tea for Two." Finishes. Giggles like a little girl. Spits.)

That's just terrific. It's a second childhood, of which the first I was deprived. Are you in China, Martin? (*Laughs*)

Voice Off Shut up over there! And stop that stupid dancing!
(*Blackout*)

*

Scene 5

BERYL and MARTIN. Enter MAX and MARTHA.

Beryl Who are you?

Max & Martha

Max and Martha.

Beryl Are you here?

Max What does she mean by that?

Martha We belong here.

Beryl This is my partner, him.

Martha What did you bring? Anything?

Beryl We can do.

Martha What?

Beryl A show.

Martha Do a show.

Max No dancing. Just the patter.

Beryl Martin? (*Silence*)

Max Is he the dummy?

Beryl Martin? (*Silence*)

Martha Brain therapy, the latest.

Max I know.

Beryl He's an actor. He's acting.
Max He's pretending. That is not acting.
Martha Who's the dyke?
Beryl I don't know. What dyke?
Martha He mentions. Is it Shirley?
Max It's her.
Martha How 'bout you? Are you a dyke?
Beryl What?
Max Do you like to rub against little girls? Before they rattled your brains, did you like to rub against little girls? On the sly? On the train?
Martha Magazines?
Beryl Let's do one, Martin.
Martha On the bus?
Max She's changing the subject.
Beryl He needs a pill. Do you have a pill?
Martha Do you?
Max You must have lots of pills.
Beryl Okay.
Martha Okay, what?
Max Give him a pill.
Martha Call the doctor in here. She shouldn't be in here. Without supervision.
Max Call him.
Beryl We'll do Shirley, Martin.
Max Surely.
Beryl What? Oh. Ha, ha.
Martha Go on.
Beryl He has to stand up.
Max Stand up, Martin.

Beryl So he can fall down.

Martha Get him on his feet and give him a pill.

Beryl He's so good at it.

Max Give him a goddamned pill.

Beryl I'll give him one of mine.

Martha We're all waiting.

Max Give him a dozen fucking pills.

Beryl Here, sweetie. (*MARTIN selects two large pills, swallows them with great dramatic flair.*)

Max There you go, you stupid fuck, you brainless idiot.

Martin You be my banana.

Max Banana?

Martin Straight man.

Max Okay, stand up. (*Nobody moves.*)

Martha Stand him up why don't you?

Beryl I can't.

Martha Why not?

Beryl I'm afraid.

Martin Not her.

Beryl Let me be your banana.

Martin No.

Martha I'll hold you up, but not for long.

Martin Not for long.

Beryl That's how you hurt a person's feelings.

Martha (*Holding him up*) Ready?

Martin There was a hat on the rack on the wall.

Max Of the office.

Martin I had an office.

Max I always had an office. I have one all the time. An office.

Martin There was a hat on the wall in the office.

Max I go there for work.

Martin In the corridor leading to the office, on a watchamacallit, a hook.

Max That's where I go to get some work done. My office.

Martin Wait a minute.

Max Why?

Martin Wait a minute.

Max It's an office all to myself.

Martin *(To someone off)* Line!

Voice Off Corridor!

Martin Not a corridor. A dressing room.

Max Where I hold forth and accomplish.

Martin A dressing room with a hat rack.

Max We have nothing in common, you and me.

Martin It had no proximity to an office.

Max You had money and I was deprived.

Martin A dressing room for actors, with a hat.

Max You had all the advantages and I had none.

Martin Near the Actors Delicatessen?

Max So what if your mother didn't pay attention?
Nobody hit you. Nobody despised you. You never learned theft. You never had to fight with your fists.

Martin After a while, I thought it was mine, the hat.

Max With your fists. Thank God. Thank God I learned to fight with my fists. If somebody offends you, punch him out. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm still here. I'm alive.

Martin Wait a minute.

Max What now?

Martin I never had any advantages.

Beryl None. He had negative advantages.

Martha That's it. I'll drop you.

Martin Someone passed a suggestion, saying—

Max And why you're alive also. Because I refused to take an insult.

Martin Saying, Isn't that your hat? The one on the wall?

Max I defended my dignity and the dignity of all.

Martin So then I thought it might very well be. Mine.

Max With my fists.

Martin A beautiful brown fedora, made by a master haberdasher in the city of New York.

Max I asked no questions and gave no warning of what was to come immediately.

Martin I began to think that it was my own hat.

Max Which was a punch in the mouth.

Martin But I let time go by.

Max I never did have a fucking office.

Martin And it did. Time went by.

Max Where you can cheat people massively and rapidly from the safety of your computer.

Martin No one else took the hat, so I thought it was mine.

Max Well, you're a thief, aren't you?

Martin I think it was my hat, in reality.

Max In reality? In reality?

Martin Someone said it was. A long time ago, someone said it was.

Max Who? Who said it was your hat?

Martin A person. And I let time go by.

Max In reality you would steal anything. You would steal food from a child. Why? Because you're afraid to go hungry.

Martin Well, it had nothing to do with food. Even though I mentioned the word, delicatessen—

Max You're afraid to go hungry, and you have to have things. Why? Because you watch television. You watch television. Why? Because you have nothing else to do. Nothing useful to occupy your time. Why? Because you have no mental faculties. They are atrophied. Why? Because they are not exercised. Why are they not exercised? Because you are lazy. Why are you lazy? Because you are spoiled. Why? Do you think the world owes you something?

Martin If you want the hat, I'll give it to you.

Max Like entertainment? You think the world owes you entertainment? No? Does it owe you advice? What to buy? How to think? Is that what you need to be told? What to buy? How to think? Yes! That's why I don't care about your stupid hat.

Martin Fine. I shouldn't have brought it up.

Max See? You don't understand what I mean. Television goes right into your head. It tells you what to buy and how to think. What to buy and how to think. That's why you're crazy. That's why you're in a home.

Martin And you?

Max I blame the world for that. But I always have my fists. Remember that. Remember that. I blame the world, but I have my fists. Thank God for the Indians of America! And that's all I'll say. That's all I have to say for the moment. So, good night. (*Exits. MARTHA lets go and MARTIN collapses into a heap. Blackout.*)

*

Scene 6

MARTIN and DR. FUNK.

- Dr. Funk** Surely you know Shirley. (*MARTIN laughs for one minute.*)
Okay. It wasn't that funny, Martin. (*MARTIN does five different takes.*) Very good. No doubt you learned that professionally. (*MARTIN nods.*) What makes a good comedian, Martin?
- Martin** Violence and Judaism. Combined.
- Dr. Funk** Are Max and Martha any help at all?
- Martin** No.
- Dr. Funk** Why not?
- Martin** Help for what?
- Dr. Funk** They are professionals, like you.
- Martin** I don't believe in them.
- Dr. Funk** So I thought it might encourage me. I mean you.
- Martin** I don't believe that Max and Martha are Max and Martha.
- Dr. Funk** You don't?
- Martin** No.
- Dr. Funk** Who are they?
- Martin** I think one of them is Max and the other one is— guess.
- Dr. Funk** I give up.
- Martin** Martha. (*Laughs for one minute*)
- Dr. Funk** Very funny.
- Martin** Because I saw them on TV.
- Dr. Funk** Of course.
- Martin** And Max and Martha are not Max and Martha.
- Dr. Funk** I understand.
- Martin** By a long shot.

Dr. Funk And Shirley?

Martin Greenspan or Brannon?

Dr. Funk The one with the money.

Martin Not a Greenspan, I can tell you that.

Dr. Funk Brannon?

Martin But I could be wrong.

Dr. Funk I suppose we'll never know, will we?

Martin Somebody knows, Doctor whoever you are. (*Looking off*)
The secret is in a black box, and that's all I'll say.

Dr. Funk A black box.

Martin That's right. A black box in a room with no windows.
And that's all I'll say.

Dr. Funk A black box in a room with no windows.

Martin A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city. And that's all I'll say.

Dr. Funk A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city.

Martin A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept,
but that's all I'll say.

Dr. Funk A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept.

Martin A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept
along with the corresponding names and addresses.

Dr. Funk A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept
along with the corresponding names and addresses.

Martin A black box in a room with no windows in a major
American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept

along with the corresponding names and addresses, and one man has the key.

Dr. Funk A black box in a room with no windows in a major American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept along with the corresponding names and addresses. And one man has the key.

Martin A black box in a room with no windows in a major American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept along with the corresponding names and addresses. And one man has the key. And that's all I'm permitted to tell you.

Dr. Funk I see.

Martin Who is the Black woman?

Dr. Funk You don't mean Mrs. Graves?

Martin You know very well who I mean.

Dr. Funk Mrs. Graves.

Martin Who is she?

Dr. Funk She works here. She takes care of us.

Martin She talks a lot about China.

Dr. Funk Does she? I hadn't noticed.

Martin Obviously. It's the key to our relationship. It's our relationship in a nutshell.

Dr. Funk I hadn't realized.

Martin Take note.

Dr. Funk I will. And your partner, Beryl?

Martin An impostor.

Dr. Funk She's not your partner?

Martin No.

Dr. Funk You never had an act?

Martin We had an act, but it was a lie.

Dr. Funk Who is she?

Martin She's my mother. *(Pause)* A black box in a room with no windows in a major American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept along with the corresponding names and addresses. And one man has the key. And that's all I'm permitted to tell you. Except for one thing.

Dr. Funk Yes?

Martin My mother is not my mother.

Dr. Funk She looks just like you. Beryl.

Martin She's wearing a rubber mask.

Dr. Funk And of corresponding age.

Martin Rip off the mask and reveal the horror beneath.

Dr. Funk Excellent job of camouflage.

Martin After all, the woman is a professional. In truth, her outside looks like her inside. *(Pause)* A sadist and a dyke, a child-beater, a God-hater, a whiner and a bitch. With delusions. She doesn't see what you and I see, when she looks in the mirror, of her face. Only God knows what she sees.

Dr. Funk Then no one is whom they claim they are.

Martin No one.

Dr. Funk Not even me?

Martin Especially not you. But I've got your number.

Dr. Funk You've got my number.

Martin Oh, yeah.

Dr. Funk What is it?

Martin I'm not at liberty to reveal it.

Dr. Funk I see.

Martin There is a black box in a room with no windows in a major American city, and that's where all the numbers are kept along with the corresponding names and addresses.

Including yours. And one man has the key. And that's all I'm permitted to tell you.

Dr. Funk Who is this man?

Martin He is an employee.

Dr. Funk Who employs him?

Martin The Company.

Dr. Funk Well, that's enough for today.

Martin I couldn't agree more. What happens now?

Dr. Funk Well, customarily, we would shake hands and you would leave my office and go. But, as you live here, it is I who will depart, instead. Good-bye. (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 7

BERYL and MARTIN. Enter MAX and MARTHA.

Beryl This is your Aunt Max and your uncle, Martha.

Martin Really?

Beryl Yes.

Martin Is that right?

Beryl Certainly, dear.

Martin That was the phoniest thing I have ever heard in my entire adult life.

Beryl I thought you might like to get to know them.

Martin Yeah, yeah. Who are you, I wonder.

Beryl Me, Beryl, the one who set you up—

Martin Let's see who they are first, really.

Beryl For your lines. (*To MAX and MARTHA*) He's getting better and better each and every day, and so am I.

Max & Martha

That's nice.

Beryl And how are you doing?

Max Is this being taped? Is that a two-way window?

Martha We didn't sign anything. We didn't get a check. We no longer have representation. Why? Because of your self-destructive passivity, your lack of honest ambition, and your refusal to face reality.

Max Is that a quote?

Martha That is a direct quote.

Max I have a feeling we're on.

Martin Do I—?

Max Not you. Us. Just watch. (*Formally, with a light cue*)

I'm sad today because I feel completely rejected.

(*To MARTHA*) And you don't care.

Martha Eat something and you'll feel better.

Max In actual fact, you wish I was dead.

Martha I just have certain needs and requirements.

Max Because you think I'm a slave or a servant.

Martha Because you're a pal.

Max I don't care, either.

Martha Because you're my pal and I love you.

Max I don't care if I die.

Martha And we're involved in this together.

Max It's a shame to say it and it scares me.

Martha Everything's going to be just fine.

Max I'm afraid God heard me.

Martha What do you mean when you say God?

Max Something in myself who stands for God and is listening in to my comments. But not only that.

Martha I don't see why I have to wince innerly every two and a half minutes.

Max I'm afraid of the void and the endless mystery and inevitable death.

Martha And that's why I'm cutting myself off, finally.

Max I'm glad you feel good about it.

Martha A person can't live like that, in a state of concern.

Max I understand completely.

Martha Not me, not me. That's it for me.

Max Perfectly understandable.

Martha I'm not going to be a slave around here.

Max I didn't realize.

Martha You never realize. It's like talking to an idiot.
I thought you had a sophisticated mind.

Max I was just saying, I'm not sure if that's what I'm afraid of, or not. *(Pause)* If you're not interested, just say so. *(Pause)* I'm afraid of being alone on the streets without a place to lay my head and I can't walk.

Martha Now?

Max Well, forever.

Martha Is that where you are now?

Max No, but that's what I'm afraid of.

Martha First, obligations must be met.

Max I talked with someone on the telephone today.

Martha And I want to be treated properly.

Max I talked with someone today, and it made me feel a whole lot better.

Martha This is not the way I want to fill my life.

Max I'm sorry.

Martha That's not what I meant.

Max It was a pretty good conversation. It was pretty long.

Martha With concern and maltreatment. And I can never get my work done. And fulfill my destiny. Because of you.

Max Well, I was going to say, I hung up the phone with a feeling of hope today.

Martha And your endless negativity.

Max In terms of a place to lay my head.

Martha So what are your plans for the future?

Max What do you care?

Martha I will always think of you.

Max But I may have said something wrong.

Martha You as you are and ought to be.

Max I'm not sure.

Martha You don't know how to talk on the phone.

Max If I said something wrong or not.

Martha Did you talk to Dr. Funk?

Max About my telephone dysfunction?

Martha About us. About me. About how my life is falling apart while you have a good time.

Max Now I'm terribly upset. I'm too upset to mention Dr. Funk in this context.

Martha How you go on at my expense.

Max I plan to talk to Dr. Funk immediately in person.

Martha Do you have an appointment?

Max Isn't he coming today? Won't he come to see us today?

Martha That's up to you. I won't interfere. I'm tired of trying to alter your behavior.

Max We're talking here about the sanctum sanctorum. It's the

privileged privacy of a psychological exchange. *(Pause)*

Do you think I'll be ejected?

Martha Bye, bye.

Max Thanks for listening. Really.

Martha Try to plan. Think ahead. Think of the good things and the right outcome, and presto—that's how it'll be.

Max Thank you.

Martha I love you.

Max I love you, too. *(Pause)*

Beryl *(To MARTIN)* I was touched by that. Were you?

Martin I think many things can be said about its effect on me, but touched is not one of them.

Beryl *(To MAX and MARTHA)* My partner is a genius.

Martin Yes, and it occurs to me, it occurs to me, and this is a complex thought, a difficult thought, it occurs to me that there is a war going on, there is a war going on, and Marx was wrong, it is not a class war, no, not a class war, it is a war of the smart against the stupid. This looks like a class war, but in actual fact the smart and the able make more money than the stupid and the unable and they, the smart and the able, feel that this should be so, because nature wanted it that way, obviously, or it wouldn't be that way, and there is no reason why the smart should support the stupid just because they are smart and the stupid are not. Do you follow me?

Max & Martha

I don't agree with that.

Beryl Yea!

Martin Naturally the smart are hardworking because they figured it out, they figured it out and are hardworking and make more money, while the stupid are lazy and good for nothing,

because they have not figured it out, so there is no reason, morally, for the smart and able and hardworking to give away their money to the stupid and unable and lazy good-for-nothings. Now, you might say that the stupid are disadvantaged, which they are, obviously, because they are not smart enough to figure it out, and you might say, that the stupid are not good for nothing because, obviously, they are good for buying things that the smart produce. Therefore, if the smart are smart they will give some of their money to the stupid, so the stupid will buy the things that the smart produce, things that make this life worth living, like electronics. So, it all works out perfectly for the good of all, because the smart can put ideas into the electronics about the things they produce, and so enable the unable to know what to buy, and the unable have the electronics in order to be able to do so. *(Pause)* Is this being taped? *(Looking off)* I think this should be taped! *(Blackout)*

*

Scene 8

MARTIN, BERYL, MRS. GRAVES.

- Beryl What happened?
- Mrs. Graves He's passive/aggressive today.
- Beryl Today?
- Mrs. Graves He's passive/aggressive every day.
- Beryl Am I?
- Mrs. Graves No, I wouldn't say so. No.

Beryl Every day we're getting better and better. I thought.

Mrs. Graves No, I wouldn't say so.

Martin No, I wouldn't say so.

Mrs. Graves Not you.

Beryl I mean, him.

Mrs. Graves You don't know what you mean, and neither does he.

Beryl Me?

Mrs. Graves Let's not talk anymore.

Beryl Just say, once and for all.

Mrs. Graves Don't suck me in, okay? You're giving yourself a bad name. You're slurring your people, okay? I like the Jews, I think the Jews have a grip on life, generally speaking, so let's try and keep it that way by taking care of our reputation for good sense, probity, and business acumen.

Beryl I take my medication day and night.

Mrs. Graves You don't have a grip. Too much electricity went through your head.

Beryl I don't remember that.

Mrs. Graves Just as well.

Martin There was an alley that got dark.

Mrs. Graves Not you.

Martin And a vacant lot and a truck.

Beryl See, he talks.

Mrs. Graves But what's he talking about? Anybody can talk. What's the subject? He's never on the subject. People have a subject.

Martin People have a subject.

Mrs. Graves People have a subject that's under discussion.

Martin That's under discussion.

Mrs. Graves You hear that? He repeats. I call that passion/aggression.

Martin Passion/aggression.

Mrs. Graves Shut up. You're an idiot.

Martin Marx was an idiot.

Mrs. Graves Are you interested in learning why?

Martin He thought it could be fixed.

Mrs. Graves Not you.

Beryl Me?

Mrs. Graves You, the subject. Not that you are the subject.
Passion/aggression is the subject.

Beryl I heard that.

Mrs. Graves You heard it, but did you understand it? You've lost track,
and I'm not surprised.

Martin I'm not surprised.

Mrs. Graves It's because he wants to have sex.

Beryl What?

Mrs. Graves Not with you. With me. That's how he shows it, by
repeating what I say. It's clinical passion/aggression.

Beryl With you?

Mrs. Graves Well, I'm the only woman in the room, aren't I?

Beryl Oh.

Mrs. Graves By the numbers. He wants to fuck me, so he repeats what
I say. He *is* fucking me, in a manner of speaking.

Martin In a manner of speaking.

Mrs. Graves He may very well be deranged, but he's still got hormones
coursing through him, and he's still got a tool.

Beryl At his age!

Mrs. Graves Oh, yeah. He don't care that I'm a Black woman.

Beryl That's a shame!

Mrs. Graves He likes that. Turns him on. Eh, Martin?

Martin He thought man created the economical situation.

Beryl Man?

Mrs. Graves He means Marx. That's one of his obsessions.
See how he changes the subject? That's avoidance.

Beryl Marx was my mother's maiden name.

Mrs. Graves That's how he squirms out of it. Oh, that's funny!

Beryl Ha, ha!

Mrs. Graves What a way to make a living!

Beryl His first wife's father gave his money to the party.

Mrs. Graves Say again?

Beryl His first wife's father gave his money to the party.

Mrs. Graves Well, I'll be.

Beryl And then he brooded.

Mrs. Graves I'll bet he did.

Martin I'll bet he did.

Mrs. Graves Keep a lid on it, Martin.

Beryl You should see Max and Martha do it.

Mrs. Graves What? Brood?

Beryl No. You know.

Mrs. Graves Sex? You watch them do it?

Beryl No, no, no, no, no. No.

Mrs. Graves Oh, my.

Martin A dyke and a voyear. How do you spell that?

Mrs. Graves Not like that.

Beryl I meant a routine. It's a routine.

Mrs. Graves Of course it's routine, but it doesn't have to be.

Beryl A thought. Is what it's called. The routine.

Mrs. Graves That's interesting.

Martin That's interesting.

Mrs. Graves I have a feeling a speech is coming. It's on its way.

Martin It's on its way.

Mrs. Graves It's routine.

Beryl It's very good, their routine. I think.

Mrs. Graves You're not following me. There's a buildup of sexual energy, so it has to be expressed. Follow? No, you don't, because you can't stay on one subject. You can't stay on one subject, and he only has one subject. And here it comes.

Martin Thank you. The question is this: A dollar is a unit.

Mrs. Graves That's not a question.

Martin Of measurement. All things are divided into units. A unit is the smallest amount of a thing. Line?

Voice Off One!

Martin It means one. One is a unit of one.

Mrs. Graves *(To BERYL)* Got it?

Beryl One.

Martin There are units of time and units of space.

Beryl He's such a genius.

Martin But the most important unit of all is the dollar.

Beryl I can't believe it.

Martin So the question is this: Everything is divided into units.

Mrs. Graves That's not a question.

Martin Except labor. Why?

Beryl A person is a unit.

Martin A person is not a unity in the accurate sense. He is one thing in the morning and another after dinner. And there you have the question of government responsibility for the poor. And that's where he falls into grievous error. How do you spell that?

Mrs. Graves *(To BERYL)* "He" is Marx. *(To MARTIN)* Grievous is spelled wrong.

Beryl My mother was a Marx.

Martin Because he misunderstood the event horizon. And he thought that government *was* the poor. That was an error, because man is not saintly, despite the efforts of organized religion. Now I'm coming to it. Because nobody knows where it goes. Nature rules. So you could type whatever you want, but a body has to meet a body. If you have any idea at all of what I'm talking about. Linear means a beginning, middle and end, or a top, a bottom and an in-between. There is a shape, like Miss Ebony of the Month here.

Mrs. Graves Whoa!

Martin I feel better now. (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 9

MAX and MARTHA.

Max I saw it happening. I saw it before.

Martha What?

Max I was crushed and preparing to be crushed. And now I'm crushed and preparing to be crushed.

Martha How are you preparing?

Max Well, I...

Martha Are you doing an acting exercise? Is there an acting exercise for preparing to be crushed while you're being crushed?

Max Yes.

Martha What is it?

Max I'm listening to you. I'm listening to you attentively. I'm listening to you so attentively that you've become a

superior person. As though you had meaning.
As though everything you said had crushing meaning,
coming from above.

Martha You're trying to get on my good side. You're trying to
insinuate yourself into my good graces.

Max It's because I don't know what I did wrong.

Martha No. You want the pleasure of love and acceptance, so you
lie about being crushed and preparing to be crushed, as
though you never did anything wrong.

Max What did I do?

Martha You do what you always do, which is lie about being
crushed, and preparing to be crushed, as though I'm a
friend of yours, a pal, a long, lost friend. And you never
say you're sorry for what you did.

Max What did I do?

Martha You act as though you're friendly, you act as though you're
nice, when all you want is sex, and then you're nice.
And then you're not even nice. You're never nice. You're
crushed and preparing to be crushed, and that's a lie.
In actual fact, you don't care about anyone but yourself.
In actual fact, you're only pretending to be crushed.

Max I see.

Martha Because nobody is doing anything to you. No one is doing
anything to you at all. Because you don't meet the minimum
requirements for basic decency and pleasant company.
So, you're alone, basically.

Max The minimum requirements?

Martha The basic minimum. You don't have to ask me about it.
You can ask the doctor. You can ask the nurse. You don't
have to ask me about it.

Max I take it back.

Martha I'm tired of telling you about the basic minimum requirements, and now I don't care.

Max Why did you mention sex?

Martha Because that's how you are. That's how I know you.

Max How?

Martha Don't pretend you don't know. You're only pretending. You can ask any normal person. Ask any normal person. But don't ask me.

Max I won't.

Martha Because I don't care.

Max I'd like to discuss what's happening right this moment.

Martha *(To someone off)* Are there tears? Did you see tears?

Max I'd like to discuss right now.

Martha He's dramatic. He's being dramatic again with the tears.

Max Right now.

Martha Don't pay any attention.

Max Is that it?

Martha It's because you're anxious and depressed, which amounts to the same thing, basically. You're anxious and depressed, because things have not gone well for you, and you're scared about the future, and you take drugs.

Max I agree with that.

Martha If you're going to take drugs, you might as well take the right one. I do. I take the right drugs, and I'm all right. Look at me. I'm just fine. I'm not anxious and I'm not depressed. I feel normal. I feel happy. Why don't you talk to the doctor? I would. I would do something. Talk to the doctor about taking the proper drugs so you're not so anxious and depressed.

Max I will.

Martha Look at your siblings. They're not normal. They have to take the proper drugs to survive. Look at my siblings. They're not normal. We have to take the proper drugs, and then we're normal.

Max I'll talk to the doctor right away.

Martha I'm so glad to hear that. I'm encouraged to hear you say that. Do you have suicidal thoughts?

Max Sometimes I do.

Martha And tell him about your suicidal thoughts. Tell the doctor about your suicidal thoughts, because that's a symptom of chemical imbalance.

Max Okay.

Martha I'm so glad. I'm feeling so much better now, now that you're going to talk to the doctor about a chemical imbalance in the brain, and your suicidal thoughts, and take something for it. I feel so much better now.

Max You're not angry?

Martha No. I feel good right now. But I'm not sexually attracted. That's something else. So if that's what you're thinking, it's wrong.

Max I'm not.

Martha I hope not. Because that would be wrong. It's not so easy. I have certain feelings of hope, but that is not sexual attraction. Because anxiety and depression are not attractive. They are not attractive elements, and sex is difficult.

Max I understand.

Martha Sex is difficult. It is difficult for all of us. For you and for me, for our siblings, everyone. It's possible we weren't meant to live in this society. This society is too much for

us, for people like us. We weren't meant for it. But we have to live here. We can't live in a primeval forest.

Max No. (*Looking out*) Did you get that? (*Blackout*)

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Scene 10

MARTIN and MRS. GRAVES. Enter BERYL and SNOOKY.

Mrs. Graves Come in, why don't you?

Beryl We thought we'd come to visit.

Mrs. Graves And here you are.

Beryl This is my ex, Snooky.

Mrs. Graves How do you do?

Snooky Glad to meet ya.

Beryl He came to visit.

Snooky I came to visit ya.

Mrs. Graves He says hello.

Snooky Hello.

Beryl That's nice, Martin.

Snooky Because I heard.

Beryl He heard you got lost.

Snooky What's the problem?

Mrs. Graves He says he doesn't have a problem.

Snooky What is this, a sanitarium?

Beryl No, no. This is a home, Snook.

Snooky A home? What kind of a home? What is it, like the government?

Mrs. Graves Funds are provided by an anonymous donor.

Snooky I didn't get that.

Mrs. Graves It's a home.

Snooky I got that. For who?

Mrs. Graves For actors.

Snooky So you don't have to work?

Mrs. Graves He says he works all the time. He's never off.

Snooky I'm in the stage hands union. That's the Teamsters.
Nobody fucks with us.

Mrs. Graves He says he's a member of Equity.

Snooky What's the matter, you can't talk with your own mouth?

Martin I'm a member of Equity.

Snooky That's a union?

Mrs. Graves This is an Equity house.

Martin This is an Equity house.

Snooky What are you, a parrot?

Beryl Hey, Snook.

Snooky You stupid fuck, I'll kick your face in.

Beryl Snook.

Snooky I work for a fucking living.

Mrs. Graves He says, Gawhead.

Snooky Gawhead?

Martin Gawhead.

Snooky I don't have to stay in a home.

Mrs. Graves He says thanks for coming over.

Snooky That's why I left her.

Mrs. Graves Why?

Snooky Why? Because she called play work and work, play.

Mrs. Graves Beryl?

Snooky Upside down. Totally.

Mrs. Graves I agree with you on that.

Snooky All my life I been around actors.

Beryl He knows.

Snooky What could be in their heads? But people like that shit, so what are you gonna do?

Beryl He knows, believe me.

Snooky How did Beryl became a comedian? She won a bingo. They took her up on the stage, she looked so stupid they started to laugh.

Beryl They laughed.

Snooky It's a form of hysteria or something. They take her up on stage, her knees come together, she smiles at the ceiling, and they can't stop laughing. What is that?

Mrs. Graves It's a form of hysteria.

Snooky So every Wednesday night they let her win a bingo and bring her up there and they all start laughing. Soon she gets a bug in her head, she's an actor, an artiste, a clown.

Mrs. Graves A natural.

Snooky She starts to bring Martin. They add a little patter, a little dancing. Next thing you know, they got an act. She smiles, she puts her knees together, she looks at the ceiling. They laugh. Martin falls down. They laugh. What is that?

Martin It's a form of hysteria.

Snooky Not you.

Mrs. Graves Who wrote their material?

Snooky You can't put bread on the table, you crack up. And that's what happens.

Martin On the Self: The Self is not I. The Self is bigger than I. The Self has to see what he is doing. He has to see what he is doing so he can know what he is doing. Then his attitude

will change. If he can see what he is doing and know what he is doing, then his attitude will change. God willing. Because he can't change it himself. Because he doesn't have the power.

Snooky You hear that?

Martin Why? Because he is a weak person. Why is he a weak person? He has no idea. Why does he have no idea? Because he doesn't know what he is doing.

Snooky Who could write that?

Beryl We had writers!

Snooky Who? Listen to this, why don't you? Gawhead.

Beryl Snook.

Snooky Who? Gawhead!

Beryl People.

Snooky People? Who were they? Tell the lady, tell the nurse.

Beryl Writers.

Snooky Who? Living or dead? Gawhead, tell the schvartze lady. Living or dead?

Beryl It depends.

Snooky Depends? Depends on what? Did they have bodies? The writers, did they have bodily functions?

Beryl Yes and no.

Snooky You hear that? How many?

Beryl Eleven. No, twelve.

Snooky Functions?

Beryl Uh, no.

Snooky Bodies?

Beryl Yes and no.

Snooky Eleven or twelve. Some with bodies, some without. You get that? Miss?

Mrs. Graves Missus.

Snooky Missus? What are they? Ghosts? *(Pause)*
Are they ghosts? *(Pause)*

Martin Line?

Snooky Who is he talking to? Is he talking to himself?

Beryl I'm not saying.

Snooky Not you.

Mrs. Graves No.

Snooky No?

Mrs. Graves No.

Voice Off Invisibility.

Martin What I was saying. I don't feel like I'm making an impression. I'm not making an impression, therefore I'm invisible. If I am making an impression, I'm not aware of it. Because people like me don't make impressions. We don't have the right to make an impression. Therefore, if I'm making a bad impression, I don't think I am, I don't feel like I am. I feel defensive, I feel on guard, like Max.

Snooky Who is he talking to? Is it Max?

Beryl Max?

Snooky Max. He said Max.

Beryl Uh, no.

Mrs. Graves No.

Martin Who would be the first one off the mark with a punch in the mouth.

Snooky Is he a writer, Max?

Beryl Uh...

Snooky I don't really give a shit. I'm trying to make a point here about non compis mentis, if you know what I'm trying to say.

Martin Well, you could be making a negative impression, and you wouldn't know it. Why? Because you don't think you're making an impression at all, and that's where acting comes in.

Snooky Where?

Martin Well, you could be making an impression then through the impersonation of yourself. *(Pause)*

Snooky Did you follow that? Missus?

Mrs. Graves I thought it was brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

Snooky But what did it mean?

Martin But, by the same token, it's not really you, is it?

Snooky Okay. I don't really give a shit. I just want you to know the real story. Okay?

Mrs. Graves Me?

Snooky Who else could we be talking to here? Not her! Not him!

Mrs. Graves It's very interesting.

Snooky And that's why I remarried. To get back to the real world. In the real world, they say, like this, we'll get dressed, we'll go out, we'll see something, we'll eat something, we'll shmooze, we'll converse, we'll come home, we'll do a little something, we'll sleep, it's enough, tomorrow's another day. And so on.

Mrs. Graves Naturally.

Snooky They keep it simple, for God's sake. And furthermore, I married a Gentile. Why? Because they're not in their heads. The Jewish people, they're going around in their heads. The Gentile people, they have a ghost, but it's a spiritual thing, it's not God, it's not an idea, it's a spiritual thing, and they can live with that.

Beryl Oh! *(Faints. Blackout)*

*

Scene 11

MARTIN, MAX and MARTHA and DR. FUNK.

- Dr. Funk** We don't proscribe drugs.
- Martha** You don't proscribe drugs?
- Dr. Funk** We don't.
- Martha** Meaning you don't.
- Dr. Funk** Meaning I don't.
- Martha** Why not?
- Max** That's an outright lie. How can you have a hospital without drugs?
- Dr. Funk** Well, this is not a hospital.
- Max** I'll bet you wish you hadn't said that.
- Dr. Funk** I do. There was no need for me to answer.
- Max** Now you regret it.
- Dr. Funk** Yes.
- Martha** So what?
- Dr. Funk** Do you want to talk about it?
- Martha** No. I'm tired of that shit. This is the start of the twenty-first Century.
- Max** Did he say proscribe?
- Dr. Funk** Mrs. Graves!
- Martha** Why?
- Max** It's not the same.
- Mrs. Graves** (*Entering*) Here I am.
- Max** It's not the same word as prescribe.
- Dr. Funk** Separate these two.
- Mrs. Graves** Stand apart, will you?
- Max** Okay.
- Mrs. Graves** A little more.

Max How's that?

Mrs. Graves More. Fine.

Dr. Funk We don't prescribe drugs on demand.

Max Exactly.

Dr. Funk From the patients.

Max Okay, just give me any fucking thing why don't you? What'd you give Martin Greenspan? Give me one of those.

Dr. Funk Everybody's different.

Martha Speaking of which, you'd better give him something else because he'll tear us apart with his teeth. Martin Greenspan.

Max He's an angry motherfucker.

Mrs. Graves He has no teeth. Unfortunately. Of his own.

Martha With his gums, then.

Mrs. Graves He could've been a star, you know.

Martha Yeah, sure. Then why didn't he?

Max Who are we talking about?

Martha Not you.

Max I had glory, and glory was thrust from me.

Martha If you think the problem is other people, you have another thing coming.

Max A quote. Everything she says is a quote. It's a quote of a quote.

Martha The problem is yourself.

Max Where have we heard that before?

Martha You can rely on it.

Max And that's why I will never again perform.

Martha The thing is, we shouldn't be in here. We wouldn't be here if we had the proper medication. If we had the proper medication, we could be walking around at large.

Mrs. Graves Time to go back to your room.

Max To our own little hell.

Mrs. Graves You can come and visit another time, again.

Martha It was him I was talking about, not me. I'm alright, myself. I'm fine. I don't get depressed. I'm not anxious. But this man is in a lot of trouble. In some ways, I think he's in worse trouble than even Martin. I don't think Martin has ever tasted glory. This man has tasted glory. He tasted glory and he threw glory away. How could he do that? Because he's troubled. No one in his right mind would throw away glory.

Max I did not throw glory away. Glory was taken from me.

Martha Wrong. The Max and Martha show was cancelled. Why was it cancelled? Because you refused to behave as you ordinarily would behave. Why? Because of pride.

Max Define glory.

Martha All right, I will.

Max Go on.

Martha Glory. It's a state. It's a state of mind, a result of the defeat of one's enemies. It is public triumph, causing the adulation of the masses and the envy of one's peers. Glory. You destroyed it out of pride. Give him a drug for pride, Doc. Give him something to calm him down. Give him something for his proud, predatory ways. Give him something to help him think straight at long last. The sonofabitch. The glory-sucking gossip. Write a goddamned prescription. Isn't that what you're here for? To support modern capitalism? Don't remonstrate. There's no need for remonstrations with me, because I know. I know what's going on. Pharmaceuticals is what's going on. You're working for them. They pay

you and make you feel good. I could go on. I think I will.
I've had it with the system.

Dr. Funk The system?

Martha That's right. The fucking system. Fucking capitalism.
Fucking people. Doctors and pharmacists and HMOs.

Dr. Funk Are we talking system or human nature here?

Martha I'm talking both, fuckhead. I'm talking lowest common
demoninator. Which is what every scum-sucking fool is in
this country, the average idiot racist.

Mrs. Graves All right!

Martha And they're going to put everything on a screen!
You just punch it up and presto they'll have you licking
the fucking thing!

Max Go for it, honey.

Martha I've fucking had it. How low can you go?

Mrs. Graves Whoa!

Martha Fucking gasbags!

Dr. Funk Are we having an epiphany here?

Martha Are we?

Dr. Funk I meant you.

Martha Why don't you say what you mean? Why do you have
to talk like such a fucking phony asshole?

Dr. Funk Why must you swear?

Martha Why must I swear? Why must I swear? (*Exit DR. FUNK*)
This is outrageous!

Martin You can yell at people, but then you have to hit them.

Max Hey, Martin!

Martha Did you see that? He walked out on me!

Mrs. Graves Are you tuning, Martin? Tuning in? China, is it?

Martha Hey, come back here! (*Exits*)

Mrs. Graves Martin?

Max He's made a couple of statements today.

Mrs. Graves I wish I could make a couple of statements.

Max About what, Mrs. Graves?

Mrs. Graves Health care issues and related. Peoples hangin' out when they ought to be working.

Max Artistes should be supported. They should earn a living wage, independent of market forces.

Mrs. Graves Folks want to pursue a hobby, then that's their problem.

Martin I see what she's saying.

Mrs. Graves Get it mixed up and turn into psychopaths.

Max I am in my own head, Mrs. Graves.

Mrs. Graves Exactly.

Martin She's being ironic.

Max I know ironic.

Mrs. Graves Every sane person in this world believes in money. You must be a damned fool not to believe in money. Fool.

Max Aha! Are they recording this?

Mrs. Graves No one is recording anything, Maxwell. That's a delusion, one of your favorites.

Max I could say a few things.

Mrs. Graves Not today.

Max But not today.

Mrs. Graves I'm out of here. *(Exits)*

Martin Bye, bye.

Max Check for microphones, you rat. *(Pause)* Come back!

Mrs. Graves *(Reentering)* What do you want? Speak up.
(Pause. Exits)

Max She only pretended to leave.

Martin You had it coming.

Max Is that what I need now? Reproach?
Martin You're responsible because you don't take care of yourself because you loathe yourself. Why?
Max Why?
Martin Because you have no money. Why? I'll tell you exactly: Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Alcohol, tobacco and drugs. Alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
Max Say it one more time.
Martin Alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.
Max Go ahead.
Martin Alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
Max See if I care.
Martin Alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
Max One more time.
Martin Alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
Max I'll kill you! (*Attacks him, grabs his head and tries to kill him.*)
Mrs. Graves (*Off*) Hey! Let go of that boy! (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 12

MAX, MARTHA, MARTIN, BERYL.

Martha Did you go out through the alley?
Martin No.
Martha Did anyone?
Martin Yes.
Martha Who?
Martin I did.

Martha When you went out through the alley, did you lock the gate behind you?

Martin Why?

Martha That's all I'm asking.

Martin Uh, oh.

Beryl He forgot.

Martin I'm sorry.

Martha You need to tell that to Herb. You need to go up to Herb, whose room is near the gate, and say, I'm sorry, I'm sorry I left the gate unlocked. Why? Because homeless people are going by in the alley with their shopping carts and plastic bags.

Max And exposing us to danger.

Martha Not you. And exposing us to danger.

Martin No.

Martha No?

Martin I won't say I'm sorry twice, and I won't say "exposing us to danger." I think that's too much. I think that's overwritten.

Martha Fine.

Martin In a minute.

Martha No, do it now.

Beryl Can I come?

Martin No.

Martha Yes.

Martin Yes, you can come.

Beryl I'll come!

Martin But don't say anything.

Beryl I will! I mean, I won't! (*Exit MARTIN, BERYL*)

Martha What's the matter with you?

Max I'm standing, I can't even say anything to myself. I'm lost, but not in thought.

Martha Can we talk?

Max I'm in space, I guess. En route. I'm hoping for a thought. I'm in a thoughtless condition (of anomie and lack of affect).

Martha Why don't you cooperate?

Max In the sense of having forgotten where I was headed and why. Which comes with a feeling of concern. Or a shock of some kind. Time is somehow heavy in my head. At the moment. So it's not thought, but movement. Or, why am I standing here? That's a thought. And then movement. I don't know. It's impossible to talk to you.

Martha Stay calm. Don't get hysterical.

Max A siren is sounding for no fucking reason.

Martha It's a car alarm.

Max Maybe there is a reason. Maybe it's a general alarm based on the horror of the situation.

Martha That's not how normal people feel.

Max The absurdity.

Martha People are going on with their lives.

Max The words are hardly out of my mouth and I'm humiliated.

Martha Stay calm. The average person lives normally with an adequate income.

Max I loathe myself.

Martha Why, honey?

Max Don't say honey, that's all I ask.

Martha They don't have time for anxiety and imagination.

Max Please.

Martha Why? That's how normal people are. Normal people say, Honey.

Max I am an underclass person. I have seen what life is.

Martha Don't tell me. Pause. Normal people have enjoyment.

Max As Kafka said, there is hope, but not for us.

Martha Kafka.

Max I'm sick of the Jews.

Martha That's not what I said.

Max Jews, Jews, Jews.

Martha I have nothing to say about that.

Max That's what a Jew is.

Martha What? Pause.

Max Obligated.

Martha A normal person is obligated, but not without hope.
There must be hope. So buck up. (*Enter MARTIN, BERYL*)

Max What happened?

Martha He had a line. The line was, "I apologize for leaving the gate to the alley unlocked." Okay?

Max I apologize for leaving the gate to the alley unlocked, okay.

Martha Not okay. Just "I apologize for leaving the gate to the alley unlocked."

Max Okay. And?

Beryl Instead he said, "Repent."

Max He said that to Herb?

Beryl He went up to Herb and said, "Repent."

Max And?

Beryl "Repent, you fucking Kraut."

Max Really?

Martin Repent, you fucking Kraut faggot. No apology intended.

Beryl Oh!

Max They don't know Herb. Who is Herb?

Martha They don't need to know.

Beryl Oh!

Max Then what's it all for? (*Silence*)

Martha Okay. What's your question?

Max What's it for?

Martha What's it for?

Max That's what I'm asking. That's all I'm asking. What's it for, if not for the audience?

Martha I'm telling you.

Max If not for them?

Martha It is for them, but not only for them.

Max They're paying, after all.

Martha Nobody forced them.

Max You invited them.

Martha Not I.

Max There has to be a story, and it has to be understandable, because they have to be able to follow it, otherwise, it's a failure. They don't know Herb. They don't know who Herb is. It's inappropriate and irritating.

Martha What are you, a critic? How did you get to be a critic? Who are you to offer an opinion?

Martin The mechanism of a play is a path to another level of reality. The substance is not the plot, it is the dialogue. This substance arises from the inner life of the author. Actors are the medium of expression.

Martha What?

Martin Knowing that performance is a level of being.

Beryl Oh!

Martin Actors should not act. Actors are instruments. They are played upon by the text. The text is already written. Good text doesn't need interpretation, only clarity. Clarity and simplicity. Tone.

Beryl Oh! That's so good!

Martha Then why didn't you say your line? I gave you a line and you didn't say it. You said something else entirely. How can you talk about text when you can't even remember a simple line, like "I'm sorry I didn't lock the gate?"

Beryl That was good, too!

Martin It's not a question of behavior.

Martha We're not talking about behavior!

Max Can you imagine? A whole industry? People behaving? All that behavior? Can you imagine?

Martha What about the line?

Max Politically?

Martha No! No, not politically! Politics has nothing to do with it! What's the matter with you? I was referring to another issue entirely!

Max Issue? Issue?

Martha That's it! Nothing will never be performed again! Not in my lifetime! Are you happy now?

Max Happy? Happy?

Beryl I'm sorry.

Martha Not you. (*Special light for MARTHA*) Because you never do it the way I asked you to in the first place. You never do it right. And then you collapse in the face of criticism. Any sort of criticism or antipathy. The merest hint of displeasure. The slightest bored expression from anyone at all, the most ignorant stranger, the stupidest movie producer, and you have lost all morale. Because you have no inherent confidence of your own, nothing of your own, no inner-directed experience, so to say, no independent initiative, no consciousness of your own. You are audience-driven entirely, like a

cipher, like a robot, like a kewpie doll, like a chorette or a banana— (*Special light goes out.*) Hey! Put those lights back on! I am not finished! Gimme those lights! (*Pause. No light*) That's it! I shall never appear before you again! I resign! I retire! I hope you're happy now! (*Goes off*)

- Martin** Was she talking to me?
Max We'll try again tomorrow.
Martin We'll try again tomorrow.
Max Was she talking to me?
Beryl I'm sorry.
Max You did very well, I thought. Actually.
Martin Me?
Max Who else could I be talking to?
Beryl What about me? I'm here, too!
Max You remembered you had a line. That was good.
Martin I'll try again tomorrow.
Max No interpretation. That's all you need to know. (*Blackout*)

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Scene 13

All but MARTHA.

- Dr. Funk** We thought we could all gather together like this and have a conversation. (*MARTHA sneaks back on.*)
Martha Why?
Mrs. Graves It's like group therapy.
Martha Group therapy?
Max Is it being taped?

Beryl We didn't sign anything.

Mrs. Graves And Martin, you have to participate. Martin?

Beryl In case it's taped.

Dr. Funk No, it is not being taped.

Beryl Visually or mentally.

Max Is there a camera?

Beryl We have to sign.

Dr. Funk No camera.

Martha Obviously, we're talking candid camera here.

Dr. Funk I wouldn't do that.

Max How would we know?

Martha I don't have anything in common with these people.

Martin Wait a minute.

Beryl We have rights to our material.

Mrs. Graves It's not a question of rights, Mrs. Brannon.

Max Yes, it is. It's a question of rights.

Martha I don't know if I want to be associated with them, especially not in front of the camera.

Dr. Funk There is no camera, Martha.

Max Where's the camera?

Dr. Funk Trust me.

Max Trust you? Trust you?

Martin Wait a minute.

Mrs. Graves Everyone stop and wait for Martin. *(Pause)*

Martha You see that? It's impossible.

Beryl I wouldn't have signed. Not without a check.

Mrs. Graves Forget that.

Beryl What?

Mrs. Graves I said forget the part about signing something. There's nothing to sign.

Beryl We used to sign. We used to sign things. (*Sobs*)

Mrs. Graves Okay. Forget about it.

Beryl It was symbolic of our situation.

Dr. Funk I think that's very true, Mrs. Brannon. Thanks for saying that.

Martha What did she say?

Dr. Funk I think that was an elegant way of saying what the situation used to be in contrast with the pathos of the situation now.

Max Oh, shut the fuck up.

Dr. Funk From the point of view of functioning.

Max Did you just ignore me?

Dr. Funk We all have a lot in common, it seems to me.

Max You ignored me, as though I had no rights.

Martha We have nothing in common with you in the first place.

Beryl I just want to thank you, Doctor.

Martin Wait a minute.

Beryl For your support.

Mrs. Graves Okay, forget that now.

Beryl Thank you.

Max I have rights.

Martha Unless you stretch the idea of entertainment, the theory of entertainment, to include the sanctum sanctorum of the psychological exchange. More to the point, unless you propose that *all* exchange is a form of entertainment. Yes. I think that's saying something, I think that's bringing something to the occasion. Do you follow? Does anyone follow me?

Max Define entertainment.

Martha Oh, please. Interesting, diverting, amusing.

Max That's the verb.

Martha Amusement, hospitality, consideration, a keeping in mind.

Martin Wait a minute.

Beryl She's very intelligent.

Martha In which case I suppose you qualify.

Dr. Funk I think so. I think we have that in common. But I think the four of you have more in common professionally.

Martha That's what I was saying in the first place.

Dr. Funk I know.

Martha Then why didn't you stop me?

Dr. Funk So it might help you to share.

Martha Not them. They can't keep up.

Martin All wrong.

Max You said I was weird.

Martin All wrong.

Max Are we supposed to express our feelings?

Mrs. Graves Spit it out, Martin.

Max Or not? Or am I completely wrong again?

Martin Because that's what's nice about being an audience. Why? Because they don't have to participate. Why? Because they paid money to sit in the dark. Why? Because they want to be entertained by you. That's why the lights are on you, not on them. Therefore it is not an exchange at all, as one party is doing something and the other is not. One is giving and one is receiving. One is paying and the other is getting paid. I suppose that's an exchange, but it's not the exchange you were talking about, where everything is on the same level, including the sanctum sanctorum and the nurse, no, where there is no terror in the situation at all, no heads of lettuce flying at you, so to say, or the absence of memory in the

lights, or nobody laughs when you fall down, but plunges the dagger, so to say, into the heart.

Beryl Martha's intelligent, but my partner is more intelligent than she is.

Martin I entertain myself. I'm in control. Nobody else is entertaining me, so to say, at all. I am entertaining me. I am the audience. I am the entertainer and the audience. Because I choose to entertain or to be entertained.

Max Which comes to the same thing.

Martin What?

Max Which comes to the same thing. Which means it has no meaning. You are not saying anything. You started out as if you were going to say something, but you didn't come up with it.

Beryl What?

Max So you wasted our time, while I was asking a real question.

Martin I entertain, or I'm entertained.

Mrs. Graves You're in China.

Martin Two different things.

Max What did you mean when you called me, "weird?"
What is that?

Dr. Funk Well, it was a joke.

Max A joke?

Dr. Funk I thought you could handle it.

Max A joke?

Dr. Funk Yes.

Max What is a joke?

Dr. Funk Well, it was a friendly intimacy, at the moment.

Max A friendly intimacy? A friendly intimacy?

Dr. Funk Yes. A light moment that we shared.

Max I'll tell you what a joke is.

Martin I'll tell you what a joke is.

Mrs. Graves Not you.

Max A joke is a violent act, a put-down. It was a put-down. You put me down. You called me "weird." That moment was shared at my expense.

Martin At my expense.

Max What did you mean by it? Do you think I'm strange? Do you think that it helps me to know that you think of me as strange? Weird? Funny? It has stayed with me all week, that remark. I have been obsessed by it. Now I think of myself as weird. What am I supposed to do now?

Dr. Funk I think it's good that you spoke about it, Max.

Martha Don't dwell on it. You dwell on it and imagine things.

Dr. Funk Thank you for that.

Max For what?

Dr. Funk For speaking about it. I know how difficult it must have been for you.

Max Difficult? Difficult?

Martha (*Off DR. FUNK*) He doesn't understand actors. He doesn't understand what actors go through. Our needs and worries. Our fears and doubts. Our extreme vulnerability to the attention of others. So it's easy for him to talk about weird, because he doesn't have to.

Max What?

Martha Entertain.

Max Wrong. That's exactly wrong. He thought he was being entertaining. By making a joke. Which is the same as assassinating someone.

Martha Oh, shut up.

Max And not only that, but you've brought us right back to the beginning. We're right back where we started. We haven't gone anywhere. Thanks to you, we're going around in circles. We're on a carousel. Is that what you want? To not go anywhere? To go round and round like a hobby horse? Is that what you want?

Dr. Funk Perhaps Beryl would like to contribute something. Beryl?

Max Contribute? Contribute?

Beryl I don't know. (*Special light cue for BERYL*)

Dr. Funk Try.

Beryl My mother's brother was a Marx. He was married to a Bronstein. Not the famous. They came from Lithuania, or from Europe. He always wore a tallis. She was four foot ten, he was a six-footer, gorgeous. They bickered all their lives. Your sister Shirley had to go over there and take care of it. Because she died. Gussie, his wife, who was unseparated from him in the worst way, so he couldn't stand it. He said, "If she goes, I won't live any more." And he wore a tallis even to the movies. Then she died. So they were afraid to tell him. So they put Gussie in bed and covered her up and he said, "Good, have a nice sleep." So Shirley had to go over there and take him to the movies, so they could give her a decent burial, may she rest in peace, but my uncle died one week later. (*Special goes out*) I think the main thing is the check, after all. If we could get back on our feet, up on the boards, do the patter, tap our toes.

Mrs. Graves Well, time certainly flies.

Dr. Funk Oh. Is it time?

Mrs. Graves Yes, it is.

Max Well, at least she said something.

Martin I liked it.
Beryl Oh!
Mrs. Graves He wasn't talking about you.
Max At last.
Beryl Me?
Dr. Funk Yes, you.
Martha She can't keep up. It's impossible.
Beryl Oh, I'm so glad! (*Blackout*)

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Scene 14

BERYL, MARTIN, DR. FUNK.

Dr. Funk Shirley?
Martin Surely. (*Smiles*)
Dr. Funk Don't laugh.
Beryl I'm not laughing.
Dr. Funk It isn't funny.
Beryl I don't think it's funny.
Martin She's aggressive/compulsive.
Dr. Funk Who is?
Martin (*Deadpan*) Surely.
Beryl She never speaks to me. Neither one. Why? Because she's superior. Why is she superior? Because she's a shrink. She's not an actor, neither one.
Dr. Funk Neither one?
Beryl Of the Shirleys. They're not actors, they have no idea.
Dr. Funk Of?

Beryl Of?

Dr. Funk No idea of?

Beryl That's right. None. (*DR. FUNK takes a deep breath.*)

Dr. Funk Let's see if we can't come to something.

Beryl We're not?

Martin Surely.

Dr. Funk I mean by talking.

Beryl I never get a chance. Max and Martha do all the talking.

Dr. Funk They're not here.

Beryl Where are they?

Dr. Funk Well, they're with Mrs. Graves right now. Why?

Beryl Why? Because they'll steal our material. They do all the talking and all the stealing. And me and my partner are helpless. We're helpless and innocent and there's nothing we can do. Why? Because we have no money. If you have no money, there's nothing you can do. Why? Because of Marxism and Idealism and his first wife and he can't remember.

Martin Wait a minute.

Beryl His lines.

Dr. Funk Go on.

Beryl We got laughed right off the stage.

Martin Right off the stage.

Beryl I know you're mad because you're sad.

Martin Don't rhyme.

Beryl Because you don't feel good.

Martin I agree with that.

Beryl We took a photo, remember? Remember we took a photo?

Dr. Funk I wasn't there.

Beryl No, because you were out with them. You were doing things with them. You were giving them attention. That's what happens, because they get all the attention.

Dr. Funk And now?

Beryl And now?

Dr. Funk What about now?

Beryl Now you're acting. You're only pretending. But you can't kid me, buster, because I was in a Broadway show.

Dr. Funk I see.

Beryl That's right.

Dr. Funk What is aggressive/compulsive?

Beryl She's a murderer. (*DR. FUNK takes a deep breath.*)

Martin Good breathing.

Dr. Funk Excuse me?

Martin That was a good bit of breathing right there. I thought.

Beryl She's an attacker. I don't care what she says. And she trivializes the sorrow of our people.

Dr. Funk Martha?

Beryl Not Martha. Shirley.

Martin Surely you know Shirley.

Dr. Funk Okay, that's it.

Martin What?

Dr. Funk I'm leaving.

Beryl See, he's going to them. He's here five minutes, and what? It's all he can stand.

Dr. Funk We're not getting anywhere.

Beryl See, he hasn't moved. Why? Because he doesn't have to—they're already here, they're in this room, hiding.

Dr. Funk Who are you speaking of?

Beryl Of?

Dr. Funk You never heard that word?

Beryl No, I never heard that word before. Of. Ov. O-ve. (*Exit DR. FUNK*) Okay, forget it. Come back. He's only pretending.

Martin Competition.

Beryl That's right.

Martin And God has nothing to do with it.

Beryl I never said.

Martin God has nothing to do with it. Why? Because there's a limited amount.

Beryl That's funny.

Martin To go around.

Beryl What did I say?

Martin So what you've got here is a random event horizon. Not God. (*Reenter DR. FUNK*)

Beryl I could say something.

Martin I'll come back to this idea later.

Dr. Funk What were you speaking about?

Beryl I have no idea what he was talking about. I was only acting.

Martin Because it's a difficult proposition, if only I could clear my head. Because the audience is God.

Beryl I never felt that.

Dr. Funk But what has this to do with God?

Martin God has nothing to do with it.

Beryl He just said.

Dr. Funk But what has this to do with the event horizon?

Martin The event horizon is not God. (*A silence*) Do I—?

Dr. Funk It's my line. (*Pause*) I see.

Beryl I understand what he's saying.

Dr. Funk What?

Beryl He's very intelligent. (*Pause*)

Dr. Funk Okay.

Martin It was an accident.

Dr. Funk And Shirley?

Beryl I said.

Dr. Funk Because someone has to pay for this.

Beryl She'll pay.

Dr. Funk This is a practical matter.

Martin Absolutely.

Beryl For trivializing our sorrow.

Dr. Funk No, I mean money. Dollars.

Beryl He was deprived and underprivileged.

Dr. Funk (To *BERYL*) He thinks you're his mother.

Beryl He thinks everybody is his mother.

Dr. Funk Are you?

Beryl He thinks *you're* his mother.

Dr. Funk Anger takes the place of helplessness. I'm angry, therefore I'm not helpless. I can lash out.

Martin That's not me.

Dr. Funk You forget your lines and fall down. Why? Because you're undeserving of attention and unworthy of lines. This is especially so of the Jewish tradition. Because regular Jewish people, they have attention and they have lines, and you have not. You have neither attention nor lines. Why?

Martin Why?

Dr. Funk You know why, Martin Greenspan. (*Enter MRS. GRAVES*)

Mrs. Graves Guess who's here? (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 15

DR. FUNK and MRS. GRAVES. Enter SHIRLEY.

- Dr. Funk** I'm so glad.
- Shirley** How do you do?
- Dr. Funk** What is Martin Greenspan to you?
- Shirley** He's my nephew. His mother tried to kill him. Why? Because my mother tried to kill me. Why? Because she was the personification of Evil.
- Mrs. Graves** Only you?
- Shirley** No, she tried to murder all of us. And she succeeded, in spirit, with everyone—but me. I had my problems but I overcame them with the help of an analyst.
- Dr. Funk** Are you a psychiatrist? M.D.?
- Shirley** No. I'm a licensed therapist.
- Dr. Funk** And do you know Beryl?
- Shirley** Yes. She's part of his problem because she reminds him of his mother.
- Mrs. Graves** He's shy.
- Dr. Funk** What kind of therapist?
- Shirley** I don't have an hour free. And I own an institute. A whole institute.
- Dr. Funk** Orthodox?
- Shirley** What do you mean?
- Dr. Funk** You put them on a couch?
- Shirley** Yes and no.
- Dr. Funk** No?
- Shirley** They can sit up if they want. I'm not a dictator.
- Mrs. Graves** Oh, no.
- Shirley** Excuse me?

Mrs. Graves I've heard a lot about you.

Shirley Well, I made it out of the gutter to the top of my profession.

Dr. Funk Yes. That's why we're so glad.

Mrs. Graves Honored.

Dr. Funk What's his diagnosis?

Shirley It's called repetition-compulsion. His mother got it from my mother.

Mrs. Graves When was this?

Shirley During the Depression. My father was in hats. Haberdashery. In those days everyone wore hats. Then he died. My father committed suicide by getting T.B. and dying.

Dr. Funk Why?

Shirley To get away from my mother.

Dr. Funk I see.

Mrs. Graves Whoa, Nellie!

Shirley What's that?

Mrs. Graves Uh, an expression.

Shirley Interesting.

Mrs. Graves I don't know where I got it.

Shirley Basically, you don't believe anyone can love anyone else.

Mrs. Graves Me? I don't believe that.

Shirley I'm talking about a condition of alienation. It's psychopathic. That's where you get the drugs, alcohol, tobacco and promiscuity.

Mrs. Graves Promiscuity?

Shirley Indiscriminate sexual activity.

Mrs. Graves I know what promiscuity is. I'm a registered nurse.

Dr. Funk Do you want to see Martin?

Shirley No.

Dr. Funk Why not?

Shirley He broke his therapy. He wanted me to be his aunt. Naturally, I was suspicious.

Dr. Funk You *are* his aunt.

Shirley I can't allow it, because it's a form of resistance. Why is it a form of resistance? To turn his therapist into his aunt?

Dr. Funk You are his aunt, am I right?

Shirley So as to avoid the truth of his situation. So as to deny the significance of his symptoms. In order to repeat his failure again and again. Again, again, and again. You can see that I care. I gave up two of my hours. People who need me and who pay for it, which is a sign of stability or wealth.

Dr. Funk That's something I wished to bring up.

Shirley Why? Because you want to get paid, right? There's nothing wrong with that. Is there? And you want her to get paid, whatever it is that she does. Her.

Dr. Funk My assistant.

Shirley Of course. You expect to get paid, and you should get paid. That's life. That's your basic situation. Are you a doctor, doctor? M.D.?

Dr. Funk No.

Shirley Who needs it, an M.D.? Chemistry, biology. We're not talking biology here, are we?

Dr. Funk What are we talking?

Shirley Crime.

Mrs. Graves Oh, my goodness!

Shirley What's that?

Mrs. Graves An expression.

Shirley Interesting.

Mrs. Graves I don't know where that came from.

Shirley You don't?

Mrs. Graves Childhood?

Shirley Child killing goes on. Child murder. By the parents.
Have you met his mother?

Mrs. Graves Martin's?

Shirley Of course Martin's. Who are we talking about,
Melchizadek?

Mrs. Graves Who's that?

Shirley He's a king, in the bible. I thought you people knew
the bible.

Dr. Funk His mother.

Shirley His mother, right. His mother is my mother.

Dr. Funk Wait a minute.

Shirley Repetition-compulsion. Her mother tried to kill her, who
is my mother, who tried to kill him, which is his mother.
Violence, starvation, deprivation, a catastrophe. That's what
she did to me. To us. I'm a survivor. Martin is a survivor.
His mother did not survive. She became her mother. How?
Repetition-compulsion. Why? No one knows. Is it in the
genes? Is it cultural? Is it Brooklyn? Martin survived. How?
By becoming an actor. Actors know something. What do
they know? They know human psychology. They know the
self. They know the illusion of the self. That's how they
can be. They're someone else. You follow me?

Mrs. Graves Wait a minute.

Shirley Never mind. You're not an intellectual. I'll ask you, Does
he smoke?

Mrs. Graves He does smoke.

Shirley Does he drink?

Mrs. Graves He drinks.

Shirley I'm sorry to have to say it, but those are suicidal tendencies. Are you giving him drugs?

Dr. Funk Well, yes.

Shirley I'm not surprised, because he's a drug addict. So what do you want from me?

Dr. Funk These are bad times, theatrically speaking.

Shirley These are the times they always were. There are no good times. There is only struggle. He has nothing because he thinks he's not supposed to. Why? His mother told him. It's a symptom. So what does he want?

Mrs. Graves He wants attention.

Shirley No. He wants to be taken care of. Which comes to the same thing. Am I supposed to become his aunt now? In lieu of therapy? Which is what he needs, as opposed to what he wants. No. The chain stops here. Now. With me.

Mrs. Graves He wants love and forgiveness.

Shirley Forgiveness? Forgiveness?

Mrs. Graves I forgive everybody now.

Shirley Why should you forgive?

Mrs. Graves Given the nature of things.

Shirley Forgiveness is not what you have to do.

Mrs. Graves What's wrong with it?

Shirley When violence is committed against children.

Mrs. Graves Okay.

Shirley It's unforgiveable.

Mrs. Graves What do you do?

Shirley Revenge is good. Retaliation is good. Excuse me, my limousine is waiting.

Mrs. Graves Not that he did anything wrong.

Shirley Of course not.

Mrs. Graves For failing himself. For not living up to himself.
Shirley Naturally. He smokes. He drinks. He's a drug addict. You see? You get the picture, finally? It's an act. He's an actor. Stubborn. The comedian. Here. My card. Next time, call for an appointment. (*Blackout*)

*

Scene 16

All.

Dr. Funk We just want to go over a few things with you.
All Sure. Sure. Okay. Sure.
Dr. Funk Would that be all right? Beryl?
Beryl I spoke. Already.
Dr. Funk Good. So. (*Pause*)
Martin Is that me?
Mrs. Graves What?
Martin I'm sorry.
Dr. Funk As we review your curriculum vitae.
Martin Me?
Martha Not only you. He thinks he's the only one. It's typical. Self-love is what it is.
Beryl I was in a Broadway show.
Martha We forgive you.
Dr. Funk Max and Martha had a series.
Mrs. Graves Max and Martha in the morning. Max and Martha go shopping. Max and Martha make a dinner. Max and Martha on vacation. And so on.

Dr. Funk Funny and poignant, it says here.

Martha Poignant? Poignant?

Dr. Funk I'm reading from a review.

Martha Poignant? I hate that. What does that mean? Poignant is tasteless. Poignant has no meaning. Poignant?

Max Touching, vulnerable.

Martha Touching? Vulnerable?

Beryl That's what they said about me.

Martha No one said anything about you. You're unspeakable.

Martin Wait a minute.

Beryl In the paper.

Max Well, okay, but you can't tell anything from that. You got canned laughter in there. You don't know. Those aren't real people laughing.

Beryl Me?

Mrs. Graves Not you, honey.

Max It's mechanical. There's no audience there.

Martha They were in their homes, Max, on couches.

Max I know that.

Martha Watching Max and Martha doing things.

Max At least she was on the Broadway stage.

Martha What was she doing on the Broadway stage? Alright, I'll tell you. She was getting slapped in the face by a fat man, and the audience laughed. Slapped in the face by a fat man, and the audience laughed.

Max You said that twice.

Martin Was it my line?

Mrs. Graves No, honey.

Martin Sorry.

Dr. Funk We do need to connect up some dots here, Martin.

Max Of course, that's what was so confusing, existentially. I enjoy watching a real performer. You know, one who belts it out, who throws that hip, who struts, who times a punch line, who slaps, who falls, I love that.

Dr. Funk Yes?

Max But we were playing, well, Max and Martha.

Beryl That's funny.

Max And the audience wasn't there.

Martha The camera was there, Max. The camera.

Max Now I imagine my funeral, my memorial. What they'll say, what they'll think. No more Max. He failed to perform and was cancelled. And no guarantee of syndication.

Dr. Funk Martin Greenspan, this must strike a chord with you.

Martin Me?

Beryl Oh, he's so much better now!

Martin Sorry.

Beryl See how he apologizes!

Martha I'm sick of it. I'm sick of his apologies. Stop apologizing, why don't you? It's a big fucking drag! *(Pause)*

Martin Sorry.

Martha And why should it strike a chord? Strike a chord? What kind of a way is that to talk to a person?

Mrs. Graves Would you like a glass of water and a pill?

Martha Yeah, I would! *(Exit MRS. GRAVES)* A pill! Any fucking thing?

Dr. Funk While we have a moment, I'd like to make a correction in the text.

Martha The text?

Dr. Funk Yes. The phrase, "Dutiful mental anticipation to the possibility of bad things happening," was used twice in the text.

Beryl Twice?

Martha Oh, shut up, it's beyond you.

Dr. Funk Yes, once in regard to worry, and the other with reference to prayer.

Martha I don't think we said it twice.

Beryl Is that prayer?

Dr. Funk In any event—

Martha There's no "in any event." We said it once, not twice.

Dr. Funk In any event, the proper expression is, "Dutiful mental *obedience* to the possibility of bad things happening." There's a big difference between "anticipation" and "obedience."

Martha What's the difference?

Dr. Funk The concept derives from Freud.

Beryl That's not prayer!

Martha You didn't answer me, Funk. (*Reenter MRS. GRAVES. MARTHA belts down a pill.*)

Martin Is it me, now?

Max Go ahead. Why not? Fine. (*Pause*) Well?

Martin Well, I did quite a number of performances. Quite a number. In various venues of various kinds.

Martha That's redundant, Greenspan.

Beryl We did a lot of variety.

Martha Not you.

Dr. Funk Okay, there's just a couple more loose ends. First, there's some confusion about the event horizon. Martin?

Martin Confusion?

Dr. Funk In the audience.

Martin It's the future present or the present future. Without that, life as we know it would be unrecognizable as life. Line?

Dr. Funk No, it's me.

Martin Sorry.

Voice Off Not you!

Dr. Funk Oh, excuse me.

Martin Line?

Voice Off Chaos!

Martin Yes, it is unknown. It is unknown and uncanny. It is uncannily unknowable and especially so on the stage, where the experience is one of heightened awareness of not knowing.

Beryl (*Ecstatic*) Oh!

Martin I saw the audience. I see them now. What are they thinking? What are they feeling? What are they planning?

Max Exactly.

Martha Not you.

Martin What happens when they go home?

Martha They're already home. That's the trouble with your reasoning. They never left. They're watching pictures. They're watching TV. They're on the Internet. This is a web site. Do you think we're live? We're not live. That's where you're wrong.

Mrs. Graves You don't know. I agree with Martin.

Martha Is she allowed to speak now? I don't think she should be allowed to speak now.

Dr. Funk (*Looking off*) Quite right.

Mrs. Graves Well...excuse me.

Dr. Funk Beryl?

Beryl I don't think I'll share, because there's a certain amount of hostility.

Martin Line?

Martha See, he's not cured.

- Dr. Funk** I'd just like to interject: that Martin is healed, not cured. Healing is different than curing.
- Martha** Why? He can no longer participate. He can't come up with it. It goes against his essential nature. Because he can't pretend that he cares. He doesn't care, and he can't pretend. But he has no self-esteem, because of his background, which is low-class sordid, and his education, which is minimalist. So he can't admit it and he can't affirm it. Is he aware? Does he have a conscience? Actually, he has a conscience. It's buried somewhere in his foot, like mercury in his foot.
- Mrs. Graves** Mercury in his foot?
- Beryl** That's not conscience!
- Martha** (*Ignoring her*) That's what happens. You get too much mercury, it sinks to the feet. That's what mercury does. You're an automaton, you're walking around with metals in your feet.
- Max** Well, I have something to say, disregarding your bullying tactics, Martha, which is that there is a class issue here, which I believe was explained by the psychiatrist earlier.
- Martin** Surely.
- Dr. Funk** Shirley Brannon.
- Mrs. Graves** Not Brannon. Greenspan. Shirley Greenspan.
- Beryl** I'd just like to say—I hollered. I hollered loud and long and no help came. The lousy stinking bastids.
- Max** Namely, that we don't feel equal, we don't have rights, we try to entertain, we try to please and to enlighten, when in actual fact we are in revolt, we are in anguished revolt, unsure of our identities, subordinate, insecure and yet enraged, desiring of acceptance and thirsting for revenge, I speak for Martin and Beryl and myself here—

Martha I don't disagree with that—

Beryl Thank you. I feel better now.

Max At a time when the progressive theory has been abandoned and everyone is at each other's throat—

Martha I'm with you there, Max.

Max Line?

Martin Is it me?

Max Not you. At a time—

Beryl What about Herb?

Dr. Funk Good point there, Beryl.

Martha Good point?

Beryl We don't see Herb, we don't know Herb. So why is he in the play? He shouldn't be in there. What kind of attitude is that, to mention a character, someone we never heard of before, Herb, and put him in the play? What is that?

Dr. Funk Post-modern?

Max What's that?

Dr. Funk Well, so they'll know what to call this, when they go home.

Max Who?

Dr. Funk In their critiques. Them.

Martha Postmodern? What is that?

Dr. Funk Deconstructed?

Martha Deconstructed? Deconstructed?

Max No. I would call it—

Beryl It's a comedy! Rhapsodic!

Martha Calm down, you.

Max I would call it pre-chaotic, or post-chaotic.

Martha How can that be? You made that up! Yourself!
In your head!

Max Theoretically.
Martha Theoretically?
Dr. Funk All right, never mind. That's it.
Voice Off Love! What about love!
Dr. Funk Martin?
Martin *(To Audience)* I love you. *(Pause)* Not all of you.
Some of you.
Max As I was saying, at a time when—
Mrs. Graves Curtain time, fool.
Dr. Funk That's it.
Mrs. Graves We're out of here. *(Blackout)*

The End