

BEER AND RHUBARB PIE

CHARACTERS:

LEN, a gay man in his thirties, attractive, dressed in Levi's and tee-shirt
FERNANDO, a masculine, muscular Cuban in his forties, with a Spanish
accent, dressed in workman's tee-shirt and soiled work pants.
ROSA, Fernando's wife, in her thirties or forties, full-bodied, pretty,
Spanish accent, talkative.
BOB, Len's roommate and ex-lover, in his thirties, a little overweight,
not effeminate, just playful.

SETTING: I) The kitchen of Fernando and Rosa's San Francisco apartment.

II) The kitchen and an alcove of Len and Bob's flat, with an attached alcove
containing a daybed.

III) Rosa's office. The kitchen of Len and Bob's flat.

TIME: Not long ago.

ACT I Scene One

(Fernando is sitting at the table drinking a glass of milk. Rosa is offstage.)

ROSA (Offstage) So do you think we should do it or no?

FERNANDO (No answer, takes a sip of milk)

ROSA (Offstage) I read this article in *Reader's Digest* which said it's no good idea to have
another kid if you're just doing it to help save the marriage.

FERNANDO (No reply, takes another sip of milk)

ROSA (Offstage) What do you think, Fernando?

FERNANDO (No answer)

ROSA (Offstage) Fernando, are you still there?

FERNANDO Yeah.

ROSA (Offstage) Can you hear me? What do you think? Should we have another kid or no?

FERNANDO Let me think about it.

ROSA (Offstage) Well, tell me what you think about it now.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

FERNANDO I don't know what I think about it now.

ROSA (Offstage) You must to have some ideas.

FERNANDO (No answer, takes a sip of milk)

ROSA (Offstage) Fernando?

FERNANDO (No answer, he sniffs the milk to see if it's sour, isn't sure)

ROSA (Offstage) Are you still there? Huh?

FERNANDO (No answer)

ROSA I read that not talkin' is a form of violence!

FERNANDO (No answer)

ROSA (Offstage) Fernando? (Entering, half dressed, still putting on clothes) Oh, you are there! You dead or something?

FERNANDO No.

ROSA Why do I gotta always drag everything out from you? Why don't you talk to me?

FERNANDO I talk to you.

ROSA No, you grunt. I talk to you, but you won't talk to me. What is it? I read this article about men who won't talk to their wives. They're not healthy. Do you know that?

FERNANDO (Doesn't answer)

ROSA That article was so true I couldn't believe it. In *Cosmo* magazine. It was you they was talking about. The husband who won't open up. Keeps everything locked up inside. You never know what he's thinking.

FERNANDO (Changing the subject) You workin' today, Rosa?

ROSA Of course I'm workin' today. What do you think I'm getting ready for? (She puts on more clothes) Mrs. Mattingly said if I was late again she'd dock me. Boy, I hate her guts. So what do you think — should we have another kid or what?

FERNANDO (Doesn't answer, sips milk)

ROSA *Querido*, don't leave your glass in the sink like you did last time. Gets all sour and smells bad, okay? And why don't you put that skylight in here like you said you would? We'd get more ventilation and stuff wouldn't smell so terrible. You got work today?

FERNANDO Got a job over in the Castro later. Some guy's broken steps.

ROSA Is it that guy I work with? His *friend*?

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FERNANDO I guess.

ROSA We could afford another kid, now that Alfredo and Ignacio are almost grown up. They could even take care of it. We can afford it. Maybe we could have a little girl this time. I'd like that. Wouldn't you? (Smiles) . . . Rosanna.

FERNANDO (Shrugs)

ROSA What kind a answer is that?

FERNANDO (Shrugs again) Is there any beer in the house?

ROSA You want beer now?

FERNANDO Yeah.

ROSA You want beer in the morning?

FERNANDO Yeah.

ROSA You want beer?

FERNANDO That's what I said.

ROSA There ain't any.

FERNANDO In the house?

ROSA Yeah.

FERNANDO Give me some money.

ROSA For beer?

FERNANDO Give me some.

ROSA No.

FERNANDO I want some beer.

ROSA No.

FERNANDO Okay, I don't want any beer.

ROSA I thought you wanted it.

FERNANDO Doesn't matter.

ROSA (Getting her purse) Here's some money.

FERNANDO I don't want it. Forget it.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- ROSA I don't get you. I never know what you're thinkin'. You've got to learn to communicate, Fernando. I communicate. Do you see me communicating right now? You oughta try it. It'd be good for you. Be good for our marriage. What do you say to that?
- FERNANDO You're gonna be late for work.
- ROSA This is more important. I read this article that said people should always make time for interpersonal relationships.
- FERNANDO For what?
- ROSA That's what we got — an interpersonal relationship.
- FERNANDO (Skeptical) Oh?
- ROSA You feelin' upset about somethin'? The fact that you're not workin' that much? I read where men don't like it if their wives make more than them or got nicer jobs. Are you mad at me because I got promoted and you got laid off?
- FERNANDO (Gives her a "what do you take me for" look)
- ROSA You sure? You resent me 'cause I've changed during the time we been together? I'm not the quiet, little Rosa you married. Does that make you angry?
- FERNANDO (Doesn't answer)
- ROSA You can tell me. Maybe you're holding it in, all this anger. It's no good for you and it's no good for our relationship that you got all this negative inside of you. You've got to let it out, Fernando. Like a big cloud over your head, like in the cartoons, okay?
- FERNANDO I'd better get ready for that job. (Gets up)
- ROSA Are you gonna leave your glass there?
- FERNANDO You said no to leave it in the sink.
- ROSA I didn't say leave it there neither.
- FERNANDO (Too patient) Where do you want me to leave it, Rosa?
- ROSA You could wash it.
- FERNANDO It's all right where it is.
- ROSA No, it isn't.
- FERNANDO Why isn't it?
- ROSA It's dirty, that's why.
- FERNANDO So what?

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ROSA It attracts cockroaches! You want cockroaches?

FERNANDO Cockroaches need milk sometimes. The little baby ones. They get tired of garbage.

ROSA (Quietly angry) Leave it. I don't care. I don't want to be a nag. You're making me a nag.

FERNANDO You got free will, Rosa.

ROSA I got to get ready. (Exits)

(Fernando watches her leave, stares at the glass, picks it up, starts to put the glass in the sink)

ROSA (Her voice stopping him) Is that glass still on the table?

FERNANDO (Changes his mind because of her and puts the glass back on the table, gets his tool box)

ROSA (Coming back, more dressed, putting on an earring) Are you hungry?

FERNANDO No.

ROSA You sure? You didn't eat.

FERNANDO I'm fine.

(Rosa takes the glass from the table and puts it in the sink, moves away)

FERNANDO I thought you said no to leave it there.

ROSA I don't got time to wash it now. You wash it later?

FERNANDO No.

ROSA Then leave it. I give up!

FERNANDO (Under his breath) I wish you would.

ROSA What?

FERNANDO Nothing.

ROSA You're not communicating again. If you got somethin' to say, speak up. I speak up.

FERNANDO (Looking in his tool box) Have you seen my awl?

ROSA Your what?

FERNANDO My awl. A-w-l. It's pointed and it's —

ROSA I haven't seen it. Have you seen my other earring?

FERNANDO No.

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ROSA Well, I can't go with just one. Screw it! (Removes the one earring and throws it on the floor)

FERNANDO (Turns his head very slowly and looks at the earring)

ROSA I'm leaving . . . Do I look pretty?

FERNANDO (No reply)

ROSA I left that article on communication in the bathroom. You should read it. Really.

FERNANDO (No reply, doesn't look at her)

ROSA See you later, honey? . . . You look nice.

FERNANDO Sure.

ROSA Maybe we could eat out tonight or somethin'. Take the kids. My treat. What do you say? McDonald's isn't so bad. . . . We could have fishwiches. They're . . .

FERNANDO . . . Sure.

ROSA I didn't mean to be hard on you just now. You know I love you. I'm trying. I am trying.

FERNANDO (Not looking at her) Yes.

ROSA So . . . well, I'd better be going or I'll get docked.

FERNANDO Yes.

ROSA (Trying for humor) Do you love me, *guapo*?

FERNANDO (Not looking at her) Yes.

(Rosa waits a moment, unsatisfied, but she must go.)

ROSA It's hard. I mean, it's . . . (She gives up, shrugs and leaves)

FERNANDO (Knowing she's out of earshot) You know what, Rosa? I don't think we oughta have another kid. What do you think? (He takes the glass, looks at it, then throws it into the trash, stares at it as the lights fade.)

Scene Two

(Dinner time, the same day. Rosa enters with a bag. Fernando is at the table with his head down, asleep)

ROSA (Sees that he's asleep, tiptoes around, putting some groceries away)

FERNANDO (Hearing her, waking, rubbing his eyes) Oh, hi.

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ROSA Sorry. Didn't mean to wake you.

FERNANDO That's okay.

ROSA Was that job hard today?

FERNANDO I didn't go.

ROSA Didn't go. Why not?

FERNANDO The guy called me and said today wasn't a good day for him.

ROSA I didn't see Bob at work. I guess that's why. So you sat around here all day?

FERNANDO Yeah.

ROSA Sleeping?

FERNANDO Yeah, some of the time.

ROSA Mrs. Mattingly docked me half an hour pay.

FERNANDO That's a shame.

ROSA (After thinking about his remark) Is that supposed to be funny?

FERNANDO What?

ROSA What you just said.

FERNANDO What did I say?

ROSA Never mind.

FERNANDO You don't like what I say? I'm trying to communicate. Isn't that what you want?

ROSA Is that what it is? I had a hard day today.

FERNANDO I'm sorry.

ROSA I don't get to lay around sleeping all day. And now I got to cook somethin' for you and the kids.

FERNANDO No, you don't.

ROSA Sure I do.

FERNANDO No, you don't. I ate already. The kids can fix their own.

ROSA They'll eat something cold.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

FERNANDO You don't need to cook anything, Rosa. You worked hard today.

ROSA I did work hard.

FERNANDO I know you did. I believe you. Cold isn't so bad.

ROSA I just feel guilty when I . . .

FERNANDO Stop feeling guilty. There's no need to feel so guilty.

ROSA I'm trying to be a modern woman, all right? I'm not going back to the old days!

FERNANDO You're succeeding, Rosa. You're succeeding!

ROSA You don't like it.

FERNANDO Rosa, believe me, it doesn't bother me. It bothers you!

ROSA (Says nothing, sits down)

FERNANDO (After a moment) That guy said to come the day after tomorrow, about the steps.

ROSA Did he really?

FERNANDO His name is Len.

ROSA Good.

FERNANDO And he'll pay me in cash, under the table. Okay? And we'll live happily ever after.

ROSA Don't get upset.

FERNANDO I'm not upset!

ROSA You are too upset.

FERNANDO I'm not upset.

ROSA Why won't you admit it when you're upset? What is wrong with you? I think you should see a doctor — a vet.

FERNANDO (Laughs)

ROSA That's better. You're too tense.

FERNANDO I'm not tense. Look. (Shows her an exaggerated relaxed posture) See?

ROSA That's not how you relax.

FERNANDO You got all the answers on how to relax?

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ROSA I didn't say that.

FERNANDO Let's not fight, okay.

ROSA Are we fighting? I thought we were talking. I thought we were beginning to talk, like real people. Are you bored, is that the trouble? Are you bored with our marriage?

FERNANDO No.

ROSA If you're bored, say so.

FERNANDO I'm not bored.

ROSA I think you are. Why won't you say so?

FERNANDO I'm not bored!

ROSA Well, I am! There, I've said it. I'm bored, Fernando. I'm bored. Why are you making me act like this? I never used to be so grouchy all the time. I no trying to be like this. Just can't help it. I don't like myself right now.

FERNANDO (Starts to say something, holds back)

ROSA What was you gonna say?

FERNANDO Nothing.

ROSA I could see it. Why did you stop?

FERNANDO You don't want to hear.

ROSA I do! That's what I've been sayin'. What is it?

FERNANDO Rosa . . .

ROSA I'm listenin'.

FERNANDO Do you think we got a good marriage?

ROSA Sure. Basically. Don't you?

FERNANDO Sure. Of course.

ROSA That's not the question.

FERNANDO It isn't?

ROSA We'll talk it out, and then everything will be all right again. What is it?

FERNANDO I don't know. I feel uneasy. I feel . . .

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

ROSA A mid-life crisis, that's what it is.

FERNANDO (After a look at her for her glibness) I'm not middle-aged yet.

ROSA Sure you are. We married young and our kids are almost men, and so you're having your mid-life crisis early, but that's what it is.

FERNANDO (Dryly) You should work as a therapist, Rosa.

ROSA I've thought of that. But I suppose it's too late to change jobs now. I always thought I'd like to do that. Funny you should notice.

FERNANDO (Dryly) Telling people what's wrong with them. I can see you sittin' behind a desk, Rosa, sharpenin' your pencil, fillin' in the forms.

ROSA (Pleased) Can you?

FERNANDO (Mocking her but so that she doesn't notice) Wearin' your earrings and markin' down those mid-life crises.

ROSA I'd be good. . . .You makin' fun of me?

FERNANDO Would you notice if I was?

ROSA What's that supposed to mean?

FERNANDO Nothin'.

ROSA I try not to make fun of you. . . . This time I'm not taking that for no answer. Say what's on your mind, for God's sake!

FERNANDO You want me to say what's on my mind? I might tell you.

ROSA Good! It's about time.

FERNANDO You sure you want to hear?

ROSA I want to hear! We've gotta clear the air here.

FERNANDO Okay, for starters, never mind the beer. Take that glass of milk this morning.

ROSA What about it?

FERNANDO You just had to have your way about that, didn't you?

ROSA You had to have your way!

FERNANDO It couldn't just sit in the sink for a while. It had to be washed, right then. No! I didn't feel like washing it, and so I don't got to wash it. I been feeling depressed and I don't feel like washin' no goddamn glass at that time.

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ROSA Keeping busy is good for you when you're feeling depressed.

FERNANDO You read it somewhere. Don't tell me, I can guess. But it's not just the glass. It's more'n that. You want to have another baby? I'm not workin' and there's a population explosion and you want to have another baby. But even if that wasn't true, you know why you want to have a baby? Because you don't know how to fill up your life otherwise. You complain about workin' so hard and workin' so much, but the truth is time hangs heavy and you don't got enough to make your life make any sense. You want a baby 'cause it's some kind of toy that'll keep you so busy you won't have time to think about how stupid and worthless your whole life is.

ROSA That's not —

FERNANDO Let me say what I have to say. You want me to communicate. I'm communicatin', Rosa. You know what really bugs me about you, honey. It's not 'cause you talk up more than you used to — all your women's stuff and your articles. You always talked up, actually. That is not it. It's what you say, Rosa, that's what bugs me. All this goddamn crap about not holdin' things back from each other. "What are you thinkin', Fernando?" "Tell me, Fernando." "I'm thinkin' this at this very moment, Fernando. Isn't that deep of me, Fernando?" "I'm expressing my anger, Fernando." "There's a little feeling over here in the back of my brain, a little smudge I ain't shared with you. See it, Fernando?" (Holds out his finger as though it's got dirt on it) "Show me your smudge, Fernando. Let's talk it out. Let's analyze it. Hey, there's a thought you had you didn't tell me about. That's bad, Fernando. You can't have secrets from me. A husband and wife shouldn't have no secrets from each other, Fernando."

ROSA They shouldn't!

FERNANDO They should! There are lots of things — lots of them — that people shouldn't tell each other or they can't go on.

ROSA You get them out and then you deal with them. You work out the problems and you have a — a breakthrough.

FERNANDO — You have shit on your finger and then all you can do with it is sniff it!

ROSA Don't be vulgar.

FERNANDO Just speakin' my mind, Rosa. Maybe my mind is vulgar.

ROSA (Getting up) The kids'll be home from practice soon. I'd better get —

FERNANDO I'm not finished yet. Don't you want me to finish?

(Rosa sits back down)

FERNANDO You know what else? Our marriage. Our whole marriage. It sucks.

ROSA I'm trying to save it. We've grown apart, but I —

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FERNANDO But why, Rosa? Why save it? Because we have such a strong, rich sex life? Huh? Because we have so many things in common? What things? Because you're afraid your mother will think you're a bad woman if you get a divorce? Because the Church won't let you get one? Because you have two kids who ain't out of high school yet and couldn't survive on their own for five minutes? Because you're afraid to go to McDonald's for fishwiches by yourself, afraid to sit in the booth alone? Because, never mind all your articles and your new self, deep down inside — *er es torpe!* It would tear you apart to be without a man, any man, even me. That's what holds this marriage together, woman. Bane — Bane — what's the word I want? Ba —

ROSA Banality.

FERNANDO Right! That's it. That's me! That's you!

ROSA . . . Why are you trying to shit on me?

FERNANDO I'm not trying to shit on you, honey, *guerida*. I thought you wanted to know what I'm thinking. Our problem isn't that we've grown apart. We've grown together! We've said everything forty-seven thousand times. Our problem isn't that we haven't had time for a little vacation getaway — just the two of us, like in the ads and the articles. Our problem is not we don't communicate. Our problem is we've reached the day when — if you tell about how awful Mrs. Mattingly is one more time, I'm gonna puke. And if I tell you one more time about all the good jobs I'm gonna have, you oughta puke. The only trouble with us, Rosa, is that we been together for too long. Not too distant, too close. And we don't like what we see up close. People like us wind up starin' at each other across the table — nothin' to say, and to make us feel alive we start pickin' at each other, pickin' and pickin' at each other until we pick each other to death. Communication is what's killed us, Rosa. Most guys won't admit it, but you wanted me to speak my mind? Well, this is it! I think we got no chance in hell 'cause I don't want to spend no more days with you for the rest of my life, and as soon as I can manage it with the money, I'm gonna leave you. There's nothin' left, but we cling to each other 'cause we're too goddamn chicken to call it off. But loneliness is better than what we got. There's just one thing wrong with our marriage, honey. It's exhausted. Exhausted. Exhausted! And, please God, let's have the guts to say so!

ROSA (After a pause) Is that really how you feel?

FERNANDO No, I'm pretendin', Rosa. I'm pretendin'.

ROSA I didn't think things were that bad.

FERNANDO (Lying) . . . They aren't.

ROSA They're not?

FERNANDO I was just blowing off steam. Don't mind me.

ROSA Don't mind you? Where do we go from here? To pray to St. Jude? For hopeless causes?

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FERNANDO (Doesn't say anything)

ROSA Are we finished?

FERNANDO What do you think?

ROSA I'm not sure. You said some pretty mean things.

FERNANDO You know, it's funny, I feel better.

ROSA Really? I feel awful.

FERNANDO I guess I oughta thank you.

ROSA You're not welcome.

FERNANDO Thanks anyway.

ROSA Where do you get off with all them —

FERNANDO You didn't say if I spoke up it had to be nice.

ROSA But I didn't —

FERNANDO Don't ask for what you don't want, honey.

ROSA (Trying to be funny) Yeah, but just 'cause I asked you to wash a glass . . .

FERNANDO If you can't stand the heat, Rosa, get out of the kitchen.

ROSA So where does this leave us? . . . Is our marriage over?

FERNANDO (Doesn't answer)

ROSA Well?

FERNANDO (Doesn't answer)

ROSA Fernando?!

FERNANDO (Doesn't answer)

(Lights fade)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

ACT II
Scene One

SETTING: (Dinner time the same day, Len and Bob's apartment. The set change should be quick, probably with the second kitchen on the reverse side of Act I's set. No intermission here)

(Humming or singing a current tune, Bob is putting the finishing touches on the meal he has prepared, placing the silverware, napkins, pouring the wine, etc. He sets down the plates of food, looking proudly at his handiwork. Bob sits down to eat, waits for Len offstage. Puts his napkin on his lap. Waits.)

BOB Where the fuck are you?

LEN (Offstage) On the phone!

BOB Slop's ready!

LEN (Offstage) Go ahead. Start without me.

BOB (Disgusted) I will not start without you. This is a first-class international gourmet meal — beef wellington, carrots delmonico, and potatoes florentine, with rhubarb pie for dessert. Get your ass in here and eat it.

LEN (Offstage) I don't eat with my ass.

BOB I work my fingers to the bone and what do I get — elegant conversation from my roommate: "I don't eat with my ass." (Sniffs his wine, swallows, then gargles with it. Gets up and goes closer to Len's side of the stage, gargles)

LEN (Offstage) What's that?

BOB (His mouth full) Chef Robert is tasting the wine.

LEN (Offstage) What?

BOB (Swallows the wine) Chef Robert is tasting the wine.

LEN (Offstage on telephone) I'll talk to you later, Sally. I've got to go . . . Yeah . . . Bye.
(Hangs up)

BOB Why do you always start a phone call just about the time I finish one of my wonderful meals? Is it a comment of some kind?

LEN (Entering) Yes.

BOB (Annoyed) What do you mean yes?

LEN Yes as in yes.

BOB My meals are — the Pope has declared my meals so exquisite they're on the Index of Forbidden Foods.

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LEN They're too fattening.

BOB Life is short.

LEN (Pointing to Bob) But fat is long.

BOB I am not fat.

LEN Let's not get into it. You look very nice tonight.

BOB I am not fat.

LEN You were thinner when we were lovers.

BOB Was I? Didn't keep us lovers, did it? Skinny as a speed freak and it wasn't enough to keep you happy.

LEN Are we going to rehash that again?

BOB I am not fat.

LEN All right, you are not fat.

BOB Eat!

LEN I'm not very hungry.

BOB You just want to be skinny, so you starve yourself. I can hear your stomach rumbling from over here.

LEN You're projecting.

BOB Wrong psychological term.

LEN Eat if you must.

BOB I do not eat any more than I ever did, and you know that. I'm older now. It stays with me now, that's all.

LEN Eat less.

BOB I will not eat less! It's not fair. And I will maintain that until the day I die.

LEN (No reply)

BOB I am perfectly normal-looking. It's society that's fucked up.

LEN Why won't you accept the fact that you are overweight and do something about it?

BOB In any other period of history, in any sane culture, I would be considered a dish.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

LEN I still think you're a dish. Very tempting and tasty.

BOB You do?

LEN Sure.

BOB Hah!

LEN I don't know what you think, but I didn't stop . . . because of your weight. Sometimes I even wonder if we couldn't — (Stops, embarrassed, gets up to get something) Excuse me.

BOB Did I forget something?

LEN I'll get it. (Gets it, sits back down)

BOB You shouldn't have been so reluctant to . . . when we were still lovers.

LEN You shouldn't have been so sensitive.

BOB Len, I could live with getting rejected in the bars by strangers, but — funny old me! — I didn't like being rejected by my lover.

LEN It was only a few times —

BOB Not being one to force anyone to pay his Biblical debt, I refrained from rape — but let's not dwell on ancient history. Let's dwell on now —

LEN If we —

BOB — I live in a very severe little kingdom called Anorexia. Terrible place, boys and girls. You should see their movie stars! By comparison, they make concentration camp inmates look like fatsos. In Anorexia who do they want to fuck most? Why, shriveled-up, emaciated bird-people, that's who. We're a nation of aviary necrophiliacs!

LEN Bob —

BOB Thou shall not eat sugar. Thou shalt not pinch an inch. Thou shalt look like a stick and be called vile if thou veerest from the Law of Skinny, a law made by a life-denying, arbitrary, unrealistic, unfair — did I say that already? — bone-humping sicko society, and I'm not going to take it any longer.

LEN (No answer)

BOB Have I made my point?

LEN Yes. Let's eat.

BOB (Pushing food away) I don't want it.

LEN Bob.

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BOB Who cuts your hair — Sweeney Todd?

LEN Bob!

BOB I'm not eating ever again.

LEN (Takes a bite) It's quite . . . quite . . . ah . . . (Purses mouth, tasting)

BOB Did you ever see a cat lick another cat's ass and then purse its mouth like this (Purses mouth) as if to say, "What is that I'm tasting?" That's how you look right now.

LEN Why are you being so nasty tonight?

BOB Because I'm fat.

LEN You're not fat.

BOB I'm fat. Society is wrong, but I give up. I'm a fat pig.

LEN You are not a fat pig.

BOB Now you're going to tell me to join a gym.

LEN No, I'm not. I like you the way you are. But it wouldn't hurt you if you worked on your muscle tone a —

BOB Aha! See!

LEN I won't say another word.

BOB You'll just make sly comments about how full my plate is. Watch my mouth chewing and grinding every "self-indulgent" bite, but of course not saying a word.

LEN (Putting his fork down) Okay, what's wrong, Bob?

BOB Go ahead, eat. I'll just chomp on this breadstick. (Grabs a breadstick and bites off a piece angrily)

LEN You've been on edge lately.

BOB (Faking melodrama) And you don't even know why!

LEN Why?

BOB I'm not going to say.

LEN Why?

BOB It's our anniversary and you forgot.

LEN Our anniversary?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB Yes, a year ago today we stopped being lovers and became that much more important thing to each other — roommates.

LEN God, you're right. It has been a year.

BOB And you didn't even bring flowers — or candy.

LEN I'm a heartless boor.

BOB You are. That's why I can't eat.

LEN (Cautiously) Maybe we made a mistake.

BOB About what?

LEN A year ago.

BOB Breaking up? Hardly. We've never gotten along so well.

LEN (Looking down, not wanting to be too explicit) I just wonder sometimes, that's all.

BOB I wonder sometimes too.

LEN You do?

BOB (Cleaning away the plates) But we made our separate beds. Now we must lie in them.

LEN (Holding on to his plate) I'm not finished yet.

BOB Yes, you are! (Grabs Len's plate, takes it away) We're on a diet.

LEN What about that pie?

BOB No pie! (Gets the rhubarb pie, displays it, then puts it away) Who wants to eat rhubarf anyway!

LEN Rhubarf? You're so bad. So excessive.

BOB And you love me for it, Martha! It's your turn to do the dishes. (Leaves them right where they are)

LEN You're a slob.

BOB No, I care not for the things of this world. (He goes into the alcove and throws himself on the daybed, face down)

LEN (Cleaning up) What's wrong?

BOB Nothing.

LEN Sure?

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

BOB I'm frustrated.

LEN At work?

BOB Yeah, there too. I put a credit where a debit should've been. Mostly just plain old sexually frustrated.

LEN I thought you were seeing that German guy behind us. The once-a-week backrub mit orgasm.

BOB Doesn't do it.

LEN (Cleaning up). . .I'm frustrated myself.

BOB Yeah? I thought you were out tricking with all the other skinnies.

LEN I go out, I cruise, I don't talk to anybody, I come home alone.

BOB Sounds hot.

LEN (Coming closer to the daybed) Remember the first time we had sex on this daybed?

BOB (Sitting up, not wanting to have sex with Len) Not really.

LEN We did. (Patting the daybed) Right here.

BOB I didn't know you were sentimental about beds.

LEN Just pointing out a fact.

BOB Odd, I remember this daybed as the place where you first removed my hand from your thigh when I touched it. Or was it the fifth or sixth time you removed it?

LEN I was going through a bad time then.

BOB For six months?

LEN I still loved you.

BOB He still loved me! If there's no sex, you're not lovers.

LEN How mechanical.

BOB Not mechanical. Why put up with all the crap you have to if there's no love-making to go with it? When you gotta spew, you gotta spew.

LEN Sorry I was so unforthcoming.

BOB You hurt my sense of myself, Len, and you don't seem to realize it. Really.

LEN I didn't — I didn't — (Starts to deny this, changes his mind) I'm sorry.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB You want to have sex sometime? . . . Now?

LEN Do you?

BOB I asked you first.

LEN It's crossed my mind, yes.

BOB You mean really start up again, as . . . ?

LEN (Shrugs lightly as though that's a real possibility) Maybe.

BOB (Gets up from the daybed) Well, I don't want to.

LEN You don't want to? (Covering up) Well, I don't want to either.

BOB Good. Now that I'm starving myself I'm too weak to have sex anyway. (Falls on the daybed, starving)

LEN You're a bastard, do you know that?

BOB (Lightly) No, I don't.

LEN Why did you lead me on just now?

BOB I didn't lead you on.

LEN Yes, you did.

BOB A skinny thing like you wanting to make it with a tub like me? Impossible!

LEN You did it to get back at me.

BOB That's me. Vindictive Bob. Waits for a whole year for his former lover to stick out his throbbing man tool — just so he can whack it off in one fell swoop. Or is it one swell foop? I seem to recall you had one swell foop.

LEN I'm sorry I brought it up.

BOB (With an innuendo) You're frustrated, you brought it up. I understand. I'm a man. When you gotta spew, you gotta spew.

LEN We had some good years, didn't we?

BOB Did we? Remind me.

LEN That time we went to New York and saw a puppet show outdoors on the sidewalk.

BOB Oh, yes, those little bug-eyed puppets. . . . I don't remember them.

LEN And the time your father called me and asked if I was seducing his son.

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

- BOB And I got on the line and told him he was a Cro-Magnon Piltdown Neanderthal and to stop harassing us!
- LEN Right! . . . Don't you remember any good times?
- BOB Let me see, George. Or am I George? The time we took our son to the orphanage and left his there. That was fun.
- LEN Son?
- BOB The little bugger. You know.
- LEN Little bugger?
- BOB The one we never mention in public.
- LEN I don't know what you're talking about.
- BOB Our son! Our son! All gay couples have imaginary sons. Driven crazy with their inability to reproduce — it's well known. But we got rid of our little bugger and our marriage has been perfect ever since. We don't drink much, but we eat to excess. We make jokes. We are perfection itself.
- LEN We're not that bad.
- BOB (Singing) "Is that all there is?" . . . Want some pie? (Going to it, taking it out of hiding)
- LEN I am still hungry.
- BOB Yeah! Talk dirty to me! Describe each pornographic bite. What are you doing now? Lifting the sugar-saturated filling to your lips? Snuffling through the rhubarb bits with your tongue?
- LEN I'm going to have some. (Gets the pie) But just a sliver. (Cuts a tiny piece)
- BOB It's terrible when you get a sliver in your throat. Have you ever had that? You get it from going down on Pinocchio.
- LEN Sure you won't have some? It's hot and sticky? (Holds out the sliver sexily)
- BOB No, no, no, you can't tempt me.
- LEN Sure?
- BOB And you shouldn't have any either. Give me that. (Tries to take the sliver of pie away from Len)
- LEN No way.
- BOB I'm just doing it for your own good. (Tries to get the pie)
- LEN (Running away with the pie) Keep your hands off! *Nein, nein, nein!*

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB Come on, Len. Hand it over.

LEN Stay away! (Runs around the table) Stay away!

BOB (Suddenly stopping) What's wrong with this picture? Aren't you supposed to be chasing me?

LEN Okay, if you like. (They switch roles and Len now chases Bob.) Come here, you!

BOB (Running around the table) Oh, no! Oh, please no! Not pie!

LEN Yes, pie! (He grabs Bob from behind and starts to force the piece into Bob's mouth too hard) Take that, you anorexic! Eat! Eat!

BOB (Pulling away, angry) I said I didn't want it! (He knocks the piece to the floor)

LEN (The playfulness over, looking at the pie on the floor) Sorry. When you gotta spew, you gotta spew.

BOB . . . My place or yours?

LEN Where is this going, Bob?

BOB Can't tell yet.

LEN Come over here.

BOB (Turns away, not answering)

LEN Come over here.

BOB (Quietly) I don't want to.

LEN (Hesitates, then comes over to Bob, hugs him from behind) How's that?

BOB (Stiff, resistant) Is somebody there?

LEN (Kisses the back of Bob's neck) Guess who?

BOB Wouldn't know. (Moves away) I didn't feel a thing.

LEN (Feeling rejected) Tonight must not be the night.

BOB And no night's going to be.

LEN I really hurt you, didn't I?

BOB I'm all scars.

LEN How can I make it up to you?

BOB Don't think you can.

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

LEN That's what I get for trying to break a taboo.

BOB (No reply)

LEN The lovers-to-roommates-to-lovers-again taboo. Tougher than incest.

BOB Aren't men the masters of their fate?

LEN One time this guy and I met. Remember Paul?

BOB No.

LEN Anyway, I knew he and were both very attracted to each other, but we didn't act on it. We became friends, and of course you know you can't have sex with your friends. What would people think. But then one time, this guy and I went rafting together, about four years after we'd first met. We'd spent a real happy day together, and that night I reached out from my sleeping bag to his . . . and touched his stomach . . . and waited.

BOB And?

LEN He picked up my hand very gently . . . and moved it away. And then he went to sleep, and eventually I went to sleep, and we never said a word about it, and after that he never spoke to me again . . . (About Bob's recent rejection of him) I guess I never learn, do I?

BOB You made that up.

LEN No, I didn't.

BOB I'm going to bed.

LEN So early?

BOB Got a big day tomorrow.

LEN I suppose you need your rest then.

BOB Yeah, I'm pretty bushed. Goodnight.

LEN Good night. I'll watch some TV or something. Maybe I'll go out.

BOB I didn't mean to . . . to get back at you. I wasn't —

LEN Sure, I understand. Goodnight.

BOB Good night. . . (He leaves, feeling bad about what he's done)

(Len looks after Bob for a moment, then goes to the sliver of pie on the floor, looks at it, sadly takes a taste with one finger, smiles, takes a second taste more slowly, remains with his finger in his mouth but not sucking it.)

(Lights fade)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

Scene Two

(Three A.M. that morning. Len is sitting in the near-dark at the kitchen table. Bob enters in his robe.)

BOB You still up?

LEN Yeah.

BOB (In order to have something to say) Did you call that repairman yet for the steps? Fernando, I think his name is. Rosa-from-work's husband? He needs the job.

LEN He's coming. (Not sure of the time) Today? Tomorrow?

BOB How much is he going to charge?

LEN I don't know yet. Shouldn't be too much.

BOB Are you mad at me?

LEN Mad?

BOB Because of . . .

LEN Don't worry about it.

BOB I don't want us to stop being roommates.

LEN Oh, I know. The mortgage is so good.

BOB Not what I meant.

LEN People shouldn't be ashamed of economic realities. It's the basis of most couplings. Folks like it. Keeps 'em together. The state likes it. Everybody nice and orderly. You know where all those dicks are going.

BOB I meant I don't want us never to speak again.

LEN We're speaking — even as we speak.

BOB You coming in?

LEN In a little while.

BOB I put a mint on your pillow, on your bed. But you didn't come in, so I . . .

LEN (A bit cool) That was thoughtful of you. Like a fancy motel. Thank you.

BOB (Trying to keep the conversation going) You know, I always wondered when I was a horny teenager if they meant what I thought they meant on those family shows: "Are you coming to bed, dear?" Did that mean they were going to have sex? Or did it just mean, "Get in here. You're

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

keeping me awake?"

LEN The latter, probably.

BOB . . . Are you coming to bed?

LEN It's almost time to get up.

BOB No, it's just a little after three.

LEN Your pie was good.

BOB I'm glad you liked it.

LEN I cleaned up the piece we spilled.

BOB That was nice of you.

LEN I'm a very nice person.

BOB You are.

LEN . . . Where do you think we'll be ten years from now, Bob?

BOB Who knows.

LEN Dead?

BOB Thriving.

LEN My fleet of trucks will be up from three to — wow! — count 'em — six or seven. I'll have a paunch and take a vacation to the Bahamas in the winter, maybe one to a cold climate in the summer. I'll think I'm pretty hot shit. What do people use that expression anyway? Who ever wanted to be hot shit?

BOB (Softly) You shouldn't feel sorry for yourself, honey-babe.

LEN That's another thin I've never understood. Why shouldn't I feel sorry for myself? I do it so much better than anybody else.

BOB You have a good life. You have friends.

LEN "Is that all there is?"

BOB You're self-employed. You're educated. You're not sick. You have a VCR.

LEN Not enough. I'm tired of them all.

BOB And your roommate.

LEN I'm . . . tired of him too.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB I don't blame you.

LEN He's a prick teaser.

BOB And a grudge holder.

LEN And a mean bastard.

BOB And a sore loser.

LEN And a . . . lousy cook.

BOB Hey! I draw the line there. I am not a lousy cook. And I was just beginning to feel sorry for you too.

LEN Everything seems so empty, that's all.

BOB But it is empty! What do you expect?

LEN Well, not everything's empty!

BOB Of course it is. Where have you been? This is it. This is life . . . Don't scream.

LEN Is joking the answer?

BOB For some of us. You don't laugh, you don't live.

LEN God, that's grim.

BOB Only if you expect the world . . . from the world.

LEN I guess I do. I feel like my life is falling apart. And I don't know what to do about it.

BOB Jog! Eat, drink, and be merry! Pray to Buddha! Boycott grapes! All of these? None of these?

LEN What keeps you going if you really think life is so . . . ?

BOB Sad? Unsatisfying? Meaningless? Why, not thinking of course. Happiness is not thinking. Happiness is not comparing yourself to others. I take that back. Happiness is comparing yourself to that baby in the next ward, the one who was born addicted to heroin, the one with brain damage and the open spine.

LEN Stop it.

BOB I'm serious.

LEN That's not going to work for me.

BOB I don't know what to say then.

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LEN Maybe . . . maybe it'd be better to take something. Just . . . do it.

BOB Come on now.

LEN I mean it.

BOB I know you do. That's why I'm worried.

LEN Just . . . cease.

BOB And leave your poor roommate?

LEN . . . Come with me.

BOB I hope we never feel this bad at the same time.

LEN No more problems with love or sex or dirty dishes.

BOB Or debits or credits or fat.

LEN I'll get a gun and shoot you and then myself.

BOB What if you change your mind in the middle? I'd better whack you with the skillet and then eat myself to death.

LEN You're making fun of me.

BOB No, I'm not. I'm trying to —

LEN Don't humor me.

BOB (Silence) You want a hug?

LEN I'm not trying to blackmail you into having sex with me. I get lonely. You get lonely.

BOB I know that. Let me hug you. (Goes to Len)

LEN I'm good-looking and I can't find a lover. What do ugly people do, for god's sake?

BOB Rub against tables. (Hugging Len) How's that?

LEN But is it sincere?

BOB (Hugs him harder) Is that better?

LEN (Grudgingly) Hm.

BOB There, there, all babies cry in the dark.

LEN Why don't you want to have sex with me?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB It's too late —

LEN In the game?

BOB Something like that.

LEN Do you want me to beg?

BOB No.

LEN Do you want me to sneak into your bed in the middle of the night?

BOB No.

LEN What do you want?

BOB I don't know.

LEN You said you were frustrated.

BOB I know.

LEN God, I must be pretty bad if even that won't do it.

BOB I'm sorry.

LEN You'll rub my back or my adenoids or cook for me and god knows how many other things, but where it really matters, you won't rub. Doesn't make any sense.

BOB Go figure.

LEN How many people in the universe can't get anybody to put their hands on that spot that really aches?

BOB Forty-eight million three hundred and twelve.

LEN You're serious, aren't you? We're never going to be lovers again, are we?

BOB (No answer)

LEN Are we?

BOB . . . No . . .

LEN (After a pause) Take your hands off me!

BOB What?

LEN (Pushes his hands away, gets up) I don't want you to touch me.

BOB All right.

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- LEN In fact, you've got a nerve coming over here and putting your hands all over me.
- BOB Len . . .
- LEN Who do you think you are, you fat slob!?
- BOB (No reply)
- LEN I'm so hard up, I have to settle for you? Not on your life, chubs!
- BOB I'm going back to bed.
- LEN Go back to bed. Play with yourself under the covers. See if I care. You think I don't hear you in your bed in there? You think I can't smell that coconut oil mixed with your sperm? You think I can't tell when you come? Why wouldn't I? You sound like a beached whale about to die!
- BOB (Quietly) Shut up.
- LEN Where's your famous sense of humor now, fatso? You and your great philosophy of life. You haven't got one tenth of what I've got going for me — in looks, in my job, in my friends. So don't tell me how to live, you porcine second-rate Ann Landers!
- BOB Shut up, Len!
- LEN Reject me! You son of a bitch! You've got a nerve rejecting me! You don't even know how to suck cock right. You're the crummiest, lousiest cocksucker I've ever known.
- BOB You managed to suffer through it.
- LEN You think you're such a lover. Well, you're not. What we had wasn't love. It was getting off together. That's what it was. When you gotta spew, you gotta spew! If I hadn't needed to come so bad, I wouldn't have spent two seconds with you!
- BOB That says a lot for you, doesn't it?
- LEN Get out of here! Go on, get! I don't want to see or hear or experience your largesse for the rest of my life!
- BOB (Goes to the exit, turns back) Don't worry. You won't. (Exits)

(Lights out)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

Scene Three

(The next morning. Len is asleep on the floor. Bob enters fully dressed, looks at Len, makes himself a cup of tea with a teabag.)

BOB (Watches Len on the floor. Len tosses, but doesn't wake up. Finally Bob stands over him and drops the wet teabag on his head.)

LEN (Startled) Hey! What's that? (Jumps up)

BOB Good morning.

LEN Oh, it's you. God, I didn't know what that was.

BOB Just a teabag.

LEN . . . I guess I deserve it after last night.

BOB You did get wound up.

LEN I didn't mean any of those things I said.

BOB (No reply)

LEN I got carried away. I guess hell hath no fury like. . .

BOB A fairy scorned?

LEN I'll make it up to you.

BOB Will you? That should be interesting to watch.

LEN I'll . . . I'll . . .

BOB That's okay. You don't have to say anything. You've said quite enough already.

LEN Would you accept an apology?

BOB I've never understood the theory of the apology. "I didn't really think all those vicious things I said. I didn't really mean to spray those scorpions all over the kitchen floor. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." What a bunch of total shit. You meant every word of it.

LEN I'm feeling better this morning. Must be from sleeping on the hard floor.

BOB You're virtue itself. Like the saints of old.

LEN Did you sleep well?

BOB (No reply)

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

LEN Are you going to avoid talking to me?

BOB Uh huh.

LEN I guess I should've slept on the daybed.

BOB This tea is terrible. (Puts the cup down)

LEN I could go out and get some more.

BOB That's all right. I've got to go to work.

LEN Want me to drive you?

BOB No. (Goes offstage to the bedroom)

LEN I'm really sorry about last night. Really! . . . Really!

BOB (Entering with a suitcase)

LEN What's that?

BOB What does it look like?

LEN A suitcase.

BOB Very good! (Puts on his coat)

LEN Will you be home for dinner? I'll fix it.

BOB (No reply, opens the suitcase, holds up a shirt) This isn't yours by mistake, is it?

LEN No.

BOB Great. (Throws the shirt back into the suitcase)

LEN I could sleep on the daybed for a while, if you like.

BOB Why bother?

LEN I thought it might ease . . . the situation until we get back to . . . normal.

BOB (Turns to Len) I'll make arrangements about the mortgage once I find a place. I think I'll stay with Eddie from work until then. You'll be able to find somebody to share, I'm sure. This is almost a nice place.

LEN You're moving out?

BOB You have a gift from the obvious. Yes, I'm moving out.

LEN (Playfully) Just tried to add a little sex to a good thing.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

BOB (No answer)

LEN Reaching from one sleeping bag to another.

BOB (No answer)

LEN Guess I'll never learn, will I?

BOB Apparently not.

LEN Don't leave hating me.

BOB . . . I won't.

LEN (Pleading) Why can't we make it as lovers? Why?

BOB (Almost crying) I don't know. I don't know.

LEN (Fighting the tears) Oh, god!

BOB (Fighting the tears) I've got to go.

LEN Don't go! We can be just roommates again.

BOB No, Len, we can't. We can't. You said too much.

LEN All babies cry in the dark. You've got to forgive them.

BOB (Closing the suitcase) I . . . (Goes to exit) Bye, lover. (Leaves)

LEN Bob? . . . Bob? (Sound of outside door closing) (Almost weeping) Please don't go!

(Lights out)

Intermission

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

ACT III
Scene One

(The same day. The accounting office where Rosa and Bob work. We see Rosa's desk and chair, perhaps a waste basket. Minimal set necessary.)

ROSA (Enter Rosa quickly. Removing her coat, checking her desk, which has a pile of file folders on it. She picks some of them up irritably.) Where did these come from? Where did — (Goes to offstage door) Linda, where did these folders come from? Linda? (No answer. Rosa returns. To herself) I will not lose control. I am in control. (Yelling) LINDA! Where the goddamn hell are you?

BOB (Entering) You called?

ROSA Oh, Bob . . . Sorry.

BOB Just passing by. Thought maybe there was a mugger or something in here.

ROSA Well, there isn't!

BOB Excuse me!

ROSA It's just that damn Linda. She's on a coffee break already. She left stuff I told her to do. I told her! And then she goes and leaves it here for me!

BOB I get in this morning and I find the Meyer accounts I worked on all last week are lost. Completely gone. I swear there's a hex on this office.

ROSA Besides, I stumbled over some stoned-out homeless person on the way in. He was pissin' in the goddamn elevator!

BOB Then Mrs. Mattingly tells me I should be wearing a tie. Where does she get off telling me how to dress! Who does she think she is, my mother? (Lights up a cigarette)

ROSA Hey, I thought you didn't smoke.

BOB I don't. (Takes a puff) I thought you didn't swear.

ROSA I don't. I didn't exactly sleep so hot last night.

BOB Me neither. What happened?

ROSA Oh, it's because of . . . (Not wanting to say) Oh, never mind. (Sharply) You know it's no smoking in the whole office, don't you?

BOB No, I haven't heard. (Takes another puff)

ROSA Mattingly is gonna get your butt.

BOB Not my butt! What's wrong with this place? Didn't it use to be nice here?

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

- ROSA Maybe it's something in the air. In the paint.
- BOB Lead. You're probably right. It did the Romans in. Now it's seeping into our brains.
- ROSA Is that why you didn't get no — any — sleep?
- BOB Oh, it was . . . It was . . . (Not wanting to say) I envy you, Rosa. You have such a quiet domestic life.
- ROSA (Lying) Yeah, I sure do.
- BOB You've been married forever, haven't you?
- ROSA Eighteen years.
- BOB Must be great.
- ROSA . . . Most of the time. Yeah, I have a great marriage.
- BOB I suppose it starts with finding the right man. Is he still coming to fix the steps today?
- ROSA I think so. Yeah, I know how to pick 'em. What about you? You married? We never talk much, do we? Just about work.
- BOB No, I'm not married.
- ROSA Funny, you seem like the married kind.
- BOB What does that mean? Safe? Tame?
- ROSA I don't know. I can just tell.
- BOB No, I'm an absolute enigma.
- ROSA (Hinting) You got a roommate, don't you?
- BOB Yes, a wonderful roommate.
- ROSA So why don't you ever talk about him?
- BOB Because you probably don't want to hear. We weren't exactly blessed by the Pope.
- ROSA The Pope doesn't tell me everything! Besides, I can put two and two together. I don't have to be no accountant.
- BOB Well, maybe you could advise me. What is it you do with your man? How do you handle him?
- ROSA I . . . I . . . cook. Raise the kids. Make love. I put up with a lot. I'm pleasant to be around.
- BOB That's my problem. I'm not pleasant to be around.

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

ROSA You can learn a lot from magazines.

BOB Which ones?

ROSA You know — next to the counter when you're checkin' out.

BOB Right, I've seen those. You're the person who reads those?

ROSA Hey!

BOB Afraid they're for you people.

ROSA You people? What does that mean? You people?

BOB They're not written with me in mind, that's for sure.

ROSA . . . And not for me either, apparently, now I think about it.

BOB Oh, why do you say that?

ROSA I don't know if I want to talk about it. Maybe I talk too much. And I got lots of work to do. (Picks up the file folders) They say people need to keep busy.

BOB Yeah, they do . . . Want a cigarette? (Lights up)

ROSA (Throws the file folders down) Hell, give me one. (He hands it to her)

BOB We can't always do what's right, for god's sake!

ROSA (Taking a puff, makes a disgusted noise) This tastes terrible.

BOB I know, but it's all we have.

ROSA I don't think I want it after all.

BOB Yeah, I suppose I'd better be getting back too before old Mattingly writes me up. (Puts out the cigarette) Boy, I hate her. She's a fanny smeller.

ROSA She is?

BOB At least! . . . I got to go. (About to leave, changes his mind) So what's the matter, Rosa? Come on, tell me.

ROSA No.

BOB Sure?

ROSA . . . It's my husband. He . . . Why don't you tell me about your roommate?

BOB All right, I will. He and I have lived together for over five years. He's got his own business. He's . . . I'm . . . And that's about it.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

ROSA That's about it? Are you lovers?

BOB Rosa, you're blowing my cover!

ROSA Everybody knows.

BOB They do?

ROSA Something wrong at home?

BOB What make you think that?

ROSA I got a sixth sense. Is that right — sixth sense?

BOB Yeah, that's right. (After thinking about it) Everybody knows? What do you mean? I never dropped a single hairpin around here, as they used to say.

ROSA It's your aura. It's not the right color.

BOB I beg your pardon. My aura is just fine.

ROSA Now don't be grumpy. I mean today.

BOB I'm not grumpy!

ROSA You're grumpy. Trust me.

BOB All right, I'm grumpy. Cure me.

ROSA I'm grumpy myself.

BOB I'll cure you. Tell me everything. Everything!

ROSA What is this? Are we playing doctor?

BOB (Laughs) You don't know what that mean, do you?

ROSA It means you give advice and then you send a big bill.

BOB Not too far off.

ROSA Okay, so I'm the doctor. What's troubling you?

BOB I want to be the doctor.

ROSA No, I want to be the doctor!

BOB Let's alternate. Is that fair?

ROSA You go first.

Beer and Rhubarb Pie

BOB What's troubling you? (Seriously) Seriously.

ROSA . . . Well, I want a baby. And I don't want a baby.

BOB Ah, that's clear.

ROSA I just brought it up to my husband 'cause I wanted to have something to happen in our marriage. Nothin' happens anymore. He don't want to talk or . . . anything. (She's a little embarrassed at her revelations) I thought I was doing the right thing, you know, talking about it. I really thought I was.

BOB And what happened?

ROSA I killed my marriage.

BOB (Comforting) Oh, Rosa, I don't think so.

ROSA I think so. I know so.

BOB (Absorbing her seriousness) That's terrible.

ROSA I know!

BOB It's probably not too late.

ROSA Believe me, it's too late, Bob. You can have too much communication. I've learned that much. And not from no dumb magazine!

BOB (Relating to his own situation) Yeah, I know what you mean.

ROSA What happened? . . . Come on now! I told you.

BOB I had a chance to revive . . . the one love I've ever had in my life. I ruined it.

ROSA Really?

BOB One of those very rare moments in anyone's lifetime, and I blew it. Absolutely blew it. And I'm supposed to be smart.

ROSA That's awful.

BOB Thanks for your comforting words.

ROSA It's not too late.

BOB Believe me, it's too late.

ROSA I didn't know you people . . . stayed together. I mean, for a long time.

BOB Rosa!

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

ROSA What?

BOB Don't spoil this.

ROSA What'd I say?

BOB Never mind.

ROSA Don't be hurt. I'm sorry!

BOB Okay, so we were a little promiscuous. Let me re-phrase that — we were a little non-monogamous. It didn't mean we didn't care for each other. Jesus!

ROSA I happen to think fidelity is very important.

BOB No wonder straight men walk out then.

ROSA Bob!

BOB It's the truth. I get so tired of all this hand-wringing you people do over a little sex here or there. Get over it.

ROSA You're not exactly an expert on keeping your "marriage" together. You get over it!

BOB I thought we were having a nice talk.

ROSA You didn't exactly sympathize with my problem — calling me "you people," for God's sake. You don't think my problems are important.

BOB Excuse me. Kick me. For a few seconds there I wasn't — so help me God — the sensitive, understanding homo of your dreams!

ROSA No, excuse me for not being the sensitive, understanding woman of yours!

BOB I suffer ten times more than you do!

ROSA What? You don't have no clue about what I have to put up with!

BOB You're the ones who make such a big deal out of being the normal ones, the only ones, the ones with all the problems right out there in the magazines!

ROSA Well, we've got children. We've got bills —

BOB I've got bills! I have had a major catastrophe in my life. I've lost my home, my lover, my best friend, and probably my job for smoking in this stupid place, and then I have to work all day and be cheerful on top of it all and never let on! You think my life is easy?

ROSA My marriage is over. My kids are American brats. I don't earn enough, and I have to come to work in this stupid place all day, and always be so goddamn cheerful on top of it and comfort everybody else! You think my life is easy?

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- BOB Do you have any idea what it feels like to be considered a pervert? For all your problems, you can always expect the whole world to listen to yours. I have to be constantly on guard who hears about mine. They can get me.
- ROSA You can just walk away from your problems. I got kids! I got responsibilities! Those get me!
- BOB Then you shouldn't have had them! And you're dead wrong that we can walk away as if we don't have feelings!
- ROSA That's why people come together — to have kids!
- BOB Yeah, the grunts of the world do. That's not the only reason and you know it! Straights can have all the sex they want without having any kids, and nobody says boo to them!
- ROSA You calling me a grunt?
- BOB I'm just saying I'm fed up with you straights — your kids this, your kids that. You people are obsessed!
- ROSA And how do you suppose the world keeps on without kids? We supply them.
- BOB Yeah, and we supply everything else!
- ROSA Bullshit!
- BOB We're supposed to be the selfish ones. But you're the selfish ones. You're not doing it for the world. You're doing it for yourself, and we're expected to jump up and down and cheer 'cause you're so goddamn self-less. It's about as far from selfless as anybody can get. You want to impose your goddamn genes on the rest of us!
- ROSA And I'm suppose to jump up and down and cry 'cause you're all dying from diseases — when it's your own damn fault! If you didn't fuck so much, you wouldn't be dead!
- BOB (Shocked) Rosa!
- ROSA I'm not sorry.
- BOB Well, I'm not sorry either.
- (Pause, as both smolder)
- BOB (Quietly) I know what men want, what they must have.
- ROSA And I don't?
- BOB Not as much as I do.
- ROSA (Quietly) I know what men want. I just don't want to give it to them anymore.

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

(Another pause. Both are still angry. Eventually, Bob lights another cigarette, sits on the edge of Rosa's desk)

BOB (After taking a few puffs, relenting) Even when you give it to them, after a while men don't want it. Have you noticed?

ROSA . . . Now that's really horrible.

BOB Well, it's the truth. Men are beasts.

ROSA Have you noticed that too?

BOB But we can't do without them, can we? Only lesbians can do without them.

ROSA I can do without them.

(Bob gives her a look)

ROSA I can!

BOB . . . Well, I can't.

ROSA . . . I can't either. . . . I'm not a lesbian.

BOB Me neither.

ROSA Sometimes I wish I was.

BOB Sometimes I wish I was straight.

ROSA/

BOB (Together) No, you don't! (They laugh)

BOB What do you think will really happen to your marriage?

ROSA Oh, Fernando might stay with me and start drinking or something.

BOB And you'd stumble on, trying to hold it together.

ROSA Right. Everything gettin' uglier and uglier. What about you?

BOB Oh, Len and I might pick up, at least the friendship part, and always be sort of polite and stiff with each other — for the rest of our lives.

ROSA Not promising for either of us, is it?

BOB But you gotta hope.

ROSA Yeah, hope is good.

BOB (Putting out his cigarette) Well, it's great that we finally got to talk, Rosa. Isn't it?

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ROSA Yeah . . . If only . . .

BOB What?

ROSA Never mind.

BOB (Having his own might-have-been moment.) If only . . .

ROSA What?

BOB If only I could have “talked” to Len like I’m talking to you.

ROSA And me to Fernando.

BOB Can I give you a hug?

ROSA Sure.

(They hug each other)

BOB (Moving away) Thanks. (Pats her hand)

ROSA Thank you! (Pats his hand)

BOB Watch those magazines.

ROSA Watch those hairpins.

BOB God, I feel better.

ROSA Me too.

BOB See you.

ROSA See you.

(Bob goes to the door, stops, turns back)

BOB So, Rosa, if one of your kids turned out gay, you’d be more . . . comfortable with it now, right?

ROSA (Doesn’t answer)

BOB Rosa?

ROSA . . . I’d kill him!

(They laugh) (Bob looks uncertain, then downright pained about how little has really changed between them)

(Lights fade)

Collected Plays of Daniel Curzon

Scene Two

(Len and Bob's kitchen, the same day. The sound of hammering offstage. Radio on in the kitchen.)

LEN (Taking the rhubarb pie out of the oven or off a hotplate, putting it on the table to cool, calling) How's it going? (Turns off the radio)

FERNANDO (In between banging noises) No sweat!

LEN How long's it going to take to fix 'em?

FERNANDO Not much longer!

LEN Want some pie? It's rhubarb! (The banging stops) You deserve a break.

(Door slams. Fernando enters, putting the hammer in the tool holder around his waist.)

FERNANDO Thanks, Mr. Nolan.

LEN Call me Len.

FERNANDO Fernando.

(They start to shake hands but hold back)

LEN You want to sit?

FERNANDO No, I can stand.

LEN Suit yourself.

(Len busies himself cutting the pie, getting a plate, fork, etc.)

FERNANDO It's a good thing you called me 'bout them steps. They coulda broke and somebody coulda sued you for everything you got! (Grins)

LEN I'm afraid they wouldn't get much.

FERNANDO You own this place or just rent?

LEN I'm making the payments, shall we say?

FERNANDO I'm thinkin' 'bout buyin'. We're just rentin' now.

LEN (Nodding at the hammer, with a strong sexual overture) Well, you should be able to save on repairs.

FERNANDO (Picking up and returning the sexual overture, but with some aloofness) Yeah, I'm pretty handy. (After a pause) You gay?

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LEN (Looking up, somewhat afraid) You doing a survey?

FERNANDO I work for a lot of gays, that's all.

LEN You're not gay, I take it?

FERNANDO (With some contempt) Who me?

LEN You married?

FERNANDO Sure. Nice girl. She's from Guatemala.

LEN Are you?

FERNANDO Grew up in Cuba.

LEN Kids?

FERNANDO Yeah. Two.

LEN (Handing him a piece of pie on a plate, adds a fork, but Fernando removes the fork, puts it back on the table) Did you learn repair work down in Cuba?

FERNANDO (Eating) Naw, I escaped. When I was a kid.

LEN That sounds interesting. (Crossing to kitchen sink)

FERNANDO The troops came to my little school and beat me up 'cause I had some holy cards. I was Catholic then. I guess I still am. Just don't go to church no more. Went to Miami and then come up here.

LEN And somewhere along the way you learned to be a carpenter, right?

FERNANDO In the army.

LEN I wish I could fix things, but I can't. (Shows something broken, such as the door at the bottom of the sink)

FERNANDO Yeah, I'm real good around the house. You're not, huh?

LEN Oh, I get by. I'm too busy at the moment.

FERNANDO What do you do for a living?

LEN I distribute — (Opening refrigerator door with a flourish, revealing a doorful of cans) soft drinks!

FERNANDO (Shrugs)

LEN (Seeing Fernando's sticky fingers) How about a napkin?

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FERNANDO Naw, I don't need it. (Licks his fingers)

(There is a look between them, sexual tension as Fernando licks several fingers one by one)

FERNANDO Yeah, I've always worked physical. Feels good. (Slaps his hammer)

LEN (To make conversation, busying himself) Where were you in the army?

FERNANDO Germany mostly. You been in the army?

LEN Almost. But no.

FERNANDO Yeah, I had a real good time in Germany — not from the Germans, though. They considered me a nigger — oops, I mean a "person of color." But I fucked a lot.

LEN Did you?

FERNANDO Some nice ass there.

LEN (Coming closer) Well, I'm glad. For your sake.

FERNANDO You gotta beer by any chance, man? I been workin' up a thirst.

LEN Let me check the refrigerator. (Goes to it, finds a bottle of beer. While his back is turned, Fernando removes his tee-shirt, turns his back to Len, does a basketball hook shot with it onto the daybed)

LEN (Turning back with the beer, noticing the hook shot, the nice body) This okay?

FERNANDO (Referring to his naked chest) I was gettin' hot.

LEN No problem. (Offering the beer) Here's your beer.

FERNANDO (Checking the label, mockingly) A Lite, huh? Well, I guess a beer's a beer. Thanks. (Takes a swallow)

LEN (Striking a macho pose) Well, when you've got a real thirst!

FERNANDO (Ignoring the mockery) You live here alone?

LEN I have a friend I . . . share with.

FERNANDO A guy?

LEN Yes. . . . He's working today.

FERNANDO What's he do?

LEN He's an accountant.

FERNANDO Yeah? (Smirks but takes a swallow to cover it) Oh, yeah. I forgot. He works

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with my wife. (About the beer) Ahhhh! That's great! Join me?

LEN I'm afraid that's the last one.

FERNANDO Take a swig of mine then! (Holds out the beer bottle, almost thrusting it into Len's mouth) Come on, come on! I don't have no germs.

LEN (Backing away) I had some tea before you arrived, so I'm really not thirsty.

FERNANDO (Walks over toward the exit, where he entered) Well, I'm gonna have to cut you some new steps. Got some wood out in the truck that might do.

LEN That sounds fine.

(Fernando stops and looks at a picture of a woman on a calendar, takes a swig)

FERNANDO (Insinuatingly) So you share with this guy, huh? (He takes another swig, then brings the bottle down to his crotch invitingly. Len looks down, but raises his head, folds his arms, as if to say he is not accepting the invitation.)

(Slow Fade)

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Scene Three

(The same, a few day later; radio on. Len has changed into a plaid shirt. He is doing a few dishes. Then there is a knocking offstage. He turns off the radio, exits.)

- FERNANDO (Entering quickly) God, it's cold out there today! (He's wearing an open jacket over a shirt similar to Len's.)
- LEN (Entering after Fernando) Well, you're certainly dressed a lot warmer than you were the other day.
- FERNANDO I got it on sale. (Taking off coat, looking down at shirt) You like it?
- LEN Very nice.
- FERNANDO (Noticing that his shirt looks like Len's) You don't think it makes me look like a faggot, do you?
- LEN (Taking the coat, hanging it up on a hook) What does a faggot look like?
- FERNANDO (Half gesturing toward Len) Oh, you know.
- LEN (Half amused) Are you very afraid of looking like a faggot?
- FERNANDO (Sharply) I'm not afraid of nothin', man!
- LEN Good! . . . I asked you to come back today because I thought you did a good job on those steps. (Points at the shelves over the sink) And I was wondering if you could take out these old shelves and put in a couple of cabinets — and could you paint them cornbread yellow?
- FERNANDO (Sneering) Cornbread yellow? What's that?
- LEN (Absorbing the mockery) I'll get you a sample.
- FERNANDO Whatever you say, man. (Picking up a kitchen chair and moving it with one hand to the shelves, not taking his eyes off Len. With heavy irony) You're the boss! (Hauls himself up on the sink to look at the old shelves, as Len cleans things away hurriedly) (As an afterthought, rude) Oh, is it okay if I stand on this?
- LEN (Since Fernando is already standing on it) Be my guest!
- FERNANDO (Checking) Hey, it's pretty dusty up here.
- LEN Yeah, I don't clean very well.
- FERNANDO (Surprised) You don't like to clean?
- LEN Nobody likes to clean, do they?
- FERNANDO (Sneeringly) Sorry, I just thought maybe you . . .

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LEN (Looking up) No, I'm afraid I'm not into cleaning.

FERNANDO (Looking down) My wife, she cleans all the time.

LEN Does she?

FERNANDO She's real sweet.

LEN Is she?

FERNANDO (with a double meaning) Your friend, he does the cleaning?

LEN (Emphasizing the words) We take turns.

FERNANDO No kidding?

LEN No kidding.

FERNANDO (Breaks the tension by starting to get back down off the sink)

LEN (Offering his hand like a knight) Need any help?

FERNANDO No, I can do it! (Gets down slowly)

(Fernando struts away, then looks back over his shoulder, catches Len looking at him)

LEN (Quickly) Well, I guess we'd better start emptying these shelves.

FERNANDO Do you mind doing that yourself, man? I gotta get some more tools from the truck.

LEN (Who has been removing teacups from the shelf, placing them on the table) No, I don't mind.

FERNANDO (Starting to leave, noticing a teacup, picks it up) Hey, these are real cute!
(Pretends to drink with his pinkie extended) Got flowers on 'em, huh?

LEN You don't like flowers?

FERNANDO Yeah, I like flowers. I just don't like 'em too much on cups.

LEN (Coming over, picking up a cup) These cups are pretty tough, flowers and all.

FERNANDO Is that right?

LEN Have a special glaze. You can throw one on the floor and it won't even break.
(Brings the teacup down as if to throw it, but he doesn't)

FERNANDO Hey, I thought you was gonna throw it!

LEN Well, it might have broken — and ruined my point.
(Puts the cup and saucer together as he ends this sentence)

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FERNANDO (With a double meaning) And then you would've had to bend over to pick it up too.

LEN Would I?

FERNANDO Could be dangerous. You could hurt your back or somethin'.

LEN Could I? I guess I have to be careful how I bend over then, don't I?

FERNANDO I guess so.

LEN You have to be pretty careful yourself, I suppose.

FERNANDO I don't bend over.

LEN You let your wife do it, is that it?

FERNANDO You leave my wife out of this.

(Len breaks the tension by getting more items from the shelves)

FERNANDO (Changing the tone) You know what — my Aunt Maria collects china dishes. She's got all kinds.

LEN Does she?

FERNANDO Yeah, she's real old now, but as far back as I can remember she's collected these china dishes. Even back in Cuba.

LEN And here I thought they didn't have any fun there. (Coming back, putting both fists on the table) Is your aunt a faggot?

FERNANDO Huh? (Laughs) What made you say that?

LEN Because she collects china. That's a sure sign.

FERNANDO Not in a *mujer*. (Cocking his head) You've got a sense of humor.

LEN We always do! (Goes back for more items to remove, gets up on the chair. Fernando watches his butt.) (Starting to turn back) I — (Catches Fernando watching him. Fernando looks away fast)

LEN I'm afraid I didn't buy any more beer.

FERNANDO (Looking at the pie, which is still out) You don't have some more of that pie by any chance, do you?

LEN (Getting it, removing the cover) Yeah, there's quite a bit of it left. My roommate and I are on a diet, as of . . . (Thinks of Bob sadly)

FERNANDO Looks good!

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(Len recovers and brings it to the table, to cut. Fernando follows)

LEN You want it on a plate? (Does mocking parallel gesture to Fernando's basketball hook shot earlier) Or should I just hand it to you?

(Fernando extends his hand, daring Len to put the pie there. Len cuts the piece, then dumps it into Fernando's hand.)

FERNANDO (Eating) Excuse my manners.

LEN You're excused.

FERNANDO This is delicious! Did you make this yourself?

LEN (Lying, lifting his hands in self-mockery) I did!

FERNANDO You make a real good pie. It's even better cold.

LEN (Moving a little closer) We can warm it up if you like.

FERNANDO (Picking up on the double meaning) How you gonna warm it up?

LEN The usual way. How would you warm it up?

FERNANDO Oh, there must be some way. . .

(Len almost reaches out, but decides not to. Instead, he turns and picks up the rest of the pie and returns it to the spot where he keeps it when not being eaten)

FERNANDO Well, I guess I'd better get a crowbar out of my truck and start on them cabinets!
(Wiggles his sticky fingers)

LEN (Assuming familiarity) Your fingers are sticky. As usual.

FERNANDO (Moving them) Guess they need . . . cleaning. (Len offers a dish towel. Fernando considers it, but wipes his fingers on his shirt)

LEN Do I make you nervous?

FERNANDO Me? Why should you make me nervous?

LEN (Throwing the dish towel on the table) Just an idea that crossed my mind.

FERNANDO No, you seem like a nice guy.

LEN Thanks for the compliment.

FERNANDO (Embarrassed) Was that a compliment? (Brushes past Len, almost elbowing him out of the way) I didn't mean nothin' by it.

LEN (Bowing ironically) Thank you.

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FERNANDO I mean . . . I mean, I don't compliment guys.

LEN You don't!

FERNANDO I mean, I wouldn't know if what I said was a compliment.

LEN (Angry) It's all right. No permanent damage done by giving a compliment.

FERNANDO (Angrier) What do you mean by that? (Threatening)

LEN Not a thing . . . Not a thing!

(Blackout)

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Scene Four

(The same, a few minutes later. Len is reading a magazine on the daybed, looking up to see what Fernando is up to. Fernando enters with a crowbar, puts it on the table, leaves for something else, returns with a hammer, puts it on the table. It's obvious that he's restless.)

LEN (When Fernando, who wants to talk but is hiding it, stops) Yes?

FERNANDO How come I never see your roommate? (Plays with his work gloves)

LEN Happened to miss him each time. He's . . . on vacation.

FERNANDO Oh . . . (Still hangs around)

LEN (Gesturing at chair) You want to sit down for a minute?

FERNANDO Oh, I don't know. I guess I should get to work.

LEN Suit yourself. (Goes back to reading, but still watches)

(Fernando continues to stand there, hands in pockets)

LEN Something bothering you?

FERNANDO Oh, I don't know. (Raps his knuckles on the table)

LEN You want to borrow my magazine, or something? (Holds it out)

FERNANDO No, I don't read too much.

LEN Men don't.

FERNANDO (Spotting a stuffed frog above Len's head, used as a wall decoration) Hey, what's that frog for?

LEN (Reaching up, tickling its crotch) For fun! Don't you have one in your house?

FERNANDO A frog?

LEN No? (Reaches up and takes down the frog, works it like a puppet) I was in a play and this was a prop.

FERNANDO You let it stay on the wall?

LEN Why not?

FERNANDO It's sort of weird, isn't it?

LEN Not if you're into frogs.

FERNANDO I guess I'm not into frogs.

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LEN (Playing with the frog) No? . . . You mean to tell me you've never fucked a frog?

FERNANDO Not once!

LEN (Shifting the cards) How about the other way? Ever been. . .?

FERNANDO (Almost laughing, uncomfortable) Fucked by a frog? Definitely not.

LEN You should try it sometime.

FERNANDO Hey, we're talkin' kinda weird!

LEN (Tossing the frog to him) Are we?

FERNANDO (Catching, holding the frog) You got a lotta things like this?

LEN You mean in the rest of the house?

FERNANDO Yeah . . .

LEN A few in the bedroom. Go take a look if you want. . .

FERNANDO That's okay. (Tosses the frog back to Len)

LEN What do you have in your bedroom?

FERNANDO My wife most of the time! (Snorts)

LEN Bragging or complaining?

FERNANDO She's got bit tits.

LEN Is that one word?

FERNANDO She does, believe me.

LEN (Very obviously doesn't reply)

FERNANDO (Laughs) What's the matter? You don't like big tits?

LEN I can take 'em or leave 'em alone. (Tosses the frog on the floor)

FERNANDO See these hands. (Holds them out) These hands shouldn't be workin' so much. These hands should be full of tits all the time! (Pantomimes grabbing handfuls)

LEN (Putting his hands behind his head) You're quite the stud, aren't you?

FERNANDO No complaints yet!

LEN I wonder what it's like to be able to brag about your sex drive like that. You never have to worry what the other guys will say, do you?

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FERNANDO Huh?

LEN If it moves, you'll fuck it, is that it?

FERNANDO All it's got to do is lay there. Don't have to move.

LEN (Putting his legs to the side of the daybed) Yes, I know the type.

FERNANDO (Moving away) Got anything else to eat? Got any whiskey?

LEN (Pretending to be feminine again) Why, I must be forgetting my manners! (Gets up, goes to take more packages from the shelves) By the way, you never told me if your wife likes to cook. I bet she does, doesn't she?

FERNANDO (Standing by the table, watching Len bringing packages over) Yeah, man, she does.

LEN A real little woman, huh?

FERNANDO Something wrong with that?

LEN (Shaking a box of cake mix) Does she bake cakes?

FERNANDO Hey, I like women to act like women —

LEN — And men to act like men, right?

FERNANDO That's right.

LEN And what does that mean exactly?

FERNANDO Huh?

LEN Describe being a man to me. (Fernando looks suspicious) Go ahead. I'm interested.

FERNANDO (Uncomfortable having to speak, but moves away thinking, then comes back) Okay, okay. A man is boss, and he knows his own mind.

LEN Very interesting. Go on.

FERNANDO And a man don't take no shit from nobody, and he fights when he has to —

LEN — And even when he doesn't have to!

FERNANDO — Like when I was in the army.

LEN Sounds admirable.

FERNANDO And if he acts right, he gets treated like a man. Me, I've always been treated like a man.

LEN (Takes a chair in a "butch" way, twirling it around, sits in it backwards) And if

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a man acts “wrong,” what happens to him?

FERNANDO (Stuck for an answer) He gets . . . (Moves away)

LEN (Still sitting, not looking at Fernando) He gets what?

FERNANDO (Unable to say)

LEN He gets what? (After a beat, insinuatingly) . . . What do you suppose it’s like? (Gets up, looks at Fernando, whose back is turned to him) You’re curious, aren’t you? You’re more than curious.

FERNANDO (Softly) I’m not curious . . .

LEN Not even a little bit?

FERNANDO No . . .

(Len hesitates, remembering Bob’s rejection. Finally he moves closer to Fernando and holds his arm full length above Fernando’s shoulder. After a few seconds, he brings his hand down and Fernando slowly turns his head to look at it. Then Len slides his hand down the other’s arm as if to take Fernando’s hand, but Fernando balks at this and jerks his hand away)

LEN (After a pause, not giving up) You want to go into the bedroom?

FERNANDO (Takes a step toward the bedroom, then stops)

LEN How about on the daybed?

FERNANDO (After a considerable pause, he sits on the daybed and starts to remove his shirt)

LEN (Coming nearer, then touching Fernando’s shoulder. Fernando flinches a little) Have you done this before?

FERNANDO (Softly) I used to do it to my cousin, about ten years ago.

(Both start to unbutton their shirts, but Fernando looks up with a start when Len pulls his own shirttails out)

LEN Changing your mind?

FERNANDO (Shakes his head no)

(They finish removing their shirts, but separately)

LEN (Touching his again; this time there is no flinching) Don’t be afraid. (Moves behind him, touching both shoulders) I think I know what you need . . . And I have something we can use . . . (Gestures, meaning he has a condom, shows the package possibly)

FERNANDO (Nods, then sadly) A guy who gets fucked ain’t a real man.

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LEN It's up to you.

FERNANDO (Whispering) I'm afraid. There's no goin' back once it's . . .

LEN (Putting both hands on Fernando's shoulders) Maybe it's a victory, not a loss.
(Fernando looks at him) Your eyes are very beautiful . . . Do you want to leave?

FERNANDO (Very slowly shakes his head no)

LEN You're sure? (Gets up and flips the light switch to low, returns)

(Fernando leans back part way against Len's body)

LEN Relax . . . (Moves Fernando's hand over to Fernando's zipper) Relax . . .

(Fernando begins to unzip his own trousers)

LEN (Moving Fernando so that he is leaning toward the pillow on the daybed) Is it all right?
(Touches Fernando's waist) Is it?

FERNANDO (Quietly) Yes . . .

LEN (Undoing his top button, unzipping his fly) I'm going to enter you with all the tenderness
I'm capable of. Don't be afraid. (Moves one hand down inside Fernando's trousers,
touching a spot between the buttocks) I can feel you . . . opening . . .

FERNANDO (After a moment) Yes, yes . . . (Sighs)

LEN Welcome to the other side, Fernando.

(Tableau. Slow Fade)

End of Play

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3M, 1W. 3 Acts. 2 Sets

A sexy but homophobic macho Latino repairman who is having marital problems encounters a shy, gentlemanly gay man, who is also having sexual problems with his ex-lover/ roommate. Sexual and cultural conflicts result.