

PUPPETS RULE!

-- a play

(Each of the three scenes can also be played separately as a one-act.)

CHARACTERS: (5)

CASS, male, 25-40, sympathetic, bisexual, struggling actor,
son, brother, lover, and believer

VOICE OF PILOT, male, mature, deep and authoritative

MA, female, 40-65, eccentric, loud, boisterous, fed-up caregiver

GOD, played by the actor who plays the Pilot

Plus two PUPPET CHARACTERS (LOVIE and ANDY), each controlled
by a puppeteer with one stick attached to the head and one to a hand

SCENE 1

(CASS enters his family home, represented by a potty chair.)

(ANDY, his younger brother who had multiple physical and mental problems, is there, portrayed by a puppet that is about 4'8" controlled by a silent puppeteer via one stick attached to the head, another attached to a hand. He wears pants with a zipper.)

CASS: (entering a little) Hello! It's me! . . . Ma?

(There is no answer.)

CASS: Andy? . . . *Ma?*

(CASS enters further into the house. He reacts to the potty chair.)

CASS: It's me, Cass! What's going on? Is this some kind of prank? Come out right now!

(His cell phone rings. He answers.)

CASS: Hello? (Turns on his speakerphone.)

MA: (on speakerphone) It's me. Did you arrive yet?

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CASS: Yes. Where are you?

MA: Out.

CASS: Out? Where?

MA: I needed a break. I knew you were coming.

CASS: Yeah, but what if I hadn't made it for some reason.

MA: But you did!

CASS: I don't see Andy anywhere? Is he with you?

MA: No. I needed a break from Andy.

CASS: Well. he's not here.

MA: Well, you can bet he's not far! Did you look on the potty? That's where he usually is.

(CASS goes over to the potty chair.)

CASS: I see the potty. I don't see Andy.

MA: Look around for him. Sometimes he gets off and crawls away.

CASS: Why aren't you here?

MA: I told you.

CASS: You can't take a break from Andy.

MA: Easy for you to say.

CASS: He can't be left alone.

MA: Oh, he can too! He crawls off and I can barely find him. And then he's perfectly fine.

CASS: Ma!

MA: Oh, don't lecture me! I don't see you taking care of him.

CASS: I would if I lived here. But I have to be in New York –

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I know. So you can be the big actor!

CASS: I'm hardly a big actor.

MA: You think I don't know that?

CASS: I'm doing all right. I was in a festival.

MA: I think you should quit while you're ahead and come back here and help me with Andy.

CASS: We already discussed this.

MA: Yeah, and you went ahead and did what you wanted. Never mind me and Andy.

CASS: Maybe you should get some extra help.

MA: We can't afford it.

CASS: Aren't there agencies that will help?

MA: We've used them up already. And they're not cheap!

CASS: So you just go off?

MA: I'm not that far away.

CASS: How far are you?

MA: That's for me to know and you to find out.

CASS: Ma, this isn't funny.

MA: Go look for Andy. See how it *feels*.

CASS: Stay on the phone. I'll look. (Moves to another spot, calls.) Andy! . . . Andy!

MA: Is he there?

CASS: I don't see him.

MA: Sometimes he crawls into a closet. (Laughs.) Like you.

CASS: (not laughing) Ha ha. Which one?

MA: He's tried them all. Try the one upstairs in your old bedroom.

CASS: He gets all the way up there?

MA: He's only helpless when he wants to be.

CASS: Wait a second. I'll call. (Goes to the other side of the stage.) ANDY! It's Cass! (Waits.)

MA: Did he answer?

CASS: No.

MA: What fun, right?

CASS: Ma, I'm sorry you got stuck taking care of Andy because of his . . . issues.

MA: Yeah, so am I. And don't pussyfoot around. Call it what it is. Issues!

CASS: It sounds too clinical.

MA: Clinical/Schmnical. It's Andy's own special issues. Deal with it. Not it. *Them!*

CASS: Are you dealing with it – them?

MA: Don't start with me, sonny boy. Years I've been dealing with this. While you run off just like your father.

CASS: I believe Pa died, Ma. Or maybe I'm mis-remembering.

MA: Your father would even die to get out of taking care of Andy!

CASS: Ma!

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm a terrible mother. Look how you turned out.

CASS: Yikes!

MA: Did I hurt your feelings? . . . Good.

CASS: When are you coming back home?

MA: Who said I'm coming back? I'm having a wonderful time on my own.

CASS: Where are you? At the mall?

MA: I'm having a strawberry phosphate.

CASS: A what?

MA: I'm having some me-time. For one hour out of the day I'm not wiping somebody's ass!

CASS: Andy can't help himself.

MA: Do you think I don't know he can't help himself? You have a gift for the obvious.

CASS: Can we save the insults for later? At the moment we both need to find Andy. Could he have gotten outside?

MA: Have you looked?

CASS: I just got here!

MA: Let me try.

CASS: What do you mean?

MA: Hold your phone up and I'll call him.

CASS: You sure?

MA: It can't hurt. Hold it up.

(CASS holds up his cell phone.)

MA: (as if calling a pig, loudly) Here, soeey, soeey, soeey!

CASS: Ma! What are you *doing!*

MA: He likes it. (calling again) Here, soeey, soeey, soeey!

CASS: Stop that! That is so . . .

MA: Oh, get off your high horse, Mr. Would-be Star! As if Andy cares! He loves it when I make the pig sound! So just shut up.

CASS: Ma, I am going to have to report you to . . . to somebody.

MA: Go ahead. Report me. Who's going to take care of Andy then? *You?* In a pig's eye! (calling again) Here, soeey, soeey, soeey!

CASS: Ma, stop it right this minute! (Reacts to the unseen ANDY, who is crawling toward him) Andy? Oh, my God, where have you been? (Listens.) Don't make that pig sound. Please! Andy, don't. (ANDY'S puppeteer is making the pig sound.) (to his mother) Ma, how do I get him to stop that?

MA: Oh, he'll get tired of doing it. Just wait. Bounce a ball. Sometimes that works.

CASS: He's not an infant!

MA: Yes, he is. He's gone downhill since you were here last. But then how would you know that, since you're so rarely here?

CASS: It's only been a year.

MA: Really? Seems more like five. But what is they say? Time flies when you're having a good time!

CASS: Come home. I can't cope with Andy all by myself.

MA: Is this *Ma* I'm talking to? (as CASS) *Ma, you can't cope?!*

CASS: If something happened to Andy, you'd never forgive yourself.

(There is no response.)

CASS: Ma!

MA: I'm thinking. I'm thinking.

CASS: You know you don't mean that.

MA: I'm thinking. I'm thinking.

CASS: You love Andy.

MA: (mechanically) I love Andy.

CASS: You do!

MA: (mechanically) I do.

CASS: He's your own flesh and blood.

MA: You know what really grinds my ass? The way people like you, who don't lift a finger to help, keep telling us who have to do the shit work, literally, what our responsibilities are. You don't know what the hell you're talking about!

(ANDY mumbles something.)

CASS: What's that, Andy? (Listens.)

MA: What did he say?

CASS: I think he said he wants a Coke.

MA: A coke? Does he think I'm made of money?

CASS: Buy him a Coke. I'll reimburse you.

MA: Big spender!

CASS: Bring him a Coke. For God's sake!

MA: Did you know it's his birthday today?

CASS: Yes. That's why I came home.

MA: Home? What's that?

CASS: (to ANDY) Happy birthday, birthday boy! (ANDY reacts wildly with happiness. Then he touches his crotch.) Whoa! Whoa, Andy!

MA: What's he doing now?

CASS: I don't want to say.

MA: What is it? As if I didn't know! He's playing with himself, right?

CASS: (checking) Yes. . . . Andy . . . Andy stop that!

MA: Did he stop?

CASS: Not yet.

MA: Why am I not surprised!?

CASS: How do you get him to stop?

MA: Oh, for Heaven's sake, Cass, he's just celebrating! This time it's his birthday.

CASS: You just let him go on like that?

MA: Have you ever tried to stop somebody from masturbating?

CASS: No!

MA: It takes a special skill!

CASS: That's why I'm asking for your expertise!

MA: Hold up the phone again.

(CASS immediately holds up his cell phone)

MA: (yelling) Andy! . . . Andy! (to CASS) Does he hear me?

CASS: I'm not sure. He's preoccupied.

MA: (yelling) Andy!

CASS: He's listening!

MA: (yelling) Andy, it's your mother! Put your boo boo away!

CASS: His boo boo?

MA: That's what we call it.

CASS: Andy, put your boo boo away.

MA: You have to distract him.

CASS: How?!

MA: Well, you can let him finish. That usually settles him down, at least for a while.

CASS: I am not letting him finish! Andy! No! . . . *No!*

MA: Did that work?

CASS: (checking) No.

MA: Of course it didn't. Is the phone still up?

CASS: (putting it back up) Yes.

MA: (yelling) Andy! (to CASS) Is he listening?

CASS: Sort of.

MA: (yelling) Andy! Kitty! Pretty kitty!

CASS: There's no kitty here.

MA: He doesn't know that! (yelling) Andy! Kitty cat! Pretty kitty!

CASS: He's listening!

MA: Andy! (She meows.)

CASS: He likes that.

MA: Has he stopped playing with himself?

CASS: He's pausing. Meow again.

MA: Meow! Meow!

MA: What's he doing?

CASS: He's looking around for the kitty cat.

MA: Do it!

CASS: What?

MA: (prompting) Meow!

CASS: I'm not meowing!

MA: And you call yourself an actor! Meow!

CASS: (reluctantly. in small voice) Meow.

MA: Louder.

CASS: (more loudly) MEOW!

MA: That's better. What's he doing?

CASS: He stopped!

MA: Praise Jesus!

CASS: Uh oh, he's starting up again.

MA: Meow some more.

CASS: Meow!

MA: And?

CASS: . . . It works. I think.

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MA: Again!

CASS: Meow. . . . Meow.

MA: Did he stop?

CASS: Yes.

MA: Hey, maybe you're a better actor than I thought.

CASS: Thanks for the compliment, Ma. I think it's my first one.

MA: Just hope it's not the last one. Now button up Andy's pants.

CASS: Come on!

MA: What if a neighbor comes over? Or Social Services. It's hard to explain his dick sticking out. Believe me, I've been there.

CASS: Andy, come over here. (Waits.) Andy, come here. Please.

MA: Is he coming?

CASS: Yes. Slowly. That's a boy. That's a very good boy.

MA: Now zip him up.

CASS: Ma's on the phone, Andy! (Quickly puts the cell phone next to the unseen Andy's ear)

MA: (to CASS) You bastard!

CASS: Say hi to Ma, Andy! (Waits as ANDY says hi)

MA: You're not the bastard, Andy. Your big brother is.

CASS: He likes that. He's smiling.

MA: Did you zip him up yet?

CASS: No!

MA: Andy, close up your boo boo.

CASS: Close up your boo boo? Really?

MA: You got a better term? God! All these niceties! Get real!

CASS: Okay, okay. (Stern voice) Andy, close up your boo boo!

MA: That's more like it. Did he do it?

CASS: No.

MA: Andy, this is mommy. Close up your boo boo. Come on, close up your boo boo for mommy!

CASS: He stopped pulling on it, but it's still sticking out.

MA: Just go over and button him up!

CASS: He's twenty-five years old!

MA: So what!

CASS: I'm not going to do it, Ma.

MA: You're useless. (yelling) Andy, I'll bring you a Coke if you close up your boo boo!
(to CASS) Did that work?

CASS: No.

MA: What's he doing?

CASS: He's just standing there staring at me.

MA: With his boo boo hanging out?

CASS: Yes.

MA: Is it hard?

CASS: (upset) I don't know. I don't want to know!

MA: Oh, get over yourself. Even if it's hard, it's not for you!

CASS: (looking at his brother) Andy, what's wrong?

MA: What is it now?

CASS: He's crying.

MA: Yeah, he does that too. A lot.

CASS: Andy, why are you crying?

MA: Because we're trying to make him put his boo boo away.

CASS: I think it's something else.

MA: Give him some of his medication.

CASS: Which one? Where is it?

MA: Beside the potty. Do you see it?

ANDY: I see the potty.

MA: It's on the back of it. See it?

(CASS goes closer to the potty, checks.)

ANDY: I don't see any medication. Besides, we can't keep Andy medicated all the time.

MA: You are so full of crap I can barely stand to talk to you.

CASS: You're not helping.

MA: *You're* not helping! With your bleeding-heart bullshit! Get your brother some medicine!
A downer!

CASS: I can't find it!

MA: He probably flushed it again.

CASS: Andy, did you flush your medication?

MA: What did he say?

CASS: He didn't answer.

MA: Is he still crying?

CASS: Yes.

MA: Big cry or little cry?

CASS: I don't know!

MA: He's probably crying because he can't see the kitty.

CASS: Should we have promised him a kitty?

MA: He'll forget. Give it time. Is his boo boo in or out?

CASS: Still out.

MA: Is he still crying?

CASS: Yes. . . . Andy, what's wrong? (Listens.)

MA: What did he say?

CASS: He peed on himself, I think. He's pointing.

MA: Does he have a diaper on?

CASS: I don't know. I can't see one.

MA: (yelling) Andy, did you leave your di-di on?

CASS: He still wears a diaper?

MA: When we're lucky.

CASS: Shouldn't he be toilet-trained by twenty-five?

MA: You were eight. Maybe twelve.

CASS: I was not!

MA: (more softly) Andy, I told you to go pee pee this morning as I left. On the potty!

CASS: Oh, my God! This is a nightmare.

MA: No, it's hilarious. You got to find the fun in life, sonny boy. (yelling) Andy, why didn't you go pee pee when mommy told you to?

CASS: Now he's crying harder.

MA: (yelling) I'm sorry, honey! Mommy's sorry she yelled at you!

CASS: (Listens to ANDY) What?

MA: What did he say?

CASS: I think he said he's sorry.

MA: For what?

CASS: For not going pee pee when you told him to. I guess.

MA: I have to help him every single time, or . . . never mind. Just never mind.

(The cell phone goes quiet)

CASS: Ma? (No answer) Ma, are you there?

MA: (after a bit) Yes. (She is crying) I'm here.

CASS: Are you crying?

MA: (crying) No.

CASS: You are too crying.

MA: No, I'm not! (Big burst of tears, sincere ones)

CASS: (at his wit's end) Oh, my God! Ma, don't cry!

MA: Why not? It feels *great!* . . . I'm hanging up now.

CASS: What?! Don't hang up!

(MA hangs up)

CASS: Ma? Are you there? (He hangs up.) (to his brother) Don't cry, Andy. Everything is going to be better. (Listens) Did you say "How"? I wish I knew, Andy. . . .

I know! Let's get you to smile! Come on, smile for Cass! . . . Come on! One teeny, tiny smile! You haven't forgotten how to, have you?

Guess what. I brought my new camera with me. Let's take a selfie! And no, it doesn't stand for selfish! You do it like this.

(Goes closer to ANDY and arranges the camera at arm's length, to take a selfie of the two of them)

Smile now! Come on, big, big smile! See me! I'm smiling! (Smiles very widely)

(Suddenly notices that ANDY's boo boo is still hanging out.) One minute, one little minute. (Tries to put ANDY's boo boo back inside his pants.) (ANDY resists, moves away.) Andy! Come back here! We can't take a selfie with your boo boo hanging out.

(He chases ANDY but can't catch him.)

You find it funny, huh, that I can't catch you? Well, I don't want to catch you . . . *any more!* I'm all done chasing you. (Listens)

What's that? You want a selfie? No selfie for you until you put away your boo boo. See *my* boo boo. It's put away. (Points to his crotch) Never mind. Forget I said anything about my boo boo. . . . People might not understand.

Oh, so now you want a selfie, huh? Well, if you do, you have to give me a big smile! Come on, big smile! (Looks) That's right! That's right!

And one more thing. Put away your boo boo. Come on. (upset) Andy! Boo boo! (sternly) No, we are not taking a selfie featuring your boo boo! . . .

Ouch! Something just bit me! (Checks his arm) My God, it's a flea! It's black and tiny, but it's a goddamn flea.

(to ANDY) Andy, do you have fleas? I'm sorry. I don't mean you. Are there fleas in the house? Is there a real kitty cat around?

(Gets bitten again.) Ouch! There's another one! (Tries to catch the flea.) Got it! (Holds it between his thumb and his forefinger.) (to ANDY) You got to squeeze really hard or they'll jump away. (Squeezes really hard.) (He looks at his fingers. The flea jumps away) Goddamn it! It jumped. How could it jump after I squeezed it that hard?!

(Listens to ANDY) What? The fleas just want to live? Oh, Andy, that's so sweet. But we can't let the fleas win, honey? They'll take over. And then you'll be all covered with red marks. (to himself) On top of everything else. . . .

(to ANDY) Did you ever see a flea show, Andy? They ride bicycles; they pull little carts; they jump on trampolines! They're amazing. If we had time, we could train our fleas. They could help you put your boo boo back inside your pants! Would you like that?

(Suddenly MA rushes in)

MA: Mommy's home!

CASS: God, you scared me!

MA: Everything scares you. Hi, Andy! How's my baby?! (She goes over and hurriedly hugs him)

CASS: (examining a flea) Do you have a cat?

MA: (Leaves ANDY) No. Why?

CASS: Well, you have fleas.

MA: We do not.

CASS: What's this then? (Shows her the flea)

MA: I don't see anything.

CASS: Are you sure there are no cats, no strays?

MA: Kristoff, the Russian next door, sometimes brings his pet rat over.

CASS: What?

MA: To play with Andy.

CASS: Yeah, I know – he loves it!

MA: He does.

CASS: Fleas on rats caused the Black Death.

MA: You are such an alarmist!

CASS: You want Andy to get Bubonic Plague on top of everything else?!

MA: Yeah, that's what I want. Maybe it'll take *you* too. In fact, I planted the fleas myself.

CASS: And you barely acknowledged Andy just now.

MA: (making a big fuss) Hi, Andy! Hi, Andy! Kisses, kisses! (Kisses toward him.) That'll hold him. Satisfied?

CASS: You're incredible.

MA: Thank you. I try.

CASS: At least you came back.

MA: Yes, because I want to talk to you – about *you*.

CASS: I'm fine. There's no need to talk about me.

MA: Yes, there is. I worry about you, your future, after I'm gone.

CASS: Don't even start.

MA: I just want to ask you one thing.

CASS: No!

MA: Do you or do you not have sex?

CASS: Ma!

MA: Do you? I want to know.

CASS: I'm not telling you such intimate details of my life.

MA: There's nothing on your body I haven't seen before.

CASS: You are crossing so many boundaries, I . . . What has happened to you?

MA: I'm fed up? Don't you *get* it? So do you or don't you?

CASS: Here, have a flea. (Offers it.)

MA: How can I help you if you won't tell me the sordid details?

CASS: I don't think you can help me.

MA: Of course I can! I'm your mother. Unless nobody can help you.

CASS: That's it. Nobody can help me. So let's change the subject.

MA: I suspect you're a . . . celibate.

CASS: I'm not biting.

MA: You should have been a priest. You would have made a perfect priest. They're celibates.

CASS: I think there are a lot of fallen-away celibates.

MA: I agree. I'm one, a celibate, that is, now that your father's passed. It's not that big a deal, especially since I was practically one when your father was alive.

CASS: TMI!

MA: Did you really know your father? He was a strange, strange man.

CASS: How could you tell?

MA: What is that supposed to mean?

CASS: You're acting pretty strange yourself.

MA: I'm free at last! Free at last!

CASS: Are you sure you aren't having a nervous breakdown?

MA: Oh, that was last week. I'm beyond that now. (to ANDY) Andy, are you hungry?
(ANDY jumps up and down with enthusiasm) Settle down. Settle down. I guess that's
a yes. It's always a yes.

CASS: What does he like to eat?

MA: Burgers.

CASS: Is that all?

MA: Pesto strips.

CASS: Is that it?

MA: I weaned him off Danish pastries with pesto strips. He was getting fat.

CASS: And now he's addicted to pesto strips?

MA: Do you think he's too fat?

CASS: I don't know. Maybe a little.

MA: Why don't you take him to a gym?

CASS: I'm sorry. I'm not taking him to a gym, Ma.

MA: He'd do well there. Throwing the barbells around.

CASS: Could we get him some gym equipment here in the house?

MA: Yeah! It's coming tomorrow.

CASS: It's not such a terrible idea.

MA: It's an absolutely terrible idea. He'd be dead in less than a day.

CASS: You could watch him.

MA: The first time he picked up anything whatsoever he would drop it right on his head. And don't make me say: And about time too! (to ANDY) How we doing over there, buddy? How's that boo boo? Getting cold? Time to put that away! Happy Time over!

CASS: What are we going to do about him? This can't go on. Can it?

MA: Sure it can. It's called life. At least my life.

CASS: Can we both catch Andy and . . .

MA: Another thing – are you on drugs?

CASS: No!

MA: Heroin? Cocaine? Hydrocodone? Ecstasy?

CASS: You've been studying up.

MA: That's because I'm a “cool” mom.

CASS: Stop watching so much television!

MA: Why? That's my drug.

CASS: (looking over) I think Andy is falling asleep? Maybe we can . . .

MA: Have you ever been on a date, even once?

CASS: I went to my senior prom.

MA: I know. But that was with me!

CASS: It was not!

MA: If you say so. Did you take Andy?

CASS: I'm not even going to answer that.

MA: Do you know what you need? You need to practice. Let's practice you talking to girls. I'll play the girl.

CASS: You're not helping.

MA: You just need practice.

CASS: I do not.

MA: To get good at anything, you need to practice, practice, practice.

CASS: How many times do I have to say no?

MA: Well, I'm not helping you if it's a man you'd be talking to.

CASS: Nobody's asking you to.

MA: I have to draw the line somewhere.

CASS: Thanks for your support.

MA: This is how you do it. (Pretending to be a young girl) Hi there, handsome!

CASS: Ma!

MA: Come here often? (encouraging him) Where you from?

CASS: (starts to play his part) Not far.

MA: You want to go somewhere and smooch?

CASS: I'll pass.

MA: (as another flirty girl) Hi there, fella. Buy a girl a drink?

CASS: Are you an alcoholic?

MA: Why, what a thing to say to a little old thing like me.

CASS: Why don't you buy *me* a drink?

MA: I'll buy a drink, you sweet thing you. What's your poison?

CASS: Strychnine.

MA: Coming right up! . . . Of course not all the girls are that easy, you have to realize.

CASS: I know that. Believe me, I know that.

MA: You have to expect some rejection.

CASS: We don't have to practice that.

MA: Sure we do. (suddenly haughty) I was not looking at you. Stop looking at me!

CASS: I'm sorry. I thought you were looking at me.

MA: Are you saying I'm cross-eyed?

CASS: No.

MA: Cuz I am a little bit cross-eyed, or eye-impaired, and it makes guys think I'm interested when I'm not.

CASS: I'm sorry I bothered you. I'll leave now.

MA: Wait! You can't give up that easily. Stop being so self-defecating.

CASS: I think you mean "self-deprecating."

MA: I know what I mean. Stop crapping all over yourself. Confidence! Confidence is sexy!

CASS: And what if I don't have any confidence?

MA: You say you're an actor, correct? So act!

CASS: I think other people might see through my act.

MA: Not true! People are very imperceptive. They like razzle dazzle. Give it to 'em.

CASS: I give people more credit than that.

MA: That's why you're a doormat. And you're always going to be a doormat.

CASS: Ma!

MA: Some folks will tell you to be genuine. I say: be phony! It'll take you a lot farther in this world.

CASS: Are we finished practicing?

MA: Do you even know the facts of life? I don't think your father ever told you. Did he?

CASS: Not in so many words.

MA: Then you probably don't know.

CASS: You are *not* going to tell the facts of life now.

MA: Ashamed? Take care of your brother for a few years. You'll get over it.

CASS: (looking over) He's asleep.

MA: He could be faking it. He does that.

CASS: Let me see. (Goes over to ANDY, checks him out) Shh. I think he's really asleep. Don't yell at him.

MA: Believe me, he can sleep through anything when he wants to, even me yelling.

CASS: I'm going to pick him up.

MA: You sure? Don't drop him. He's heavy.

CASS: He's not heavy. He's my brother.

MA: What bullshit! He weighs the same, whether he's your brother or not.

CASS: I think I can handle it.

MA: You're going to need my help.

CASS: I don't think so.

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MA: If you drop him, it's on you.

CASS: Okay, it'll be on me.

MA: I'm simply warning you.

CASS: All right, I'm simply warned. (Goes carefully to ANDY)

MA: Don't drop him.

CASS: (gritting his teeth) I'm not going to drop him!

MA: Here, let me put down some pillows. (She finds a couple of pillows nearby)

CASS: I might trip over the pillows, Ma.

MA: I'll walk ahead of you, and if you start to drop Andy, I'll throw the pillows down real fast, to break his fall.

CASS: Are you sure that's a good idea?

MA: Absolutely. Okay, pick him up. I have the pillows.

(CASS picks up the sleeping ANDY and places him over his shoulder)

CASS: I've got him.

MA: Now one step at a time.

CASS: Where am I taking him?

MA: Put him on the couch. He likes it there.

CASS: What if he wakes up? Will he stay there?

MA: Sometimes.

CASS: How do you keep him there?

MA: You don't want to know. . . . Got him?

CASS: I think so. (Adjusts the rather awkward ANDY to his other shoulder) There! That's better.

MA: Wait! Let's fix his boo boo while we have the chance.

CASS: It's pressed up against me.

MA: I'll reach around.

CASS: Do we have to do that now?

MA: Take the opportunity when you have it!

CASS: Okay, okay. (He turns to open up ANDY more to MA) Can you see his boo boo?

MA: (fiddling) I can't quite get it.

CASS: Don't wake him up.

MA: Can you reach down and press a little bit?

CASS: Which part?

MA: The opening. Pull it shut.

CASS: Should I press it or pull it?

MA: Try both. See what works. Jesus, Cass, are you helpless?!

CASS: Oh, for god's sake! (Reaches down and closes up ANDY's pants) There!

MA: I'll pull up the zipper. (She does, with difficulty) Got it! Whew!

CASS: (echoing MA) Whew.

MA: See what can happen when we work together?

CASS: Yeah, we're quite the team.

MA: That's why you should come back home and help out.

CASS: We'll see.

MA: That means no.

CASS: We'll see.

MA: Don't worry about me. I won't run off to be an actor. I'll be right here, just me and Andy, like two peas in a pod. Two pees in a potty.

CASS: I'm sorry, Ma. But I have to have my own life.

MA: That's what I used to say, when I was alive.

CASS: Oh, God!

MA: You're a good brother.

CASS: (rocking ANDY in his arms) He's a good kid.

MA: Yeah, it's sweet now. But you'll leave.

CASS: But I'm here now, Ma. I'm here now. (Kisses ANDY's head)

MA: He sleeps so well in your arms because he loves you.

CASS: Is that it? I think he's just tired.

MA: No, he loves you. He does. I can tell. (Rubs ANDY'S head as CASS holds him)

CASS: (after a pause) Do you love *me*, Ma?

MA: What a question!

CASS: Well, do you?

MA: (rubbing CASS's head) I'm thinking. I'm thinking!

(Lights slowly fade.)

END OF SCENE 1

SCENE 2

CHARACTERS: (5)

CASS, nicely dressed, with suitcase
VOICE (over PA system), male, any age,
preferably deep and authoritative
MA, in airplane seat next to her disabled son
ANDY, a puppet controlled by two sticks via a puppeteer
LOVIE, another similar puppet but of *undetermined* sex

SETTING: Four airplane seats. It would be nice if real airplane seats could be used; otherwise, chairs will do. There is an easily opened suitcase on the floor in front of Cass.

LIGHTS UP on CASS

(He is seated facing DOWNSTAGE. He spends much of his time talking across the aisle to another passenger. We do not know if that person (portrayed by a puppet) is male or female. The audience would be other passengers who happen to overhear what transpires.)

SOUND of airplane taking off.

CASS: (to nobody in particular) Nice take-off! (Mimes removing his seat belt) Get that horrible thing off me! (Glances at the passenger across the aisle from him) You seem to be having trouble with *your* seat belt. Here, let me help. (Gets up. Stops) You sure? (Sits back in his seat.) Those things are killers. More people are killed by seat belts than by plane crashes! Okay, you got it! Good for you. . . . (Turns away, turns back) Hello there! I'm Cass.
(Waits for a response) I don't bite! (Waits again) Are you going to be like that? It's a long flight. (Waits) Suit yourself. (He hums) Can you tell what song that is? (Listens) Yeah, I don't know either. (Suddenly) By the way, I'm bisexual. How about you? (Listens) Don't care to say, huh? No pressure. I couldn't help noticing you. You're very attractive. (Waits)

Hey, don't move to another seat. I promise to be good. (Waits. Then oily) I'm *very* good. At least that's the word on the street. I wouldn't know for sure. That's because I've never had sex with myself. (Waits) Never! The thought of masturbation is too depressing for words. People are so lonely as it is. Having sex by yourself? Yikes! Now that will really make you want to kill yourself. Don't get me started. What's all this crap about people being over-worked and so busy, busy, busy all the time? Not the problem! The problem is boredom. (Spells it wrong) B-O-R-D-U-M! More people die from boredom than from syphilis. What's your name? (Waits) I'm Cass. A lot of people ask me if it's short for Casanova. What do you think? (Leans toward the other passenger) Maybe it is. Maybe it isn't. I'm not telling! (Waits) Do you find me strangely alluring? That's a joke! That's a joke! Hey, don't go. Besides, the plane is completely full. We all have to stay where we are. What were we talking about? Don't you find yourself craving that thing called novelty? Day in, day out, the same old, same old. It's enough to drive anybody downright nuts! You're always hearing about these couples who have been together for, like, twenty years. Twenty years, can you believe that? And we're supposed to all go, "Yippee for them! Aren't they terrific!" Well, I for one don't find it terrific. I think it's sad. You couldn't find one other person to have sex with in twenty years? And don't get me started on the ones who have been together for fifty years! Of course, after that long, who else would want to have sex with them?! (Waits.) Was that mean? I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to be mean. But you can't tell me they're *happy*! You know what I'm saying? And what about you? Are you married? (Waits) I can wait. I can wait. That was a joke! A joke! Single? Divorced? Bigamist? Now you *know* that was a joke! You gotta make jokes

in this life, right? People are so serious all the time! Lighten up – is what I say! And why can't sex just be something to pass the time?! Like on a plane. Ever hear of the Mile High Club? (Listens) Really? You've never heard of it? Well, suffice it to say, it passes the time on an airplane. Not that I've done it. A lot. (Waits) Ever. It's my understanding that it doesn't have to take that long. Especially since it's cramped and nobody looks their best in the mirror of an airplane toilet. It can be over in a trice. How long is a trice exactly? You can be in and out of there faster than a bunny rabbit on Viagra. (Waits) Pardon the metaphor! Not that I personally am all that speedy. The word on the street is that there is stamina – and then there is *my* stamina. (Makes an arm like an erection) If you get my picture. I once went for four hours without stopping. I even called my doctor during the episode and he told me it was okay to continue. Not that I always listen to my doctor. I mean, who is he to tell me whether I can have sex or not?! That's for your mother to say! Ha! That's a joke. How about you? Are you into long or short sex? I read somewhere that actual sex usually lasts on average about thirteen minutes. Not these all-night sessions you keep hearing about. What a crock! I think porn is ruining everybody's expectations. What about you? Ever watch porn?

LIGHTS UP on MA and puppet ANDY in seats across from CASS.

(They are far enough from each other to wave but not to overhear each other)

MA: Andy, stop that. (Listens) Because I said so. For once, can you just sit still? (Listens)

Yes, we're on an airplane. We're going for a visit to the city. (Looks) That's right. You can clap. I'm clapping too. (She claps her hands) (Listens) We're going to stay with your big

brother. That's right. You can clap for that too. See me clapping? (Claps harder) And guess what? You're going to be staying there with your big brother. He doesn't know that yet, but you *are*! (Coddles ANDY) Yes, you is! Only don't tell your brother that just yet. Okay? That'll be our little secret. Okay? (Looks) Andy, don't put your fingers in your nose, honey. Please. (Listens) All right, but just one finger. Just one.(Reaches over to remove one of ANDY's fingers from his nose)

LIGHTS DOWN on MA and ANDY
LIGHTS UP on CASS

CASS: Am I stepping out of bounds here? I apologize. It's just that you're just so damned cute!

I don't usually make a play for just anybody on a plane. Trust me! It takes a very special person, like you. (Looking around) God, I'm thirsty. Where's the attendant? (Looks.) Oh, Lord, they're way up there. A person could die of thirst before they get to you. (Suddenly the lights go out.) Geez. Now what?!

(There are two announcement pings)

VOICE: I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen, we seem to be having a temporary lighting problem.

But there is nothing to be alarmed about. It should be fixed in no time. Please stay in your seats. In case it isn't clear, this is your captain speaking. Thank you.

CASS: (in the dark) Are we going to die?

(Pause)

CASS: (to the other passenger) Just goes to show how you need to seize the day, doesn't it? You never know when you might crash. And there you are, one orgasm you're never going to get. That was brought home to me when my uncle died. Here he was making all these

homemade porn films and he ups and croaks at the age of forty-three. Slipped on some lubricant they use in the porn and broke his hip, which just got worse and worse, and then he developed some kind of flesh-eating infection in the hospital. And he died. I ask you – is that fair? No, it's not fair! I decided right then and there at his funeral that you've got to seize the day. Or the day will seize *you*!

LIGHTS DOWN on CASS
LIGHTS UP on MA and ANDY

MA: How are you doing, kiddo? Ready to take your finger out of your nose now? (Listens)

(ANDY suddenly slaps MA) *Andy!* No slapping! No! No! Jesus! You almost got my eye!

Okay, leave your finger in your nose. See if I care!

LIGHTS DOWN on MA and ANDY

(LIGHTS UP on CASS)

CASS: Hey! We're back!

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: See, ladies and gentlemen, it was just a temporary problem. If you wish, you are now free to get up and move about the cabin.

CASS: (to the other passenger) You want to move about? (Listens) You're good? Okay! (Stands up) I'll leave you alone now. . . . But *we're* good? Right? (Starts to leave, then comes back) I carry protection, if that's what's bothering you. (Listens.) It's terrific stuff, they say. It's guaranteed by UNICEF or somebody. It will stop any kind of venereal whatchamacallit. You want to see it? It comes in this real pretty package. (Looks in his suitcase.) It won't take me a minute to find it. Needless to say, it prevents sperm from

doing their thing. You got to stop those little buggers. . . . Do you mind my asking if you're a man or a woman? (Listens.) Oh, you'd rather not say? That's fine. Did I tell you I'm bisexual? (Listens) I did? Yeah, I like to get that right up front in the conversation when I meet somebody, so there are no misunderstandings. I hate all those arguments like, "Did you sleep with her? Did you sleep with him?" Give me a break! You can't be bisexual and monogamous both! Get real!

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: This is your captain again. We are very glad to have you onboard. We hope that you are comfortable. I believe we have solved the lighting problem and everything ought to be shipshape from here on in. We may experience a bit of turbulence shortly, so we ask you to stay in your seats with your seat belts fastened. I am turning on the seat belt sign for now for your safety. Thank you.

CASS: (calling out) Who do you have to screw to get a drink around here? (to the other passenger) Luckily, I brought some bottles with me. (Fusses with the suitcase. Pulls out a plastic bottle) Want one? It's just water, spring water. With a little bit of alcohol. (Listens) You're sure? It's great! I made it myself. Look! (Takes a swig) Ah! Delicious! You got to hydrate. There are far too many dehydrated people walking around this old world, let me tell you. (Takes another swig. Puts the bottle back into the suitcase) I suppose I should go to sleep. I'm really tired. I've been visitng family. Boy, will that tire you! They've over there. They're coming to stay with me for a few days.

LIGHTS UP on MA. He waves at HER. She waves at him.
LIGHTS DOWN on MA)

CASS: (Stretching) I find it hard to sleep on a plane. How about you? (Waits) I suppose you'd love to have me go to sleep, wouldn't you? Well, I just might. Those swigs were powerful. (Makes a snoring sound) I have to warn you. I snore when I sleep. I'm told! I've never heard me. Do you snore? Don't tell! I forgive you! Okay, here I go, right off to sleep. (Slumps, head to the side. We hear several snores) (Suddenly waking up) Fooled you! I wasn't really asleep. Maybe I need somebody to knock me in the head, you think? Bet I'd sleep then. (Waits) You feel like knocking me in the head? (Listens) (Laughs too hard, then coughing) (Followed by a big sigh) Wish I had my own airplane. I'd fly that thing twice the normal speed. I'd be where I want to go in half the time it takes them to pat me down at security. Do you like being patted down by security? I think some of them are *preverts* [*sic.*] Pardon my Swahili! They just like feeling up strangers. Whew! You never know who's working those security lines, let me tell you. I don't feel up strangers. No way. I just talk them up! (Pause)

Well, I guess I'll say good night. Maybe I can catch a cat nap or two. Sleep tight! (Slumps in his seat, in a different direction than before)

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: This is the captain again. (to co-pilot) What? No, don't push that! What are you thinking?! (to passengers) I'll get back you. (to his co-pilot) Chris, what's wrong with you?! (CASS sits up and listens to this strange, somewhat upsetting conversation by the pilot)

LIGHTS DOWN on CASS, still unsettled.
 LIGHTS UP on MA and ANDY

MA: Andy? (Looks around for him) Andy? Andy, where are you? (Gets up) (to another unseen passenger) Have you seen my son? (Listens) What's he look like? He has a finger up his nose. Oh, never mind. (She starts looking for ANDY) Andy? *Andy!?* For God's sake!

LIGHTS OUT on MA.
LIGHTS UP on CASS

CASS: (all in whispers to the unseen passenger) Maybe we shouldn't sleep. Do you like costumes? (Reaches down to his suitcase) How about hats? (Pulls out a ship captain's cap, puts it on) You like ship captains? (Leans closer to the other passenger, trying to look sporty in the captain's cap) Ahoy there, matey! (Waits) How about this one? (Puts away the captain's hat, pulls out another one, a cowboy hat) You into cowboys? (Puts the cowboy hat on) Howdy! You from around these parts? No?! Me neither. I guess we're just two scared little heifers on a plane. (Waits, then puts away the cowboy hat. Pulls out another hat from the suitcase) (in Spanish) *Hola!* (He puts on a sombrero) *Como esta?* (Listens) You don't think it suits me? Is it too ethnic? Ethnic is good! (Listens.) I have other hats. (Offers to show them) No? How about underwear? (Listens) Okay, we don't have to have underwear. (Suddenly leers) If you catch my drift. (Leers harder) I'll catch your drift if you'll catch mine.(Listens) Are you sleeping? (Listens) No? Good. Just tell me if I'm disturbing you. (rushing right along) People are just ships passing in the night, aren't they? What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas – unless you post it on Facebook! (Laughs) "Unless you post it on Facebook!" That's a good one! I have a new one: What happens in the Mile High Club stays in the toilet! Especially if your plane is crashing. (Waits) You like that one? . . . You don't wear your emotions on your wrist, do you? Is it

"wrist"? You don't even wear them on your face. How cool is that?! Some folks might think you don't have emotions. But this guy knows better. You've got the cool of someone who'd stick your head into the mouth of a crocodile! Even if your head got bitten off, it wouldn't faze you. And I admire that! Far too many hotheads running around this crazy old world. But not you. Not you. (No response) (sadly) Not you.

(Pause)

(after a big sigh) You know what? I think I need some exercise. (Jumps up from seat) They say you need to keep the old blood pumping when you're on an airplane. You could get a bubble in your heart and that would be the end of you right then and there. (Makes a death face) Dead in your seat! (Waits) Have you ever seen a dead person? Not pretty. Not one bit pretty. People tend not to be at their best when they're dead. Have you noticed that? (Starts doing callisthenics near his seat) (calling to the captain but not that loudly) Hey, captain, how's that argument with whoever going? (to unseen passenger) Ever seen anybody actually die? I saw this woman once who was on a ferris wheel. You know one of those rides that goes up and around. (Demonstrates) Up and around. Well, this woman got to the top of that ferris wheel and stood up. She was showing off. And when that ferris wheel got to the very top, that woman . . . that woman . . . sat back down and came back to the ground, and *that's* when she fell out. It wasn't far, but she hit her neck wrong and died right there, after about forty-five minutes. I stood there and watched the whole thing. It was awful. (Listens) I was eleven. (Listens) Yes, I knew that woman. (Waits) She was my mother! (Listens) You think I'd lie about a thing like that? Actually, she was the

lady who lived next door, but she was practically my mother. My own mother wasn't around. (Waits) She was in prison. (Listens) For? Ah, for . . . rustling cattle. . . . I *think*. It was always a bit vague. (Stops the exercise, falls back into his seat) Whew! That felt amazing! I think I just put another five years onto my life with those moves. You should try it. Will add years. A sound mind in a sound body.

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: (to co-pilot) Get your hands off me, goddamn it! (to passengers) Sorry about that, folks.

Everything is fine here in the cockpit. Everything is fine. (to co-pilot) *Stop that!*

(Pause)

LIGHTS UP on MA and ANDY.

(MA grabs ANDY) There you are, you little devil! (to other unseen passengers) I'm sorry. I'm sorry. He can't help himself. he's only . . . twenty-five. Andy, get back in your seat. I paid good money for that seat and you're going to sit in it. (She drags ANDY back to his seat) Now sit there and behave! (Pause) Don't cry now, Andy. Don't cry. You're disturbing the other passengers, honey. (Listens) You don't care? Andy! They can hear you. (Listens) What? Fuck 'em? . . . Andy, where did you ever learn language like that?!

LIGHTS DOWN on MA and ANDY

LIGHTS UP on CASS

CASS: (to passenger) If I said that I loved you, would you do it with me? (Waits) I do love you, you realize. I absolutely believe in love at first sight. Some might call it superficial. I call it super-*special!* You like that? Some people say I have a way with words. What I feel for you is one-hundred percent (spelling it out) L-O-V-E. Or even L-U-V – the British

spelling. And it's the first time I have ever felt such a propulsion toward one particular individual – you. What else could it be but love? Would I be spending this much time talking to you if it wasn't total love?! And I do not even require love in return. It's enough that I love you on my own. You could even hate me and yet I would continue to love you. Do you think that you could love me maybe just a little bit? A teensy-weensy? (Waits) Why do you not answer? Here I have put my heart on a plate for you, and all I get back is this . . . stare. And yet life is so short, so very short. (He throws himself into his seat and then puts his legs over the arm of the seat, toward the other passenger) If I killed myself for love, would you have sex with me then?

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: Hello, ladies and gentleman. You captain speaking. The rest of the crew and I hope you are enjoying your flight. Just let us know if there is anything else I, or they, can do to make your flight more enjoyable. Sit back, relax, enjoy a movie or music. We know that you have a choice of airlines. Thank you again for flying with us. Thank you.

CASS: (to captain) That's it? What about the other person up there with you? Who is that?

(to puppet passenger) No, I'm not neglecting you. In our time together I have discovered the one true person I was meant to be with. You! If I don't kill myself, what about marriage? Now you know I'm dead serious. I have never asked anyone to marry me before. And I never will again. Even if you die. I mean later, a long time from now. I will never, ever ask anyone else to marry me but you. Because, quite frankly, how could I ever find another more suitable, more perfect than you? We could maybe even get

married here on this airplane! Nifty, huh? The pilot could even marry us! Like on a ship, only up in the air. Somebody's got to be authorized to perform weddings in the air. It's the law! Perhaps there's even a minister onboard. Do you have a preference? I'm easy myself! A rabbi? A mullah?

(Suddenly the airplane begins to shake. Cass leaps up but has trouble standing)

Oh, my God! What's happening?! (Listens) No, it's not God punishing us! Why would you say *that*? There are a lot worse people God could be punishing! (Stumbles) Whoa! Steady there!

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: (to co-pilot) Take that, you son of a bitch! (Sound of choking) Die! Die! You bastard!

(Pause)

VOICE: (to passengers) Ladies and gentlemen, this is the captain speaking. We are experiencing that turbulence we mentioned before. We will get through it in a little while. In the meantime, please take your seats if you are not already seated. And fasten your seat belts securely. Thank you.

CASS: I'm not staying in that seat! (Stumbles around) Who do they think they are, treating me like some sheep, all tied up?! I'm a human being! I will be treated like one! (Falls down) If I break something, I'm suing! I'm suing even if I don't break something! What kind of airline is this?! Can't even control the turbulence! (The turbulence suddenly stops) (to the turbulence) You'd better stop! (He sees that it has stopped) (sitting down, to the other passenger) How about that? I made the turbulence stop! . . . You feeling okay? No

upset tummy? (Waits) Me neither. Got a stomach like a steel trap. Air sickness, my ass!

Get over yourself, I say. Some people are so dramatic! Don't fly if you can't handle it.

Right?

(Two announcement pings)

LIGHTS DOWN on CASS

LIGHTS UP on MA and ANDY

MA: Thank you for not crying anymore, honey. You're a gem. Your mommy's little gem. And you're going to be living with you brother, Cass, from now on. Isn't that great? He's going to look after you, just the way mommy has for all these years. Only better! You'll be in the city now. You won't have to go out in all that terrible fresh air back home. You know how much you hate fesh air! You'll be able to stay inside all the time, all toasty and warm and safe. And your brother will be there and put you to bed and sing to you. He will. You know he will. That's the kind of guy your brother is. He'll be much better to you than your own mother ever was. She was a bad mommy, a bad, bad mommy, but soon you won't have to put up with her anymore, not one more minute. (Sings) "Rockaby, baby, in the treettop, when the wind blows, the cradle will rock. When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall. And down will come baby, cradle and all." (to herself) What a terrible thing to sing to a baby. (She wipes away a tear) But *you'll* be all right. You'll be all right, with your big brother. . . . (She looks sad)

LIGHTS OUT on MA and ANDY

LIGHTS UP on CASS

VOICE: We have passed the turbulent area, I am happy to report. It should be clear for the

remainder of our flight. But just to be on the safe side, please remain in your seats with

your seat belts fastened. Thank you. . . . Attendants, there is a clean-up in the cockpit.

Please come forward.

CASS: (loudly and sarcastically to the Voice) Thank *you*!

VOICE: Will the passenger who was doing calisthenics in the aisleway earlier kindly refrain. We are not a gymnasium. In case it isn't clear, this is your captain speaking.

CASS: What a buzz kill! I hope he crashes! (Listens) No, I'm not worried. I always carry a parachute when I fly. (Reaches for the suitcase) You can't be too careful. (Listens) No, I don't have a second one. . . . But you could hang onto me when I jump. (Listens) Sure, I'd do that for you.

(Pause)

Has anyone ever pursued you as hard as I have? (Listens) Yeah, I didn't think so. . . . I mean that as a compliment. (Listens) Well, you could *take* it as a compliment. (Listens) No, I didn't mean nobody else thinks you're attractive. I meant to me you're *super*-attractive, and that's why I have devoted most of this flight to you. (Listens) Are you going to be that way now? (Listens) Of course I respect you! Why wouldn't I respect you? We haven't even had sex yet. (Listens) No, that doesn't mean I wouldn't respect you if we had sex in the toilet. I'd respect you more! Who wants clean sheets all the time?!

(Listens) Well, you don't have to get all hot and bothered about it. I know how to take no for an answer. Maybe we should just not talk anymore. (Listens) Good! I agree. (Mimes zipping his mouth shut, then turns upstage)

(Pause)

CASS: (turns back to the other passenger) Actually, I'm a virgin. This is all just a lot of bluster.

I've never had sex with myself or anyone else in my entire life. On my word of honor! I just decided that this flight was going to be the start of a whole new phase in my life. But I guess I blew it. . . . I guess I've blown most things in my life. I was born – what's the opposite of prematurely? Postmaturely? Whatever! I came into this world with a full set of teeth and a full beard. I have some baby pictures, if you care to see them? (Gestures toward the suitcase) No? Well, having a beard when you're a baby isn't easy, let me tell you. Besides having to shave with little fists, it's hard to see yourself in the mirror. And kids can be cruel. Even parents can be cruel. "Stop growing that beard!" my mother used to say to me. "It reminds me of your father when you suckle my breast." Needless to say, I got very little breast feeding when I was a baby. But I was plucky, a plucky little kid, with a full beard. It doesn't matter if you don't believe me. I have learned over the years that you can't count on people's sympathy. Believe me, there's very little sympathy out there. (Points to the audience) Hard hearts – that's what's out there. And you're a fool if you think it's any different. . . . But I overcame "That Condition." Oh, yes, I took control of it, and I said, "You're just a Human Condition! That's all you are! And I've got you by the short and curlies and I'm not letting go until you go away! Go away!" And do you know what happened? That's right. My Human Condition went away, and I have not been troubled with it once since I turned eighteen years old. And that's my advice to everybody. Get rid of your Human Condition as soon as you can, and you'll be a lot better off in this old world. Now if I were a preacher, I'd say "Amen." But I'm not a

preacher. So we'll do without the "Amen." An "Amen" doesn't make it true anyhow.

"Amen" to that, say I!

(Two announcement pings)

VOICE: Ladies and getnlemen, we will be arriving at our destination in a very few minutes. We have been ordered to circle the airport because there are several other planes that need to land before we do. Rest assured that we will get you to your final destination safe and sound. Thank you once again for flying Carpe Diem Airlines – the airline with a flair! This is your captain signing off until we have landed. Thank you. . . . Attendants, I am *still* waiting for clean-up in the cockpit!

CASS: (to the Voice) I guess we're not going to get anything to eat and drink! Well, I can fix that. (Searches the suitcase) I have something delicious in here. (Finds a bottle of pills, opens it) This will kill my appetite. Permanently. (Listens) No, I'm joking. (We should be able to tell that he is *not* joking this time) (Listens) No, you can't have one. They're just for me. I said before I started that this would be my last hurrah. Well, *hurrah!* They're supposed to be fast, these pills. They ought to be; they cost enough. I don't actually have anywhere I really have to be. Can you believe that? I'm just sort of flying around. Around in circles, like this airplane. (Draws a circle with his finger) And then you crash – if you're lucky! . . . Is that depressing? Good Lord, let's not be depressing! Anything but that! But it's not depressing. It's liberating. When your flight is over, you ought to know it's done. Why keep circling and circling, hoping for an orgasm in the toilet?! It's over, kiddo. It's over! (Takes a poison pill) (to the other passenger) Don't get up, not that you

were going to! It's too late in any case. I can already feel that pill singing me to my rest. (Somebody said that. I didn't make it up. It's kinda pretty, especially for saying "You're dead.") (Getting groggy) Whoa there! I'm groggy. Now I'm really feeling it. I wonder if I'll go to Hell. What do you think? Don't answer that. Leave me at least one illusion. (Groggier still) You are born with a Human Condition and then you go to Hell. Sounds about right. You'll find my ID in my suitcase. (Almost out) I hope I haven't been too much of a bother on this flight. I meant well! And it wasn't personal! (Waves) Bye, Andy! Bye, Ma! (Dies.)

LIGHTS OUT
THEN BACK ON QUICKLY

VOICE: Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain speaking. Apparently we have had some misfortune onboard our flight today. One of our passengers has poisoned himself. I wish I could say I was joking. But I believe some of you saw it for yourselves. Or could I be mistaken? Perhaps you all could tell me if you saw something else instead. Is that possible? You could let us know by putting your hands together and applauding for what you saw take place. In case it isn't clear, this is your playwright speaking. (Cass jumps back to life. The other puppet passenger is still across the aisle)

CASS: (to other passenger) I hope I haven't been too much of a bother on this flight. I meant well. And it wasn't personal. (to members of the audience) How about you? Want to join the Mile High Club? . . . How about you? How about *all* of you into the toilet? We'll set a record!

VOICE: How many of you saw that?

(The audience applauds as it wishes)

VOICE: Or what about this? Did anybody happen to see this?

(CASS jumps back to life)

CASS: (to the other passenger) Your last chance before I kill myself! (Holds the pill to his mouth) (Listens, surprised) Really? You want to join the Mile High Club? With me? Really? You're sure? Well, let's go then! It just so happens that this pill is not poison after all. It's actually a contraceptive *and* a profilactic *and* an aphrodisiac. And it's said to be good for the heart too! And no gluten!

VOICE: Is that what happened? They joined the Mile High Club, did it once, and never saw each other again?! (The audience will applaud as it wishes) Got it. Or could it possibly have been this last one?

(CASS jumps backs to life)

CASS: (to other passenger) You've thought it over and you *will* marry me?! You don't think we're completely incompatible, barely know one another, and most likely are grossly unsuitable for each other, especially sexually? For us, it's the real thing and not forced whatsoever?! . . . You know what – I think so too. Come my love. (Holds out his hand to unseen passenger) For "at my back I always hear/ Time's winge'd chariot hurrying near!" (He comes downstage and offers to take the unseen hand of the other passenger)

VOICE: Is that the end? The two of them? But just how *much* do you want it?! Oh, I know you want it. Just tell me just how much you want it!

(The audience will applaud as it will, but probably loudest for this last ending)

LIGHTS OUT

VOICE: (in the dark) For God's sake, how many times do I have to ask for clean-up in the cockpit?!

NO INTERMISSION

SCENE 3

I HATE HELLOS

CHARACTERS:

CASS, bisexual male, 25-40, sweet, son, brother, lover, believer
ANDY, a male puppet with a small build, age 25, controlled by a
puppeteer with two sticks, one attached to the head, one
attached to a hand

LOVIE, a puppet of undetermined sex, controlled by a puppeteer
with two sticks, one attached to the head, one to a hand

GOD, 40-75, mature male, authoritative voice, played by the actor
who plays the pilot's voice in first act

MA, female, 55-75, depending on the age of Cass, loud, boisterous

TIME: Two years later

SETTING: CASS's small apartment, with a twisted (backward) loveseat for two

(Enter CASS carrying a bag of groceries)

CASS: Got some groceries!

(Nobody answers)

CASS: Yum Yums!

(Still nobody answers)

CASS: I'm going to give it away to the homeless!

(LOVIE emerges from somewhere. The audience sees a puppet controlled by a
puppeteer. The sex is indeterminate. When LOVIE or ANDY speaks only CASS
can hear.)

CASS: Ah, there you are, Lovie! You want to cook tonight? (Listens) Of course you don't.

How about some okra? You love okra? (Reacts to LOVIE's hatred of okra) Okay, so you
don't love okra. No need to spit on the floor. Here, let me clean that up. (Gets a paper
towel and wipes the floor) Guess what! I got an acting gig today, finally! I play a

banana! But it's Equity! We can pay some of those bills. Yay us! How's was the refrigerator today? Don't hear it making that noise right now. Did you fix it? (Listens) Of course not. Did you call that repairman? I left you his number. (Listens) Of course you didn't. We'd better get that fixed or we won't have any sherbet. That orange sherbet we have has melted and re-frozen three times now. (Finishes putting away the groceries) I know you don't like sherbet, but I do. . . . Want to cuddle?

(CASS goes to the loveseat and sits down, gestures for LOVIE to join him)

A cuddle and a half after a hard day's labor! I registered twenty-two colonoscopies today! Yay me!

(LOVIE is reluctant.)

Come on. One little cuddle!

(LOVIE joins CASS in the other side of the twisted loveseat)

That's a start! It's our anniversary. Did you know that? Two years! We've been a couple for two whole years! (He hugs the unseen LOVIE with a big hug) This is my real yum yum. (Another hug, but then LOVIE moves away) Where you going? You call that a hug? . . . By the way, where's Andy? (Listens) Don't tell me he's in the closet again. I thought we had cured him of that!

(Gets up from the loveseat)

(calling) Andy? It's Cass! Yum yums! (to LOVIE) How long has it been since you saw him? (Listens) You don't remember? (Listens) I realize he runs off, but it wouldn't kill you to watch where he goes. (Listens) I realize that he's not your relative; he's mine. But

I thought we had an agreement that since you're not working, you would . . . Never mind. Let's not argue!

(calling) Andy! Andy! . . . (reluctantly, with resignation) Here, soeey, soeey! (Listens to LOVIE) I know it's awful, but it works! Here, soeey,soeey, soeey!

(The puppet AN DY appears)

There's my special boy!

(ANDY runs over and hugs CASS around the waist)

Whoa, there, big fella! You almost knocked me down. (Listens to LOVIE) He knocked *you* down this afternoon? (Listens) I realize that he's gotten very big. But he was just trying to show you some affection. (Listens to LOVIE) He used a baseball bat? He didn't! You're making that up.

(Suddenly ANDY is coming toward CASS with the baseball bat)

Andy, no! No! No baseball bat. (Listens) I realize it's aluminum, but it still hurts.

(Listens) We'll play baseball later, okay? Catch. You like catch, don't you? Maybe we can all three play. Lovie would love to play catch. Wouldn't you, Lovie?

Why are you always so passive? After two years, you'd think you'd make one decision on your own. (Listens) I'm not nagging! I'm suggesting. How we doing on cleaning up your space? (Listens) You did? Let me see. It sounds wonderful.

(CASS walks over to LOVIE's space)

(LIGHTS UP on total clutter. We see books, magazines, posters, dishes, old mail, paper bags, other junk in big piles, the bigger the better)

CASS: Funny, I don't see anything cleaned up. (Listens) You threw away what? (Listens)

Some old toothpaste tubes? (Trying to be positive) Well, that's great, Lovie! It's a start.

(Listens) No, I won't shut up about the hoarding now. (Listens) Well, fuck you too, Lovie.

Are you sure Andy doesn't hide in the clutter? And that's why we can't find him sometimes? (Listens) No, I don't want you to move out. I just want you to stop hoarding.

You do not need every Josef Stalin poster ever made! (Listens) I know you love them.

But that's why we can't have anybody over. And we three also have to *share* this place.

Maybe Andy could help you clean up. What about that? (Listens) You'd kill him. Really?

I thought you and Andy were getting along somewhat better of late. Right?

(ANDY chases LOVIE with the baseball bat. CASS tries to placate both)

Andy, no! No baseball bat for Lovie! No! Not even for fun. And, Lovie, don't throw that waffle maker! You two are going to be the death of me! We have to to work this out!

Why don't you both sit in the loveseat, and everybody cool down? Sit! (Listens)

Because I said so. Don't you want to cool down? (They sit) Look at the two of you in that loveseat! You'd think it was made for you! (Listens) What's that, Lovie? Andy is violating your personal space? Andy, move your arm, just a bit. (He goes over and moves the arm) That's better. (Listens to ANDY) You think Lovie stinks? Now that's not a very nice thing to say, Andy. Lovie doesn't stink. Lovie just has a different sense of hygiene from the rest of the human race. I'm sorry! I'm sorry!

(LOVIE storms off.)

Don't go! I love your smell. I do! . . . Smells.

(LOVIE goes to the hoard and hides in it.)

You can't run to your hoard every time we have a little argument! We need to discuss some things.

(ANDY gets up from the loveseat and starts swinging the baseball bat. CASS reacts to the swings)

CASS: Andy! No! No baseball! No! No! (to LOVIE) Leave him alone now! He's almost calm.

(desperately, loudly) Please! Please! God help me! I need some help! PLEASE!

(The doorbell rings)

(CASS goes to the door and opens it)

CASS: Yes?

GOD: You called?

CASS: And you are?

GOD: God.

CASS: . . . Do you have any ID?

GOD: Do you want my help or not? I can leave. I'm very busy. (Starts for the door) ID, my ass!

CASS: I'm sorry. It's just so unexpected to see you.

GOD: You think you're the only one asking for my help?

CASS: No.

CASS: You do sound like somebody I know, somebody I've heard before. I just can't quite place you.

GOD: I don't think so.

CASS: You sure? You sound very familiar.

GOD: What do you want and make it snappy? Give me your best elevator pitch.

CASS: I'd . . . I'd like some help with my brother and my . . . my Lovie.

GOD: Is that them? (Gesturing)

CASS: Yes.

GOD: The one with the baseball bat is your brother? And the one with the hoard is your . . . ?

CASS: My partner.

GOD: Is it a man or a woman?

CASS: Even you can't tell?

GOD: Usually I can. But with your Lovie, it's a . . .

CASS: You're telling me, and it's been two years!

GOD: You'll work it out one day.

CASS: Really?

GOD: I have no idea. But people like to hear stuff like that.

CASS: How can I get Lovie and Andy to get along so that we can share this apartment?
I guess that's basically it. Oh, and some more acting jobs.

GOD: You want acting jobs too?! What a greedy bastard!

CASS: Is that too much to ask?

GOD Compared to most people's lives, you've got a sweet deal, believe me.

CASS: I know I do. It's just that the stress around here gets to be too much. Couldn't you . . . ?

GOD: Couldn't I what?

CASS: You know.

GOD: What were we talking about?

CASS: You don't remember?

GOD: I've got a lot on my plate. I also think I may have a touch of Alzheimer's.

CASS: God has Alzheimer's?

GOD: Early stage. . . . I think. Remind me what we were just talking about. Was it your kidneys? I get lots of prayers about kidneys.

CASS: No, they're fine. It was --

GOD: Don't tell me! I'll get it, I'll get it. Was it your lame mule?

CASS: No, I don't have a lame mule.

GOD: Don't tell me, don't tell me. . . . Are you the one with the pulsating cyst?

CASS: No. Not yet.

GOD: Don't tell me, don't tell me!

CASS: I'm going to tell you. I'd simply like to know what your plan for me is. I believe you have a plan for each person's life.

GOD: (incredulous) I have a plan for each person's life?!

CASS: You don't?

GOD: First I've heard of it.

CASS: Really?

GOD: It sounds like a terrific idea. But do you know how much work that would entail?!

CASS: Are you sure you don't have a plan, at least for *my* life?

GOD: What's your name again?

CASS: Cass.

GOD: Cass?

CASS: You don't remember me at all?

GOD: Are you the bisexual?

CASS: Yes.

GOD: Now I remember you!

CASS: There are so few of us?

GOD: You and Lovie met on an airplane!

CASS: Exactly.

GOD: That's all I know.

CASS: Are we going to live happily ever after?

GOD: How old are you? Six?

CASS: (actor gives his real age)

GOD: Have you ever known a single human being to live happily ever after?

CASS: But it's possible, isn't it?

GOD: Okay, are we done here?

CASS: Done? Nothing has changed!

GOD: Well, at least I dropped by. That's more than most people get.

CASS: Please! I can't keep on living like I am! Like we are.

GOD: Sure you can. Most do. Bye. (Heads toward the door) Good luck!

CASS: No! You can't leave yet!

GOD: What is it now?

CASS: I'd like an answer to my prayer.

GOD: Are you the one with the diarrhea?

CASS: (indignant) No!

GOD: You sure?

CASS: Positive! Are you sure you're God?

GOD: (angrily, loudly) I am thy God, by God! So shut up! And fuck you!

CASS: Sorry, sorry. Geez.

GOD: How dare you question me?! You goddamned little nobody!

CASS: All right, all right.

GOD: I ought to kick your butt. You want me to kick your butt?

CASS: No!

GOD: You know I can kick your butt, don't you? I have *ways*!

CASS: Probably.

GOD When I get finished kicking your butt, you'll be so fucked up, you'll pray for diarrhea! What do you say to that?

CASS: You're a little hostile?

GOD: You ain't seen my bad side yet!

CASS: Well, thanks for stopping by. It's been . . . amazing.

GOD (as petitioners) "Give me this, give me that." It never stops! "I want to win the game!"
"No, *I* want to win the game -- and the lottery!" "And I want a reality TV show and a huge penis!"

CASS: Can you give somebody a huge penis?

GOD: Get in line!

CASS: Sorry, I couldn't stop myself.

GOD: Okay, now who are you again?

CASS: It doesn't matter.

GOD: Take two aspirins and call on me in the morning.

CASS: Thank you. Is there a charge?

GOD: No charge. Try leeches.

CASS: Leeches?

GOD: I hear they're good.

CASS: Not for everything.

GOD: (angrily) I am the Lord thy God! If I command leeches, by God, get you some leeches!

(The doorbell rings)

(CASS goes to the door)

CASS: (to ANDY and LOVIE) I'll get it! (at the door, but not opening it) Who's there?

MA: (outside) God. . . . Let me in.

CASS: Ma? . . . You're dead.

MA: Let me in.

CASS: You died two years ago.

MA: I just took a break.

CASS: But you left a suicide note. When you left Andy behind.

MA: So I exaggerated!

(CASS opens the door. MA enters)

MA: Mommy's back!

CASS: You can't just come back from the dead?!

MA: Life happens! Don't be such a drama queen!

CASS: You remember Lovie and your son Andy.

MA: (Waves.) Hi, Andy! Hi, Lovie! Aren't they sweet?

CASS: You just decided to come back, just like that?

MA: I heard that you issued a distress call.

CASS: To God!

MA: Ma is God spelled backwards.

CASS: No, it's not!

MA: Beggars can't be choosy.

GOD: Can I leave now? I have another appointment somewhere. . . . I think. Maybe it's in Brooklyn?

MA: (to GOD) And who are you?

CASS: Ma, this is God. Or should I introduce God to Ma? . . . Who's older?

MA: Such a refined boy I raised! So polite.

CASS: Ma!

MA: (to GOD) Let me be honest. I was worried about him for quite some time. His sexuality.

CASS: Ma!

MA: I thought he'd never settle down. But look at him!

CASS: Ma, you're embarrassing me, in front of God and everybody.

GOD: (to CASS) Don't worry about it. I won't remember.

MA: All right, so where am I going to stay?

CASS: You're planning to stay?

MA: Of course. Where else am I going to go?

CASS: There's always your house.

MA: The bank foreclosed on that. That goddamned Bank of America. (to GOD) Can you recommend a good bank?

GOD: I hear the Bank of Babylon is pretty good.

MA: Really? Are they still in business?

GOD: They're not in business?

MA: Tell you what! Why don't I just stay here for a couple of days, or a couple of years, until we sort things out?

CASS: A couple of years?

MA: You got a futon? I can sleep on that.

CASS: There's just one bedroom and then there's all the clutter . . .

MA: I can sleep with Andy. Where does he sleep?

CASS: You're not sleeping with Andy.

MA: What?!

CASS: It's not appropriate.

MA: You're telling your mother what's appropriate with her own son?!

CASS: He's not a little boy anymore. Nor am I. Boundaries, Ma, boundaries.

MA: Oh, so you're a big man now, huh? A householder! (vulgarly) Well, hold this!

CASS: Ma, have some respect.

MA: I'm respecting. I'm respecting. (aside, about GOD) But this guy seems like a loser to me.

GOD: I like her. She reminds me of me.

MA: Thank you. (to CASS) I don't mind sleeping with Andy.

CASS: Could you phrase it some other way, please!?

MA: Oh, you. You think I want to have sex with my own son? Just because you have quirky sexual proclivities, it doesn't mean I do! (to LOVIE) No offense, Lovie!

CASS: No offense?!

MA: Trust me, I do not want to have sex with Andy. He's not my type.

CASS: Yes, let's clear that up.

MA: You're more my type.

CASS: Ma! You'll say anything!

MA: Okay, you're not my type.

CASS: Thank you!

MA: But I can sleep with you and Lovie.

CASS: Ma! For God's sake.

MA: I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

CASS: That's nothing to kid about.

MA: You think incest is not a family topic? Believe me, nothing is more about the family than incest. I think there was some way back in our family's history, actually.

CASS: Somehow I don't doubt it.

GOD: I had Adam and Eve and their kids have sex with each other. Way back. Is there something wrong with incest?

CASS: Can we move on, please?

MA: Don't worry. Lovie is not my type either. (to LOVIE) No offense, Lovie! (Waves)

CASS: Well, I can rest easy now, knowing that my own mother has no designs on me, my brother, or my partner!

MA: See how much mommy loves you! And in such a pure way!

CASS: Oh, I used to worry if my mother loved me, but not anymore. I have God here, and he loves me.

GOD: I do?

CASS: God doesn't love me?

GOD: How can I say this? You're not my type. But may I make a suggestion about your living conditions?

CASS: I guess.

MA: Shoot.

GOD: Have you thought about putting in an altar?

CASS: An altar?

GOD: For sacrifices. I love sacrifices.

CASS: But you're not going to be living here. Ma is. I mean, Ma wants to. But it remains to be seen.

MA: I know about sacrifices, believe me! Mostly *mine*!

GOD: You could light some of that stuff in your hoard over there. (Points) The fumes could waft up to me. Every now and then I like a good waft!

CASS: I am not lighting a fire in this apartment.

GOD: Why not?

CASS: Unless you like Josef Stalin pictures? Do you?

MA: You have Josef Stalin pictures?

CASS: I don't. Lovie does.

MA: Lovie has Josef Stalin pictures?

CASS: It's . . . it's . . . complicated.

MA: (waving) Hi, Lovie! Do you know who I am? It's me, your mother-in-law! (aside to the others) God, that one's a cipher!

CASS: We're not legally married.

MA: Yet. The next word is "yet."

CASS: You don't have to get married to live together.

MA: In my book you do.

CASS: And what book is that?

MA: The Good Book.

GOD: I wrote that!

MA: I loved it.

GOD: Thank you.

MA: (to CASS) So when are you getting married? You have God Himself right here. Why not have him marry you right here and now?

CASS: I wouldn't want to impose.

GOD: I wouldn't mind. Does the bride have her cattle?

CASS: Cattle?

GOD: As part of the marriage settlement.

CASS: I don't think so. But maybe there's some cattle in the hoard. Lovie, do you have any cattle in there?

MA: Lovie's not answering. Are you sure you two communicate well?

CASS: We're ideal! Lovie, can we sacrifice your cattle so we can get legally wed?!

MA: We don't have to go that far. Just a nice ceremony! Is that too much to ask?!

CASS: Ma may say every outrageous thing she can think of. But, oh, at the end of the day, Ma wants a traditonal wedding!

MA: You bet I do. I do. I do. I do. But what this guy wants seems a little old school, even for me.

CASS: Yeah, Ma's absolutely the New Testament.

GOD: I am the Lord thy God! Thou shalt not have a strange gods before me. (about MA)
Even her!

MA: Whoa, whoa, wait a minute now. Who you calling a strange god?!

GOD: You!

MA: At least I'm not into wafting!

GOD: (sniffing MA's clothes) Are you mixing two different fabrics together?

MA: Hey, watch it!

GOD: What's this about a New Testament?

MA: The fulfillment of the Old.

GOD: Whoa, whoa, wait a minute now! I didn't order any fulfillment. Who needs a fulfillment?!

MA: Your kind do.

GOD: (outraged) My kind do? My kind do?

MA: (teasing) No can do?

GOD: (very angry, magisterially) Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's ass!

MA: Who covets his neighbor's ass?

CASS: What does that have to do with anything?

GOD: (uncertain) Nobody here covets their neighbor's ass?

MA/CASS: No!

GOD: Sorry. My bad. (suddenly) You sure nobody covets somebody's ass? How about Honor thy father and thy mother? Is that one of mine?

MA: Good one!

CASS: Good grief! I used to hate goodbyes. Now I hate hellos! (to GOD) Goodbye, goodbye, thanks for stopping by. (to MA) Goodbye, goodbye, Ma. Thanks for stopping by.

(CASS tries to escort them both out of the apartment)

GOD: (pointing) I bet there's an ass over in that hoard somewhere.

MA: You're throwing your mother out on the street?!

CASS: If that's what's outside this door.

GOD: (to MA) You can come with me.

MA: Where?

GOD: Up there. (Points to the ceiling)

MA: You live upstairs?

GOD: Yes. Way upstairs!

MA: Are you just trying to pick me up?

GOD: No! I don't do that -- anymore.

MA: Well, I'm not carrying your baby! I've had enough babies to last a lifetime. (to CASS and ANDY) No offense! Besides, I'm a little long in the tooth to get pregnant.

GOD: I can fix that.

MA: I don't want to be pregnant. I didn't want to be pregnant before, either time!

(Pause)

CASS: Awkward.

MA: (placating) But of course I'm so glad I had you both.

CASS: It's okay, Ma. I can take you better when you're nasty instead of phony.

MA: I'm never phony, even when I'm . . . phony.

GOD: (to MA) Are you coming with me?

MA: (scared) That's sounds so ominous. Am I about to die?

CASS: Ma!

MA: (dramatically) Goodbye kids! (Waves) Goodbye, Lovie! I'm sorry I didn't get to know you better. (Waves)

GOD: It'll be better with me.

MA: Oh, my God, I *am* dying! (Clutches her heart) Is it my heart? (Clutches head) Or a stroke?

GOD: Are you the ulcerated liver I came for?

MA: My liver? Where's my liver? (Feeling around her body) I never knew I had an ulcerated liver!

GOD: Maybe that's the one in Brooklyn?

MA: Do I have an ulcerated liver or don't I?

GOD: What are your symptoms?

MA: I don't have any symptoms!

GOD: Then maybe it's not you after all.

MA: Then why the hell are you scaring the daylights out of me?

GOD: I can come back, you know. In fact, you can *count* on me coming back.

(Pause)

MA: Awkward.

GOD: It's not right now!

MA: Well, that's a mercy!

GOD: I have just one more thing to say.

CASS: And that is?

GOD: Let us never forget the brave drag queens who fought at Normandy!

CASS: There were drag queens at Normandy?

GOD: They were there. They just weren't allowed to wear drag.

CASS: You learn something new every day.

MA: (to CASS) Do you think I should go off with God? Does it seem a little strange, or is that just me?

CASS: I have no idea what's strange anymore.

MA: (to GOD) I don't do quickies!

GOD: Maybe I just want a platonic relationship.

MA: Yeah, yeah, that's what they all say. Or used to.

CASS: You two could have coffee together. See how you feel.

MA: (to GOD) If I go with you, there's no sex and there's no dying! Is that perfectly clear?

GOD: You drive a hard bargain for your company.

MA: You betcha!

GOD: (to CASS) Your ma's a whippersnapper. I'm glad I stopped by.

MA: (aside to CASS) Do you think he's really God?

CASS: Probably. Or a reasonable facsimile.

MA: You're not just saying that to get rid of me?

CASS: Ma, how could you think such a thing!?

MA: What if he's a serial murderer? If I wind up strangled in a gutter, I'm blaming you, mister.

CASS: Of course you are.

GOD: (to CASS) If I wind up strangled in a gutter, I'm blaming you, mister.

CASS: Whatever.

MA: Let me say goodbye to my boys! Come to mamma! Come on!

(ANDY comes over. CASS reluctantly comes over. All three hug uncomfortably)

(Pause)

GOD: Awkward.

MA: Andy, I'm so glad that your big brother finally got a chance to spend more time with you. (ANDY jumps up and down happily) He takes good care of you, doesn't he? Just like I knew he would. What a brother! (CASS jumps up and down like ANDY, mockingly) (to CASS) No need to overdo!

And Lovie! How about some love from Lovie!

(LOVIE comes out of the hoard, carrying a poster) Oh, what's that you're carrying? (examining it) A poster of Josef Stalin! For me?! How wonderful! I don't have any, and it's just what I needed. Big hug from Ma to Lovie? (She hugs LOVIE)

Is that everybody in the hug department?

GOD: You haven't hugged me.

MA: Hey, we're on a first date. No hugging, no kissing. No hands everywhere. I remember!

GOD: How about on the third date?

MA: We'll see. (to CASS) See, honey, your ma's still got it.

CASS: I can see that. Everything I know I got from her.

GOD: (worried) You got something from her? What exactly did you get?

MA: Not *that* something!

GOD: (to MA) Are you the one who called about --

CASS: Moving right along here! Moving right along.

MA: Goobye everybody! It's been a hoot. (aside to CASS) See if you can get Lovie to open up more. . . . Is Andy dating yet?

CASS: Goodbye, Ma! I'll call. Goodbye, God!

GOD: You're not going to call?

CASS: I'll see.

MA/GOD: Goodbye! Goodbye!

(MA and GOD leave arm in arm)

CASS: (to audience) I need a curtain line!

BLACKOUT

LIGHTS UP on CASS. The apartment is free of clutter.

(There are three ordinary chairs where the loveseat was)

(The doorbell rings)

CASS: Coming!

(He answers the door)

CASS: (very friendly) Hi there! So glad to see you two! Andy! Lovie! Long time, no see!

(ANDY and LOVIE enter. They are now a couple)

CASS: How have you two been? You're both looking great! (He shakes their hands)
Marriage must agree with the two of you! Come in. Come in! Have a seat. You want a lemon drop martini? I make a killer lemon drop martini. But sit! Sit. How's your new apartment? (Listens) Really! I thought so.

Have you heard from Ma and God? No? Neither have I . . . *Awkward.* (Laughs) I'm sure they're fine. They're fine. Or we would have heard!

(It should be ambiguous if MA died or just went to live with a man claiming to be GOD)

Me? Acting? I'm starring in a play! I hear I'm good in it. Though I guess it's not for me to say. But look at you two! I can't begin to tell you how happy it makes me to see you two working out. I always thought you two might have more in common with each other than you ever did with me. I mean, you're both just such . . . fantastic people! Fantastic! What can I say!?! Let me get those lemon drop martinis, okay? Okay! (He stands and leaves)

(A moment for the puppet couple in the empty chairs, who touch hands)

BLACKOUT

THE END