

SUCH BAD FRIENDS
By Daniel Curzon

CHARACTERS: (3)

STUART: In his 20s, flamboyant, argumentative, lacking restraint, borderline nuts

DENNIS: In his 40s, cautious, polite, ironic, lonely

CALLIE: In her 30s, a busybody do-gooder, also sarcastic

SETTING: Present day, minimal set, with props as needed

(LIGHTS UP.)

CALLIE: (to audience) Yes, I introduced Stuart and Dennis. Perhaps I shouldn't have. It seemed like a good idea at the time. No, I wouldn't have done it if I had known what it was going to lead to. I was just trying to help them both! Honestly! OY!

(Earlier. Lights up on Stuart. Callie joins him.)

CALLIE You know who you should meet!?

STUART: Who?

CALLIE: My friend Dennis. You'd be perfect for each other.

STUART: I have a boyfriend already. . . . I *guess* he's still my boyfriend!

CALLIE: Oh, I didn't mean as a boyfriend. Dennis has a boyfriend too. Just as friends. You both have so much in common.

STUART: Like what?

CALLIE: You're both gay!

STUART: It might take more than that.

CALLIE: Oh, I know you're argumentative, Stuart, and a quite prickly at times, but I'm sure you two would hit it off!

STUART: I'm sort of busy, Callie. Thanks anyway. (being prickly) And I'm not prickly!

CALLIE: Well, maybe "prickly" is the wrong word.

STUART: It is!

CALLIE: What's the word for beyond "prickly"?

STUART: Splendiferous?

CALLIE: I just hate to see people lonely.

STUART: I'm not lonely!

CALLIE: Oh, but you are.

STUART: I have Jo-Jo.

CALLIE: Yes, but you've quarreled with everybody else in your life, haven't you?

STUART: I don't need anybody else. Do I seem that lonely to you?

CALLIE: Who else but me is still speaking to you?

STUART: Even Jo-Jo and I have not spoken in a week. We avoid each other, managing to keep our distance. And it's not easy in an apartment that small.

CALLIE: See!

STUART: You introduced me to Jo-Jo, if I recall correctly. No?

CALLIE: I did! I have an instinct for these things.

STUART: Perhaps you shouldn't have?

CALLIE: What?! It's been the best four years of your life!

STUART: Maybe, on some days.

CALLIE: See!

STUART: We've stopped having sex with each other.

CALLIE: TMI!

STUART: Why is it TMI? I'd think you'd be interested in the outcome of your handiwork.

CALLIE: Well, Stuart, I can't be held responsible for all aspects. I'm a bit like the Deity. I set things going, but after that it's up to the parties involved!

STUART: You're a bit like the Deity all right. Evil!

CALLIE: So is that a yes to meeting Dennis?

(Lights down.)

(Lights up on Stuart separately.)

STUART: She's such a busybody! I can't stand that woman. And yet she's the only friend I haven't completely broken with. And the only reason I haven't is because she won't go away!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie and Dennis.)

CALLIE: So do you want to meet him? I'm not forcing you!

DENNIS: I'm too old for him.

CALLIE: I'm telling you this is not a romantic date! It's just for a friendship.

DENNIS: You don't think I can make my own friends?

CALLIE: You can make them, Dennis. You just can't keep them.

DENNIS: I have plenty of friends.

CALLIE: But you don't!

DENNIS: You're right. I told Pam I don't want to see her anymore.

CALLIE: See!

DENNIS: She's become a self-righteous nag. Or maybe I have!

CALLIE: And how many friends does that leave you?

DENNIS: You. And Trevor. If he's even a friend, which I doubt. "He's not only my lover, he's my best friend!" What bullshit! They must be living in some other universe than I am.

CALLIE: See!

DENNIS: We barely talk about anything anymore. He watches TV in one room, while I'm in another. We don't even fight over what to watch. So we say almost nothing to each other. Yay for us!

CALLIE: That's why you need to meet Stuart. He's lively. You're lively. I just know that you

two will click! My instincts are never wrong.

(Lights out on Callie.

(Lights up on Dennis separately.)

DENNIS: Why do some people think they have a right to “matchmake” you when you didn’t even ask them!?

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart with a smart-phone. There is no need to actually type out anything. He and Dennis speak all their e-mail messages and texts directly to the audience.)

STUART: Hi there! Callie Lindstrom gave me your e-mail address. Do you want to catch a movie and have lunch sometime? She thinks we could become friends. Let me know. . . . Stuart.

DENNIS: Hello, Stuart. How nice to hear from you. Yes, Callie gave me your e-mail address too. Trevor and I would love to see a movie and have lunch sometime. What’s good for you? . . . Dennis

STUART: Oh, you want to bring your boyfriend along?

DENNIS: Trevor doesn’t have to come. When’s good for you?

STUART: You need a chaperone? LOL! Is that the right abbreviation? Don’t worry. I’m not looking for a new boyfriend.

DENNIS: Good. It seems that neither of us is looking for a new boyfriend. Don’t you hate the term “boyfriend”? It seems so adolescent. I’m free this Friday if that’s good for you.

STUART: I love the term “boyfriend”! I’m just not sure I love the boyfriend! LOL! I’m busy on Friday. They are doing a play version of my book in Chicago, and I have to do a video chat with the director. He’s ruining my book! I’ll get back to you on a time to meet.

DENNIS: How exciting to have a play of your work done! Till next week then.

(Lights out. Then lights up on Dennis again.)

DENNIS: How did the video chat with the director go? Just checking back. . . . Dennis.

STUART: Sorry I haven’t been in touch. One of my cats got sick and almost died. How about two Fridays from now? Any movie is okay, as long as it doesn’t have subtitles. LOL.

DENNIS: I was sorry to hear about your poor cat. Do you know what made it sick?

STUART: I think it ate a mouse that had been poisoned by the apartment manager here. If you ask me, he poisoned the mouse just so he could go after my cats! I'm not supposed to have cats, but that fucker is not going to order me around! So I let them romp around in the hallway sometimes. They need to get out sometimes. Fuck him! The mouse got away.

DENNIS: How many cats do you have?

STUART: Just three. Tinklebottom, Snuggle Ears, and Bruce Wayne. I just love 'em to death.

DENNIS: I'm sure they are delightful. I'm not really a cat person myself.

STUART: How boring! LOL! Did you ever decide when you want to meet for that movie?

DENNIS: I thought you were going to give me a time. And a place.

STUART: No, you said that you'd pick one.

DENNIS: I did? Shouldn't we pick one that we both want to see?

STUART: I'll see anything as long as I can get the matinee price. My SSI check only goes so far. They are showing the original "Frankenstein" on the digital big screen next Monday. It's been restored, but it's not a matinee. I love Boris Karloff. Don't you?

DENNIS: Boris Karloff is not exactly my type. But I wouldn't mind seeing him restored. I can supplement your ticket if we need to.

STUART: That would be great! I'll bring a sandwich and some cookies and sneak them into the movie theater.

DENNIS: I suppose we could dine out afterwards. My treat.

STUART: You sound like you have a ton of money. I don't want to take advantage.

DENNIS: LOL! It should be okay, as long as we don't make it a regular habit. So it's Monday night then? What time?

STUART: It starts at eight. If I'm late, go in and leave my ticket at the escalator with my name on it.

DENNIS: You expect to be late? Maybe we should re-schedule.

STUART: Oh, let's not re-schedule! "Frankenstein" is only on that one time.

DENNIS: May I ask why you will be late?

STUART: I may not be late. I just say that because sometimes I oversleep and am late for things. This way I protect myself.

DENNIS: I see. . . . You oversleep in the early evening?

STUART: I'm on speed. Didn't Callie tell you?

DENNIS: No, she failed to mention that.

STUART: Really? I'm trying to get off. I'm on methadone now. Of course that doesn't block speed. LOL!

DENNIS: I probably shouldn't mention this so early on, but my partner, Trevor, is also on methadone. And speed! For years now.

STUART: Cool! Small world! Bring some speed along to "Frankenstein"!

DENNIS: I don't do any drugs myself.

STUART: How square! You don't really have to bring any speed to the movie.

DENNIS: Well, that's good to hear.

STUART: So it's Monday at eight then at the Rialto Multiplex. Do you know where that is?

DENNIS: I do. I will be driving.

STUART: You have a car? Great! But I think the parking costs an arm and a leg there.

DENNIS: It should be all right. It's after six. But I also just received my handicapped placard in the mail. I can use that if need be.

STUART: You're handicapped?

DENNIS: Just temporarily. I hope! LOL! I wrenched my back trying to move a bookcase by myself.

STUART: Sounds awful. Why did you try to move it by yourself?

DENNIS: Because Trevor won't help me move it. It's been in the basement for months.

STUART: Make him! Withhold sex if he won't!

DENNIS: (after a hesitation) I'm afraid that part of our "long-term" relationship has dried up.

STUART: Yeah? Same with me and Jo-Jo. It sucks.

DENNIS: I hear that it's known to happen. Even among heterosexuals!

STUART: But why do we have to be like them? I don't want to be "accepted"! I want to suck cock and get fucked in the ass! I don't want to be married. I hate all this assimilationist shit!

DENNIS: I'm considerably older than you. I no doubt long for mere conventionality.

STUART: What good is that if you can't be yourself?

DENNIS: I suspect "yourself" is somewhat . . . different from "myself."

STUART: You aren't going to be embarrassed by me, I hope?

DENNIS: Why? What are you going to do?

STUART: I never know!

DENNIS: I hope that comes with an LOL.

STUART: You'll just have to see, won't you? See you Monday at "Frankenstein" at eight! Bye!

(Lights out on Dennis and Stuart.)

(Lights up on Dennis e-mailing Callie.)

DENNIS: Callie, what have you gotten me into? I have a strong feeling that your friend Stuart and I are not going to hit it off. And I mistakenly committed to a movie.

CALLIE: (with smart-phone, speaking her messages aloud.) Come now, Dennis. Don't be an old stick-in-the-mud! How are you going to meet new people, young people with fresh ideas!? Don't pre-judge Stuart. He can be utterly charming if you give him half a chance.

DENNIS: I'm sure he can be. I haven't seen him, so I realize I'm judging him just from his e-mails. But I do confess that I am uncomfortable around effeminate men.

CALLIE: But why?

DENNIS: Let's just say it's from a lifetime of being afraid of being beaten to death for not "acting like a man."

CALLIE: Oh, you need to get over that. It's silly. When I walk down the street with Stuart, sure

he pisses off some people because he's so out there. But I think it's hilarious.

DENNIS: And he doesn't get threats?

CALLIE: Oh, sometimes. But he's fabulous at turning the tables on the bad guys. I love it!

DENNIS: I think you like fights.

CALLIE: This is my reward for being nice?

DENNIS: You positive he doesn't think it's a sex date? You know I am not into anybody under thirty. And, frankly, I am sexually turned off by screamers.

(Lights out on Dennis and Callie.)

(Lights up on Stuart and Callie.)

STUART: Callie, you runt you! Why do you think that Dennis and I have anything in common? And now I have to meet up with him for a movie.

CALLIE: Stuart, you can always cancel. Not that I think you should. He's dying to meet you. Did you call me a runt?

STUART: He is?

CALLIE: Absolutely.

STUART: You made it clear to him that I don't date older men?

CALLIE: It's not a date! By the way, he also doesn't date younger men. So you two are about as safe from a date as it gets. And I am not a "runt"!

STUART: How can he not like younger men? We're wonderful!

CALLIE: I believe he also likes 'masculine' men, you know, for the hard stuff.

STUART: Well, fuck him!

CALLIE: Just try one date. See how it goes.

STUART: I thought you said it wasn't a date.

CALLIE: Okay, don't go! Stuart, don't make such a mountain out of everything!

STUART: Do you think we'd make a couple because of fem and butch? How old-fashioned is

that!?

CALLIE: Pardon me for interfering! Sheesh!

STUART: You're trying to impose a heterosexual model on me. You make me think of this guy I saw at the airport where Jo-Jo works. He noticed that we seemed to be a couple, and so he says, "Which one of you is the woman?"

CALLIE: And you said?

STUART: I looked at his wife and him and said, "Yeah, which one of you two is the woman?"

CALLIE: And how did that go over?

STUART: He chased me.

CALLIE: He didn't!

STUART: He did! Until Jo-Jo caught up to him and pushed him onto the baggage loader!

CALLIE: He didn't!

STUART: He did too! He went right along the baggage belt and banged his fat head on the overhang.

CALLIE: (enjoying it) You're making this up.

STUART: Only some of it.

CALLIE: Which part?

STUART: I'm not telling! And I want you to tell this Dennis I'm not going to the movie.

(Lights out on Stuart and Callie.)

(Lights up on Callie and Dennis.)

CALLIE: Now *you're* not going after all?

DENNIS: I spy certain signs that this is not going to work out.

CALLIE: You can spend your whole life being overly cautious. You'll never get out of the house.

DENNIS: I see plenty of other people's houses, every day.

CALLIE: Selling them is not living in them.

DENNIS: You're right. You're right. I am too judgmental.

CALLIE: You are! It's all right, though. Stuart has backed out as well.

DENNIS: Without even meeting me?

CALLIE: Isn't that better than after meeting you? Zing!

DENNIS: Interesting. It is definitely harder to make new friends as you get older.

CALLIE: I have tons of friends!

DENNIS: I suspect we have differing definitions of friendship.

CALLIE: So you two meet and don't hit it off. Big deal. You just don't bother again.

DENNIS: I can use someone to go to movies with. I can barely drag Trevor to one anymore.

CALLIE: That's all I'm saying.

DENNIS: I'm sorry, Callie, for making this so difficult. Thank you for worrying about me.

CALLIE: I just love it when two people I've introduced hit it off. Some people try to hog all their friends for themselves, but why not share the bounty, I say?

DENNIS: Okay, you've persuaded me. But what about Stuart?

CALLIE: I will call Stuart.

DENNIS: Should I call him?

CALLIE: You go, girl!

DENNIS: Callie, you know I hate that feminization stuff!

CALLIE: Sorry. I think it's cute.

DENNIS: It's not cute. It's demeaning.

CALLIE: Only if you consider being called girlish demeaning.

DENNIS: The people who say it are usually being demeaning, not complimentary. Trust me.

CALLIE: Okay, Big Boy. I won't do it anymore. Got to go!

(Lights out on Callie and Dennis.)

(Lights up on Dennis and Stuart.)

DENNIS: (on cell phone) Hello.

STUART: (on cell phone) Stuart here – Callie’s friend.

DENNIS: Oh, hello.

STUART: You still want to see “Frankenstein”?

DENNIS: I thought you didn’t.

STUART: I’ve changed my mind.

DENNIS: Oh, really?

STUART: You still want to?

DENNIS: I suppose.

STUART: Nobody’s forcing you.

DENNIS: I realize that. It’s just that I feel like I’ve been through two or three relationships with you and we haven’t even met.

STUART: Oh, don’t mind me. I’m just a little strange. Not good at socializing. Not good.

DENNIS: I guess I’ve been warned.

(Lights out on Dennis and Stuart.)

(Lights up on Dennis, who appears to be waiting in front of a movie theater. He has a cane. He checks his watch.)

(Lights up on Stuart, almost offstage.)

STUART: (talking on his cell phone) I’m coming! I’m coming!

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (on his cell phone) The movie has started already.

STUART: I told you to go in. Just leave my ticket at the escalator.

DENNIS: I don’t see any escalator. At least not one with your name on it!

STUART: I'll be there any minute now. "Frankenstein" won't start until after the previews.

DENNIS: If you say so.

STUART: Spoiler alert! The monster dies in a fire at the end.

DENNIS: I thought he survives.

STUART: That's in "Bride of Frankenstein." Want to see that when it comes next month?

DENNIS: How does that one end?

STUART: You don't sound too pleased that I told you.

DENNIS: Should I be pleased?

STUART: Callie said that you're in real estate, right? Are you used to people being late to appointments?

DENNIS: I suppose.

STUART: (close to Dennis) Here I am!

DENNIS: Great! I imagine there are seats left.

STUART: I don't think they're sold out.

DENNIS: (offering his hand) Well, it's nice to finally meet you.

(They shake hands.)

STUART: The same here. (joking) Now about that house you wanted to show me.

DENNIS: Oh, right. I'm afraid somebody jumped on it. Snapped it up.

STUART: I thought the housing market was down.

DENNIS: It's made a surprising turn around.

STUART: I guess I missed out then.

DENNIS: Maybe next time.

STUART: It's all right. I don't have any money to buy a house anyway.

DENNIS: That's why I let the property go even before you got here.

(They smile, acknowledging their little game.)

STUART: We'd better go in! The monster has no clothes on early on! Don't want to miss any!

(Lights down. They move upstage and then cross back down.)

(Lights up on two chairs serving as two movie theater chairs. There is a third chair farther off.)

DENNIS: (whispering) I like the aisle. Is that okay?

STUART: (whispering too loudly) I don't mind!

DENNIS (whispering) I think we're disturbing others.

STUART: I forgot to get candy.

DENNIS: You need candy?

(An unseen voice hushes them. A crew person can do it.)

STUART: You sit. I'll be back. (He leaves for the offstage candy counter.)

(Dennis takes a seat, chagrined.)

DENNIS: (to unseen others) Sorry.

(The unseen voice hushes him again.)

(Pause.)

(Stuart returns, making a disturbance getting into the seat next to Dennis.)

STUART: They don't have Jujubes, damn it!

DENNIS: (whispering) The movie is starting.

STUART: (whispering) I can see that.

(The unseen voice hushes him.)

STUART: Oh, shut up yourself. I'm starving here!

DENNIS: (whispering) Be careful. That person might have a gun.

STUART: (whispering) I'd like to see him try.

DENNIS: (whispering) People have been killed for less.

STUART: (whispering) Oh, don't be such a spoil-sport!

DENNIS: (whispering) I thought I was just being rational.

STUART: (whispering) Oh, look! There's Colin Clive.

DENNIS: (deliberately does not reply)

STUART: (whispering) He's also in "Bride of Frankenstein." I think he's hot!

DENNIS: (deliberately does not reply, squirms)

STUART: I'd love some Jujubes.

UNSEEN VOICE: I'm going to kill you and your Jujubes!

STUART: Oh, no, you're not!

(Dennis gets up and moves to the chair farther away.)

STUART: Where are you going?

DENNIS: (whispering) It's a bit cramped over there.

STUART: Are we seeing the movie together or separately?

(Lights up on Callie, in a chair behind them.)

CALLIE: (whispering) Stuart? Dennis? Is it you?

STUART: (turning around) Callie?

(Dennis turns around too.)

CALLIE: (whispering) What a coincidence!

DENNIS: (whispering) Are you checking up on us?

CALLIE: (whispering) Absolutely not. I just wanted to see "Frankenstein" on the big screen.

UNSEEN VOICE: (loudly) So do we!

STUART: Well, here he is! (Gets up, walks like Frankenstein.)

DENNIS: I think I'm going to leave.

STUART: Leave?

(Dennis gets out of his seat.)

CALLIE: Wait! I'll come with you. (She joins Dennis.)

STUART: Well, *I'm* not leaving!

CALLIE: (to Dennis) Let's go have a drink. What do you say?

DENNIS: I suppose.

STUART: Wait. I'm coming too.

UNSEEN VOICE: (Claps approval.)

STUART: Oh, screw you!

(Stuart runs after Callie and Dennis, who have left.)

(Lights out. Lights up on Stuart at restaurant table with Callie and Dennis.
All have wine glasses.)

STUART: I really wanted to see that movie.

DENNIS: Because you identify with Frankenstein?

STUART: No, because he's hot. I would do Frankenstein.

CALLIE: You wouldn't! You never know where his various parts have been!

STUART: You know who's really hot in that picture? Dwight Frye.

DENNIS: Who?

STUART: The guy who plays Fritz the hunchback.

DENNIS: Really?

STUART: I'm not just saying that because the handicapped are "in." He's very cute. His face.

DENNIS: You know who Dwight Frye is?

CALLIE: Oh, Stuart is a cornucopia of movie trivia.

STUART: It's not trivia. It's more important than who the prime minister of Burundi is!

DENNIS: I suppose that can be debated.

STUART: What a lot of people think is important is not.

CALLIE: See! Isn't this terrific?! You two!

STUART: (to Dennis) Did you bring the speed?

DENNIS: No. I thought we discussed that.

STUART: Do you think your boyfriend can give me some of his? We could work out a deal.
I could give him some of my food stamps.

DENNIS: I don't think he has any extra.

STUART: It will stop me from going out on the streets to get it!

CALLIE: Stuart! You are too much.

STUART: (to Dennis) Why don't you call your boyfriend right now? I'll bet he has some he doesn't need.

DENNIS: I don't quite know what to say.

STUART: Say yes! Say yes!

DENNIS: I don't think "yes" is what I am going to say.

STUART: (to Callie) You said he would be fun!

DENNIS: As I think I indicated, I don't use drugs myself. And I wish Trevor would stop.

STUART: You're having a drug – this wine.

DENNIS: I don't think speed and wine are comparable.

STUART: Yeah, wine's worse.

DENNIS: Not if you stop at two.

STUART: People get all huffy and self-righteous about "drugs," but they pour things into their own bodies that are terrible for them.

DENNIS: I read that a little red wine is good for the arteries.

STUART: Well, I read that methamphetamine is good for the soul!

CALLIE: Wow! You two! I just knew you'd hit it off.

DENNIS / STUART: (together) Are we hitting it off?

CALLIE: So what did you two think of "Frankenstein"?

STUART: I loved it. I've seen it at least fifty times.

DENNIS: You've seen it fifty times? Is there something I missed?

STUART: I love the scene where the villagers go after the monster with torches.

DENNIS: I didn't remember how formally dressed they are, for villagers.

STUART: I identify with Frankenstein. The villagers don't care for me, either.

CALLIE: Oh, Stuart, everybody loves you!

STUART: No, they don't. At least I hope they don't.

DENNIS: I suppose the villagers get a little nervous around a monster.

STUART: Because they're narrow-minded.

DENNIS: Perhaps it's because the monster throws children into the water.

STUART: He's just playing! Besides, it's only one child! She was annoying anyway!

CALLIE: I just loved the black and white photography. So old-fashioned.

STUART: (imitating Dr. Frankenstein) "It's alive! It's alive!"

(Lights out.)

(Lights up on Dennis and Callie.)

DENNIS: Well, at least you tried, Callie. It just wasn't meant to be.

CALLIE: I did sense a certain amount of strain there. Maybe my matchmaking powers are fading.

DENNIS: Believe me, I appreciate the attempt.

(Suddenly lights up on Stuart, interrupting them.)

STUART: (speaking his e-mails to Dennis) Hi there! You wanna join me in the LGBTQ Speakers Bureau and visit some high schools?

DENNIS: What?

STUART: I'm going to be speaking to kids in some local high schools. It's an effort to help kids be less trans- and homophobic. Jo-Jo doesn't want to go, but I thought you might join me. Below is the application form.

DENNIS: Thanks for the invite. But I really have no interest in talking to American teenagers.

STUART: I hope you're joking, because that attitude sounds like something that might come out of the worst stupid American teenager. I mean this more as a joke, not as an attack. Apparently you're not the only one who feels that way about American youth. But come on! It'll be fun!

DENNIS: I think you may not be welcomed with open arms. Be warned.

STUART: Why do you see teenagers as especially bad? I have a problem segregating any one group as less worthy of my respect because that implies that some group is more worthy. The way I see it, all human beings are equally corrupt, and it is my duty either to enlighten them or to find some way to destroy the human race.

DENNIS: My sister was a high school teacher, at least until she had a nervous breakdown and went into something less stressful.

STUART: What was that?

DENNIS: Rehabilitating serial cannibals.

STUART: Is that a joke?

DENNIS: Let's just say she convinced me not to go into American high schools.

STUART: The only reason I'm so eager for you to consider doing it is because Jo-Jo would rather have his eyes gouged out than speak to any group, and I would rather not do it alone. I'm sure you're a very good public speaker.

DENNIS: I believe that I can hold my own. But I must decline.

STUART: The students who are in my play in Chicago have spoken to me on Skype. They seemed very nice.

DENNIS: Dealing with high school actors in a play is very different from walking into a classroom and trying to maintain control. Substitute teachers have to do this all the time. I do not envy them.

STUART: But they will see that I am Lord God King Buttfuck, the great and powerful, and that they are to remain silent and bask in the afterglow of my omnipotence. I'll protect you!

DENNIS: Stuart, I think you might be in for a nasty surprise if you go into a classroom. We're not talking about Japan here! Not only may there not be respect, even with a teacher present, there might be downright rudeness and overt homophobia. And forget trans altogether!

STUART: Because you think I'm too over the top?

DENNIS: It is not about what I think. It's about what coddled American students think. And do.

STUART: You are so cautious! I wouldn't want to live that way.

DENNIS: Live the way you want. Maybe you'll have a spectacular time. I wish you luck with it.

STUART: Suit yourself. Would you mind looking at the attached notes I wrote for the program for my play in Chicago? Thanks!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Then lights out on disgruntled Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: Hi there! Have you had a chance to look at my program notes? Say what you think!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: I finally got to your notes. I thought they were very interesting. I did spot a typo in the word "recalcitrant." Good job!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: I was really taken aback by your comment on my typo. Do you think I didn't see it? That's the best comment you can muster up? I found it very supercilious. Some vague "good job" comment doesn't work for me. Do you think I can't take real criticism?

DENNIS: You asked for my feedback. I gave what I wanted to give.

STUART: If you're harboring other criticisms, I don't see why you didn't give them?

DENNIS: You are assuming that I had other criticisms. Perhaps I had none. I also believe that in new friendships it is dangerous to offer too much of anything that can lead to a quarrel. It is my experience that old friendships can withstand quarrels, but new ones cannot.

STUART: I disagree. You should be able to say whatever you want to. Did you think I could not take your criticism? I'm tougher than that!

DENNIS: Stuart, perhaps I had no other criticism than the typo. Why are you arguing with me about this?

STUART: Don't you love to argue? I do! I've never understood why people will go to any lengths to avoid a little disagreement.

DENNIS: Perhaps you are not as thin-skinned as I am.

STUART: But I'm supposed to be the sissy!

DENNIS: Even I know that "sissies" can be quite tough cookies.

STUART: Believe it!

DENNIS: What troubles me is you seem to demand I give you the comments that *you* want me to give, whether or not they are what *I* want to give.

STUART: Well, then just say that. Don't be so coy.

DENNIS: The older I get, the more I am trying to avoid downright confrontations. In my youth I was less careful and regret it now.

STUART: Well, I regret not being more confrontational earlier in my life.

DENNIS: Maybe we're just too different to be friends.

STUART: Can't stand diversity?

DENNIS: I can stand some. I just wonder if constant disagreement can work for very long.

STUART: I like all the different people I encounter all the time.

DENNIS: Good for you. I confess I feel that some people are so different from another one of them has to give in.

STUART: What does that mean?

DENNIS: Gay activists and religious fundamentalists don't mix well.

STUART: You really think that?

DENNIS: You really *don't* think that?!

STUART: You're funny.

DENNIS: I'm funny?

STUART: You think *I'm* funny?!

DENNIS: Maybe we're both funny, each in his own way.

STUART: Oh, that's such a cop-out! Stand up for what you believe in!

DENNIS: I am standing up for what I believe it!

(Lights out on Dennis and Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: I know, I know. I should have left them alone, never introduced them.

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: (to Callie) You certainly shouldn't have!

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (to Callie) Being "lonely" is forty times better than being insulted and annoyed by that asshole!

CALLIE: I guess no good deed goes unpunished.

STUART: What good deed? You call that a good deed?

DENNIS: He's right!

CALLIE: See! Now you have something in common – hating me!

STUART: Why did you do it, Callie?

DENNIS: Yeah!

CALLIE: Why? Because I was bored? Yes, guilty!

STUART: You're not getting off that easy. You did it to be mean.

CALLIE: No, I didn't!

DENNIS: We're not pawns in some game you like to play!

CALLIE: Give me a break!

STUART: You don't seem to realize how much stress you've caused us.

DENNIS: Besides the time wasted.

CALLIE: I'm sure neither of you will ever recover.

STUART: It's certainly made me distrust your judgment.

DENNIS: And it's made me even more reluctant to venture into other new friendships.

CALLIE: Oh, for God's sake! You two should both get over yourselves.

(Lights out on all three.)

(Lights up on Teacher, played by Callie.)

TEACHER: Class, may I have your attention? . . . May I? (Waits) May I? (Waits) Thank you. (to student in the audience) Juan, stop that! (Waits) Class, today we are extremely lucky to have as our guest a produced playwright! He has taken time out of his very busy schedule to come and tells us about his life and his lifestyle. I am sure that you will afford him every courtesy. Won't you please welcome Mr. Stuart Pricke. (Applauds him.)

(Stuart enters, nods.)

STUART: It's Prick-*eh*. It's German. Like Porsch-*eh*.

TEACHER: Of course. (to students) You see, students, we can all learn something every day. It's not even Prick-*ay*, as it would be in French. It's Prick-*eh*! Because it is German.

STUDENT: (played by Dennis) He's a prick-*eh* any way you say it!

TEACHER: (a warning) Kevin!

STUDENT: Maybe he should change his name.

STUART: Maybe you should change your attitude!

TEACHER: Why don't we hear some more about your play!

STUART: I'd love to. It's being done by the Children's Theatre of Chicago next month. It's actually the second time they have done it. It was a big success last year.

STUDENT: (under his breath) I'll bet.

STUART: It was! You weren't there, so you don't know!

STUDENT: Who the bleep cares about some old play!?

TEACHER: Watch the language!

STUDENT: I already did!

TEACHER: What is your play about, Mr. Pricke?

STUART: It's about bullying in the boxing ring.

TEACHER: That's what I was told. How interesting!

STUART: It's a very important subject that everybody needs to learn about. There is far too much bullying in today's boxing ring, both amateur and professional.

STUDENT: If not there, then where?!

TEACHER: (a warning) Jamahl!

STUDENT: But I like bullying! I've always bullied!

STUART: My play demonstrates that you can have a good, solid punch-up by playing by the rules. There is, however, no need whatsoever ever to land a glove on your opponent.

STUDENT: (upset) What?!

STUART: We prove that one can *almost* hit one's opponent's chin and still win by showing that you could have hit it but you chose not to at the last possible moment. Instead of rewarding bullying, it rewards skill and judgment and aim!

STUDENT: (with disdain) That is so gay!

TEACHER: (a warning) Genghis!

STUDENT: I thought we had to use "gay" now!

STUART: (to Teacher) Let me handle this. (to Student) Do you want to take me on? Huh? Right here, right now?

TEACHER: Whoa! Whoa! The lawsuits!

STUART: You think you can beat me up because I'm girly? You might be in for a surprise, dude! I'll girly your ass!

TEACHER: (to Student) Don't answer him!

STUDENT: Do I have to stop before I hit the actual chin?

STUART: For you, we can suspend my rules. You ready?

TEACHER: Well, wasn't this a wonderful visit from our guest today! (Applauds.)

STUDENT: I thought he was gonna tell us about his lifestyle!

STUART: I am very proud of my lifestyle. I don't have to prove anything to you. I live on SSI in a tiny apartment in a troubled area of the city with Jo-Jo my partner and three perfect cats. My drug use is almost under control. And I am working on a brand new play. I could not be happier!

STUDENT: You're a role model?

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: How did the visit to the school go?

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: They loved me!

CALLIE: I knew they would.

STUART: That teacher did sort of hurry me out of there at the end. I really had much more to say.

CALLIE: Well, they say kids' attention span today isn't what it used to be.

STUART: Maybe I'll become a teacher. I'd crack the whip!

CALLIE: Stuart, can I ask you something?

STUART: Uh oh! What?

CALLIE: My mother fell down in her apartment. She wasn't found for two days. Now she's asking to come and live with me. I don't know what to tell her. You had a mother, right?

STUART: Tell her no. Who needs some old "fallen woman" around!

CALLIE: Stop. I'm serious.

STUART: I am serious. What do you actually think of your mother? No bullshit answer.

CALLIE: I hate seeing her growing feeble.

STUART: I never liked my mother. She liked me even less. It made me tough. So I no longer resent her. Besides, she's dead. If you wait long enough, your mother will be dead too and your problem will be solved.

CALLIE: It's not funny, Stuart. Sometimes you can be so . . .

STUART: Who's being funny? You can't be held back by other people. I learned that a long time ago.

CALLIE: You sound rather heartless.

STUART: I gave up my heart after the first time I was beaten up. I think I was six.

CALLIE: I wish I could be that decisive.

STUART: If you can get through your mother, you can get through anything.

CALLIE: I guess that's wise advice. Is that wise advice?

STUART: Of course it is. Can I ask you a question?

CALLIE: Sure.

STUART: Jo-Jo and I are going to Chicago for my play next week. Could you feed my three cats while we're gone?

CALLIE: I'd love to, Stuart, but I'm going out of town myself. I'm sorry.

STUART: How convenient that you're out of town the same time we are.

CALLIE: Can't you put them in a pet shelter?

STUART: We can't afford it. Besides, the people there would probably eat the poor things!

CALLIE: What about a neighbor?

STUART: I asked my neighbor one apartment down the last time we went somewhere. She didn't even clean the litter box! We had a big fight over it. I'm not asking her again.

CALLIE: It's quite a task cleaning a litter box.

STUART: Well, she offered to feed them. Litter goes with feeding.

CALLIE: Maybe she wasn't . . .

STUART: I've got to go, Callie. Thanks for your help!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Then lights out on Callie.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (on cell phone) Hello.

STUART: (on cell phone) Hi there!

DENNIS: Stuart?!

STUART: How you doin'?

DENNIS: Uh, fine. I thought we weren't friends any longer.

STUART: What kind of friendship would that be?! You have to be persistent in these things.

DENNIS: I guess I'm old school. Or maybe it's new school.

STUART: I was wondering if I could ask you for a favor.

DENNIS: Me?

STUART: You like cats, don't you?

DENNIS: I can take them or leave them.

STUART: But they can be so loving.

DENNIS: It seems to me more likely to call them serial killers.

STUART: Oh, that's funny! Wrong, but funny.

DENNIS: What is it you want exactly, Stuart?

STUART: You think I want something?

DENNIS: Yes.

STUART: I resent that.

DENNIS: You just called to chat?

STUART: Well, there is something.

DENNIS: Well, blow me.

STUART: Pardon me?

DENNIS: Sorry, it's an old expression. As in "blow me down." Not the other.

STUART: If you say so. What I'm wondering is would you be able to feed my cats when Jo-Jo and I are out of town next week. I asked Callie, and she turned me down flat. And I thought she was such a good friend.

DENNIS: Oh, that's too bad. I am about to go out of town myself.

STUART: When?

DENNIS: The exact day isn't clear yet.

STUART: So you could work it so that you could take care of my cats. You'll love them!

DENNIS: I'm a little allergic to cats.

STUART: Oh, you are not! You're just saying that.

DENNIS: How many days are you going to be gone?

STUART: As few as five and as many as ten, depending.

DENNIS: Depending?

STUART: There is some talk of me being interviewed by the press, but it might be after the official opening. We're having trouble with one of the cast members.

DENNIS: Sorry to hear that.

STUART: It's no skin off your back.

DENNIS: Nose.

STUART: What?

DENNIS: I believe the expression is "no skin off your nose."

STUART: You really seem obsessed with minutiae, aren't you?

DENNIS: I suppose you could say that.

STUART: I try to take a larger view of things.

DENNIS: Olympian, no doubt.

STUART: So you'll look after my poor, little babies then?

DENNIS: Stuart, you take my breath away.

STUART: Jo-Jo and I really have nobody else. We'll even pay you.

DENNIS: You will? How much?

STUART: How about twenty dollars?

DENNIS: Per visit?

STUART: For the whole thing.

DENNIS: Twenty dollars? I'd rather do it for free!

STUART: Oh, great! I knew I could count on you. You're a decent human being.

DENNIS: And yet I could accuse myself of such crimes.

STUART: What?!

DENNIS: It's an allusion to something Hamlet says.

STUART: I could never understand Shakespeare. But I am trying to read *Shakespeare for Dummies* even as we speak.

DENNIS: Hamlet is saying that he is rather ordinary but even at that he is full of evil.

STUART: You don't have to explain it to me.

DENNIS: Sorry, I thought you were trying to expand your knowledge base.

STUART: Are you saying I'm evil?

DENNIS: I thought I was saying *I* was.

STUART: I suppose I ought to read the Bard, since we're both playwrights. Or at least I've been adapted for the stage.

DENNIS: So you said. How's that coming along?

STUART: I don't like some of the changes the director has made. We'll get those fixed when and if I get to Chicago. I may have to stay home if no one will feed the cats.

DENNIS: Can't Jo-Jo stay home?

STUART: Oh, but I need him with me. He stands by me.

DENNIS: You strike me as someone who can stand on your own amazingly well.

STUART: You sound like you don't want to feed my cats.

DENNIS: I wish it hadn't come to this, Stuart.

STUART: Come to what? It's just a little favor. But if you don't care if the cats starve, what can I do?

DENNIS: Oddly enough, in some ways I stand in awe of your gall.

STUART: I've learned in life that if you don't ask, you don't receive.

DENNIS: Where do you live?

STUART: On the north side of the city. Where do you live?

DENNIS: On the south. It's a good forty-minute drive each way.

STUART: Oh, that's not so bad. I have to take the bus everywhere, and it's a nightmare. So when can I get the keys to you?

DENNIS: I don't think I'm getting through to you, Stuart.

STUART: Sure you are. But I'm ignoring you! For the kitties? They're here all around me right now, asking, When is Uncle Dennis coming to feed us? Huh? Huh? (Stuart meows.)

DENNIS: Oh, my God.

STUART: Can you come on your lunch break, from your office? How far is that?

DENNIS: It's a bit closer to where you are.

STUART: There! You can keep the cat food at work. I have the cans all laid out. Just stop by and get them and the keys. (He meows again.)

DENNIS: (caving in) All right, I'll feed them.

STUART: Oh, you're a saint!

DENNIS: A sucker more likely.

STUART: Don't say that! When will you be by? I'm going out this afternoon.

DENNIS: I suppose I can stop by in about an hour. That's my lunch break. I'm showing a house after that, in your general area.

STUART: See! I knew it wouldn't be that much trouble. I'll come down. Meet you on the corner of Hazelwood and Elk. In an hour. Thanks a million. Got to go now. (Hangs up.)

(Lights out on Stuart.)

DENNIS: (looks at his phone, shakes his head) Stuart, you are everything I want to be – and don't!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Dennis, on another part of the stage.)

DENNIS: (with his cell phone, dialing, then speaking) Hello, Stuart. It's Dennis. I am parked at the corner of Hazelwood and Elk. I don't see you. Please pick up! (No answer. Dennis hangs up.)

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

(Dennis dials his cell phone again.)

STUART: (his voice on his answering machine) You have reached the number you have reached. Leave a message, goddamnit!

DENNIS: Stuart? Is this the right number for you? I have been waiting for fifteen minutes. I still don't see you on the corner of Hazelwood and Elk. Do I have the correct place? Please return my call.

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart on mattress, sleeping, snoring.)

DENNIS: (dialing, then talking) Hello, Stuart. This is my sixth call. My lunch hour is about up, and I've got to see my potential client. I guess we will not be able to arrange things today. Perhaps it was not meant to be. Goodbye. (Hangs up.)

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart, waking up, stretching, yawning.)

STUART: (looking at his clock) Oh, shit! . . . Well, I missed him. (Falls back down, trying to go to sleep again.) He could have called more than once. Fuck him!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: (texting Dennis) How have you been? I haven't heard from you in ages.

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: Hi, Callie. Sorry I haven't been in touch. I've been really busy at work. New listings.

CALLIE: You'd think with all these new-fangled communication devices we have now, people would be more in touch.

DENNIS: You'd think. . . . How have you been?

CALLIE: I'm going to Nevada to meet up with my Native American friend, Edgar Beaver the Second.

DENNIS: Eager Beaver the Second?

CALLIE: Edgar Beaver! He runs this spa where you sit in a sweat lodge for six hours. It's heavenly!

DENNIS: Six hours? Sounds dangerous.

CALLIE: We take breaks. It restores my soul. I've gone every year now for the past seven.

DENNIS: Maybe I can get a massage somewhere around here. I feel a bit stressed out myself.

CALLIE: How is your friendship with Stuart progressing?

DENNIS: He didn't tell you.

CALLIE: Not a word. What's what?

DENNIS: I'm afraid Stuart was just too over the top for me. The last straw is when he asked me to feed his cats and then didn't answer when I came by for the cat food and the keys.

CALLIE: Yeah, he can be like that. I have learned to just tell him no. He has a habit of keeping very irregular hours. Do you want me to call him for you?

DENNIS: Not really. I think it best if we just let that relationship die. Somehow I feel that it never really got started. He did keep my attention, though.

CALLIE: Let me call him for you. I still have hope for you two.

DENNIS: I read in an article somewhere that you can figure out whether you can be friends with someone in three minutes or less.

CALLIE: Oh, that's being too judgmental too soon.

DENNIS: The idea of turning a big negative into a great positive is a literary conceit, at best. It's what happens in books, not in real life.

CALLIE: No wonder you don't have any friends!

DENNIS: I have friends, Callie!

CALLIE: Yeah, but they're friends you don't see very often. Or, worse, they're work friends, people you hang out with to talk about foreclosures or short sales, or whatever. Those aren't real friends.

DENNIS: It was great talking to you, Callie. But I have to get back to work. One of my non-friend co-workers wants something from me.

CALLIE: I didn't mean to hurt your feelings.

DENNIS: You didn't hurt them. My feelings are impervious to hurt.

CALLIE: Say you're not mad.

DENNIS: I'm not mad. I'm just over-worked. Give Eager Beaver my prayers!

CALLIE: I'll call Stuart for you!

(Lights out on Callie.)

(Lights out on Dennis, shaking his head.)

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: (on cell phone) Dennis?

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (on cell phone) Stuart?

STUART: I hear that you still are willing to feed my cats while I'm gone.

DENNIS: (sighs) I think there's been some miscommunication.

STUART: Sorry about that mix-up with the exchange of the keys and the cat food.

DENNIS: I never heard back from you.

STUART: I'm calling back now. I had to see my therapist that morning at seven. When I got back home, I was exhausted and fell asleep and simply didn't hear my alarm clock go off.

DENNIS: I'm sorry about it all, but I think –

STUART: What do you say to this? Jo-Jo works for Delta Airlines, and so we can get you on an almost free round-trip flight anywhere in the world. Just for taking care of my cats for eight days. We have everything finalized in Chicago now. Wouldn't you like to fly somewhere? Even to Europe!

DENNIS: Really? I would love to get away for a few weeks.

STUART: I'll get Jo-Jo to put you on the stand-by list. I'm sure you'll get on.

DENNIS: I may not get on?

STUART: It's not for sure, but you could save a ton of money. Jo-Jo and I have flown lots of times.

DENNIS: You don't say.

STUART: Now I'm talking your language, I can tell!

DENNIS: Does Delta fly to Paris?

STUART: I'm sure it does. Is it a deal then?

DENNIS: Eight feedings for Paris? I think we may have a deal here.

STUART: Great! We still have to exchange cat food and keys.

DENNIS: Do you think you or Jo-Jo could drop the stuff off at my office?

STUART: Oh, we both don't drive. What if I gave them to Callie, and she gave them to you?
I'm seeing her tonight.

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Dennis, miming going up two long flights of steps to Stuart's apartment, using his cane.)

DENNIS: (counting) One flight.

(Lights out on Dennis. Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (still counting, still miming) Two flights! One visit.

(Dennis mimes using a key while carrying cans of cat food to open Stuart's apartment.)
The cane makes it even more difficult. He drops a can of cat food.)

DENNIS: (to the unseen cats) Hello, kitties! Uncle Dennis is here! Are we hungry babies?

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (miming climbing the steps again) Six visits!

(Mimes entering Stuart's apartment with cat food cans, now in a bag.)

DENNIS: Hello, Tinklebottom! Hello Bruce Wayne! And I can see you hiding there, Snuggle Ears! Uncle Dennis is here with the goodies again!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

(He is really struggling now from all the exertion. He drops the bag of cat food cans and then the keys. He also drops his cane. He manages to retrieve everything awkwardly).

DENNIS: (counting) Second flight! Eighth visit! I made it!

(Dennis mimes opening the apartment again.)

DENNIS: Hello, kitties! It's Uncle Dennis again! Please don't eat me!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: How are my babies?

DENNIS: Is was me or them. So I ate them.

STUART: (horrified) What?!

DENNIS: I'm kidding, I'm kidding!

STUART: You had me going there. Don't do that.

DENNIS: Aren't you home by now?

STUART: Oh, Jo-Jo and I decided to stay an extra day. We are going for a boat ride on Lake Michigan.

DENNIS: Really?

STUART: But don't feel obligated to feed the cats again. They can go a day without. We'll be home tomorrow evening.

DENNIS: Well, that's good to hear. My legs were giving out.

STUART: I'm sure the cats are very grateful.

DENNIS: Funny, I don't associate cats with gratitude.

STUART: That's why I love 'em! Nobody pushes them around. Did you manage to change the litter? We don't want the apartment manager to smell anything.

DENNIS: I cleaned it twice and took the dirty litter home with me.

STUART: I don't know what Jo-Jo and I would do without you.

DENNIS: For that almost-free trip to Europe, it wasn't that bad.

STUART: You sound so mercenary.

DENNIS: (almost amused) What?

STUART: I thought you'd want to help out a friend.

DENNIS: I saw it as more of a business deal.

STUART: I despise people who do everything for money. There is so little generosity left in the world anymore!

DENNIS: Generosity perhaps works best when there is reciprocity.

STUART: Where did you learn that – in a fortune cookie? And what does “reciprocity” mean? I've never understood that word.

DENNIS: Don't understand “reciprocity”? I'd explain it to you, Stuart, but you might think I was trying to correct you.

STUART: There you go again, being condescending!

DENNIS: Apparently, that is the only refuge I have.

STUART: Not that you care, but the play adaptation went very well. Lots of raves, standing ovations.

DENNIS: It must have been wonderful.

STUART: They talking of doing it again next season. Three times in three years!

DENNIS: That's even more wonderful.

STUART: I tried to get them to extend it right now. We're selling out. But they have another show coming in. Jo-Jo and I would have gladly stayed for another week.

DENNIS: But Tinklebottom is missing you so. And Snuggle Ears and Bruce Wayne.

STUART: Well, it lets you off the hook in having to take care of them a minute longer.

DENNIS: Lucky me!

STUART: Could you put them on the phone.

DENNIS: The cats? I'm in my office.

STUART: I wish I had spoken to them earlier when you were over there at my place. I just was so busy. I had to give the director notes even after we opened. He is so set in his ways!

DENNIS: The cats are just fine.

STUART: Well, I suppose if they were dead, you wouldn't tell me anyway.

DENNIS: You're wrong, Stuart. If they were dead, I would send you pictures!

STUART: What's that supposed to mean?

DENNIS: Why don't you tell *me* what you think it means.

STUART: I think I spy a little resentment.

DENNIS: Just a little?

STUART: You didn't have to offer to look after the cats. You could have said no. Callie said no, and I respect her for it.

DENNIS: And I said yes and you disrespect me for it!

STUART: There is no reason to raise your voice.

DENNIS: You're lucky I'm not screaming.

STUART: I don't get you, Dennis. You can't seem to make up your mind. Are you really trying that hard to be a friend?

DENNIS: Something tells me that we don't have the same definition of the word. Not even close.

STUART: I'd look after your cats, if you had any.

DENNIS: But I don't, do I?

STUART: Maybe you should get some.

DENNIS: Yeah, I'll get some, just so you can look after them.

STUART: I don't understand why you seem angry with me.

DENNIS: Do you know that there wasn't even a can opener in your apartment, to open the cat food with?

STUART: Yes, there is!

DENNIS: It didn't work.

STUART: I used it just before we left. It was working fine.

DENNIS: I had to bring one from home.

STUART: Well, you do have to jiggle it just so to get it started. But it's not that difficult.

DENNIS: And those three cats shouldn't be in that small an apartment. It's just one room basically.

STUART: They have plenty of room. They can climb inside the closet and come out on the other side of the room. They love it.

DENNIS: It's claustrophobic.

STUART: What do you want them to do, go out and run in the streets and get run over?

DENNIS: Yeah, Stuart, that's what I want.

STUART: Well, I'm not going to do it.

DENNIS: Those are not the only two choices, Stuart!

(Lights up on Callie.)

DENNIS: (to Stuart) Let me get this, okay?

STUART: Be my guest.

DENNIS: (on cell phone) Yes?

CALLIE: Hello, Dennis! It's Callie.

DENNIS: Hello, Callie. I'm on the other line with Stuart.

CALLIE: Oh, great! Put him on too. We can all talk.

DENNIS: Stuart, Callie wants to talk.

STUART: I wouldn't know how to do it. If you do, go ahead.

(Dennis clicks Callie into the call.)

DENNIS: Are you both there now?

CALLIE / STUART: (together) I'm here!

CALLIE: Well, it's good to see that you two are finally hitting it off.

DENNIS: We're fighting.

CALLIE: No!

STUART: Not because of me. Dennis is the one who's fighting.

DENNIS: It takes two. I take that back. With Stuart, it takes just one.

STUART: Hey!

CALLIE: Fellas, stop!

STUART: I just don't get it!

DENNIS: (at the same time) It's maddening!

CALLIE: Stuart! Dennis! Guess what. I've fallen and I can't get up. (Groans.)

DENNIS: Callie, are you joking?

CALLIE: No, I'm serious. I'm on the floor being eaten by cockroaches. Save me!

STUART: Do you want us to call 911?

CALLIE: I don't think there's time. Oh, a cockroach just nipped my boob!

DENNIS: Now I know you're joking.

CALLIE: Evidently it's the only way I can get you two to cooperate.

STUART: Have you fallen or not?

CALLIE: But I have gotten up!

DENNIS: I'd better go. I have an office meeting coming up.

STUART: Don't let me keep you. Tinklebottom has an ear mite or something, and it's killing him. I've got to attend to that.

DENNIS: Give Tinklebottom my love!

STUART: Say hi to all the people in your office – whom I've never met even once. Goodbye, Callie! Regards to your mom.

CALLIE: That's it? This must be the most unsatisfying telephone call of all time.

DENNIS: You tried, Callie. You tried. It just did not work out. The best-laid plans and all that.

CALLIE: I don't know why I bothered. Neither one of you is grateful. Neither one of you tried very hard.

STUART: I'm grateful!

DENNIS: There has to be a certain mysterious chemistry to make it work.

CALLIE: I give up then! Ninety-nine percent of the time what I join together stays together. But I guess even I make mistakes.

DENNIS: I'm hanging up now.

STUART: So am I.

DENNIS: Have a good life, Stuart.

STUART: I plan on it. Sell a lot of houses at a big profit!

DENNIS: I'll do my best.

CALLIE: I'm hanging up first. Talk to both of you soon, separately. Whatcha gonna do! Bye!
(Hangs up.)

DENNIS: Well, goodbye, Stuart.

STUART: Do you still want that reduced fare on Delta?

DENNIS: Let's call it even. What do you say?

STUART: Suits me. So long.

DENNIS: Oh, God, I just remembered I have your keys!

STUART: (Suddenly Stuart grabs his forehead and makes a pained noise.) Ow!

DENNIS: What's wrong?

(Stuart falls to the floor, passed out.)

DENNIS: Stuart? Stuart? Are you fooling around? Have you actually fallen and can't get up?
. . . Stuart?

BLACKOUT
End of Act I
INTERMISSION

ACT II

(A few moments later.)

DENNIS: (still on cell phone) Stuart, are you there? It's Dennis!

STUART: (lying on the floor, paralyzed, his cell phone dropped) (Groans quietly.)

DENNIS: Hang on. I'll call 911. (He does.)

(Lights out on Dennis and Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: (to audience) And he was only in his twenties! A mini-stroke! Two of them, one on each side. It just goes to show that you can't take anything for granted in this life. The doctors aren't sure he's going to make it. He could have more strokes!

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: Have you heard any more about Stuart?

CALLIE: He's still paralyzed, but he can talk a little now. Thank God for that!

DENNIS: Have you been to see him?

CALLIE: I was at the hospital but just for half an hour. I had to get back to my office. Are you going to go visit?

DENNIS: Visit? Stuart and I weren't really friends.

CALLIE: I know, but it would be such a nice gesture. He has nobody.

DENNIS: What about Jo-Jo?

CALLIE: They had quarreled a few days ago, and they weren't living together anymore.

DENNIS: Well, he could still make a visit, for old times' sake.

CALLIE: I talked to him. He's pretty bitter about Stuart.

DENNIS: I think I can understand.

CALLIE: Oh, my God!

DENNIS: What?!

CALLIE: Stuart's cats! I wonder if anybody is looking after them.

DENNIS: I have no idea. Won't Jo-Jo look after them?

CALLIE: He hated those cats. They fought about them all the time. They could starve to death.

DENNIS: Well, I do have Stuart's extra set of keys. I never got a chance to return them.

CALLIE: How lucky! Now you can go over and see after the cats.

DENNIS: Are you positive no one else is taking care of them?

CALLIE: I don't see how anyone could be.

DENNIS: Did Stuart mention them?

CALLIE: He's not all there.

DENNIS: Can't you go over to the apartment?

CALLIE: You have a set of keys. I don't!

DENNIS: Christ!

(Lights out on Dennis and Callie.)

(Lights up on Dennis, miming entering Stuart's apartment.)

DENNIS: Hello, kitties! It's Uncle Dennis! How are you? (Looks inside.) Okay, okay, I'm coming! I'll open the cans. I'll open the cans! Calm down. Calm down. Tumbleweed, back off! Or whatever the hell your name is! Back! Back!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Sounds of a can opener opening a can of cat food.)

(Lights up on Stuart. He is in a hospital bed, still paralyzed, but he can move his head.)

STUART: (weakly) Nurse! . . . Nurse!

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: (entering the hospital room) How are you, Stuart? It's Callie.

STUART: You're not the nurse!

CALLIE: I know I'm not. What do you need?

STUART: I need my catheter adjusted.

CALLIE: Maybe I can fix it. Where is it?

STUART: It's in my penis.

CALLIE: It's in your . . . ?

STUART: To take the pee away. My medication must be wearing off. It hurts.

CALLIE: So you can feel something. That's good!

STUART: Screw you, Callie! Pain is not good!

CALLIE: Well, it means some feeling has come back.

STUART: Yeah, my dick feels like it's being ripped apart from the inside. It might be infected.

CALLIE: I'd better not touch it then. Let me see if there is a nurse around.

STUART: They won't come. They hate me already.

CALLIE: You've only been here two days.

STUART: I gave them hell. So incompetent! And they can't understand English!

CALLIE: Let me check. (She goes off a bit.)

(Callie returns as the nurse.)

NURSE: Yes?

STUART: The catheter in my pee hole stings. Understand?

NURSE: Me no understand! (The nurse leaves.)

STUART: Come back here!

NURSE: (leaving) No!

STUART: God damn you and the entire fucking staff!

(Re-enter Callie as herself.)

CALLIE: Stuart, you have to behave if you want them to help you.

STUART: I'd help myself if I could move anything but my head! (Shakes his head around.)

CALLIE: Have you heard a prognosis from the doctor?

STUART: Duh! I had two strokes at once! Ischemic, to be precise.

CALLIE: Your mind seems okay now. Sort of.

STUART: Yeah, my mind is fine. I just can't move a muscle in my body.

CALLIE: Well, it's not going to help if you keeping stressing out.

STUART: Thanks, doctor!

CALLIE: Have you talked with Jo-Jo? On speakerphone?

STUART: He called. We fought. He hung up on me.

CALLIE: I don't know what to say.

STUART: Am I a bad person, Callie? (Starts to cry.) I'm not trying to be a bad person. Really I'm not.

CALLIE: I don't think you *mean* to be a bad person, Stuart.

STUART: Well, I'm not changing. Would you believe that I was bullied when I was a kid?

CALLIE: I find that hard to believe.

STUART: Well, it's true. Then one day I just made up my mind: *that* is not happening to me ever again.

CALLIE: We all have to make some compromises in life, to survive. It can't be all bang, bang, blam!

STUART: This catheter is killing me!

CALLIE: Okay, let me see what I can do. They'll probably arrest me for practicing medicine without a license. (She comes closer to Stuart.) Where exactly?

STUART: Down there. (Bobs his head.)

CALLIE: (reaching under the blanket that is over Stuart) Here?

STUART: Careful now.

CALLIE: (feeling around for the catheter) I think I've found it.

STUART: (imitating Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*) "I think she's got it! I think she's got it!"

CALLIE: Should I lift up the blanket?

STUART: I have a little modesty left, Callie, not much, but a little.

CALLIE: (looking) I think it may be turned a little. Perhaps if I pull it back, just so.

STUART: Go ahead. Go ahead. (Grits his teeth, closes his eyes.) Why does nothing else in my body feel anything except that fucking catheter?!

CALLIE: (hesitating) Let's see here . . .

STUART: Have you moved it yet?

CALLIE: Not yet. I don't want to do it wrong.

STUART: Just do it!

CALLIE: Okay, here goes. You can't sue me! (She reaches under the blanket, moves something.) There!

STUART: (screaming) Oh, Jesus God and Savior! Oh! Oh! Oh! (Suddenly relaxing) I think you got it.

CALLIE: I did?

STUART: That feels so much better. Thank you. Thank you.

CALLIE: No problem. Anything for a pal.

STUART: Can you come back tomorrow? I may need a hand.

CALLIE: (with mock outrage) What?!

STUART: Shaken, not stirred.

CALLIE: Among other things, I thought you were gay, Stuart.

STUART: I'll close my eyes. You can close yours too.

CALLIE: I'll adjust your catheter. I'll hold your hand. However, I won't give you a hand job.

STUART: (yelling) Nurse, remove this woman! She's useless!

CALLIE: I bet you'd let me do it too.

STUART: Is there any doubt? Especially if my current state doesn't change for the better.
I am not going to lie here paralyzed for years – and horny as hell!

CALLIE: Maybe that should be part of long-term health care?

STUART: What do you want to bet it never will be. They'll slice you and stick you and cut off any number of your parts, but give you sexual relief for ten seconds? Never!

(Lights out on Stuart and Callie.)

(Lights up on Callie, texting.)

CALLIE: You really should go and visit him.

(Lights up on Dennis with a can of cat food.)

DENNIS: I'm visiting his cats. That's enough. I just changed the cat litter.

CALLIE: You're a good person, Dennis.

DENNIS: Tell that to Snuggle Ears. He still won't come near me. He gives me the Evil Eye.
How is Stuart doing?

CALLIE: About the same. It's been ten days now.

DENNIS: Has Jo-Jo relented and gone to see him?

CALLIE: No. I've been over three times.

DENNIS: What's going to happen to him?

CALLIE: They don't know.

DENNIS: Is he going to get better? Is he going to die?

CALLIE: His infection is better, but he's worried about his rent. It's due tomorrow.

DENNIS: And?

CALLIE: Can you pay it? He says he'll reimburse you. He has the money in an account.

DENNIS: He can't write a check, correct?

CALLIE: Not yet.

DENNIS: Can he call his bank and get it to send the money? Or send it via phone?

CALLIE: He says he's been late several times this year and is on warning from his landlord. He's terrified he'll be evicted – and the cats will be put to sleep.

DENNIS: I doubt that Stuart is terrified of anything.

CALLIE: He's really just a sweet, vulnerable little leprechaun underneath it all.

DENNIS: Callie, that is such third-rate Freudian bullshit you leave me breathless.

CALLIE: Don't start attacking me. Let him be evicted. What do you care?!

DENNIS: Well, why can't *you* front the rent money?

CALLIE: My son is starting boarding school next semester. The tuition is outrageous. And my ex-husband won't pay.

DENNIS: I'm not made of money. The housing market has been very slow.

CALLIE: Then don't do it.

DENNIS: How much is it?

CALLIE: I'm not sure. I gave give you the landlord's number, which Stuart gave me. The landlord can tell you the exact amount.

DENNIS: I'm going to say no, Callie.

(Callie pauses.)

CALLIE: Meow!

DENNIS: Oh, goddamn it! Give me the number!

(Lights out on Dennis and Callie.)

(Lights up on Stuart.)

(He is still lying in his hospital bed, immobile except for his head.)

STUART: (after a few moments, to the audience) What the fuck are you staring at?

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (to audience) I hear that Stuart is no better. I don't know why, but I feel guilty for not visiting him. I doubt that he would be visiting me if I were in a similar place. And it's not as if we ever actually became friends!

STUART: (offstage voice) *Meow!*

DENNIS: (to audience) My God, I am such a sucker!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart in hospital bed.)

(Lights up on Dennis, entering the hospital room.)

DENNIS: (softly) Stuart? It's Dennis. (No response.) Stuart?

STUART: Did you bring the cats for a visit?

DENNIS: No.

STUART: Are they dead?

DENNIS: No. I've been looking after them.

STUART: Did you pay the rent?

DENNIS: Yes.

STUART: Well, at least the cats won't be homeless, at least for another month.

DENNIS: They're doing fine.

STUART: Do they miss me?

DENNIS: (after a hesitation) Yes.

STUART: You don't have to give me false comfort.

DENNIS: It's not false comfort. I'm sure they will be all over you, once you recover.

STUART: To eat me – butt first. Haven't you seen those wildlife programs?

DENNIS: Now you're just being morbid.

STUART: I'm just being realistic. Most people are such cowards. They can't face the ugly truth of their lives. I can! Especially *their* lives!

DENNIS: You're probably depressed.

STUART: I'm not depressed! Or maybe I'm always depressed. At least give me that I have courage to face the truth. . . . It's all I have.

DENNIS: (awkward, nothing to talk about) So! How are they treating you here?

STUART: Oh, doctors come in and probe and prod here and there. Alas, nothing I can charge them with!

DENNIS: Charge them with?

STUART: Some kind of physical abuse or something. I am bored out of my mind.

DENNIS: Can't you watch TV?

STUART: I can. You want to know what I've learned?

DENNIS: What?

STUART: That you have to be a freak to get on television, first of all. Then you have to scream and deceive and cheat and then hit somebody. I'm talking about those so-called reality shows.

DENNIS: Have you ever thought about applying?

STUART: What's that supposed to mean?

DENNIS: You're colorful.

STUART: Actually, I did apply once. I got as far as the interview stage. They said I was too sedate.

DENNIS: Really?

STUART: I was behaving that day. See what behaving got me? Rejection!

DENNIS: I guess the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

STUART: Finally we agree on something.

(Awkward pause.)

DENNIS: Do you want to watch a movie maybe? There must be a DVD player around.
(Looks around.) I enjoyed that when we went to see “Frankenstein.”

STUART: I thought you couldn’t stand being there.

DENNIS: Well, I’m glad I went.

STUART: What do you think of Callie?

DENNIS: Of Callie?

STUART: Is there an echo in here? What do you think of her, honestly?

DENNIS: She tries very hard to . . .

STUART: Interfere in other people’s lives?

DENNIS: I was going to say to “make people happy.”

STUART: I think she does it because of her own life and her own problems.

DENNIS: I know very little about her life, to be honest. She rarely talks about herself.

STUART: Personally, I think she runs a brothel for guys who want to have kinky sex with autistic lepers.

DENNIS: I’ll ask her.

STUART: She’ll never admit it. She hides under the disguise of Ms. Niceness! But I can read people. How do you know her? Did you go for kinky autistic leper sex?

DENNIS: Just initially. Then Callie and I got to be friends.

STUART: I knew it!

DENNIS: I wish it were that interesting. I believe I showed her some properties a few years ago.
We seemed to hit it off.

STUART: I can’t remember how I met her. She may have been standing at the stage door for nights on end. I finally took pity on her and invited her in.

DENNIS: You were on the stage?

STUART: It’s from “All About Eve.” The evil Eve Harrington.

DENNIS: I’ve never seen it.

STUART: You're kidding!

DENNIS: No, seriously.

STUART: You can't be gay and not have seen "All About Eve."

DENNIS: You want to watch that together? Maybe they have a copy in the video library here.

STUART: You don't want to talk to me?

DENNIS: I just want what you want, Stuart.

STUART: You seem uneasy.

DENNIS: Well, we actually don't seem to have very much in common.

STUART: You could sing to me.

DENNIS: I don't sing.

STUART: A lullaby. (singing) "Rockabye, Stuart, in the treetops. When the bough breaks . . . you'll be paralyzed!" Now isn't that lovely!?

DENNIS: Oh, you'll recover. You watch.

STUART: I don't think so.

DENNIS: You're too mean not to!

STUART: If only demanding it were enough. The word on the street is that I've had some permanent damage.

DENNIS: You heard this from the doctor?

STUART: Not directly. But I overhear things.

DENNIS: Do you want me to find out for sure?

STUART: Not quite yet. Even I need some self-delusion. There is something you can do for me, though.

DENNIS: Sure. What's that?

STUART: Could you massage my butt hole?

DENNIS: What?

STUART: I think a little bit of feeling has come back there.

DENNIS: And it itches?

STUART: Not exactly itches.

DENNIS: Maybe a nurse or a doctor can get you a cream.

STUART: No, I think it needs a finger. Around the edge.

DENNIS: (shocked) You want me to finger your butt hole? (Catches himself being too loud.)
You want me to . . . ? (Gestures.)

STUART: Just around the edge. You don't have to penetrate.

DENNIS: Stuart!

STUART: You have a problem with that?

DENNIS: Yes, I have a problem with that!

STUART: Oh, don't be such an old prude!

DENNIS: *Why* would I do that?

STUART: Oh, for God's sake, it doesn't have to be romantic!

DENNIS: Believe me, it would not be romantic.

STUART: I think it's one of the Ten Commandments. If thy brother itches, thou shalt scratch!
And if it isn't, it should be! Thy brother's scratcher.

DENNIS: I feel very uncomfortable discussing this, Stuart.

STUART: But why?! It's just a matter of bodily biology. Why are people so hung-up on the
body and its basic needs!

DENNIS: Perhaps it's because we're more than mere bodies.

STUART: Oh, please! Next you'll be telling me people have souls!

DENNIS: You don't think people have souls?

STUART: Show me your soul.

DENNIS: It's private.

STUART: Show me your soul and finger my hole. Show me your soul and I'll scratch it!

DENNIS: Thanks. But I thought you couldn't move.

STUART: I can't. Show me your soul and I'll tongue it.

DENNIS: Now you're just being gross.

STUART: I'm just being human. It's the basis of most human interactions. Marriage. Business. Friendship. You give me this, I give you that.

DENNIS: It's a trifle more subtle than that.

STUART: The words used to describe it may be. It's funny how putting things in just the right way with just the right euphemisms [*sic*] can make all the difference. "You can fuck me if you give me stuff" is still the basis of marriage. And "poo poo" is still shit.

DENNIS: So endearing!

STUART: That doesn't make it untrue.

DENNIS: I'm sure your current situation has soured you.

STUART: No, I'm the same as I always was. The only difference is I can't flail my arms about to make a point.

DENNIS: Maybe if I slap you, you'll get better.

STUART: Now you're talkin'!

DENNIS: It's "euphemism."

STUART: What is?

DENNIS: You said "euphenism." It's actually pronounced "euphemism."

STUART: Wow, I've been slapped! You know how to go for the gut.

DENNIS: I suppose it's petty, but I can't help it.

STUART: Don't apologize. It seems that I can learn something new even in my current state. "Stuart, you are not paralyzed." (saying the word carefully) Euphemism! "You are the world's most intelligent vegetable!"

DENNIS: Well, I'd best be going. I've got . . .

STUART: Who cares!

(Lights out on Stuart and Dennis.)

(Lights up on Stuart, hanging off the bed.)

(Lights up on Jo-Jo.)

JO-JO: (played by Dennis) Stuart?

STUART: Jo-Jo?

JO-JO: I came to visit you.

STUART: Great. It took you long enough.

JO-JO: Are you all right? You're half off the bed.

STUART: I was trying to fix an itch or two. I failed.

JO-JO: I've missed you.

STUART: I'll bet. How's the airline business?

JO-JO: Not bad. I'm flying to Rio in a couple of weeks.

STUART: And you're taking me with you!

JO-JO: . . . Will you be able to go?

STUART: You can stuff me in your luggage.

JO-JO: Somebody might notice.

STUART: I'll be quiet. I promise.

JO-JO: It's cold in there with the luggage. You might freeze to death.

STUART: And this is better? (Moves his head around.)

JO-JO: You'll get better.

STUART: Did the doctor tell you that?

JO-JO: No.

STUART: I thought not.

JO-JO: What do you want me to say, Stuart?

STUART: Goodbye.

JO-JO: I'm sorry I didn't come earlier. I didn't want to . . .

STUART: . . . See me like this? You were right. Now leave and never come back.

JO-JO: I can't do that. After all we've been to each other.

STUART: I'd play the violin, if I could move my arms!

JO-JO: I'll try to come here more often.

STUART: I don't want you to come out of pity. Pity was never part of us!

JO-JO: It's not pity. It's love.

STUART: I want you to leave, Jo-Jo, and don't ever come back.

JO-JO: But –

STUART: I mean it!

JO-JO: I'm not going to let you lie here with nobody to . . .

STUART: Get out! Not only do I not love you, I never did, and now I downright hate you!

JO-JO: Stuart!

STUART: I hate you! Get out! Get out! (Jo-Jo hesitates.) *Get out!*

(Finally Jo-Jo leaves.)

STUART: (aloud, to himself) Now *that's* love!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: (to audience) I hear that Stuart tried to commit suicide. He managed to throw himself out of his bed.

STUART: (offstage) And it wasn't easy!

CALLIE: (to audience) As you can see, he survived.

STUART: (offstage) Sissy power! Power to the sissy!

CALLIE: (to audience) Indulge him. (in a whisper) I do!

STUART: (offstage) I heard that!

(Lights out.)

(Lights up on Doctor, played by Dennis.)

DOCTOR: What's this I hear about you throwing yourself out of bed?

(Lights up on Stuart in bed.)

STUART: So what if I did!

DOCTOR: I guess we're going to have to do something about that.

STUART: Like what?!

DOCTOR: We can't have you harming yourself.

STUART: Like I'm not harmed enough already?!

DOCTOR: The hospital is liable if anything happens to you.

STUART: (sarcastic) And I thought it was for me!

DOCTOR: It's for you as well. (Takes a step toward Stuart.)

STUART: Stop! (Doctor stops.) First do no harm!

DOCTOR: There will be no harm. (Pulls out a restraining strap.)

STUART: What's that?

DOCTOR: A little something for your protection.

STUART: Don't even think about it.

DOCTOR: I've already thought about it.

STUART I'll scream.

DOCTOR: I'll give you a sedative.

STUART: I'll bite you!

DOCTOR: I'll bite you back! But I hope it doesn't come to that. (Moves closer.)

STUART: I think you're a sadist!

DOCTOR: Only if this gives me pleasure – and it doesn't.

STUART: You're not really going to restrain a man who's had a stroke?

DOCTOR: You keep managing to move around. What if you fall out of your bed and fall on your head?

STUART: Maybe I'll yell hallelujah!

DOCTOR: It might not kill you. Just keep you from moving your head. You'd be even be totally immobilized.

STUART: So you want me to thank you for tying me down?

DOCTOR: No thanks are necessary. (He pounces on Stuart with the restraining strap and succeeds in getting it around him.)

STUART: Stop!

DOCTOR: Do you want a gag as well? I can get one!

STUART: Help! Help!

DOCTOR: We'll just see about that. (Finds a handkerchief and stuffs it in Stuart's mouth. Stuart spits it out.) Oh, no you don't, my fine friend! (Stuffs the handkerchief back into Stuart's mouth and gets some tape from a pocket and tapes his mouth shut.)

STUART: (muffled) You can't do this to me!

DOCTOR: No? You watch me, you little prick! (Finishes securing the mouth gag and the restraining strap around Stuart's body.) *Voila!*

STUART: (muffled) *Voila?!*

DOCTOR: Eventually you'll thank me.

STUART: (muffled) Like hell I will!

DOCTOR: Calm down and I'll remove the gag.

STUART: (refusing to agree, biting at the gag.) Grr!

DOCTOR: All right. Your choice. You've chosen the hard way. I must go now. I will send in a nurse to see how you are. When one is free! (Exits.)

(Stuart lies in his hospital bed restrained, gagged.)

STUART: (to audience, muffled) Oh, my God! Now I pooped myself!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Nurse, played by Callie.)

NURSE: (peeking in on Stuart) You okay, Mister?

(Lights up on Stuart in bed.)

STUART: (muffled) I'm peachy!

NURSE: You want me to take gag?

STUART: (muffled) I want you to gag, yeah.

NURSE: (coming in further) Okay, I help you.

STUART: Thank God you don't understand English!

NURSE: (removing the gag) Don't tell doctor!

STUART: I'll say I did it myself.

NURSE: Good.

STUART: While you're here, could you change my diaper?

NURSE: Diaper?

STUART: Whatever it is you put on me. It's a diaper, whatever you call it.

NURSE: That for nurse's aide.

STUART: Is there one available?

NURSE: Don't think so.

STUART: Tell me I'm going to wake up and this has all been a nightmare.

NURSE: What?

STUART: Tell me I'm – Never mind.

NURSE: You no scream. You no jiggle. (Demonstrates jiggling.) (Shakes finger.) No! No!

STUART: I get it!

NURSE: You go sleep now.

STUART: (immediately makes snoring sound) I'm asleep. (Snores some more.)

NURSE: I send nurse's aide. When one is free! (Laughs, leaves.)

(Lights out on Stuart.)

STUART: (in the dark, a SCREAM.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (to audience) I hear Stuart is not doing too well.

(Lights up on Stuart. The gag and restraining strap are gone.)

DENNIS: (to Stuart) How you doing?

STUART: You missed it.

DENNIS: Missed it?

STUART: They changed my diaper. It was quite a show.

DENNIS: I'm sure.

STUART: I had to swear on my mother's virginity that I would behave if they cleaned me up, removed the gag and restraint, got me a new catheter – and fluffed . . . my pillows.

DENNIS: Your cats are fine.

STUART: I'm sure they are. Cats are pretty self-reliant.

DENNIS: They miss you.

STUART: You liar.

DENNIS: It's true. They sent you a get-well card.

STUART: Ha! That's a good one. All three of them are illiterate. And they graduated from college too!

DENNIS: If you don't believe me, here's the card. (Produces a greeting card from a pocket.) I had to correct a few spelling and grammatical errors, but it's from them.

STUART: Now you're just trying to make me cry.

DENNIS: Do you want to see what they wrote?

STUART: Sure. . . . It had better be good!

(Dennis comes closer to the bed with the get-well card.)

DENNIS: (reading the card aloud) "To Stuart, we are sorry you are gone bye-bye. We think of you every time we are hungry."

STUART: (touched) Ahh.

DENNIS: (continuing with the card) "We look out the window and watch the birdies from time to time. We like them, very much. We'd like to romp and play with them outside."

STUART: (touched) Ohhh.

DENNIS: (continuing the card) "We hope you will get all better soon and come home so that we can curl up on your legs. We like that you are a very warm person."

STUART: My babies!

DENNIS: There's a P.S. (Reads.) "P.S. Uncle Dennis has been a brick through all this."

STUART: A brick?!

DENNIS: (continuing) "We love him almost as much as we love you."

STUART: How adorable!

DENNIS: There's more. (Reads.) "When you come home, would you please move the chest of drawers in the corner. We are sure there is a chipmunk behind it that we would like to invite to the prom. Love, Twinklebottom, Snuggle Ears, and Bruce Wayne."

STUART: (correcting) Tinklebottom.

DENNIS: I guess that's one I missed.

STUART: Tell them I loved the card.

DENNIS: I will. You know, I had some thoughts about the cats.

STUART: Such as?

DENNIS: They need a bigger space to live in. That apartment is so small you can barely turn around in it.

STUART: Nope!

DENNIS: A place with a cat door so they could go in and out.

STUART: You volunteering your place?

DENNIS: Not really.

STUART: Jo-Jo was going to take one or two, but he never did. And now he never will.

DENNIS: Are you two talking?

STUART: Not anymore.

DENNIS: You should call him. I can help with the phone. We can use mine. (Shows it.)

STUART: You're just full of recommendations, aren't you?

DENNIS: I don't think cats enjoy being locked up.

STUART: If I can do it, they can do it! Besides, they like being able to hide.

DENNIS: They also like being able to go outdoors.

STUART: What do you know about cats? Have you studied them?

DENNIS: Not a lot, no.

STUART: It seems to me that you're just an ignorant bigot about cats.

DENNIS: (flabbergasted) "Ignorant bigot"?!

STUART: You are.

DENNIS: Stuart, we are simply having a discussion about how treat to cats. You don't call

someone an “ignorant bigot” if you . . . if you . . .

STUART: If you what?

DENNIS: If you ever expect to interact with that person again.

STUART: You don’t like me saying you’re an ignorant bigot?

DENNIS: Of course not!

STUART: Well, you correct my pronunciation. [*sic*]

DENNIS: Not all the time. . . . It’s pronunciation.

STUART: There you go!

DENNIS: Correcting your English is not the same thing as calling someone an ignorant bigot.
Those are fighting words.

STUART: Well, you’re telling me how my cats should live. It’s none of your business.

DENNIS: They’ve become my business since I’ve had to take care of them.

STUART: You don’t have to take care of them. Let ‘em starve.

DENNIS: You know I can’t do that. And you don’t mean that either!

STUART: I’m past caring.

DENNIS: No, you’re not.

STUART: Yes, I am.

DENNIS: You just love to argue. You’ll argue about anything.

STUART: I’ve heard just about all I want to about how much I love to argue.

DENNIS: I have never in my life met anyone who loves to disagree as much as you do.

STUART: Maybe you need to meet more people then!

DENNIS: And now here we are arguing about whether you like to argue or not!

STUART: You’re pretty smug about yourself, while some of us have to lay here unable to defend ourselves.

DENNIS: Oh, for Christ’s sake, now you’re going to play the victim?! (correcting) *Lie* here!

STUART: Yes, the Vegetable Card. You wouldn't treat me this way if I weren't a vegetable.

DENNIS: You're better than this, Stuart.

STUART: No, I'm not. I'll do anything to win.

DENNIS: (incredulous) The Vegetable Card?

STUART: Hey, what else have I got?

DENNIS: You are not going to remain in your present state. I can feel that in my bones.

STUART: How come I don't feel that in my bones? Touché!

DENNIS: Can we have just a normal conversation once, just back and forth, roundabout. It doesn't have to be all about confrontation.

STUART: Then say something I agree with.

(Dennis shakes his head in frustration.)

STUART: Come on, say something I can agree with.

DENNIS: The sky is blue.

STUART: What if you're colorblind? I am, by the way.

DENNIS: No, you are not! You're just making that up!

STUART: Now who's being argumentative?

DENNIS: You are maddening.

STUART: I am a poor vegetable with two strokes, I'm gay, and I'm colorblind, and you have the nerve to call me maddening?! . . . You are not my friend anymore, Dennis.

DENNIS: I've never been your friend! . . . Oops.

STUART: Well, we tried to be friends, thanks to Callie. It just didn't work out.

DENNIS: I guess not.

STUART: I suppose the magic just wasn't there.

DENNIS: Perhaps so.

STUART: I was just too alpha for you, in my way.

DENNIS: Oh, fuck you, Stuart! Just fuck you!

(Lights out on Dennis and Stuart.)

(Lights up again on Dennis.)

DENNIS: Did you get that? Fuck you!

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: I'm sorry I ever got into this! Oy! My mother was a matchmaker in the Old Country. I thought it was in my blood. Wrong! . . . But maybe I can still fix it!

(Lights out on Callie.)

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (cautiously) Yes?

CALLIE: It's Callie.

DENNIS: I can see you caller ID.

CALLIE: And you still picked up? That must be a good sign.

DENNIS: What can I do for you, Callie?

CALLIE: Wow, that sounds rather cold.

DENNIS: Just don't tell me I have to make up with Stuart.

CALLIE: He told me what happened. That's not like you, Dennis.

DENNIS: You can only be a doormat for so long. Stuart is one of those people who drain you dry and then fling away the husk. I've had it with that guy!

CALLIE: I think he's feeling a little regretful about everything.

DENNIS: No, he's not! You're just making that up.

CALLIE: Now you're turning on me? I'm just trying to do a good deed.

DENNIS: Well, your good deed is simply not working! Let it go!

CALLIE: I'm not getting anything out of this – except grief. I don't know why I bother.

DENNIS: I don't know why you bother, either. Stop bothering! Stuart and I have absolutely nothing in common except that we're gay! Stop forcing us together!

CALLIE: You'd think from your tone that I was trying to do you injury.

DENNIS: I'm sure you think you're a saint and a half. But you've just given me stress and annoyance.

CALLIE: Well, pardon me!

DENNIS: Why are you calling?

CALLIE: Just to say hello.

DENNIS: Hello!

CALLIE: Dennis, you are really blowing this out of proportion.

DENNIS: No, I'm not. I'd rather be lonely than have friends like Stuart!

CALLIE: Do you want me to apologize for introducing you two?

DENNIS: No! Just realize when something isn't working. Life isn't a Frank Capra movie!

CALLIE: Maybe you give up too easily.

DENNIS: Callie, I don't want to hear any more about it.

CALLIE: Well, maybe I do! You're not going to just throw my efforts in my face!

DENNIS: Callie, we are getting dangerously close to ending our friendship.

CALLIE: Oh, come on! Who else have you got but me?!

(Dennis looks at his phone.)

DENNIS: Goodbye and good riddance! (He slams the phone down.)

CALLIE: Dennis? Dennis? You aren't serious?! (Looks at her dead phone, then hangs up.)

(Lights out on Callie.)

DENNIS: (looking at his phone) Oh, God!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Lights up on Callie.)

CALLIE: (entering the hospital room) Stuart?

(Lights up on Stuart.)

STUART: (groggy) Callie?

CALLIE: Yes. How are you?

STUART: A little foggy.

CALLIE: Are you sleeping properly?

STUART: I sleep too much. It passes the time.

CALLIE: What's your doctor say?

STUART: My medical insurance is running out.

CALLIE: No!

STUART: Oh, yes. I'll be living on the street in a garbage can before you know it.

CALLIE: That can't be right.

STUART: I'm not worried. I know how to earn a living from my garbage can.

CALLIE: You do?

STUART: I will watch the passersby and make up snarky life stories about them and charge tourists two bucks a pop to hear them.

CALLIE: Is there a market for such things?

STUART: I'll be rich as Rockefeller! Take you, for instance.

CALLIE: Me?

STUART: Here comes a lady who looks like she means business! Does she look like she's together? You bet she does! But underneath that cool demeanor beats the heart of a person who goes to art museums and secretly farts, in an effort to destroy the paintings with methane gas!

CALLIE: Crude! No two dollars for you.

STUART: I will get the money from others. See that man over there! His name is Dennis.
A former friend of yours perhaps? I'm sure you'll be interested to know something
secret about him.

CALLIE: (curious) What?

STUART: Two bucks upfront!

CALLIE: I want a free sample first.

STUART: That Dennis is not what you thought him to be!

CALLIE: In what way?

STUART: He has sex with autistic lepers!

CALLIE: With what?

STUART: And he's straight! He just pretends to be gay.

CALLIE: Really?

STUART: To hide his infatuation to autistic leprous *females*!

CALLIE: I thought there had to be something hidden somewhere.

STUART: See, you'd pay for dirt on Dennis.

CALLIE: I still can't believe he ended our friendship over nothing.

STUART: You didn't really like him.

CALLIE: I did too like him!

STUART: Did you like him better than me?

CALLIE: How am I supposed to answer that?

STUART: You say, "I liked you better than Dennis, Stuart."

CALLIE: (mockingly) "I liked you better than Dennis, Stuart."

STUART: Cross your heart?

CALLIE: I know you've had two strokes, Stuart, but this is ridiculous.

STUART: So you actually liked Dennis better than me?

CALLIE: Let me tell you a little story, my friend.

STUART: Oh, goody!

CALLIE: Imagine me in my garbage can on the street. (Arranges herself.) See me?

STUART: Good enough.

CALLIE: See that man with the matching pair of strokes over there. (Points at Stuart.)

STUART: A handsome devil, isn't he?

CALLIE: So-so.

STUART: Hey!

CALLIE: He somehow manages to alienate every single person in his life, almost without trying.

STUART: Believe you me, it takes effort! A very special skill that man has!

CALLIE: If he's not careful, he's going to wind up utterly alone, except for the occasional doctor or nurse.

STUART: Piffle!

CALLIE; Stuart, I'm serious. Even I can only take so much of you.

STUART: I thought you found me entertaining.

CALLIE: You are like too much cotton candy. The first few bites are terrific. Then the teeth begin to ache.

STUART: Eat me!

CALLIE: You've lost Jo-Jo. You've lost Dennis. Who haven't you lost?

STUART: Eat me! Ass first!

CALLIE: What is wrong with you?! I am trying to tell you you are in grave danger of being completely alone in this world.

STUART: Do I look worried? They'll be lining up in no time.

CALLIE: I don't know how much your doctor has conveyed to you about your situation. But he has told me the stark truth.

STUART: Which is what?

CALLIE: Do you really want to know?

STUART: Yes, I really want to know.

CALLIE: The prognosis for your future is not good. You are not likely to recover from the strokes. Some feeling may return in some areas, but the chances of you being bed-ridden for the rest of your life are great.

STUART: Really?

CALLIE: Really.

STUART: Well, then will you at least bring me some speed from time to time?

CALLIE: (exasperated) Stuart! . . . Is someone supplying you speed now?

STUART: Yeah.

CALLIE: Who?

STUART: Muriel, the old lady in the next room. She's a dealer. She charges an arm and a leg. But she does deliver in her wheelchair.

CALLIE: Why do I almost believe you?

STUART: Because it's almost true. Except that she doesn't deliver. You have to crawl to her on your . . . whatever you have: hands and knees . . . stumps. Well, I refuse!

CALLIE: So you haven't had any speed while you've been here.

STUART: It's been the coldest turkey since the Pilgrims' microwave went out at that first Thanksgiving.

CALLIE: Probably a good thing for you.

STUART: Easy for you to say.

CALLIE: Paralyzed on both sides *and* addicted to methamphetamines!

STUART: Everything is beautiful, in its own way.

CALLIE: I don't know what to say.

STUART: Oh, chat away mindlessly, as you usually do.

CALLIE: Mindlessly? Is that what you think I do?

STUART: Pretty much.

CALLIE: Stuart, you are not helping yourself in the slightest.

STUART: I'm free at last! Free at last! I no longer have to be nice to people.

CALLIE: You were holding back? You cannot possibly believe you were holding back.

STUART: People say such drivel most of the time. It's hard not to spit in their faces.

CALLIE: And yet you want sympathy now.

STUART: Of course I want sympathy. I just don't want to give it!

CALLIE: I don't know how break this to you, but it doesn't work like that.

STUART: I'll be the judge of that.

CALLIE: You don't really want to be trapped as you are with no one coming to visit you.

STUART: No? I relish it!

CALLIE: I think you will sing a different tune if it happens.

STUART: Are you finished with your lecture? I am dozing off.

CALLIE: (shaking her head) Stuart . . . Stuart.

STUART: Oh, just go! Don't come back.

CALLIE: Stuart.

STUART: I never liked you anyway. You just liked me because I was a freak show!

CALLIE: I thought it was more than that. I guess I was mistaken.

STUART: You were. Now go away. Don't call. If a relative gets married or dies, don't bother to inform me.

CALLIE: But –

STUART: How many ways or times do I have to say it? Get lost! Go with God! Go without God! Fuck off and Up Yours! And Bye-Bye!

CALLIE: You will regret this, Stuart.

STUART: I doubt it! Are you gone yet?

CALLIE: Goodbye, Stuart. (Moves toward the exit, hesitates)

STUART: What are you waiting for?

(Callie leaves.)

STUART: Alone at last!

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Stuart in a different part of the bed.)

STUART: (quoting movie line) “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn!”

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Stuart in another part of the bed.)

STUART: (quoting movie) “You can’t handle the truth!”

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Stuart in yet another part of the bed.)

STUART: (quoting movie) “If we bring a little joy into your humdrum lives, we feel as though our hard work ain’t been in vain for nothin’.”

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Stuart in still another part of the bed.)

STUART: (quoting movie) “Oh, Jerry, let’s not ask for the moon. We have the stars!”

(Lights out on Stuart.)

(Lights up on Stuart on the floor.)

STUART: (quoting movie) “Have I fallen so far, and is the hour so late, that nothing remains but

the cry of my hate?”

(Lights out on Stuart.)

STUART: (in the dark) I could go on!

(Lights up on Dennis.)

DENNIS: (to audience) Stuart’s doctor asked me to visit him. Nobody else has come.

(He enters the hospital room.)

STUART: Who’s there?

DENNIS: Dennis.

STUART: Dennis who?

DENNIS: The Dennis who takes care of your cats.

STUART: Oh, my babies! How are they?

DENNIS: I have adopted them.

STUART: All three?

DENNIS: All three. It wasn’t easy rounding them up from your apartment, but it got done. They are staying at my place now.

STUART: You’re not letting them outside, are you?

DENNIS: From time to time. They love it.

STUART: They could get run over and killed.

DENNIS: I have them on leashes.

STUART: You must be quite the sight.

DENNIS: I am the talk of the neighborhood.

STUART: Don’t let anything happen to them.

DENNIS: From your mouth to God’s ear.

STUART: I don’t believe in God.

DENNIS: It's just a saying.

STUART: I was worried about them.

DENNIS: They seem to fit right in. I am not supposed to have pets.

STUART: If you keep them inside, no one will see.

DENNIS: (ironic) I am pleased that you seem so grateful.

STUART: Didn't I say I was grateful?

DENNIS: No.

STUART: I didn't thank you?

DENNIS: No. Maybe I missed it?

STUART: Well, of course I'm grateful.

DENNIS: Good. I'm grateful you're grateful.

STUART: It's not easy for me to say thank you.

DENNIS: You don't say?!

STUART: I have learned over the years that people interpret it as weakness.

DENNIS: I've learned the opposite.

STUART: I will not be the grinning, shit-eating sissy who is held in utter contempt!

DENNIS: Maybe there is some middle way?

STUART: For you maybe. I have made my bed and now I must lay in it.

DENNIS: Do you think you might get some kind of home care?

STUART: Can't afford it.

DENNIS: Can you stay here indefinitely?

STUART: I think they throw me out with the soiled linens next week.

DENNIS: And the prognosis is?

STUART: More of the same. Plus bed sores!

DENNIS: It's not funny.

STUART: You're telling *me* it's not funny?!

DENNIS: I'm sure there will be some new breakthrough, for post-stroke victims.

STUART: I'll be waiting, right here!

DENNIS: You can't give up hope. By the way, it's "lie on it."

STUART: Sure you can. And I said "lay" just to piss you off.

DENNIS: In a way I admire your attitude, Stuart. You don't clasp at straws or helping hands.

STUART: Yay me!

DENNIS: No, seriously. You are one incredibly tough cookie.

STUART: You want to go steady?

DENNIS: (laughing) Actually, I just met someone online. We've been out on a couple of dates.

STUART: Really? How'd that go?

DENNIS: The sex was fantastic. The conversation a little less so.

STUART: Remind me again. What's sex?

DENNIS: It's . . . Shall we change the subject?

STUART: I rub against the sheets sometimes.

DENNIS: Really? How'd that go?

STUART: The nurses scold me. I haven't quite managed an orgasm yet. But I have hope!

DENNIS: See!

STUART: Well, I hope your new Internet boyfriend works out for you.

DENNIS: Why, thank you.

STUART: Make sure that he isn't a serial murderer.

DENNIS: I'll do that.

STUART: Then send him my way! At this stage of my life, I can't be too picky.

DENNIS: That's awful.

STUART: Not to murder me! Just the sex part.

DENNIS: Maybe there's a service that comes out and . . .

STUART: You mean prostitutes for the bed-ridden?

DENNIS: Maybe. You think the hospital might allow it?

STUART: Who cares if they allow it or not! I refuse to pay for sex!

DENNIS: Something tells me we all "pay" for sex in one way or another.

STUART: That may be so, but I'd rather do without than pay money for it! It turns me off completely.

DENNIS: "*De gustibus non est disputandum.*"

STUART: I take it that's Latin for "shove a bus up my ass."

DENNIS: I think it's more along the lines of "there is no arguing about taste."

STUART: Quite the scholar, aren't you?

DENNIS: I wouldn't go that far.

STUART: You probably think I like it up the ass, don't you? Because I'm so "fem," right? I know I've said that, but I was just being provocative. Trust me, nobody's been up that garden path for years. Not since I learned to say no. I'd like to have back those times when guys thought they could ride me hard. I hated it! Absolutely hated it! "And, as God is my witness, I'll never get sodomized again," as Scarlett O'Hara once said at Tara.

DENNIS: I suppose you're a scholar of movies.

STUART: I'm almost finished with my *Shakespeare for Dummies*.

DENNIS: That's great. Do you have enough books? Can I get you something you especially want?

STUART: I have my TV, my special e-reader, the ceiling. I'm good!

DENNIS: Maybe you could share a room, have somebody to talk with.

STUART: We already tried that. They all asked to be transferred.

DENNIS: How many?

STUART: Four. And, yes, it was *them*, not me! Such a bunch of whiny losers!

DENNIS: What are we going to do with you, Stuart?

STUART: I imagine leave me here to rot until the residue sprinkles down to Hell.

DENNIS: I wonder if I could bring your cats to see you.

STUART: I believe no animals are allowed.

DENNIS: Guard dogs are allowed.

STUART: That's it then. *Blind* me and bring in my babies as seeing-eye cats! I won't be able to see them, but they can lick my festering eyelids!

DENNIS: Has anyone been to visit you?

STUART: Just you. Oh, a priest came by one time and asked if I wanted to pray with him. I said, "Get the fuck out of here!"

DENNIS: You didn't!

STUART: He seemed surprised.

DENNIS: It couldn't hurt, I suppose.

STUART: Actually, Mr. Know It All, I read an article once that said that people who know others are praying for them to recover do worse than others! So there! And so I was in fact protecting myself, thus proving that I have hope! Da Dum!

DENNIS: Guess what! I brought you a gift.

STUART: Really? What? A ski trip to Idaho? Trampoline lessons?

DENNIS: Almost as good. (Takes photo from a pocket) A photograph of your three babies! Da Dum! (Shows Stuart the picture.)

STUART: Oh, my God! It's really them! Could you hold it a little closer?

DENNIS: Sure. (He does so.)

STUART: Let me kiss it! Let me kiss it!

(Dennis holds the photograph so that Stuart can kiss it.)

STUART: (breaking down in tears) Oh, my God! They are so beautiful! I love them so much!
(Cries harder.) Thank you! Thank you! Oh, thank you for bringing this picture!
Tinklebottom, Snuggle Ears, Bruce Wayne! (Cries more.)

DENNIS: Whoa, whoa! I've never seen you lose control before.

STUART: They are the only things I love in this whole fucking world. And I can't even touch
the real thing. Just this crummy photograph.

DENNIS: You're welcome.

STUART: I wish I was dead. I wish they were dead. I wish it were all simply over with.

DENNIS: Not true.

STUART: It is true. . . . Do you think you could smuggle in something I could take to . . .

DENNIS: (looks around nervously) I can't do that. Stuart.

STUART: Please. Have I ever said please to you before?

DENNIS: I can't. I couldn't.

STUART: And flights of angels will sing me to my rest! See, I'm learning Shakespeare!

DENNIS: I've got to go. I have a house to show.

STUART: Will you come back sometime? Bring another picture of my babies?

DENNIS: If you'd like me to.

STUART: If you want to. I'd like that.

DENNIS: Well, it was . . .

STUART: Yeah, wasn't it!?

DENNIS: Ah . . . goodbye, Stuart. (He turns to leave.)

STUART: Could I ask you one more favor, Dennis?

DENNIS: (turning back) Sure. What?

STUART: Let me whisper it in your ear.

DENNIS: In my . . . ?

STUART: Pretty please, with sugar on top.

(Dennis comes closer to the bed.)

DENNIS: Yes?

STUART: Lean in a little more. (Dennis is hesitant.) Come on, just a little.

(Dennis leans in and Stuart whispers something in his ear.)

STUART: (then aloud) Please! I am so goddamned horny! It won't take long. I promise it won't take long!

DENNIS: (hesitating) Stuart . . . I don't really want to.

STUART: It's an act of true charity! You don't like me. I don't like you. How could it be any more pure charity than that?

DENNIS: (looking around nervously) What if somebody sees?

STUART: We won't let them join us! How's that?

DENNIS: I don't know . . .

STUART: Just a helping hand under the covers. In, up, down, up, down, a few times. Then bingo! Then hand out. There's even Kleenex over there!

DENNIS: Stuart, I can't do this.

STUART: You said I needed to have hope in order to live. A picture of my babies and a little shake, rattle, and roll under the covers are all I've got in this world. I say again to you: please, please, *please!*

(Dennis hesitates.)

DENNIS: All right – for the kitties.

(Dennis sticks his hand under the blanket on Stuart's bed.)

(Lights out on Dennis and Stuart.)

(Lights up on Callie as policewoman.)

CALLIE: (seated, to offstage cop) Send in the prisoner, if you would.

(Dennis enters, shackled.)

CALLIE: Take a seat.

DENNIS: (seeing a chair, takes a seat) Here?

CALLIE: That's fine. Do you know why you're here?

DENNIS: Sort of. Not really.

CALLIE: You are here because of the sexual assault upon a man at St. Luke's Hospital.

DENNIS: No, I think you misunderstand.

CALLIE: Do I? You think I misunderstand what a rotten, exploitive [*sic*] selfish sex predator you are?!

DENNIS: Yes, it wasn't that way at all. . . . And the word is "exploitative."

CALLIE: You don't say! I'm sure you would know.

DENNIS: My friend Stuart asked for some sexual relief.

CALLIE: Did he indeed?

DENNIS: Did you ask him what happened?

CALLIE: Are not aware, sir, that a person unable to move under his own volition cannot grant reasonably informed consent to any such sex act?

DENNIS: Sure, he can. It was Stuart's idea, not mine.

CALLIE: You are quite incredible, I must say. And apparently without the slightest twinge of remorse!

DENNIS: He enjoyed it! It was the only time I ever saw him truly grateful for anything!

CALLIE: You are disgusting! Not only do you blame the victim for the assault, you claim he enjoyed it!

DENNIS: He did enjoy it! He begged me to come back again!

CALLIE: No doubt he would say anything to get you to leave.

DENNIS: Did you threaten him with some kind of sex crime too? Did you threaten to kick him out of the hospital for it? That's it! That's what's going on here!

CALLIE: Protest all you like. Too bad you didn't notice the security camera that caught you in your nefarious act! You might have thought twice before you sexually assaulted a poor, indigent, handicapped, helpless stroke victim! Who's also trans!

(Lights out on Callie.)

DENNIS: Oy!

(Lights out on Dennis.)

(Pause.)

(Lights up on Stuart, walking but with great difficulty with crutches.)

(Lights up on Dennis, in prison apparel, behind a roll-on of some prison bars.)

DENNIS: Stuart, you can walk now?

STUART: As you see. Not easily. But I am getting there. Thanks largely to you.

DENNIS: Me?

STUART: Once I had that orgasm you gave me, I realized that I had to make myself recover. It turned my life around.

DENNIS: Mine too.

STUART: I'm sorry that I didn't defend you better. They said it would have been too much for me to attend your trial. And I was afraid they would punish me for a sex crime too.

DENNIS: I wish I could say I understand.

STUART: How much did you get?

DENNIS: Five years.

STUART: Really? That's awful.

DENNIS: Lots of sex in here. It just doesn't happen to be with people you'd want to have sex with.

STUART: Thank for you taking care of my cats.

DENNIS: You're welcome. Do you know what happened to them?

STUART: Callie took care of them after you were convicted. Then they just didn't come back to your condo anymore.

DENNIS: So you maybe you were right? I shouldn't have let them out.

STUART: Maybe they found new homes.

DENNIS: I hope so.

STUART: You changed my life, Dennis. I will never forget that. Ever. What do you say to me coming by every week or so to visit you? Would you like that? I figure, under the circumstances, it's the least I could do.

DENNIS: You know what, Stuart. That's a deal. Just one thing!

STUART: What's that?

DENNIS: No hand jobs required.

STUART: You've got yourself a deal, Dennis. It's funny. I guess, because of all this, we *are* friends now, after all. . . . Right?

DENNIS: (to audience, pitifully) Meow!

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY