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PARALLEL LINES

A Play in Two Acts

Ann Lambert

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Masters of Arts
at Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada**

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ABSTRACT

PARALLEL LINES

A Play in Two Acts

by

Ann Lambert

Most of the action in Parallel Lines takes place in the "Custom's House", an upscale Wall Street restaurant. It is the late fall of 1989. The play opens as the restaurant is experiencing a severe decline in business and no one is certain why. The slump is making everyone at the restaurant increasingly anxious.

Tony suspects he has jinxed yet another restaurant, and his frustration is expressed in absurd displays of cruelty. Connie desperately pursues her long standing ambition of making it to management level. Jim has just launched a catering business along with a new, if fragile, romance. Renee is convinced she has landed the role that will end her waitressing career forever. Ray dreams of leaving the city and an impending ulcer to retire to a small fishing community while his assistant, Steve, plots to take over the kitchen. Linda is still wondering what she should "do" with her life.

It is against this backdrop that Ramon arrives on the scene. Amongst these myriad personal conflicts, emerges the main conflict, between Ramon and his new country, as expressed through his encounters and confrontations with the other characters. The central relationship is between Ramon and Linda. She is the only one who actually notices Ramon, who sees him as more than another "Mexican" wetback. They become lovers, but she is frightened by the intensity of his attachment to her, and rejects him. The despair this causes in him, coupled by his sense of isolation and Tony's increasing antagonism, drives Ramon to final, violent and tragic confrontation. By the end of the play, Ramon's hopes for a new and safe life in America are shattered.

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**"WHO IS THE WORST ENEMY OF DEMOCRACY?"
AND WE ALL RESPOND, "THE PEOPLE!"**

(Manlio Argueta)

THE CHARACTERS

RAMON: *THE DISHWASHER. 38 years old.*

LINDA: *A WAITRESS. 33 years old.*

JIM: *A WAITER. 38 years old.*

RENEE: *A WAITRESS. 34 years old.*

CONNIE: *HEAD WAITRESS. 39 years old.*

TONY: *THE MANAGER. 35 years old.*

RAY: *THE CHEF. 51 years old.*

THE COOK: *THE COOK. 22 years old. (Steve)*

ANGEL: *THE SECOND DISHWASHER. 45 years old.*

HOMELESS MAN: *Actor playing Angel doubles for this role*

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THE SET

The kitchen dominates Stage Right and Center. To the right are the ovens, in the middle there is a long counter for preparing food. Downstage Center is the coffee machine and the waiters' working area. To the left is the dishwashing machine. Downstage from this are the swinging doors leading to the Dining/Bar area. By these doors there is a wall telephone. Upstage, and slightly elevated is the back door leading to the street. On the Upstage wall is an enormous clock. The kitchen should incorporate certain elements suggesting stainless steel efficiency, but must be non-realistic to the extent that the workings of the kitchen do not overwhelm the dramatic action of the play. As for kitchen props, there must be plenty of dishes, pots and pans, cutlery, garbage and as much food as possible. Ray must have his beef to prepare.

Past the swinging doors and Downstage Left are the restaurant's Dining/Bar areas. There is a table, some chairs, a tasteful wall print and a few plants. Slightly Upstage and to the left, is the bar. A counter, a few stools and bottles are required.

For the bar scene with Linda and Ramon, two stools will suffice. In Linda's apartment, there is a bed and a few beer bottles.

STAGING NOTES

I have deliberately omitted stage directions which block the kitchen action for certain characters, because I felt these would be intrusive. It is assumed that they are always "busy". In general, Linda does most of the prep work, or "mise en place". Jim tidies and attends to details, Renee does as little as possible. Ramon is constantly washing and stacking dishes, wiping up, fetching boxes, doing the grunt work.

ACT ONE. SCENE ONE:

AS A SINGLE SPOTLIGHT OPENS AT CENTERSTAGE, WE HEAR SINATRA'S "NEW YORK NEW YORK". RAMON, WEARING A CRUMPLED, GREY-STRIPED DISHWASHER'S UNIFORM, WALKS INTO THE SPOT. THE MUSIC BUILDS TO A CRESCENDO, AND ABRUPTLY STOPS.

RAMON: That song was written by a Canadian, someone once told me. Then an American sang it and made it famous. It is often the song people think of when they see this city for the first time. (BEAT) My name is Ramon Ezperanza. I left my country in 1988, despite the fact that the political... situation was supposed to be... improving. Bodies were still being dumped like garbage, people were still afraid to claim their dead, or search for loved ones who had been disappeared. Priests were still being murdered for teaching people not to confuse resignation with... goodness. Improving for whom, I wonder? (BEAT) I was accused of being a Communist. Well, not exactly. I was accused of teaching Communist ideology in my village. Most of the people I taught didn't know the difference between a Communist and a capitalist. They wanted to learn to read. They wanted their children to have enough to eat. (BEAT) I was teaching them to take control... even if just a little bit, of their lives. (BEAT) When I came to America, I left my history at the border. I ceased to be the person I was. I was a dishwasher,

RAMON: and damn lucky to be one, too. I am not an immigrant. I am a refugee. There is a difference.
(BEAT) This is what happened to me, in New York City, in the autumn of 1989.

ACT ONE. SCENE TWO:

IN THE KITCHEN. IT IS 10:30 MONDAY MORNING. THE LIGHTS COME UP TO REVEAL RAY, THE COOK AND JIM. RAY AND THE COOK ARE BUSY PREPARING FOR LUNCH. RAY IS HACKING AWAY AT AN ENORMOUS CHUNK OF BEEF. COOK IS DICING AND SLICING. JIM IS CUTTING STRAWBERRIES. LINDA ENTERS FROM THE BACK DOOR.

LINDA: Fucking Monday. Fucking Monday. FUCKING MONDAY!

JIM: Good morning ! My, you look like an unmade bed!

LINDA: Fuck off, Jim.

JIM: I would love to,... but the options, shall we say,
(GESTURES TOWARDS RAY AND COOK) are limited?

LINDA: Smell of that meat's turning my stomach--

RAY: Did we have a tad too much to drink this weekend?

LINDA: My eyeballs are sore.

JIM: Tsk, Tsk, Tsk...

COOK: I got pissed this weekend too!

JIM: Delightful!

LINDA: Where the hell IS everyone?

COOK: Hey, I heard a good one last night.... What do you call a Nigger in a suit?

LINDA: I am not doing butters again.

JIM: Ray, look at these strawberries. They're positively SODDEN with mold!

COOK: What do you call a Nig- A Puerto Rican in a suit? Come on!

RAY: Cut the mold off. Save what you can.

JIM: Ah... Triage...

COOK: A defendant! (GUFFAWS)

JIM: Well... (GOES TO FRIDGE AND PUTS THEM AWAY) I'm not serving them. There was a time when this establishment wouldn't dream of serving anything second-rate.

LINDA: There was a time at this establishment when we made money.

JIM: Don't start, it's only Monday--

LINDA: Well, I haven't made a decent buck in three weeks here. What the hell is going on?

JIM: (SIGHS) I don't know. I've never seen it this bad.

COOK: Aw, quit your whining. I'd like to see you live on what I make--

JIM: Bring it up at the meeting. I've got several grievances I intend to air.

LINDA: What meeting?

JIM: This morning. Connie may get her promotion, Lord help us all.

LINDA: She's worked for it.

JIM: Dictatorship of the Right or the Left. It's all the same to me.

COOK: Huh?

LINDA: Yeah. I know what you mean. The worst ones work their way up the ladder. Then they treat you like shit. Course, that doesn't explain Tony.

JIM: He was born a manager. Just scuttled out from under his rock.

LINDA: Where the hell is everyone? I am not doing butters!

RAY: You know, I saw a very interesting story on T.V. this weekend. About a cow that escaped from the slaughterhouse. (CONTINUES TO CHOP MEAT) They had him in the pen, you know, before they shock 'em and slit their throats. Well, he just figured it out, or something, and jumped the fence.

JIM: So, guess what happened last night!

RAY: Just hightailed it into the woods. Got clear away.

LINDA: What?

JIM: Well, Bob wasn't feeling well, so I decided there was still time to catch Carmen at the Met.

LINDA: You got gum, Jim? My mouth tastes like I licked a rug.

JIM: So there I am, desperate for a ticket, and not a scalper in sight--

RAY: What I think is, they know what's gonna happen to them. They know what's coming. We think they don't, but they do.

JIM: So, I thought I'd have a drink by the Chagall mural, just so the evening isn't a total loss, and

JIM: this very elegant woman is sipping champagne next
(cont'd) to me. In a stunning off-the-shoulder fuschia
gown, dripping with diamonds.

RAY: He jumped the fence.

JIM: Very uplifting, Ray. Please I'm telling a story
here. Anyway, I tell her I haven't got a ticket
and how standing room can really ruin one's
appreciation of the opera, and she offers me a
ticket!

COOK: Whoopee-shit.

JIM: We are talking four hundred dollar loge seats!
The loge!

Ray: They didn't even notice the cow was gone at first,
til they see him running for the highway. Running
for his life.

JIM: We were so close I could see the sweat on
Placido's brow!

COOK: What happened to the cow, Chef?

RAY: Got hit by a truck.

LINDA: Christ, Ray.

JIM: Thanks for sharing, Raymond. So anyway, Theresa Stratas was singing. Divine voice!

RAY: Totalled the truck.

RENEE BOUNCES IN THROUGH THE BACK DOOR AND GOES STRAIGHT TO THE TELEPHONE. SHE DOESN'T STOP TO GREET ANYONE.

LINDA: Butters, Renee!

RENEE: (ON PHONE) Tell him Renee called and that I've been trying to reach him all morning. It IS urgent... Yes, URGENT. He can leave a message with my service. Yes! I'll call back in half an hour. Of course he has the number!

RENEE HANGS UP. LINDA CARRIES A HUGE BIN OF BUTTER OVER TO HER AND DROPS IT.

LINDA: Butter! Just waiting to be whipped and smeared.

JIM: Aren't we all?

COOK: Speak for yourself.

JIM: (FOLLOWING LINDA AROUND) After the opera, we stroll to the lobby, arm in arm, and people are STARING at us. I just KNEW she was someone.

RENEE: I cannot do butter today.

LINDA: Your turn. Check the roster.

RENEE: I'm up for this movie. I KNOW I am. MY agent won't call back.

JIM: I said, I don't mean to be gauche, but may I give you my card?

LINDA: What card?

JIM: You know Bob and I are starting a catering business. I've told you a hundred times-

RENEE: It's a Sophie's Choice type story. I play a woman who's forced to betray a friend so she can save her children... But they all die anyway.

LINDA: A sequel to Sophie's Choice? Didn't she kill herself?

RENEE: I said it's LIKE that. Same kind of human... dilemma. You know, a moral... situation and all that. I end up falling in love with the Nazi who destroyed my family. It turns out he's not such a bad guy.

COOK: Sounds kinky!

JIM: So she takes my card, turns it over, touches my arm gently and thanks me for a delightful evening.

LINDA: Butters, Renee! I'm not doing them.

RENEE: (RELUCTANTLY AND HALF-HEARTEDLY STARTS THE

RENEE: BUTTERS) If only you knew how... torturous it is
(cont'd) to be here. I mean, you have no idea. Any day
now. I'll never wait tables again as long as I
live.

LINDA: And the Feds are gonna balance the Budget.

JIM: Will you let me finish my story?

RENEE: Sometimes you're so... negative, Linda.

JIM: Then, someone comes up to us and says, Ivana! I
didn't realize you were here tonight! Did you
hear what I said? I attended the opera with
Ivana Trump!

LINDA: And you ran into the Pope himself at the
laundromat--

COOK: You know what I call opera? Uproar! (Laughs)

RAY: Was it the one with the crying clown? Used to
love that one. Was on Ed Sullivan all the time.

JIM: No, no... That was I Pagliacci.

RAY: You didn't even need to know what he was crying
about. You felt it anyway.

RENEE: Ivana Trump? She's been completely redone. Not
an original part left. Fake boobs, fake teeth,

RENEE: fake everything. Did you know Cher's had a
(cont'd) hundred face lifts?

COOK: Cher? Get outa here.

JIM: Ivana said she'd... MENTION me to some people.
Can you imagine? Bob was beside himself when I
got home. Imagine the possibilities for our
little enterprise!

LINDA: What enterprise?

JIM: I've TOLD you. The business Bob and I have
embarked upon together-- "Enfin" Caterers. It's
French. It means "At last".

LINDA: And where are you getting the money?

JIM: Too small, scrumptious words--Trust Fund. Bob's
parents are loaded.

LINDA: I thought you weren't speaking to each other--

JIM: Oh, all that's blown over. We were just a little
stressed out--

RENEE: I thought you said he fired a gun at you--

JIM: It wasn't loaded. He's so melodramatic.

Dysfunctional family, very low self-esteem.
(BEAT) We've planned the menu-- This Saturday

JIM: night, dinner for twelve - Pate de fois gras,
(cont'd) caviar canapes, breasts of wild duck a l'orange, a
saumon Norvege, salade Nicoise, a selection of
cheeses, and la piece de resistance - les
patisseries!

RAY: I hope you're serving a sorbet between courses to
cleanse the palate.

JIM: (BEAT) Thank you, Ray. From the man who uses a
Ouija board to plan his menu, I find that very
enlightening.

COOK: Watch your mouth, you!

JIM: Petit Fours, Milles Feuilles, Religeuses, and a
chocolate mousse pie that makes life worth living.
The crowning achievement of Western civilization!

A MAN APPEARS AT THE BACK DOOR, SWADDLED IN RAGS

RENEE: Look!

COOK: Aw, ... no...

JIM: What does he want?

RAY: What do you think?

LINDA: Well, give him something.

RAY: You know the rules. He'll keep coming back.

RENEE: (BRANDISHES SPATULA) He can have some butter!

JIM: Give him the strawberries!

RAY: (CHOPPING MEAT) We're not supposed to give anything out. You know how it is.

LINDA: He's an old man, for Christ sakes.

COOK: How can you tell? Pee-yoo! I can smell him from here.

RAY: Okay. I got some leftover pasta here somewhere.

JIM: Last week's Fusilli? We don't want to kill the man.

RENEE: What time is it?

RAY PREPARES A DOGGIE BAG FOR THE MAN AND GIVES IT TO LINDA.

CONNIE COMES THROUGH KITCHEN DOOR.

CONNIE: All right, campers, coming through. Watch your backs, Constance has arrived! (BEAT) (SEES LINDA WITH BAG) What's this?

LINDA: Just a few leftovers, Con.

CONNIE: No, no, no, no... No handouts. House policy. (TO MAN) Go on, get outa here!

LINDA: What's it to you?

CONNIE: Cause that's the rule. No handouts. What if I did that for every bum who showed his face?
(NOTICES MAN IS STILL LURKING) Hey! What are you, deaf? (BEAT) I am sick and tired of these people. I'm sick of seeing them on the train begging everywhere you turn. I'm sick a steppin' over them to get to work. I'm sick of feeling guilty when I don't got change and I don't feel like diggin' around in my pocketbook.

COOK: I know what you mean. I'm sick a feelin' like I done something to them.

RENEE: (ON THE PHONE) Are you sure? No messages?

CONNIE: Off the phone, Renee!

LINDA: Jesus, Con, the guy's just hungry.

CONNIE: So, he can get a job. (BEAT, SOFTER)
Quit bustin' my chops, okay? Not today (BEAT)
Renee! OFF THE GODDAM PHONE!

RENEE HANGS UP

JIM: Think today's the big day, Constance?

CONNIE: I want this, kids. I want this bad.

LINDA: Yesterday, Head Waiter. Today, Assistant Manager.
Tomorrow, The President.

CONNIE: I'm just waiting for Mr. Sullivan to rubber stamp it. That's if Tony doesn't sabotage things. Business's been slow lately, and the slime's beginning to panic. This ain't... isn't the first restaurant he's driven into the ground. He's lookin for someone to blame. My nose is clean, it isn't gonna be me.

JIM: Just don't let him take advantage of you, Constance.

CONNIE: I was slinging hash when you were still in diapers, boyfriend. I can take care of myself.

JIM: Don't say I didn't warn you-

RENEE: Did I tell you I got a movie, Con? I think.

CONNIE: That's great, baby doll. I knew you'd hit it big. You got that face. (BEAT) Tonight, I am burning this baby! (GRABS UNIFORM) (MIMES REMOVING TIE, SHIRT, SKIRT) Whoosh! In the fire! (OTHERS JOIN IN) There goes that goddam noose! This straitjacket!

RENEE AND LINDA PRETEND TO REMOVE AND JUMP ON THEIR SKIRTS. LINDA KICKS ONE HIGH HEEL ACROSS THE KITCHEN.

RENEE: I have a DREAM!

LINDA: Ow! My head...

TONY, THE MANAGER, ENTERS THE KITCHEN AS SHOE FLIES PAST. HE CROSSES HIS ARMS AND WATCHES AS LINDA RETRIEVES IT. EVERYONE IS VERY QUIET.

TONY: Now that's what I like to see. Professionals at work. Connie I want everybody out front, NOW. Meeting!

CONNIE: You heard the man.

RENEE: This is it, Connie!

JIM: (TO HIMSELF) Strawberries, stained linen, tattered menus, Oh, Almost forgot... chipped plates...

LINDA: Now remember, we want to know what he's planning to do about this slump. An we want our prep work paid for.

(JIM, LINDA, RENEE, CONNIE, EXIT)

RAY: (PICKS UP NEWSPAPER. TO COOK) I'm going downstairs. It's that time again.

COOK: Chef, I wanted to talk to you about some ideas I got, you know, spruce up the menu a little. Keep us ahead a the game.

RAY: Not now, Steve. My stomach's bad today.

COOK: But Chef--

RAY: We'll talk later, okay? Now, you watch the fort while I'm... indisposed.

COOK: All right, Chef. And Chef?

RAY: What?

COOK: I appreciate your givin' me this opportunity.

RAY EXITS. COOK DANCES AROUND KITCHEN. TAKES RAY'S BIG 'CHEF'S' HAT AND PUTS IT ON. ADMIRES HIMSELF IN STOVE'S STAINLESS STEEL. LIGHTS FADE IN KITCHEN.

ACT ONE. SCENE THREE

LIGHTS UP ON BAR/DINING AREA. THE WAITERS ARE SITTING AT A TABLE, BORED, AND SMOKING CIGARETTES. TONY IS PACING BACK AND FORTH, NEARING THE END OF HIS ORATORY.

TONY: Item seven... It has come to Mr. Sullivan's attention that some of you, and you know who you are, have decided to dispose of leftovers. This is absolutely forbidden. Not for your pets, not for the bums off the street, not for you. Leftovers are to be left ALONE ! If they go to waste, then that's our business.

LINDA: What about food that's gone off?

TONY: We don't want you people DECIDING for yourselves

TONY: which food that may be. We don't want you people
(cont'd) CREATING leftovers! Do I make myself clear!
Item eight. ATTITUDE! WHAT IS IT?

CONNIE: Uh, the way you feel about your work?

TONY: Correct. And what is the attitude the Custom's
House is looking for?

CONNIE: Uh--

TONY: Too slow... Jim?

JIM: The customer is ALWAYS right. Although subtle
guidance on the part of the waiter is not
discouraged. I like to--

TONY: ATTITUDE is the most important variable in any
restaurant. It impacts on everything! The food?
The price? No! ATTITUDE! We want our
clientele to feel like they've come to the place
that recognizes their achievement. Their power.
They are WINNERS. We respect winners.
Right, Girls? RIGHT, GIRLS?

WAITERS MUMBLE VAGUE RESPONSE.

TONY: Connie! Mr. Lynch wants only white lettuce
chopped fine, tomatoes firm never mooshy-

CONNIE: But not too pale. Put an olive anywhere near his face and kiss that tip goodbye.

TONY: Mr. Shapiro wants his salmon with ketchup. What do we do?

JIM: We report him to Gourmet magazine.

TONY: We have it on the table before he asks for it! Last week, a waiter who will go unnamed, but who is not longer with us, took it upon himself to point out to Mr. Merrill that white wine is not appropriate for a Rack of Lamb. Mr. Merrill was entertaining guests from Japan. Mr. Merrill was not amused. You are servers, not consultants. Servers, not colleagues. You WAIT on people. If you have a problem with that, I believe there are a few other restaurants in this city. Not so many where you can make this kind of money. (BEAT)
HARRY'S! Harry, next door is in trouble. The man who INVENTED carpaccio for Christ's sake. He's hurting. And do you know why? Attitude!

LINDA: He's not the only one who's hurting.

TONY: WHAT was that?

LINDA: I said, we're not doing so great ourselves. I haven't made any money here in weeks--

TONY: This is exactly what I'm talking about. Whining, complaining all the time. NEGATIVITY!

CONNIE: Business has been real slow--

TONY: Black Monday! BLACK MONDAY! I told you what happens! Things always slow down around October.

LINDA: That was two years ago!

TONY: The stock market drops 400 points and people get nervous. What do you expect? NO ONE'S going out for lunch. Give it a week. They'll be back. Drinking and eating harder than ever.

LINDA: You said that a month ago. The regulars are gone. It's like the place is jinxed or something--

TONY: Jinxed? Who said JINXED? Tony Reale doesn't work in any place that's jinxed. You GOT it?

CONNIE: WE all just want to help... get this place back on its feet--

RAMON RUNS IN, WEARING A BUSBOY'S TUXEDO UNIFORM. HE STANDS THERE, OUT OF BREATH, TRYING TO GET TONY'S ATTENTION.

TONY: Who the fuck are you?

CONNIE: The new dishwasher, I think.

TONY: What happened to the old one?

CONNIE: You fired him.

TONY: (TO RAMON) You going to a ball or something?

(BEAT) (TO THE OTHERS) The new dishwasher. He'll be starting today. Everybody say hello. (BEAT) You got a problem, let Connie dialogue with you. I'll be busy downstairs today. Show him the ropes, will you, Con? (STARTS TO LEAVE) And remember, ATTITUDE!

CONNIE: (PANICKING) Tony! (BEAT) Will Mr. Sullivan be in today?

TONY: That's what the man said.

CONNIE: Because I been waiting a long time to talk to him. I mean, you said we could sit down and--

RAMON: Excuse me, Sir. I am a busboy. Not dishwasher.

TONY: No. We no need busboy. Need dishwasher. You dishwasher, okay, Amigo? All right, let's break it up. You all have work to do. (EXITS)

CONNIE: (PAUSE) All right. (BEAT) So, what're you all looking at? He said he'd be in today. (TO RAMON) Kitchen's that way. Already got me training another goddam Puerto Rican. They never last. (CONNIE AND RAMON EXIT TO KITCHEN)

LINDA: Well, we really let him have it.

JIM: Nothing EVER gets resolved around here. I know he thinks my suggestions are merely cosmetic, but appearances in this business are essential--

RENEE: Who cares? It's just a restaurant. There are more important things in life.

LINDA: No shit, Sherlock. (BEAT) Did you see his face when I said the place is jinxed?

JIM: Sore spot, indeed. Poor Connie. He's toying with her.

RENEE: I just don't understand how people can let their whole life revolve around getting a... job. It's kind of sad.

JIM AND LINDA WATCH HER LEAVE. THEY LAUGH.

JIM: Oh, straight from the horse's mouth.

By the way, whatever happened to that new waitress?

LINDA: Which one?

JIM: The one that was in college... Young, very pert breasts--

LINDA: Oh... Brittany, ... or Tiffany... Mahogany?

JIM: One of those names. Remember she wanted some

JIM: "real life" experience?
(cont'd)

LINDA: Guess she wanted to experience making money.
Christ, there's only three of us left, not
including Connie. They've closed the upstairs.

JIM: It's a war of attrition.

LINDA: I wonder who's next to go?

JIM: Renee, of course. This is her last week - for the
hundredth time. We'll probably all still be here
well into the millennium. The 21st century at the
Customs House. A sobering thought.

LINDA: Maybe there'll be a revolution. Send all the
brokers to ... labour camps in... Jersey--

JIM: I've fantasized about that. I used to be quite
the radical, once. I used to go on protest
marches. CAN you imagine? Bob still does. God,
he's adorable. God, I'm glad I'm not in my
twenties anymore. We were supposed to go to the
Earth Day march. But they canceled it due to
inclement weather.

LINDA: (BEAT) Sometimes... I can't believe I'm 33
years old. I mean, I haven't decided what to do
with my life yet. I'm 33, Jim. I have visions of
myself, in white orthopedic shoes, supp-hose,

LINDA: swollen ankles, still hustling cocktails when I'm
(cont'd) sixty-five.

JIM: Wearing a Dolly Parton wig and peacock eyeshadow?

LINDA: Flirting with customers half my age, who laugh at
me when I turn my back. (BEAT) I've been doing
this for eleven years. No, almost twelve.

JIM: It's a dirty job, but somebody's got to do it.

LINDA: You know, waitressing... serving people all day...
you lose something. It wears you down. Erodes
your... soul.

JIM: My, you can be a wet blanket.

LINDA: Maybe this IS all I can do. What if this is all I
am capable of?

JIM: You, my darling, are capable of nything.

LINDA: Thanks. I think.

JIM: It's never too late. I once thought that was one
of the cruellest lies. When Terence died... I
thought that my life was over. Physically and
emotionally. I'd turn on the T.V. and almost
believe what the lunatics were spewing... the
curse of God, revenge of the righteous. I didn't
go near anyone for 5 years. And then, there was

JIM: Bob. Sometimes I think I love him so much I want
(cont'd) to BE him, you know? I want to get inside him.
(BEAT) The point is...

RENEE: (WALKS OVER TO JIM AND LINDA) Hey, do you guys
think you could give me a hand, here? The
doilies aren't done yet.

JIM: Duty calls.

LINDA: Doily placement. Linda Smith, "THIS IS YOUR
LIFE!" I need a drink. A little hair of the
dog. What the hell does that mean, anyway?

JIM: It means you've got a problem.

LINDA: Only when I can't get a drink.

JIM EXITS. LINDA SITS ALONE, RUBS HER EYES, PUTS ON HER BOWTIE.

LIGHTS FADE ON HER AND UP IN KITCHEN.

CONNIE: (TO RAMON) All the dishes go here. Pots and
pans here, aqui. Si? Never let them get ahead of
you or you're dead meat.

RAMON: Yes, yes. But I am a busboy-- The paper said--

CONNIE: Busboy maybe later, okay? Now, dishwasher. Five
swing shifts, five lunches, five cocktails, right?

RENEE: (DROPS DOILIES AND GOES TO TELEPHONE) Connie, I

RENEE: just have one call to make--
(cont'd)

CONNIE: NO way, Baby doll. After lunch.

RENEE: Come on, Con. I'm up for a movie--

CONNIE: You know the rules. Jesus, I'm a fucking tape recorder here. (CONNIE EXITS)

RENEE: (NICE) Hi. What's your name again?

RAMON: Ramon.

RENEE: Nice name. Look, Raoul, watch the door, okay?

The door? Two seconds okay? (DIALS)

(BEAT) It's Renee again. Any messages?

(BEAT) Damn? (HANGS UP) (TO RAMON) I'm up for a film and my agent won't call back.

(BEAT) (TO RAMON) I played a woman once who fell in love with her Mexican gardener. It was just a student film, pretty amateur stuff.

(BEAT) It was heavy, though. You know, very... They were from different worlds.

LINDA: (ENTERING THE KITCHEN) This headache won't quit. You got something, Renee?

RENEE: (EMPTIES CONTENTS OF PURSE. PILLS OF EVERY SHAPE AND COLOUR TUMBLE OUT) What do you need?

LINDA: What are these?

RENEE: They'll fix what's ailing you.

LINDA: (GRABS VIAL) What're these?

RENEE: Skinny pills. Can't look like a concentration camp inmate with chubby thighs.

LINDA: How many of these are you taking?

RENEE: Whatever it takes, sweetheart. I had to lose fifteen pounds for this part.

LINDA: You're already skin and bones. They're real bad for you, (SOFTER) I thought we talked about this before--

RENEE: Look, you like martinis, I like my little red pills. Get off my case. (EXITS)

LINDA: (SWALLOWS PILLS. LOOKS AT RAMON'S SUIT) I think you're a bit overdressed. Your suit. (POINTS) How long've you been in New York?

RAMON: Six weeks.

LINDA: Where are you from?

RAMON: El Salvador.

LINDA: Oh, it's pretty heavy there, huh?

RAMON: Heavy?

LINDA: You know.... a lot of problems. It's on the T.V.
a lot.

RAMON: Yes. There are many problems.

LINDA: You got one helluva stack of dishes there.
(BEAT) What's your name?

RAMON: Ramon.

LINDA: Nice to meet you, Ramon. I'm Linda.

RAMON: Linda. This means beautiful in Spanish.

LINDA: (SMILES, WARY) No kidding. What did you do in
... El Salvador?

RAMON: Do?

LINDA: Yeah, you know, a job?

RAMON: I am a teacher. At the university.

LINDA: Oh, yeah? I was almost a teacher, once.

*PAUSE. LOOK AT EACH OTHER, AT KITCHEN. AT THE DISHES PILED BEFORE
THEM.*

LINDA: Welcome to America, Ramon.

ACT ONE. SCENE FOUR:

*IN THE KITCHEN SOMETIME LATER. THERE ARE HUGE STACKS OF DISHES,
ALL CLEAN. IT IS THE MIDDLE OF WHAT WAS ONCE THE 'LUNCH RUSH'.*

- COOK: I can't figure it. Where're the customers? I got twenty plates of shrimp here. We ain't sold one.
- RAY: Keep your pants on. It's still early.
- COOK: It's Friday, Chef. Something's wrong. They're not coming.
- RAY: It's the time of year. Always quiet. They'll come back. (SIGHS) They always do.
- COOK: (CHOPPING MEAT) Look at this. Full of fat. I wanted to talk with you Chef, about the menu.
- RAY: Business is slow, and the first thing they think it's the menu. That is not the problem. Always looking for a scapegoat.
- COOK: I am not sayin there's a problem. I'm just saying we could think about some of the specials, lay off the heavy sauces go with lighter, healthier stuff--
- RAY: You mean the same bullshit everyone else is doing?
- COOK: (STILL CHOPPING) It's not bullshit! It's a trend that's going to last. You watch them out there? They're not going for those five martini

COOK: lunches anymore. The sixteen oz. steaks, the
(cont'd) potatoes, the cream... Heart attack city! It's
perrier and salad. Arugula, Radicchio.

RAY: That isn't cooking. Tastes like cardboard.
(WATCHES COOK CHOP) You know, I was watching
this show last night. About Tibet.

COOK: (SIGHS) Uh-huh.

RAY: Very interesting people. When somebody dies, they
don't bury them. They take the body to a
mountaintop... there's lots a mountains there, and
they slice the flesh right off the body.

COOK: Gross!

RAY: Then they chop it into little pieces, and throw it
to the vultures.

JIM: Disgusting. Those people have no respect for
life.

RAY: No, that way they're not... wasted. They believe
it's very important. Or something like that.

JIM: Chef, what do you say? Let's try something new.

RAY: (WATCHING COOK TRIM MEAT) I say you could learn
a thing or two from those.. Tibeters. Where'd you
learn to prepare a roast?

COOK: Huh?

RAY: Planning on leaving any meat on that? There's nothing wrong with this!

COOK: It's fatty!

RAY: You're cutting the sirloin there, son. Christ, give me that! (TAKES MEAT FROM COOK) You done the fish? I said, you cleaned the fish?

COOK: No.

RAY: Then get that butt down those stairs, and finish your work. While you're at it, sweep up that floor, and straighten out those condiment shelves. I want that place as clean as my mother's, God rest her soul.

COOK: Ramon! Gimme a--

RAY: He got his work to do. You got yours. It's called Division of Labour.

COOK EXITS, GRUMBLING. JIM AND LINDA ENTER THE KITCHEN, GIGGLING.

JIM: Did you hear them? Talk about foreplay--

LINDA: Oh, Ms. ..Leverage... You were... stunning today, I mean it.

JIM: I just put it together last night--

LINDA: You were extraordinary. You were so...
strong..so..convicted.

JIM: Convicted?

LINDA: Full of, you know, CONVICTION.

JIM: Say it again!

LINDA: You were... SEXY!

JIM: No one's said that about my presentations before--

LINDA: Oh, (SNAPS FINGERS) MISS! Do you have decaf
capuccino?

JIM: Decaf has saved my life!

LINDA: And these people run the world.

RAY: Nothing to do?

LINDA: It's a wasteland out there.

RAY: Well, it's not the food.

LINDA: Course not.

RAY: Well, I got me an assistant who'd like to feed 'em
all hamster food. And the portions he wants to
serve makes the plates look like swimming pools.

JIM: You just keep him away from anything important.

RAY: Ah, I remember what it's like. He's just itching to leave his mark--

JIM: Then let him pee on the hydrant outside.

RAY: (LAUGHS) You know, you got a good sense of humour, you. Very witty. He just wants to be more... creative. Like you, like me. Except I been in the business too long. Waiting for customers now, not like the old days. Makes me very nervous. Eats me up from the insides, you know? Shoulda bought that boat with my brother-in-law.

JIM: Well, we all wanna be something. Many are called, few are chosen.

LINDA: Speaking of wannabees, where's Renee?

JIM: In the bathroom, where else?

RAY: What does she do in there?

JIM: (SNORTS LOUDLY, AND TOUCHES HIS NOSE) I can't imagine. My shrimp plate. Thanks Ray,

JIM EXITS AND COOK ENTERS, CARRYING A CRATE OF LETTUCE. RENEE

ENTERS. SHE IS QUITE WIRED.

RENEE: ORDERING... READY BOYS? Four shrimp plates, four green salads, two lamb. two sirloin, one medium,

RENEE: one rare. ORDERING... three gravlax, two salmon,
(cont'd) one with veggies, one with rice. Oh, and one grav
with sauce on the side? Got it?

RAY: Got it!

LINDA: What'd you do, Renee? Grab them off the street?

RENEE: I'm on a roll!

COOK: Some people have charm.

LINDA: Steve! You impress me! Such a big word!

JIM ENTERS IN A FURY.

JIM: WHAT IS THIS? These shrimp are not cooked!

COOK: Get outa here. Look at em.

JIM: They are virtually RAW! I almost died of
embarrassment!

COOK: There ain't nothing wrong with em.

JIM: Where is Connie? CONNIE!

CONNIE RUNS IN.

CONNIE: WHAT THE fuck is the matter with you? They can
hear you in Jersey.

COOK: He's fuckin hysterical again. I can't deal with

COOK: fucking faggots.
(cont'd)

JIM: I will not be spoken to like that. The man can't
 read, let alone cook.

COOK: HEY!

CONNIE: Just fix it, Steve. Where's Ray?

COOK: Downstairs AGAIN, Con. I run this place by
 myself--

JIM: I am not bringing it back to that table. I cannot
 face them. The standards of this establishment
 have slipped so precipitously lately--

CONNIE: BRING IT, JIM. NOW!

JIM: (TAKES PLATE WHICH COOK HAS THROWN AT HIM.) I
 go under protest. (EXITS)

COOK: "I GO UNDER PROTEST..." (MUMBLES) Fuckin
 faggot.

CONNIE: You watch your mouth.

COOK: It ain't normal, Con--

CONNIE: What do you know about normal? You do your work
 and keep your yap shut. Linda! What are you
 doing? Hibernating?

LINDA: Growing cobwebs waiting for a table.

CONNIE: You got ESP or something? Get out there and check your section.

LINDA EXITS FOLLOWED BY CONNIE. RAMON HAS NOTHING TO DO, AND IS LOST IN THOUGHT, GAZING AT THE FLOOR.

COOK: Hey, Pedro! Get your thumb outa yer ass!

RAMON: Sorry... What--

COOK: You got nothing to do? HERE! (TOSSES A HUGE BOWL OF STRAWBERRIES AT HIM.) Do these!

RAMON TAKES IT AND STARTS TO WORK. HE IS NOT SKILLFUL.

COOK: (WATCHING) What are you, a moron? (WALKS OVER TO RAMON. SHOWS HIM. THEN PITCHES IN.) What the hell.

LINDA AND JIM ENTER.

JIM: That was extremely unnerving.

LINDA: It's dead out there. I haven't got one single customer.

RENEE: (RUNNING IN) My tournedoes? Thanks!
ORDERING... four salad, one sirloin, two salmon.
RAMON! I need the champagne glasses at the bar!

LINDA: Look at that!

JIM: Champagne. That's a thirty buck tip right there.

LINDA: What is wrong with this picture, Jim? We've been here since the Ice Age. We're better waiters! I'm gonna talk to Tony.

JIM: I wouldn't do that...

LINDA: I got to make a living. I don't have a rich boyfriend like some people I know.

JIM: Tony is quite fond of Renee.

COOK: Like I said, some people got it, some people don't.

TONY ENTERS.

TONY: If I hear one more person ask if I can fit them in, "HA HA HA... Whatsa matter? Harry's is full to the rafters. Can we have a drink at the bar? We're waiting for a table across the street. What happened here, a NEUTRON BOMB?" (WALKS AROUND THE KITCHEN, HALF INSPECTING.) Where's Ray? I said, Where's Ray?

COOK: Tony, I finished those salad plates like you asked, and I cleared out the fridge. Ray's been... under the weather lately, spending all his

COOK: time downstairs... and he won't taste--
(cont'd)

LINDA: He knows a sinking ship when he sees--

TONY: WHAT WAS THAT? (BEAT. GIVES LINDA HIS "LOOK")
I got a chef who don't like to cook. Mr. Sullivan
is going to hear about this. (SEES STRAWBERRIES)
What is this? Who cut these? You threw half of
them out-- Who did these?

COOK: Dishwasher.

TONY: (TRYING TO CONTROL HIMSELF, TO NO ONE IN
PARTICULAR) A dishwasher... is not CAPABLE of
doing strawberries. Strawberries are expensive.
THESE... are EXPENSIVE. (TO RAMON) YOU do
DISHES. Capiche? You are a dishwasher. Dishes.
I don't want to see you NEAR the food AGAIN
(BEAT) (NOTICES LINDA AND JIM WATCHING, AMAZED.)
Get on the floor. Both of you. You have
customers waiting.

LINDA AND JIM EXIT. TONY ADJUSTS HIS SUIT, SMOOTHS HIS HAIR.

TONY: I want this kitchen washed from top to bottom.
Place is a pigsty. (EXITS)

COOK: You got it, Boss. Ramon!
I want the floors scrubbed, I want the walls
behind the stoves done. The stove! And I want--

- RAY: (ENTERS FROM BACK DOOR. LOOKS AROUND.)
No action yet? Stomach's real bad. Shoulda got outa this business years ago. Bad for the stomach.
- COOK: Where you been Chef?? Poisoning the food?
(LAUGHS) Poisoning. That's a good one. The mass murderer. The Chef. I like that. That's not bad.
- RAY: You know, I think I saw that on T.V. once.

ACT ONE. SCENE FIVE:

LIGHTS UP ON DINING AREAS. LINDA, JIM AND THE COOK ARE SITTING AT TABLE. THE END OF THE DAY.

- LINDA: What a crummy, rotten, shitty, lousy, useless day. For SOME of us, anyway.
- JIM: Water off my back! Today, Bob and I shop. We've got another party to do. We're going Ethiopian. Very trendy these days. Everyone sits at these little tables and eats with their hands. Disgusting, but they love it.
- COOK: What do Ethiopians eat?
- JIM: Anything they can get. Sorry, bad taste.

- LINDA: Today, my ONE table sat around for hours, smoking, drinking coffee and sipping cognac. God, it was torture watching them. Coffee, cognac, cigarettes. Everything you could ever want comes together in that combination of smells.
- COOK: Yeah, the three C's. You know what they give you? The Big C.
- JIM: (PATTING COOK'S BELLY) Looks like you touch plenty of something--
- RENEE: (RUSHES IN. VERY SPEEDY. SITS. STANDS. SITS.) What time is it? Oh my God. I've got two hours. Should I eat something? Give me a cig, will you? How does my hair look? Is it all right? I got a callback for the movie. This may be my last week here. My last day!
- JIM: You've been saying that for years, darling.
- RENEE: This is my third callback. MY THIRD! I've never had 3 before! Never! You want to hear it? You want to hear my piece? Jim, read with me. Here. (PULLS OUT SCRIPT) You read here. Okay? Okay? Ready? (RENEE PREPARES HER MOMENT.) "I don't care what I have to do. I don't care. Ever since they took Mama away, I don't care what happens to me. I am dead, dead inside. I don't

RENEE: even want revenge. I want my babies to live. And
(cont'd) I will do ANYTHING for that. I will sleep with
him, I will sleep with all of them if I must. AS
long as they don't kill my babies. AS long as
they don't hurt them. ..."

JIM: (COMPLETELY FLAT AND DEADPAN.)
"But you don't know what these men are like.
Killing for them is a game. A GAME."

RENEE: "If I must use my body... or what is left of it.
My skin... used to be so soft. Now, it is like
leather. Now, I am bones. I have no breasts. No
milk for my babies."

JIM: "Do not say this. You are still beautiful. Very,
very beautiful."

RENEE: "You know where my children are ?"

JIM: "They are alive."

RENEE: (KISSES JIM'S HAND) "Thank you. Oh, Thank you.
Thank you."

RENEE: Okay, now skip to page twenty-seven...

JIM: That's great, Renee. Wonderful.

RENEE: You think so? I'm trying to be her, you know?
To imagine, to FEEL what it must be like--

LINDA: You did it. I felt her.

RENEE: What about my accent?

JIM: Perfect.

COOK: What is this anyway? The Nazi movie?

RENEE: You really think so? (GETS UP) I got to run.
This is it!

JIM: Break a leg!

RENEE RUNS OUT AND PASSES CONNIE WHO SITS WITH A PILE OF PAPERS AT ANOTHER TABLE.

JIM: God, that was dreadful.

LINDA: You know what made me quit acting? I had to go for an audition, a commercial. Some grocery chain. I had to hold a head of lettuce like it was getting me off, lick my lips, look at the camera and say, "FRESH..." Did about 20 takes. Most embarrassing moment of my life. They said I didn't have the right attitude.

JIM: Seems to me I've heard that somewhere before.

RAMON EMERGES FROM THE KITCHEN WITH THREE HUGE BAGS OF GARBAGE.

CONNIE: (TO RAMON) Go by the back! There's customers here! (RAMON RETREATS) And come eat. Now!

LINDA: Do you have any idea how much garbage this city spews out everyday? Have you seen the garbage barges? They just roam around the city with no place to go.

COOK: What? Jersey's full?

JIM: Jersey? They could add ten states to the Union of garbage alone.

COOK: Why don't they send it up to Canada? They got room.

JIM: Canadians want our garbage?

COOK: I dunno. What about Mexico? We get enough a theirs. (LAUGHS)

JIM: You are an odious person.

RAMON COMES OUT WITH HIS LUNCH. SITS QUIETLY BESIDE THEM.

COOK: Speaking of which... (COOK GETS UP.) Have a nice weekend, ladies.

TONY WALKS UP TO CONNIE, IN A RUSH.

TONY: Connie, I need you downstairs.

CONNIE: I'm on break. I'm doing a double today. Let me finish my lunch.

TONY: You want to be assistant manager?
Well I need assistance now.

CONNIE GETS UP SLOWLY.

TONY: (PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HER) And Con? Mr.
Sullivan wants all the girls in high heels from
now on. You, too.

CONNIE: (BEAT) Right. (EXITS)

TONY APPROACHES RAMON AND SITS DOWN. PUTS HIS ARM AROUND HIS
SHOULDERS AND PULLS RAMON CLOSE.

TONY: Amigo. I got a big job for you. Got a big night
tonight with a friend of mine. Comprende? Yeah,
you understand. So, I want you to do me a favour.
My car's in the lot out front. You clean it
spotless, okay? Inside and out. Take you half
an hour. You do it fast, I give you five bucks.
Okay, buddy, Okay?

RAMON: My shift is finished.

TONY: I'll give you five bucks, okay?

RAMON: I'm finished. I'm off tonight.

TONY: Ten bucks. Ten. All right, Amigo?

RAMON HESITATES THEN AGREES. GETS UP WITH HIS PLATE. TONY FOLLOWS.

LINDA: Soon he'll have him picking the lint off his suits.

JIM: Well, my new enterprise awaits me.

LINDA: Come for a drink next door, Jim? Please?

JIM: No time, no time! I'm meeting Bob uptown in 20 minutes.

LINDA: Call him. Tell him something came up. Please? Do you good.

JIM: No, got to run. (KISSES THE AIR) Now, don't go embarrassing yourself. I want you out of there by 7:00, and home in bed by 9:00. Alone. Promise? Promise?

LINDA: They don't taste the same when you drink alone.

JIM: Please be careful, you know how you get. Bye, Sweetie. (EXITS)

ACT ONE. SCENE SIX:

SPOT ON RAMON.

RAMON: (TO AUDIENCE) I came to America. I came to America when there was nothing left for me in Salvador. I left the university to teach at a tiny school in a tiny village. Teaching is a very... suspicious occupation in my country.

RAMON: (BEAT) One day, the soldiers came, and they took me back to the capital, San Salvador.

(BEAT) I denounced them all... all the names.. even the ones I didn't know. (PAUSE)

When I came to America, there was nothing left for me in Salvador. My world was brand new, like the hundreds of shiny cars I see everywhere here.

(BEAT) But it is different to arrive when you have no choice. I am not an immigrant, with big eyes and an open heart. I am a refugee.

I washed dishes until I could only dream about dishes, higher and higher mountains of them, never finished, never clean.

I scraped enough food off those plates every day to feed that village for a month. (BEAT)

One day, I went to drink in the bar next door to the restaurant. I wanted to drink until I couldn't see those dishes anymore. I found her there. She had the look of someone who looks for her soul in a bottle. I recognized that look.

SPOT FADES ON RAMON

LIGHTS UP ON RAMON AND LINDA. THEY ARE SITTING ON TWO STOOLS, FACING THE AUDIENCE. SHE'S NOT DRUNK YET, BUT WELL ON HER WAY.

LINDA: I mean, do you KNOW how many people in this city,... no..., this PLANET make a living SERVING people? It's scary... Not DOING anything, not PRODUCING anything useful, not CREATING something, ... except enough money to claw their way to another day. Claw their way to another day... I like that! (BEAT) It's not like those suits on Wall Street DO anything either. They just chase bits of paper around, and make a fortune. Go figure. And... and.. when they get nervous? When they panic, cause they're like sheep, they all scare at the same time, .. the rest of the world has to pay for it. I know, .. my Dad was in the business. Drank himself to the Big Stock Exchange in the Sky. (BEAT) Us... service people have got to organize. Everyone else is... ORGANIZED. That bastard has fired an army since I worked there. No job security. No benefits. You break a leg and they may as well shoot you. It's just such a PISS-OFF... (BEAT) (LEANS ON RAMON'S SHOULDER) Listen to me. Do you even know what "piss-off" MEANS?

RAMON: Not the words exactly, but the feeling is clear.

LINDA: I'm surprised to see you here. Thought you turned into a pumpkin at five o'clock. You're always racing outa the restaurant before anyone sees you

LINDA: go. Can't say I blame you. You want another
(cont'd) beer? Frank! Ramon, this is Frank. Best bartender
in the city. No, I mean it. I don't say that..
for nothing. Frank, this is Ramon, our dishwasher.
Ramon's from,... Where're you from again?

RAMON: El Salvador--

LINDA: Right! Nor..tega's your President?

RAMON: No. You confuse us with Nicaragua and ...Panama.

LINDA: And you guys are the Communists?

RAMON: Nicaragua is Communist. Well, what Americans call
Communist. Salvador is Fascist.

LINDA: It's a real mess down there, isn't it? I mean,
they shoot you for looking the wrong way.

RAMON: Some are killed for their ideas. Some for nothing
at all.

LINDA: At least you die for... something there. Here we
die for... leather jackets--

RAMON: And I read... for these... high-heel sneakers?

LINDA: High tops! Yeah! (BEAT) I wonder what I would
die for... If I'd die for... ANYTHING. I guess if
I fought for something for a long, long time,...

LINDA: and someone wanted to take it away. It's hard to
(cont'd) imagine... I never fought for anything--

RAMON: This... I don't believe.

LINDA: No,... never. I've never wanted something badly
enough. It's a waste of time. Waste of energy.

RAMON: Sometimes you have no choice.

LINDA: You know, I'd love to have no choice. You know what
I mean? I'd love to be... forced to fight for
something I could DIE for. Nobody here cares
enough. I mean you SEE things right in front of
your nose, but it feels like it's happening far,
far away. It's like your life just follows this...
track, just follows these lines... parallel to
everything else. But you don't touch. (BEAT)
Maybe I'd die for my kids. Yeah.

RAMON: You have children?

LINDA: Are you kidding? No, no, no... Jesus. That's
all I need. I just got rid of a deadbeat
boyfriend. Well, not just. A year ago. A
musician. Too sensitive to find a job. Christ,
they attract me like flies to shit. (BEAT) You
have kids?

RAMON: (BEAT) No.

LINDA: Married? Girlfriend?

RAMON: No.

LIGHTS FADE ON RAMON AND LINDA. RAMON TO AUDIENCE:

RAMON: We drank and talked, drank and talked, the alcohol working like the oil in an engine. Everything coming smoother. (BEAT) She was the first... American who really looked at me. I told her the iguana story. The iguana and Jacobo. Jacobo was my best friend, and godfather to my children. Yes, I had three children. Two of them is still alive.

LIGHTS BACK UP ON RAMON AND LINDA. SHE IS DRUNKER.

LINDA: So I quit college and started out on my own.
(BEAT) My parents never got over it. I mean, they DID everything right. I wasn't supposed to end up a waitress.

RAMON: What were you supposed to be?

LINDA: Oh, Christ, Anything but THAT. I tried a few things. I could never... finish what I started. Now, I just don't... start anymore.

RAMON: A waitress is so bad?

LINDA: My mother still pretends it isn't true. When her friends ask her what I'm doing, she says I'm finishing my studies. They must wonder. I guess, in a way, it's true though. I study. (BEAT) I can't talk to them anymore. My brother's a Born-Again Christian. You know, they take the bible seriously. Jesus is gonna float back down here with a big sword and kill all us pagans. Then all the true believers will get yanked from their cars on the freeway, or wherever they are, and get sucked up to heaven. They believe this. I mean, YOU try to reason with them. Oh, shit. You religious?

RAMON: At one time. I have seen on the subway... advertisements that say the Madonna appeared to a young boy in ... Queens? I thought she came to me once. But she disappeared when I stopped drinking.

LINDA: (LAUGHING) Oh, yeah. You got to be careful with hallucinations. (BEAT) God's on T.V. everyday, if you want to watch--

RAMON: On these talking programs?
(BEAT) I saw the eyes of God, once. In the face of a soldier. They were eyes with no history, no memory. (BEAT) I didn't like his eyes. (BEAT) My neighbors here watch T.V. all

RAMON: day. They don't DO anything, they just watch. I
(cont'd) don't like these shows that tell you when to
laugh--

LINDA: Sitcoms. You don't have the same thing at home?

RAMON: Oh yes... Stupidity is universal.

LINDA: (BEAT) Why did you leave? Never mind. Dumb
question. Cause you had to, I guess.

RAMON: (BEAT) There was an... offensive. Army offensive
against our town. To... clean it up. The soldiers
chased us from one side, and the helicopters waited
on the other. It is called a hammer and... anvil
operation. We were chased to a river, hundreds of
us, terrified, mortars dropping around us. I ran
and I ran and I found a tree to hide under. It was
so loud. I thought my head would explode. Then
I felt a terrible pain in my back and I screamed,
"I am shot, I am shot !" My friend
Jacob was behind me, and I hear him laughing, like
a crazy man. The helicopters had scared an iguana
from the tree, and it was hanging from my back, its
claws ripping into my skin. (RAMON STARTS TO LAUGH)
A stupid iguana! (LINDA LAUGHS) We laughed about
that for many weeks after. (BEAT) We shit our
pants laughing. (BEAT) It's a long time since I

RAMON: think of this.
(cont'd)

LINDA: (THEY LOOK LONG AND HARD AT EACH OTHER.)
Do you want more? Beer?

RAMON: Yes. I buy.

LIGHTS FADE ON BAR. OVER, A PULSING SOUND. LOUDER AND LOUDER LIKE A HELICOPTER. LIGHTS UP ON RAMON AND LINDA, AT HER APARTMENT. THERE IS A BED, SCATTERED BEER BOTTLES. LIGHTS ARE VERY LOW, SO THEY ARE SEEN IN SHADOW. THEY START TO KISS, THEN GRAB AT EACH OTHER, VERY HUNGRY, TEARING EACH OTHERS' CLOTHES OFF. THEY FUMBLE AROUND, DRUNKENLY. THEN, THEY ARE MAKING LOVE.

RAMON: (VOICE OVER. THROUGHOUT LOVEMAKING)

Dear Carmen... I am having trouble to think tonight. You cannot imagine the noise here,... louder than the market on Saturday afternoon. Remember our demented roosters? How they would crow in the middle of the night and drive me crazy? Here it is the scream of ambulances, the voices of cars. Are the children all right? Do you understand why I had to leave? It was the shame I felt when I looked into their eyes. The shame that made me question what I did. Even the good things. (BEAT) There is so much here! If you spent all day dreaming of all the things you could ever want, you could not begin to fill the stores. Everything is so clean. It is like big MacDonald's like we saw in Mexico.

RAMON: Blue eyes and blond hair. But, underneath, much is very ... dirty. Here, it is not a crime to be poor. But it is a disgrace. Something you have brought upon yourself.

I try not to think of Tono. I know Juan said it was God's will, and we cannot blame Him. Blaming God takes the guilt away from those who should be punished. Sometimes I dream of having another baby to take his place. Forgive me. I could not live with the fear anymore. I am not courageous like you. (BEAT) I told them... things. I told them. Jacobo is DEAD because of me. You can't cry in front of them. You can't cry because... frailty gives them courage. It nourishes them. They are empowered by it. (BEAT) She is the first woman I have touched since you. I need to touch someone so much it frightens me. Tell the children. Tell them I am still their father. I miss you, Carmen. Your husband. Your companero. Your husband, Ramon.

LIGHTS DIM, THEN RISE UP. LINDA STUMBLES TO HER FEET.

LINDA: I know I've got one beer left in the fridge. Share? (SHE SITS BY RAMON. STROKES HIM.) How did you get these scars? What happened to you?

RAMON: (BEAT) I have a wife. I have two children.

ACT TWO: SCENE ONE:

MONDAY MORNING IN THE KITCHEN. RENEE IS FILING HER NAILS. RAY AND COOK ARE WORKING. LINDA IS MAKING COFFEE.

RENEE: (VERY SPEEDY) I was good. I really was. I could feel it, you know? I felt everything she was feeling. I really felt her rage, how she coulda killed him with her own hands, just... gouged his eyes out. Bit his cock off. Well, you know what I mean. But I was also attracted to him, to that tiny bit of kindness, no not kindness, that tiny bit of non-evil he had in him. Attracted and completely repulsed me.

My drama coach used to say just find the love in the character, find the love. The nude scenes are tasteful, I think. He takes his clothes off, too. Usually the men don't. I've waited so long for this. I've got it. Do you think I've got it?

RAY: You're a class act, Renee. It was just a matter of time before they recognized REAL talent.

RENEE: You can't imagine how gratifying it is to land something like this after all those years of off-off stuff. Crummy little plays where I rolled around on the floor while somebody described a massacre somewhere. This is the real thing, you know. Once you get your foot in the door, you

RENEE: know, the rest just open up for you--
(cont'd)

COOK: Hey, Chef, your roast!

(REMOVING A HUGE ROAST FROM THE OVEN) Now...
that is one beautiful piece of beef. Smell
that... Ah... they don't deserve this.

LINDA: Should be in a museum, Ray. You're a regular
Leonardo Da Vinci.

RAY: That's what I been telling Mr. Sullivan for 10
years. Still making less than I should.

LINDA: You got to be more forceful. Sit him down, talk
to him.

RAY: I never see the man.

LINDA: Can I have a little piece a that?

(COOK CUTS PIECE. SHE TASTES.)

Ah... Exquisite. Tastes like Christmas. Nothing
like a roast.

RAY: Now, time for my paper and my coffee. Best part
of the day. Steve, you watch the fort.

COOK: You bet, Chef.

RAY EXITS

COOK: He don't touch the beef anymore.

LINDA: What?

COOK: Won't taste it. Ever since that cow... escaped or something. Hardly touches any of the food.

LINDA: Guess he knows how it tastes by now. That's how Beethoven played the piano.

COOK: Never heard of a chef who don't try his own food. Spooky.

LINDA: You just better appreciate the man. Only chef I ever worked with who isn't an alcoholic, insane or both.

COOK: Don't get me wrong. I like the man. He's just--

JIM ENTERS BY BACK DOOR

JIM: Morning all.

LINDA: Good morning!

JIM: Well, someone's chipper this morning. What IS to be done, as Lenin once said. (LOOKS CLOSELY AT LINDA) I sense someone got laid this weekend.

COOK: You do the wild thing, Linda?

JIM: Who was the lucky man? Had you ever seen him before? (BEAT) Do I know him? Not that deadbeat bartender. Who? Who?

RAMON ENTERS. HE'S LATE. WEARING SUNGLASSES. FORGETS TO TAKE THEM OFF WHILE HE STARTS THE DISHES.

JIM: Hey, Ramon! Nice glasses. (GESTURES) Glasses!
They're very hip.

RAMON: (REMOVES THEM) Hip?

JIM: Cool. You look good. Sexy! (TO LINDA) He's
actually a decent-looking guy. Bit like Raul
Julia. If you did something about the hair.

RAMON TRIES TO MAKE EYE CONTACT WITH LINDA. SHE AVOIDS HIM.

LINDA: I forgot! How was your party?

JIM: We OUTDID ourselves. It was a smash! The
hostess said she'd recommend us to all her
friends. You should've seen this place. Who was
it who said the rich are just not like us?
The world is created... for their ... pleasure.
We've all been put here to make their lives..
easier. They don't just... expect, they get. You
should have seen Bob. He fits in like a glove.
He's a genius at small talk.

LINDA: He is one of them, isn't he?

JIM: I'll say it again... Thank God for trust funds.
But I don't care about the money--

LINDA: Your nose grows as we speak.

JIM: He's SO young. Do you know he's only seen Bonanza in re-runs! No, I am not going to analyze this to death. I am HAPPY. Yes, I can say that. And I'm not terrified that it will stop. That's happiness, isn't it? He's so young. He only came out last year, his parents don't know anything yet.

LINDA: Wait 'til he brings you home to meet the family.

JIM: Mr. and Mrs. Giddens! Delighted to meet you!
I'm Jim. Bob and I met at a bar in the Village.
I sucked him 'til his eyes turned white on our first date. Can I call you Dad, Sir?

COOK: Make me puke!

JIM: He'll never tell them. He said it would kill them.

LINDA: What do you want him to do?

COOK: If I were his parents, I'd get him to see a shrink as soon as possible.

JIM: (TO COOK) Steven, a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

CONNIE: (ENTERS KITCHEN.) Attention everyone! Mr. Sullivan is supposed to be in today.

JIM: Doesn't she know yet? He doesn't exist!

CONNIE: (INSPECTS KITCHEN) I want him to see this place run like the Pentagon.

LINDA: Bad example, Con.

CONNIE: That bastard had better recommend me. I been busting my balls covering for him. Where's Ray?

COOK: Where he usually is. On the throne. Connie, can I talk to you about some ideas I got for the menu?

CONNIE: You just get those salads done. Ideas! When you're chef, got it? Still wet behind the ears and he wants to talk ideas! (EXITS)

COOK: (AFTER CONNIE) I RUN THIS FUCKING KITCHEN!
RAMON! I need those dishes. Hurry the fuck up!

RAY AND RENEE WALK IN.

RAY: And did you see the woman whose OWN kid shot her?

RENEE: Imagine how she feels.

COOK: Who got shot?

LINDA: RENEE! BUTTERS!

RENEE: These are the last butters I will do for the rest of my life.

- COOK: Who got shot?
- RAY: Oh. It was on Phil Donahue. They were talking about whether you're born bad, or your... environment makes you bad. They had these mothers who got shot by their kids, or their kids shot someone--
- RENEE: Some of them were only twelve years old.
- RAY: They grow up in Crack houses, they have no fathers, nobody to look up to. They become... uh... what did they call them? Socio..paths.
- COOK: What's that?
- JIM: Someone with no sense of right or wrong. Personally, I think all teenagers are sociopaths.
- RENEE: One expert said some people are just born that way. Genetics.
- LINDA: What way?
- RAY: Bad. You know, missing something basic.
- JIM: The nature versus nurture argument. Many sociologists have argued that the separation is an artificial one.
- RAY: I don't know. I think it's a bit a both.

RENEE: I like the other show better. Sally Jessee.

LINDA: I don't know how you watch those shows. Like listening to my neighbors fight all day long.

RENEE: I love them. Sally Jessee won't do just anything. She has some integrity. I heard she refused to do a show about necrophilia.

COOK: Necro-who?

LINDA: People who like to fuck the dead.

COOK: Make me puke?

LINDA: She probably couldn't find any victims to talk about it.

JIM: It's an interesting debate. Can your environment relieve you of moral responsibilities?

CONNIE: (CLAPS HANDS) Heads up! Bowties on. Linda your shirt's got a stain. I want a fresh one tomorrow. Jim, you're gorgeous as always. Renee, hair tied back.

CONNIE BUSIES HERSELF CLEANING UP AFTER WAITERS.

CONNIE: Everyone ready? Manager's on a bit of a rampage today. Watch your backs.

LINDA: What do you think, Con?

CONNIE: I don't think, I work.

LINDA: Do you think we're born bad, or we just get that way from a bad environment?

COOK: I grew up in a lousy neighborhood. I don't go around cutting people for a few bucks. How come it's always the Blacks and Ricans? I don't cross the street when I see a white guy coming.

JIM: Thank you for clearing that issue up for us.

RAY: I'm glad I'm not anything, you know?

LINDA: Huh?

RAY: I'm glad I'm not Black, or Jewish or Chinese. I'm just American. Well, you know, Irish.

CONNIE: Well, I'm not Irish and I'm an American.

COOK: I'm not either.

JIM: And you're just about the most American American I've ever known.

COOK: (UNCERTAIN) Thank you.

RAY: I mean, I don't have to worry about being something else too.

CONNIE: (BEEN THINKING) I think you make your own life

CONNIE: for yourself (BEAT) I got pregnant when I was
(cont'd) seventeen years old.

LINDA AND JIM KNOW THIS SPEECH AND MOUTH THE WORDS SILENTLY. RAY
AND COOK SNEAK OUT BACK DOOR.

CONNIE: My mother always said, if he wants the milk, he's
got to buy the cow. Well, I was too smart, then.
Couldn't listen to anyone. I missed finishing high
school, college was too expensive with a kid. But
I worked like a mule, I refused to take welfare.
That's the way I was brought up. I work hard. Like
Ramon there. For some people, washing dishes all
day would be unbearable. But for him, it's
paradise. Right Ramon? Are you happy here? Ramon?

RAMON: (LOOKS AT LINDA) Happy?

CONNIE: It's a question of... expectations. He's a good
boy, Ramon. A real hard worker. None a you people
know what that is. In his country, people work or
they starve. Here they drink their welfare
cheques and piss 'em out.

TONY ENTERS

TONY: Jim, Renee, you have customers. Connie, there's
inventory to do.

CONNIE: Oh. I thought I'd do that after lunch. I have
to--

TONY: I need you now. I've got errands to run.

CONNIE: Uh huh. Mr. Sullivan in yet?

TONY: Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Sullivan. You'd think it was the Second Coming. Yes, he'll be in. (EXITS)

CONNIE: You know what he does? You know where he's going? He runs up and down the street, and checks every restaurant to see how busy they are. He's terrified we're the only one. He is obsessed. They all know what he's doing. It's embarrassing! (EXITS)

RAMON AND LINDA ARE LEFT ALONE. SHE WIPES A COUNTER. HESITATES, THEN TURNS TO LEAVE. RAMON GRABS HER ARM.

RAMON: Why don't you speak to me?

LINDA: I didn't get a chance--

RAMON: I called you this weekend. You never answer your phone?

LINDA: It's not... that. I got very drunk with you. I didn't want to do... that again.

RAMON: You didn't want to do what you did?

LINDA: Not that way.

RAMON: (TRIES TO TOUCH HER) What way?

LINDA: (TRYING TO WRIGGLE AWAY FROM HIM) It's nothing,
Ramon. I can't talk about it now-- (SHE LOOKS
TOWARD KITCHEN DOOR)

RAMON: What is wrong? Are you afraid they will see us?
You're embarrassed?

*RAY COMES IN FROM DOWNSTAIRS WHILE THEY ARE STILL LOCKED
AWKWARDLY. SEPARATE SUDDENLY. RAMON GOES BACK TO MACHINE. LINDA
RUNS TO COFFEE MACHINE AND MAKES HERSELF BUSY.*

RAY: (WITH PAPER) Did you see the news? We just
invaded Panama.

RAMON: No!
(RUNS OVER TO RAY, AND GRABS THE PAPER FROM HIM)

RAY: They say it's the war against drugs. This...
Noriega's a big-time coke dealer. Guess they
gotta do something. (BEAT) Hey, Ramon, you're
not from Panama, are you?

RAMON: Panama? No, No. El Salvador.

RAY: Oh. Good.

*LINDA EXITS KITCHEN. RAMON WATCHES HER. LIGHTS FADE ON HIM AND
RAY.*

ACT TWO. SCENE TWO:

LIGHTS UP FAST IN KITCHEN. RAMON IS WIPING UP THE LAST OF THE POTS.

RENEE IS DOING HIP BENDS.

RENEE: (TO RAMON) So, this is probably it for me. The end of my waitressing career. Well, I am thirty-four years old for God's sake. Oh! I never tell anyone that! (BEAT) Not a moment too soon. Once you get your foot in the door, the rest just opens up for you. Can you imagine what this'll look like on my resume?

JIM AND LINDA ENTER.

JIM: I dropped my last check. Could you coffee them for me?

LINDA: What am I, your Sherpa?

JIM: Please. I have a heavy date with my sweetheart. It's our anniversary.

LINDA: Renee and I are staying for a drink. Join us?

JIM: I have a million things to do! I'm making us a special supper, candlelight, bottle of Dom Perignon. It's been six months.

LINDA: Aren't you supposed to wait a year?

JIM: Well, we're celebrating the success of "Enfin" as well. And Bob said he's got something important to tell me. Big news.

RENEE: I guess we're all celebrating today! I've got a table. Linda, I'll meet you at barside (EXITS)

LINDA: I knew you were that kinda man. Once you fall in love, you drop all your friends.

JIM: You exaggerate. (KISSES HER) Tata!
(RUNS OUT)

PAUSE

LINDA: (TO RAMON) Stay for a drink?

RAMON: Here?

LINDA: Yeah, Renee's last day.

RAMON: You're going to speak to me?

LINDA: (SIGHS) I told you... It's not that--

RAMON: I called you every day this week. I needed to talk to you. Not your stupid machine.

LINDA: I never answer my phone--

RAMON: Is it normal to you to make love to a man like it is nothing?

LINDA: Come for a drink--

RAMON: It is because this is what I do? (GRABS SHIRT)
This is not what I am. (HE APPROACHES HER. SHE
TOUCHES HIM. OVER HIS SHOULDER SHE SEES HOMELESS
MAN COME IN THE BACK DOOR.)

LINDA: I just don't like to be so... so.. needed. I want
us to do this slower. I'm not used to things
going so fast. (SEES MAN AT DOOR) Look--

RAMON: (TO MAN) No! No puedo! Disculpa me.

LINDA: Let's give him something. What have we got?

RAMON: Nothing. I put everything away. Kitchen's clean.

LINDA: C'mon. He's a regular, now.
Here. What's this? Leftover roast. Garbage?

RAMON: Yes.

LINDA: Perfect. (HANDS IT TO RAMON.) Give me the wrap
paper over there. Let's give him a nice piece...
(MOVES TO FRIDGE) of Grand Marnier cheesecake...

TONY WALKS IN. WATCHES FOR A SECOND. HOMELESS MAN SLINKS AWAY
WHEN HE SEES TONY.

TONY: What the hell are you doing?

LINDA: Nothing.

TONY: (GRABS BAG FROM RAMON) What's this? Roast beef ?
I should fire you now, you little sonofabitch.
What did I tell you? It's this kind of ...
attitude, this kind of... SUBVERSION that ruins a
restaurant. DO YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?? Yes, I think
you do. READ MY LIPS! You never, never give away
anything from this kitchen unless you show it to
me first for my approval. HAVE YOU GOT IT?
(RAMON DOESN'T RESPOND, LOWERS HIS EYES.)

LINDA: (WATCHING RAMON) It's just garbage. Scraped off
the plates. It's gonna float around on a barge
forever.

TONY: What, are you his lawyer?

LINDA: This rule is ridiculous.

TONY: I don't make the rules. Mr. Sullivan makes the
rules. Mr. Sullivan makes all the decisions, I
just enforce them. I'm the ENFORCER. Like
Schwarzenegger. Something isn't right, talk to
Mr. Sullivan. Understand? (BEAT) I like you,
Linda. You got a chip on your shoulder, I find
interesting in a woman. (TO RAMON) You watch
your back. (EXITS)

LINDA: (BEAT) Why do you let him talk to you like that?

RAMON: For some people, like him, there is no answer.

LINDA: No, that's too easy. If you just stood up to him once, he'd leave you alone--

RAMON: Easy? You're telling me what's EASY? It's easy for you to walk out of this place and find another job tomorrow. For me, I don't exist here in this country, and I can't exist at home. I don't EXIST! This is my job, THIS! (TAKES DISHES AND DROPS ONE, TOSSES A POT) This is my universe. We do the work you and him and her don't want to do, and we're supposed to be... HAPPY! You watch your television and you think you understand how the world works. The word in 10 seconds. Your good fortune makes you think you are... superior. All you Americans.

LINDA: Oh, here we go... I wonder how you ever got the balls to get out of Salvador.

RAMON: And you fuck someone like it's the same as having your morning shit! (BEAT) I'm sorry. Linda?

LINDA: (WRIGGLES AWAY FROM HIM) Look. I'll be at the bar. When you're done, come have a drink. Or don't.

RAMON: We'll go somewhere else? Not here. I can't here.

LINDA: We're toasting Renee. Then we'll go next door.
(SOFTER) Okay?

LIGHTS FADE AS RAMON WATCHES HER LEAVE. HE REGARDS PILES OF
GARBAGE. KICKS A BAG. LIGHTS OUT.

ACT TWO. SCENE THREE:

LIGHTS UP AT RESTAURANT BAR. THE COOK AND TONY ARE SITTING AT ONE
END, RENEE AND LINDA AT THE OTHER.

LINDA: (TOASTING) To the future... Jessica Lange!

RENEE: Please. Meryl Streep. Much more range.
And to you, Linda. To... well, what do you want?

LINDA: Oh, the usual. (FACETIOUS) A husband, a house,
and 3 lovely children.

RENEE: Stranger things can happen.

LINDA: I want to feel less... pissed off all the time.
Maybe it's time to leave this city. Now, I've
been quacking on about that since I came here. Me
and 10 million others. (BEAT) To... Jim! And his
lovely bride! To... (LOOKS OVER AT TONY) What
the hell... To Tony!

TONY: Thanks. (BEAT) (A LITTLE DRUNK) You're a good
team--

COOK: (TO LINDA) What am I, coloured?

LINDA: To the future... Chef Boy-Ar-Dee!

COOK: You got the Chef part right... I been real busy--

TONY: We're changing the menu. Going to try more nouvelle stuff. Steve here's been cooking up a storm. Bright kid.

LINDA ALMOST CHOKES ON HER DRINK

COOK: So, Boss, I wrote down those ideas for you. Ray won't talk about them, so... And I'd like to get the kitchen under control. Inventory's all screwed up--

TONY: You got it. I like your attitude.

COOK: Well, I like to pitch in where I can.

TONY: And we got reservations coming out of our ears next month. They're back! Did you hear me? They're all coming back! Hey, you seen Connie?

COOK: I think she's downstairs.

TONY: I didn't tell her yet, but she's got the job. Mr. Sullivan's coming tomorrow. She can stop lickin' my ass now.

LINDA: To your ass, Tony! May it always be well-licked!

COOK: I'm on my way out. (TO TONY) I'LL TELL HER TO COME UP, Okay? (EXITS)

TONY: Okay! (LOOKS AT OTHERS) Feel like having a little fun?

RENEE: What?

TONY: Haven't tried THIS for awhile, but it works everytime.

(GETS TO HIS FEET, A LITTLE DRUNK. PULLS A BILL FROM HIS WALLET GOES BEHIND BAR AND RUMMAGES FOR SOMETHING. GIGGLING A BIT.)

RENEE: What are you doing?

TONY: You'll see. (TIES A HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL TO LONG STRING. RUNS TO KITCHEN DOOR AND PLACES IT JUST OUTSIDE. RACES BACK TO THE BAR AND SITS DOWN.)

LINDA: What're you doing?

TONY: You'll see. Works every time.

THEY ARE ALL WATCHING. HEAR A NOISE AT THE KITCHEN DOOR.

CONNIE: (COMING THROUGH THE DOOR) Ah, my aching dogs. Fucking heels. (STOPS TO REMOVE HER SHOES. SEES A HUNDRED DOLLAR BILL) Hey. (GOES TO PICK IT UP. IT MOVES. TAKES A STEP. MOVES AGAIN)

RENEE AND TONY BURST OUT LAUGHING.

CONNIE: The oldest one in the book. I must be tired.
(WALKS TO BAR AND SITS DOWN. SHE'S ACTUALLY QUITE
PISSED OFF, BUT WON'T SHOW IT.)
Think I'll have one myself. Mr. Sullivan never
made it in, huh?

TONY: I guess not.

CONNIE: Guess he'll be in tomorrow?

TONY: Guess so.

CONNIE: So, we're having a party here, I see. I told
Ramon to join us when he's finished.

TONY LOOKS AT THE OTHERS. RUNS TO REPLACE BILL AT THE DOOR. RUNS
BACK TO HIS SEAT.

LINDA: Aw, leave him alone.

RAMON EMERGES FROM KITCHEN WITH TWO ENORMOUS BAGS OF GARBAGE.
DOESN'T SEE MONEY AT FIRST, RETURNS TO KITCHEN TO GET TWO MORE BAGS.
THEN HE SEES IT. HE LOOKS AROUND. TONY, RENEE, AND CONNIE
START TO GIGGLE QUIETLY. RAMON REACHES FOR THE MONEY. IT MOVES.
HE FOLLOWS. IT MOVES AGAIN. HE FOLLOWS. IT MOVES AGAIN. TONY,
CONNIE, RENEE AND FINALLY LINDA ARE LAUGHING UPROARIOUSLY. RAMON
DROPS THE GARBAGE AND MOVES TO THE BAR.

TONY: If you saw your face!

RENEE: (TO OTHERS) He couldn't quite figure it out...

CONNIE: I haven't seen anyone fall for that one so good in
a long time--

LINDA: Okay, guys, I don't think he appreciates--

RAMON: (TO TONY. SO ANGRY, HE'S SPEAKING SPANISH)
You are all fucking assholes!

RENEE: Uh-oh. He's speaking Spanish. Good thing we
can't understand.

TONY: Ramon, come on-- Hey, come on, Amigo.

RAMON: (REALLY ANGRY. THE WHITE KIND OF HATRED THAT
MAKES YOUR EARS RING) You are a fucking
sonofabitch with pig-shit for brains.

TONY: Hey, speak white! What are you LOOKING AT?

*OTHERS ARE GETTING UP FROM THE BAR, AS THEY SENSE SOMETHING
HAPPENING. THE NEXT SEQUENCE EVERYONE WATCHES AS IF
TEMPORARILY FROZEN.*

RAMON: I am looking at you.

LINDA: Ramon, sit down, have a drink.

*TONY PUTS HIS ARM AROUND RAMON'S SHOULDER TO SIT HIM DOWN.
RAMON THROWS HIS ARMS OFF, SHOVING HIM IN THE PROCESS.*

TONY: Whoa! Easy!

LINDA: Ramon, sit down. Ramon! Jesus Christ, he's not
 worth it!

RAMON ATTACKS TONY IN A FURY OF ARMS AND LEGS. NO ONE
INTERVENES FOR A FEW VERY LONG SECONDS. FINALLY, CONNIE AND
LINDA JUMP IN, LINDA TAKES A HARD PUNCH FROM TONY. CONNIE
MANAGES TO GET RAMON OFF TONY, WHO IS ALMOST UNCONSCIOUS.
RAMON STRUGGLES IN CONNIE'S ARMS, BUT THE FIGHT'S GONE OUT
OF HIM.

CONNIE: Someone call an ambulance!

RENEE RUNS TO THE PHONE.

CONNIE: And call the police!

LINDA: Jesus, Con. Not the police. The cops come he's
 in real trouble--

CONNIE: What're you talking about? LOOK AT TONY!

LINDA: Let him go, Con. LET HIM GO! (TO RAMON) Christ!
 GET OUTA HERE! GO ON!

CONNIE HOLDS HIM, BUT HE MAKES NO EFFORT TO RUN.

LINDA: WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT TWO. SCENE FOUR:

THE NEXT MORNING. IN THE KITCHEN. RAY IS LOOKING THROUGH A NEWSPAPER. COOK IS TASTING FOOD.

RAY: Feels a little... too quiet here this morning.
Feels tense or something. (BEAT) Stomach's actin'
up again. (REACHES FOR PAPER)

COOK: So... Chef... I talked to Tony yesterday. Looks
like we got reservations pouring in for next
month. He wants to try out some of my recipes.

RAY: (BEAT) You talked to Tony?

COOK: Yeah, Chef.

RAY: You talk to Connie?

COOK: Connie don't like me. But then, Connie ain't in
charge.

RENEE ENTERS

RAY: Renee! You forgot something? Or you just
couldn't leave us?

RENEE: (DEAD) I didn't get it.

RAY: I don't understand... They said you had it.

RENEE: I didn't get THAT part. They said I was too...
Nevermind. I got another part. The Nazi matron.

RENEE: I got three lines. Three fucking lines...
(cont'd)

RAY: Aw, I'm sorry, Renee--

RENEE: Oh, fuck off. All of you.

I know none of you believed it would happen. (BEAT)
None of you wanted it to happen. Well, what IS to
be done? BUTTERS? (BEAT) They want me to put on
15 pounds! (ALMOST SOBBING) (WANDERS AROUND THE
KITCHEN, SPATULA IN HAND) I'll be in the
bathroom. (EXITS)

CONNIE ENTERS, FOLLOWED BY NEW, HISPANIC DISHWASHER, PASSES

RENEE.

CONNIE: What's with her? (BEAT)

So, here's the kitchen. There's your machine.

COOK: She didn't get the part again.

CONNIE: Oh, no, ...Babydoll. Gentleman, this is Angel.

Angel, right? He'll be washing dishes--

RAY: What happened to the last one? Where's Ramon?

CONNIE: It's a very long story. He is no longer working
here. (TO ANGEL) You go change downstairs, I
want you back up in five minutes. Gentlemen, Mr.
Sullivan, rumour has it, is here. He's DOWNSTAIRS!

BACK DOOR OPENS. CONNIE LOOKS OVER, EXPECTING MR. SULLIVAN. ADJUSTS HER DRESS.

LINDA WALKS IN.

LINDA: Who's he? Oh, the new dishwasher? You don't waste time around here, do you?

CONNIE: Why aren't you dressed?

LINDA: I came for my paycheque.

CONNIE: Now, what you wanna do that for?

LINDA: You're the person I speak to now, right?

CONNIE: I'm taking over while Tony's in hospital.

COOK: (To Ray) What did she say?

LINDA: So, what are they going to do with him?

CONNIE: They're gonna fix his nose, he's got a concussion-

COOK: Who's got a concussion?

LINDA: I mean Ramon.

CONNIE: I don't know, and I don't care. We're pressing charges.

LINDA: You shoulda let him go. THEY'LL DEPORT HIM.

CONNIE: He's a fuckin loony!

LINDA: They'll kill him if he goes home--

CONNIE: I'm losing sleep already.

LINDA: You shoulda let him go... It's only a job, Connie.

CONNIE: You can do what you want, huh? You don't have two kids, one who's slow in school. You don't run to the goddam doctor and fork out two hundred bucks when your kid gets a fever in the middle of the night. You don't have nothing to worry about. Don't tell me what I should do!

(BRUSHING OFF LINDA. MOVES TO DINING ROOM DOOR)
MR. SULLIVAN! You made it! How good to see you Sir! I'm Constance Stavros. I don't think we've met. Can I get you a coffee, Sir? (EXITS)

LINDA WATCHES CONNIE. SHAKES HER HEAD. JIM WALKS IN.

JIM: (SINGING) "Gibraltar may crumble, the Rockies may tumble, but all I have to say,... Our love is here.. to... stayyyy..." (TO LINDA) He TOLD them! He told Mom and Dad! They didn't disown him, they didn't threaten plagues, they didn't even spill their martinis... They said they suspected all along-- He told them. He loves me. We're going to visit them this weekend. What will I say?

LINDA: I'm sure you'll think of something.

JIM: Why aren't you dressed?

LINDA: I'm quitting, Jim.

JIM: You can't. What are you talking about?

LINDA: I am.

JIM: You can't. Who will I talk to?

LINDA: I'll call you. I promise. I just need time off.
Change of scenery. You know--

JIM: That sounds ominous. What's going on?

LINDA: It's a long story. There's just some stuff I have
to do. Nothing heavy, you know, just completely
change my life. I just, need to do something.
Just do something.

JIM: I don't understand. What happened?

LINDA: I'll call you. (HUGS HIM) I will. (TO RAY)
I'll see you around, Ray. It was a pleasure.
(HUGS RAY) (TO STEVE) Hasta Luego. (EXITS)

***JIM WATCHES HER LEAVE. THEN, BUSIES HIMSELF MAKING COFFEE,
ETC... DISHWASHER COMES BACK. GOES TO MACHINE.***

JIM: (GESTURES TO ANGEL) Who is that? That's not
Ramon. What is going on? (BEAT)
Well, what is to be done? (TO RAY AND COOK)

JIM: Good Morning, Gentlemen. Cap' .ino?
(cont'd)

COOK: (TO RAY) What's with him?

JIM: Well? Steven? Sugar?

COOK: (BEWILDERED) Yes. Please?

RAY: Yeah. No. No, thank you. My stomach.

JIM SERVES COOK A COFFEE

RAY: (TO NO ONE IN PARTICULAR) I've been thinking about that boat with my brother-in-law. I could do it. I got the money. Why wait?

JIM: I agree, Chef. Life is not a dress rehearsal, as someone once said.

COOK: In Montauk? There's no fish left out there.

RAY: Course there is.

COOK: Not what I heard. I heard there's no fish left. You ever catch a fish there?

RAY: Sure, plenty.

COOK: When? 1945? For fishing you got to go to Canada. Millions of fish there.

RAY: You know, it's so close, but I never been there.

JIM: I was in Montreal, once. Very pretty. Clean.
Very clean.

RAY: I saw a show about Canada once. They speak
French there. I'm too old to learn French.

JIM: It's never too late, Raymond.

RAY: Well, you never know, huh?
I like listening to that French accent. I find it
kinda sexy. On women.

JIM: (OPENING FRIDGE) Oh, for goodness sake. Ray, look
at these cantaloupe! They're hard as rock! We
can't serve these... They're mutating for
goodness sake...

LIGHTS DIM AS JIM CONTINUES HIS LITANY.

LIGHTS OUT.

ACT TWO. SCENE FIVE:

RAMON WALKS OUT TO THE SPOT IN CENTERSTAGE.

RAMON: (TO AUDIENCE) I ran and I ran, expecting to get it
in the back, in the leg, in the head. I am
surprised to still be alive. (BEAT) I never saw
her again. I tried to find her apartment, but my
memory of our travels that night... I never saw her

RAMON: again. I live on the streets, in the alleys, under the ground where people step over me on their way to work. (BEAT) I learned that there is something worse than being hated. It is being... ignored. In Salvador, six Jesuit priests, their cook and her fifteen year old daughter were murdered by elite solders trained, no... created by the Americans. When they were found, their brains lay on the slippery grass, shot right out of their skulls. There was... speculation whether the intact brains had been removed by the killers. Symbols that the priests, after all, were the brains behind the Movement. But no, that is what happens when you are shot at close range with an M-16. This incident scandalized the world. Now, it is completely forgotten. (BEAT) Revolutions, famines, new wars of resistance... some even say the end of history... have distracted everyone's attention. (BEAT) One thing worse than being hated is being ignored.

*LIGHTS FADE ON RAMON, AS "NEW YORK, NEW YORK" IS HEARD AGAIN
UNTIL ITS FINAL NOTE.*

THE END