

Excerpts from...

The Scary Man Plays



A series of short, daily-written plays exploring, love, loss and a few laughs by John Moore

NO. 2: "SERIOUSLY, SCARY MAN ..."

The year is 2008. SCARY MAN stands at crowded bar, awaiting service. He's scribbling on a napkin. TIME passes. Eventually a WAITRESS brings him a Stella. He's then approached by a woman who clearly knows him.

NICE WOMAN: Scary Man, I need your advice.

SCARY MAN: And I've got some for you: Don't bet money on the Broncos until they prove they can win a playoff game without John Elway at quarterback.

NICE WOMAN: Oh silly, everyone knows that but Amy Board. No, I need your advice about women.

SCARY MAN: Well, I'm clearly the expert. My longest relationship lasted 42 seconds.

NICE WOMAN: I know, that's why I've come to you. It's about my son. He's 24 and has no idea how to approach women. What would you tell him?

SCARY MAN: Well when I find someone attractive, I run a background check at work. That way I can get her address, phone number, social security number, credit rating and criminal history without actually having to speak to her. It makes the inevitable stalking that much less confrontational. ... That's just how I do it, though.

NICE WOMAN: Well! ... If only my son were a theater critic, too! But assuming he doesn't have your access to criminal records ...

SCARY MAN: Short of that, I dunno ... Just tell him to engage the woman in any kind of conversation that will

lead to her giving up her email address or phone number without her even realizing it.

NICE WOMAN: For example ...?

SCARY MAN: For example, I might break the ice with you by asking, "What did you think of the Tuesday's elections?"

NICE WOMAN: "Hooray for the Democrats!"

SCARY MAN: OK ... Then so then I'd say to you, "If that's how you really feel, you should check out this article i was reading about how Tuesday was really a disaster for the Democrats."

NICE WOMAN: "Waaaaaah?" ... Oh, I saw "Urinetown" last Friday. Now I can't stop saying, "Waaaaaah?" ... Isn't that cute?

SCARY MAN: No. "So even though Tuesday's election meant a shift in the overall numbers toward the Democrats in Congress, the election itself was a massive defeat for Democratic policies. Because these new Democrats we were electing all over the country are called "Blue Dog" Democrats. They are really nothing more than Republicans in sheep's clothing. They are conservative Democrats who are pro-gun, pro-life, anti-gay, anti-tax and anti- any sort of social program. What Americans voted for Tuesday was lower gas prices. They certainly didn't vote for fairness for women, immigrants, homosexuals ... or deers."

NICE WOMAN: I really should read more.

SCARY MAN: Then I might say to you, "Write down your email address and I'll send you the link to this article.

Oh, and there's a lecture next week in Boulder about how all these dumb-ass Democrats got duped into thinking they actually won on Tuesday. Write down your phone number, too; we can go together."

NICE WOMAN: Oh Scary Man, you are so smooth! Only you could take the greatest Democratic mandate in 40 years and turn it into gloom and doom -- and get a girl's email address and phone number out of it! I swear, if I didn't have 17 grandchildren, I would be all over you myself.

SCARY MAN: But alas ...

NICE WOMAN: So, sweet Scary Man ... I have a personal question to ask you ...

SCARY MAN ... Careful.

NICE WOMAN: Scary Man, you are so charming, so smart, so handsome and so funny. ... I just have to ask ...

SCARY MAN ...No, you really don't.

NICE WOMAN ... I know we don't know each other all that well, but that's not going to stop me ...

SCARY MAN: Why would it? ...

NICE WOMAN: Seriously, Scary Man, I must know ...

SCARY MAN: Here it comes ...

NICE WOMAN: (an added sound effect makes the following words come out distorted, mangled, slowed-down and amplified): Why ... aren't ... you ... married?

(SCARY MAN stops, turns toward NICE WOMAN, looks deep into her eyes and finally says, seriously and without missing a beat ...)

SCARY MAN: ... Because there's something wrong with me. (To bartender:) Check, please! (Back to NICE WOMAN, who tries to interject, but he beats her to it, again without missing a beat): So anyway, did I point out how all that malicious glee the gays were showing last week over the fall of that maggot preacher in Colorado Springs came back to bite them on the ass on Election Day? Because here was Hickenlooper going on TV talking about fairness, selling the idea to the mainstream about how committed same-sex couples are really just like you and me -- monogamous normal folks who deserve the same rights as you and me, and how all they want is basic fairness, and along comes this sicko scandal that

only serves to reinforce in dumbass mainstream America's minds the tired stereotype that homosexuality is in fact a depraved lifestyle that's all mixed up with prostitution and drugs and seedy hotels ..."

(As SCARY MAN prattles on -- improvise, actors! -- about how the fate of the world was not saved, rather the opposite, in Tuesday's elections, the lights and volume on SCARY MAN fade, leaving a discombobulated, nosy, fawning NICE WOMAN to wonder winsomely under his unbroken political prattling ...)

NICE WOMAN VOICE: "So what really IS wrong with you SCARY MAN?" ...

END OF PLAY

NO. 3: "VOICE MESSAGE"

SCARY MAN climbs onto his double-bed, punching up pillows and the push-buttons on his phone ...

COMPUTERIZED VOICEOVER: You have one new message, left Monday at 2:14 a.m. ...

(The action shifts to an identical bed on the other side of the set, where the following narrated action plays out):

VOICE (The following is recorded narrative): Hey there, Scary Man. I just had a dream where I woke up cold and naked in the middle of the night, and I turned to hold you so you could make me feel warm again. But you weren't there ...

WOMAN (picking up the narrative, lying atop the second bed and now speaking live): ... Well, part of you was there. Your heart was sitting on the pillow next to me right there where you ... well, where you usually are. All of you. Your heart just sat there, beating slowly, splashing blood all over the sheets, as if it had just escaped and found its way home. And I just ... smiled. I was so happy to see your heart, Scary Man, without all of those layers of skin and veins and sinewy cartilage keeping me from it.

"Well, hey there," I said happily. "I have been wanting to meet you for the longest time."

NAKED BEATING BLOODY HEART: "Shhh! Not too loud. You don't want to wake the Scary Man."

WOMAN: "Absolutely not, thank you," I said. And then, do you know what, Scary Man? He told me a joke. Really! To break the ice, I'm sure. He whispers to me ...

NAKED BEATING BLOODY HEART: "What did the bartender say to the horse?"

WOMAN: Well, you know me, Scary Man, I don't know jokes. So he says to me...

NAKED BEATING BLOODY HEART: "Why the long face?"

WOMAN: We laughed and laughed. I always wanted to believe you have a pure heart, Scary Man, and that's when I knew for sure. Because your heart told me a clean joke. You always say that your heart is black as coal, but I know better. So I asked him, "Where have you been all this time, Scary Man's heart?" And he said ...

NAKED BEATING BLOODY HEART: Finding my rhythm...

WOMAN: And we laughed and laughed again. "Well this is turning into a regular party," I said, and so like a good Southern girl, I got up in the middle of the night and made us a couple of Bloody Marys. There we sat, both of us naked in the bed, and I tried and tried to get your heart to open up and tell me all about you. But he was being coy. So I took that bottle of vodka and I poured it straight down his arteries and up his veins. "Why do you hide yourself?" I asked your heart. "Where do you go? Who are you, really?" And boy did that Bloody Mary loosen him up. It was an intravenous infusion of truth. He told me everything I've always wanted to know, Scary Man. All your secrets. It was wonderful. When he was done, I knew you for the first time. I mean, really knew you. I sat back in my bed in absolute content. It felt better than a good fuck. Finally, I turned to your heart and I said in utter contentment, "It's so nice to finally meet you."

NAKED BEATING BLOODY HEART: You know that I love you, too, don't you? Ab imo pectore?

WOMAN: "I do," I told him. Then for the longest time I just stared at your organ on the pillow next to me, still calmly and regularly pumping away, splashing blood everywhere. And finally I wondered: "What keeps you beating, Scary Man's heart? You aren't connected to anything!" But before you got a chance to answer, there was a loud noise, a car crash nearby, I think, and I woke up. And in that cruel instant when the daylight snuffs the wise synapses of the dark, I couldn't remember anything your heart had told me about you. Not one word. All your secrets -- lost ... again. I just cried and cried, Scary Man. I was lost and cold and alone in my bed and missing you.

NAKED BEATING BLOODY HEART: So what did you do?

WOMAN: Well, I got up and made myself two Bloody Marys and crawled back into bed. Now I'm calling you, Scary Man, to tell you all about it, and you're not home. You're not here. You're not there. Where are you, Scary Man? I hope I'll be seeing you again soon. Since you won't talk to me in the real world, maybe you'll talk to me in my dreams ...

END OF PLAY

NO. 4: DISASTER DATE #463 (First in a series)

CHARACTERS:

SCARY MAN: A scary man

SHORT-TIMER: His date

WAITER

CHEF

SETTING: Mizuna, a fantsypants Denver restaurant with cloth napkins.

SCARY MAN (to audience): I knew I was in trouble the moment I saw the cloth napkins.

WAITER: Hello folks, can I start you off with something to drink?

SCARY MAN: Um, er, ehhh, ershlgghhrrer.

SHORT-TIMER: Tsssssk (followed by a tiny, intentionally punctured pouty exhale to indicate slight disgust).

WAITER: Why don't I give you folks a little more time?

SCARY MAN (to audience): I was out of my element. This wasn't the buffet line at the Country Dinner Playhouse. It had ... cloth napkins!

WAITER: Are you two folks ready to order?

SCARY MAN: Ahhh, urrr, umm... dishmithlferter.

SHORT-TIMER: Tsssssk (followed by a louder, intentionally punctured pouty exhale to indicate moderate disgust).

WAITER: Why don't I give you folks a little more time?

SCARY MAN (to audience): I was nervous. I really wanted to impress this girl. Enough so that I took her here, to this strange place where I couldn't understand anything on the menu, much less eat it. Where are the chicken tenders? Where are the corn dogs? Where's the f*&^ing kids menu???

WAITER: Do you folks have any questions about the menu?

SCARY MAN: Well, er, er, liftshistmbleforth –

SHORT-TIMER: Tsssssk (followed by a noticeable, intentionally punctured pouty exhale to indicate growing disgust).

WAITER: Why don't I give you folks a little more time?

SCARY MAN (to audience): And then I saw it. My escape. There it was in black and white and calligraphy: Mac N Cheese. Well, actually it said Mac N Lobster, which is kinda gross, because who really likes lobster, right? But surely you can't have Mac N Lobster without the Cheese. There WILL be Cheese! This IS better than the buffet line at the Country Dinner Playhouse!

WAITER: Do you have any questions about the menu?

SHORT-TIMER: Tsssssk (followed by a blatant, intentionally punctured pouty exhale to indicate maximum disgust).

SCARY MAN: Hey! Wait for it!

SHORT-TIMER: Oh, sorry ... I just assumed.

SCARY MAN: As a matter of fact, we ARE ready to order, my good sir. Short timer?

SHORT-TIMER: Yes, I'll have the skewered strips of filet mignon with a Malaysian curry dipping sauce.

WAITER: An excellent choice. Hungry, are we?

SHORT-TIMER: First date.

WAITER: Oh, I understand completely. Then you are going to want a side order, an expensive bottle of wine, and dessert. I recommend that you start out with a small pasta with truffle oil. Perhaps the smoked salmon sampler.

SHORT-TIMER: I'll take it.

WAITER: Which one?

SHORT-TIMER: Bring them both.

WAITER: Perfect. And you, sir?

SCARY MAN: Yes, I'll have the Mac N Cheese N (trailing off) ... no lobster.

WAITER: I'm sorry, what did you say?

SCARY MAN: I said, I'll have the Mac N Cheese N (trailing off) ... no lobster.

WAITER: Wait, for a second there I thought you said you wanted the Mac ... N the cheese ... N no lobster! Hahahah.

SCARY MAN: I did. That's exactly what I just said.

(AWKWARD PAUSE)

WAITER: I'm sorry, but just so I make sure that I deliver your order to your exact specifications ... would you just mind repeating yourself one more time?

SCARY: I want the Mac ... N the Cheese ... N I don't want

WAITER: Wait, wait, wait. I want the chef to hear this.

(WAITER dashes off into the kitchen.)

SHORT-TIMER: Tsssssssssk (followed by a loud, intentionally punctured pouty exhale to indicate more maximum than maximum disgust).

CHEF: Yes, what is so important that I have to hear this myself?

SCARY MAN: I want the Mac ... N I want the Cheese ...

CHEF: N the lobster. Yes, this is no problem. I don't underst --

SCARY MAN: No! ... N I DON'T want the lobster.

WAITER: See see see ... what did I tell you?

CHEF: What did you just say, you horrible little scary man?

SCARY MAN: Oh, I think you heard me.

CHEF: But sir, no one orders the greatest, most delectable delicacy on our menu, and then says, "But I want you to hold the greatest, most delectable delicacy on our menu!"

SCARY MAN: I just did.

CHEF: You're playing a very dangerous game here, you

monster!

SCARY MAN: Why? ... Is there some sort of rule? Does it say "no substitutions" somewhere on your menu? I didn't realize this was Benny's! Oh let me just look one more time ... Nope, no I don't see anywhere on this menu where it says, "Welcome to Benny's! No substitutions."

CHEF: Very well sir. ... That will just leave more for my cat.

WAITER: You understand we will have to charge you full price for that?

SCARY MAN: I would expect nothing less.

WAITER: Oh, I assure you, these will be the best four bites of Mac N Cheese that you will ever taste ... for \$463 ... sir.

SCARY MAN: And I will thank you for it!

WAITER: And I will thank you for thanking me for it!

(CHEF and WAITER dart into the kitchen. Pause. Pause. Wait for it ... Wait for it ... and ... huge burst of laughter rises from behind kitchen doors. SHORT-TIMER drops her head in disgust. WAITER returns with two glasses of water.)

WAITER: Is there anything else I can get for you folks while you are waiting?

SHORT-TIMER (to WAITER): Yes. Just put mine in a box. I won't be staying. (Turns to SCARY MAN) Tssssssssssssk (followed by a tiny, barely noticeable, punctured pouty exhale to indicate her slight disgust).

END OF PLAY

NO. 5: "FEMALE CHARACTER"

SETTING: Denver's City Park. FEMALE CHARACTER sits alone on a bench tucked in a remote corner of the park. SCARY MAN gathers his four high-school students and together they approach FEMALE CHARACTER, who is, and will remain, oblivious to them. Over the course of the play, the students will study her closely like a scientific sample, even get nose-to-nose with her -- but there will be no acknowledgement.

SCARY MAN: Now, here's an excellent subject. OK, class, what do you notice straight away?

A: This is as far away as you can get from other people in the park.

B: Most people couldn't find this spot if they were looking

for it.

SCARY MAN: What does that tell you?

A: She doesn't want to be found.

C: She's nervous.

D: Her sunglasses are far too large. She's hiding.

C: Covering a bruise?

A: Her face, what I can see of it, anyway ... is stunning.

D: Those shoes are stunning.

C: Gucci?

D: No, Manolo Blahnik.

A: Her coat is too heavy for the weather.

B: She's wrapped up like a cocoon.

A: She must be sweating under all that.

C: And yet, she looks so cold.

(FEMALE CHARACTER removes her sunglasses. Students gasp...)

SCARY MAN: What do you see?

A: Her eyes are so large...

D: Sky blue ...

C: At one time, those eyes could captivate any man who made contact with them.

A: At one time ...

FEMALE CHARACTER stands up. Removes her coat and tosses it on the bench. Next to go is her scarf, then her sweater.

B: Oh my...

SCARY MAN: What?

B: Under all those layers, she's so very small...

SCARY MAN: Let's cover the basics.

A: She's ... oh, 37.

C: Married ... unhappily.

D: Very unhappily.

SCARY MAN: How do you know that?

C: Look, she keeps pulling on her wedding band.

A: Could just be a nervous reaction, maybe it's subconscious.

C: But she's tugging and tugging on that thing as if it were chained to her.

D: She feels guilty.

B: She's meeting a man here.

A: Clandestine!

B: Maybe for the first time.

D: Maybe for the last time.

SCARY MAN: What's her name?

- A: Desiree.
- B: Monica.
- C: Lee Ann.
- D: Katie.

- D: Three children.
- C: No, two!
- B: Her hair is long, auburn ...
- D: Why is it covered up and tied back by a scarf?
- C: To keep her kids from pulling on it?
- B: Nope ... she keeps it tight enough to hurt.
- C: Why?
- B: To never forget for one second how unhappy she is.
- C: Still, at one time ... a mesmerizing beauty...
- A: ... At one time.

FEMALE CHARACTER starts to smoke.

- B: Her puffs are long, heavy drags.
- C: To breathe in every last toxin.
- D: She wants for it to kill her.
- B: Deep down, she is exhilarated to be meeting her new lover here for the first time.
- D: Deep down, she's relieved to be meeting her old lover here for the last time.
- A: Are they breaking up?
- C: Or are they running away together?

STUDENTS: Hmmmmm...

- A: Her mind is made up.
- D: What had she been thinking, cavorting around with a man 15 years younger than her?
- B: Fifteen years older than her.
- C: Her son's T-Ball coach.
- A: Her babysitter's father.
- C: It has to stop.
- D: And it has to stop today.
- C: The risk is too great.
- D: She could lose everything.
- C: Her 15, no 17-year marriage to a man who is a respected doctor.
- A: Who she put through medical school.
- B: That's why doesn't have a degree of her own.
- D: He's a decent enough man.
- C: True (sigh) ... no bruise.
- B: A leader in the community.
- A: He's the T-Ball coach.

- B: He has provided for her.
- A: Given her security.

- D: He's a good father to her three children.
- C: Two children.
- B: She hates herself for betraying him.
- D: Even if the thrill is gone ... you know...
- C: In the bedroom.
- D: A cheap thrill is nothing stacked up against what she'll be giving up ...
- C: Graduations.
- B: Weddings.
- A: Grandchildren.
- C: She'll be penniless.
- A: Her only skill is how well she looks on her husband's arm.
- D: There's always a market for that.
- B: She often tells her girlfriends that things like politics and religion never mattered much to her.
- D: Why should they, when she has a husband who cares enough about those things for two people?

THEY ALL LAUGH

- D: But she's learned her lesson before it's too late.
- B: If her indiscretions had gotten out, her husband's budding political career would have been over before it even started.
- C: She could never live with that.
- D: All she has to do now is get it over with. Thank the young boy ...
- B: Thank the old man ...
- D: Thank the young boy for the nice couple of months.
- C: It's been a good shag.
- A: Let him down easy ... then get the hell out of here.
- C: Her son has to be picked up at 3.
- D: No one will be the wiser.

FEMALE CHARACTER sits back down on the bench, more relaxed and takes a long, deep breath.

- A: She's at peace.
- B: ... Wait a minute ...
- C: A wave of insecurity is suddenly washing over her.
- D: Where is he?
- A: He's late.
- C: He's not coming.
- B: She is growing impatient.
- A: Her son has to be picked up at 3.

- D: A chill is enveloping her.
- A: That feeling of dread that you get when you realize a cold is coming on, and there is nothing you can do to stop it.

SCARY MAN: Well, it sounds like you have her pretty well figured out.

A: Pretty well.
C: I'll say. It's as plain as the look on her face.
D: Wretched woman.
B: This was really a very easy exercise after all.

SCARY MAN: Have you settled on a name?

A: Julie!
B, C and D: Yes ... Julie!

B: Hey, where is that bastard?
A: He stood her up.
C: I can't take it.
D: I kind of feel sorry for her.

SCARY MAN: Someone is coming.
A: It's him!
B: I can't make out his face.

FEMALE CHARACTER: Oh thank god, you're here. You brought flowers. Lilies, of course ... Perfect as always ... Oh, no, I haven't been here long. ... OK, I've been here awhile. ... Yes, fretting. That's what I do ... No, it doesn't matter now. All that matters is that you're here. I've missed you, sweetheart. ... so much. ... The children are fine. They think you're coming home tomorrow. Oh I hate it when you are gone for even one night, Thomas. I miss you so much. ... Of course I believed you would make it. But you know, it's late. I was afraid ... Oh, Thomas, I couldn't stand the thought that after all these years, an anniversary might go come and go without us meeting up here, in the exact spot where I first set eyes on you so many years ago, where we come back every year so that I can look into them again and tell you with awe and with gratitude how much I truly love you ...

(FEMALE CHARACTER continues speaking to the unseen man as her voice, and the lights, fade).

END OF PLAY

PLAY 11: "THE POSSIBILITY OF YOU"

Setting: The end of the world. The remote end. WOMAN is seated. Looking. Intently. Without expectation. With contentedness. She's in this for the long haul.

SCARY MAN: What are you waiting for?

(WOMAN does not respond. Smiling. At peace.)

SCARY MAN: What are you waiting for?

(WOMAN does not respond).

SCARY MAN: You know I'm not coming.

WOMAN: I'm not waiting for you.

SCARY MAN: Bullshit.

WOMAN: I'm not.

SCARY MAN: Then what are you waiting for?

WOMAN: I am waiting for ... the possibility of you.

SCARY MAN: There's a difference?

WOMAN: Yes. And it's everything.

SCARY MAN: "The possibility of me." That's enough for you?

WOMAN: I'm not delusional. And I'm not greedy ... I'm patient. I know that the most I can hope for right now is the possibility of you.

SCARY MAN: You're mad!

WOMAN: Entirely likely.

SCARY MAN: Listen, you can't put your whole life on hold to look for me, and then come here to the end of the world, where you won't possibly find me.

WOMAN: And yet, here I am.

SCARY MAN: You're a coward.

WOMAN: No, I am determined.

SCARY MAN: If you are really looking for me, you shouldn't start at the end of the world. I mean, you really should start in a city. Where people live. I'll help you out. I'll tell you which one I'm in. Better yet, I'll give you my address.

WOMAN: I know all that.

SCARY MAN: Well, if that's true, then a person might start to think that you're not looking for me at all. That maybe this is all an excuse because you're running away from something else.

WOMAN: I didn't say I wanted to find you. I am well aware that might just ruin everything.

SCARY MAN: So, what is it that you really want?

WOMAN: What I really want is 10 minutes inside your head. Then I could find out what I need to know. That would have saved me five years of waiting, and wanting ... and counting.

SCARY MAN: But you know I'm not coming ... here.

WOMAN: Sometimes I allow myself to consider that possibility. It makes me sad.

SCARY MAN: But I'm way over on the other side of the world.

WOMAN: No, you're close.

SCARY MAN: How can you say that?

WOMAN: No matter where you are, you're close because you're here. I mean, look at you. I can't even get away from you here at the end of the world. You're inside my head. How close can you get?

SCARY MAN: You fool. Right now I am sitting by a different road, a hundred million miles away from here. And do you know what I'm doing?

WOMAN: No.

SCARY MAN: I'm doing the same thing you are.

WOMAN: Waiting?!

SCARY MAN: Waiting.

WOMAN: For who?

SCARY MAN: For someone ... who isn't you.

WOMAN: But you're a wanderer. And one day you'll wander again ... and this will be the last road you've never traveled. So you'll take it. And when you get to the end of this last road at the end of the world, I will be waiting for you.

SCARY MAN: What makes you think that when I get to the end of the last road at the end of the world, you are who I'll want to find?

WOMAN: I have a feeling.

SCARY MAN: A feeling? So you'll keep sitting here, waiting at the end of the world -- because you have a feeling?

WOMAN: If I give up that feeling, then I'll have nothing.

SCARY MAN: Listen to me: I have a thousand roads to travel before I will ever try this one. It's been five years, I haven't taken it yet.

WOMAN: I can wait.

SCARY MAN: But you will never have me.

WOMAN: I won't if I stop waiting for you. That, I know for sure.

SCARY MAN: That's nothing.

WOMAN: I'll wait.

SCARY MAN: Arrrgh! No! Get up! Go!

WOMAN: I'm happy where I am.

SCARY MAN: Happy?

WOMAN: It beats the alternative.

SCARY MAN: How did you ever get this way?

WOMAN: Time stopped the moment I saw you.

SCARY MAN: Time didn't stop! Your life stopped. And now it's passing you by. Now get up and walk away. Live what little is left of your life.

WOMAN: I said time stopped. I didn't say anything about a clock. Or a calendar. Or a bell tower.

SCARY MAN: Don't you see how pathetic this is?

WOMAN: I think deep down you rather enjoy it, knowing that I'm waiting here for you. Knowing I'm not the same for having laid eyes on you. And for this, and a thousand other curses, I will lie a thousand lies. Knowing that I'm not the same for having touched you. For this, and a thousand other curses, I can't touch and I don't want to be touched. Knowing that I've forgotten the color of eyes. Knowing that I'm not the same for having loved you. Knowing that I have come here, cursed, to the end of the world, where I now sit. And I will wait for you. Yes, I think you rather enjoy that.

SCARY MAN: But I promised you nothing.

WOMAN: True. You don't give out promises. You give tantalizing hints, subtle confusions. You're unknowable. And yet, it's hard not fall in love with you from afar. ...

You give good subtext.

SCARY MAN: Have I ever given you anything tangible to hold onto?

WOMAN: Holding on to the possibility of you is better than holding onto anything else. Anyone else.

SCARY MAN: But I don't want you. (echoes in repeat)

WOMAN: You're not the first who didn't. Only the best. Only the best.

SCARY MAN: OK, I'm leaving.

WOMAN: You were never here.

SCARY MAN: I'll never be back this way.

WOMAN: Oh, you'll come around.

SCARY MAN: I won't.

WOMAN: Yes, you'll come around.

SCARY MAN: I won't.

WOMAN: And I'll be waiting.

END OF PLAY

NO. 12: DISASTER DATE #147

(Second in a series)

CHARACTERS:

SCARY MAN: A scary young man

SHORT-TIMER: His date

WAITER, CHEF

SETTING: The Broker, a fantsypants Denver restaurant with cloth napkins.

SCARY MAN: So I'm seeing a psychoanalyst.

SHORT-TIMER: Are you? That's attractive.

SCARY MAN: Yes ... she says I talk too much.

SHORT-TIMER: Stunning. So are you depressed?

SCARY MAN: I wouldn't say I am depressed ... anymore. I would just say that ... blue is my favorite color!

SHORT-TIMER: You sure sound to me like you are depressed.

SCARY MAN: No, in fact, I have a sure-fire technique for battling off the blahs.

SHORT-TIMER: What's that?

SCARY MAN: Whenever I start to wallow in my own self-pity; whenever I start to think about how I am utterly alone in this world, and how I haven't fulfilled really any of my life goals, and of how life really isn't much more than a cruel ongoing joke, and that I am living paycheck to paycheck just to keep getting going on in my misery, why I sing a few bars from my favorite song ... and I feel better!

SHORT-TIMER: Really? And what song is that?

SCARY MAN: Why, it's "Beautiful Day," by U2. You know – "what you don't have, you don't need it now?" That line really sets my priorities back in order, and I'm able to make it through another long, cold miserable night, the kind that reminds me that I'll never know if I snore because I'll never have anyone lying next to me to tell me one way or the other.

SHORT-TIMER: Really? Because did you know that U2 has a combined worth of more than \$810 million?

SCARY MAN: No. Really?

SHORT-TIMER: Really. So what they don't have? They won't need it ... ever.

SCARY MAN: Maybe we should just order dessert.

SHORT-TIMER: Yes, I think I need it ... now.

(SCARY MAN signals to the WAITER, who starts to come over with a dessert cart).

SCARY MAN: Well, I have to say, this has been a very successful date.

SHORT-TIMER: You call this a successful date?

SCARY MAN: Well, by my standards, anyway. You see, I usually don't make it to dessert. And by that I mean, my dates don't usually make it to dessert. But I have to say tonight has been something of a landmark occasion.

SHORT-TIMER: You don't say?

SCARY MAN: You might be surprised to hear this but I tend to get very, very nervous in restaurants with cloth napkins. Very, very ... very veryveryvery nervous ... and yes, I do tend to ramble on a bit when I get nervous which is funny because it's all because I don't know what to say and you would think that if a person doesn't know what to say he wouldn't say anything at all because he's searching for something to say but no not me when I have nothing to say I fill the silence by saying absolutely every little word that comes into my head no matter how nonsensical -- ostrich!! -- which can be kind of embarrassing because you never know what you are going to say but one thing's for sure there are no awkward silences when I'm around!

(AWKWARD SILENCE)

SHORT-TIMER: You don't ... say?

SCARY MAN: Yes, I do ... say.

SHORT-TIMER: Well, there's always dessert.

SCARY MAN: Hahaha, you're kidding me now.

SHORT-TIMER: We'll see.

SCARY MAN: No seriously, we've made it to dessert. What's to screw up about dessert?

SHORT-TIMER: We'll see.

WAITER: Yes, madam and gentleman, I'd like to turn your attention now to your dessert options ...

SCARY MAN: It all looks fantastic.

SHORT-TIMER: I gotta say, Scary Man, I agree with you. It looks fantastic.

WAITER: Now if you will just follow along, I'd like to start with our "Shadowbrook Chocolate Meltdown." That's a rich, dark chocolate cake with a molten truffle core. That's served with vanilla bean ice cream.

SHORT-TIMER: Yumm!

WAITER: And it only gets better! Next we have our signature Crème Brûlée. Now that's of course a light vanilla-bean custard with a caramelized sugar topping.

SHORT-TIMER: Oh, yes, it is!

WAITER: Our house specialty is the Jack Daniel's Mud Pie, which is a coffee-crunch ice-cream pie with whiskey chocolate sauce.

SCARY MAN: Oh, none for me ... I'm driving!

(AWKWARD SILENCE)

WAITER: Ahem, yes ... very amusing sir.

SHORT-TIMER: No it's not.

WAITER: Beg your pardon?

SHORT-TIMER: Don't encourage him. That wasn't even remotely amusing.

WAITER: You think so too?

SHORT-TIMER: Absolutely.

WAITER: (In plain hearing of SCARY MAN): Oh thank goodness. I've been putting up with this half-wit all night and clearly he's nothing more than an insufferable twitching little twit, isn't he?

SHORT-TIMER: A simpering pile of Human Jello Flesh.

WAITER: I thought we accidentally served his spine to another table with an order of Baby Back ribs.

SHORT-TIMER: Well, maybe so waiter, because clearly there's no backbone to be found at this table.

WAITER: Oh call me Mortimer.

SHORT-TIMER: I will. Hello, Mortimer!

WAITER: He can't possibly think he's making any headway with a gorgeous double-breasted mountain of class like you, can he?

SHORT-TIMER: Well, until I get my dessert and he pays the check, I thought I'd just leave things slightly vague in that department.

WAITER: Ah, a very good strategy.

SCARY MAN: Hello?

WAITER: Yes, sir?

SCARY MAN (Wounded. Inarticulate. Silent.)

SHORT-TIMER: Did you interrupt us for a reason?

SCARY MAN: Um...

SHORT-TIMER: Well speak up, for God's sake.

SCARY MAN: Um...

WAITER: Terribly impolite.

SHORT-TIMER: Um Are there more dessert options?

WAITER: Why yes. In fact, I highly recommend our New York-style cheesecake. It's made with premium cream cheese, Graham Cracker crust and a Crème Fraîche topping. Served with Morello cherry sauce.

SHORT-TIMER: Oh, you just try and stop me, mister ... Mortimer!

WAITER: I would only try to do so by tempting you with our warm, seasonal fruit crisp with pecan-streusel topping and vanilla-bean ice cream.

SHORT-TIMER: I am having a dessert orgasm as you speak..

WAITER: It's a gift.

SCARY MAN: I have a question.

WAITER: Why, yes, of course, sir. Ask me anything.

SCARY MAN: Is there a difference between vanilla and vanilla bean ice cream?

SHORT-TIMER: Ugghhhhhhhgh.

SCARY MAN: Because you keep saying "vanilla bean" ice cream-

SHORT-TIMER: Ugghhhhhhhhhgh.

SCARY MAN: When I've only ever heard it called "vanilla" ice cream anywhere else.

WAITER: La la la la la la la la la la.

SCARY MAN: What are you doing?

SHORT-TIMER: I am trying to sing your stupidity out of my head.

SCARY MAN: Oh, try "Beautiful Day." It always works for me.

WAITER: No, thank you sir. Nothing short a bottle of grain alcohol mixed with Grand Marnier will do the trick after a question THAT stupid. Now, where was I?

SHORT-TIMER: You were just about to get to ... the chocolate!

WAITER: Oh yes, indeed. Next is our chocolate velvet tart.

SCARY MAN: Tarts ... for ... the tart?

SHORT-TIMER: What the hell did you just call me, Jello Boy?

SCARY MAN: Uhhhh... uummm ... err ... gee, that's some chocolaty goodness!

WAITER: Chocolatey goodness? Please! That's "chocolate shortbeard crust coated with marbeled granache!"

SCARY MAN (whispering) ... chocolaty goodness?

WAITER: Madam, have you made your selection?

SHORT-TIMER: Why, yes, I have. And it was the toughest decision I've had to make since agreeing to go out with this guy, but I will have the cheesecake.

WAITER: An excellent choice, madam. And for you sir?

SCARY MAN: Well, I really had my eye on the cheesecake, too, but I can see you only have one slice left, so-

SHORT TIMER.. Ugghhhgh.

SCARY MAN: -I'll go with my second choice, the chocolate velvet tart.

WAITER: Wait wait wait a second.

SCARY MAN: Yes?

SHORT TIMER.. Ugghhhgh.

WAITER: Your first choice was ... the cheesecake?

SCARY MAN: Yes?

SHORT TIMER: Ugghhhgh.

WAITER: And now you are ordering the chocolate velvet tart because ...

SCARY MAN: Because I see you only ...

WAITER: Wait wait wait, don't say it.

SCARY MAN: Why not?

WAITER: Because I am going to need a witness.

SHORT TIMER: Ugghhhgh.

WAITER: I will be back in one second..

SHORT TIMER.. Ugghhhgh.

(WAITER dashes off into the kitchen. AWKWARD SILENCE.)

CHEF: Yes, what is so important that I have to hear this myself?

SCARY MAN: All I said was that I would like the chocolate velvet tart.

CHEF: Yes, an excellent choice. No problem, sir. I just don't underst –

WAITER (to SCARY MAN): Wait wait wait, tell him why.

SCARY MAN: What?

WAITER: Tell him why you ordered the chocolate velvet tart.

SCARY MAN: Fine, as I just told the waiter, I really had my eye on the cheesecake, but my date chose first and-

WAITER: And?!!

SCARY MAN: And I could see that you only have one slice left, so-

CHEF: What makes you think we have only one slice left?

SCARY MAN: Because there's only one slice of it on your little dessert cart here.

SHORT TIMER.. Ugggggggggggh!

(AWKWARD SILENCE)

WAITER: Do you want to tell him?

CHEF: Oh, I very much want to tell him.

WAITER: Well then, I defer. After all, you are the chef.

CHEF: Thank you.

SCARY MAN: Tell me what?

SHORT TIMER: Ugggggggggggh!

CHEF: Yes, well, then, sir. The truth is you see that ... we do have more than one slice of cheesecake left.

SCARY MAN: Oh you do? Well, then great.

CHEF: In fact we have more than one slice of everything you see here left.

SCARY MAN: Well how was I to know?

CHEF: You were to know because you see this right here? ... it a dessert tray.

SCARY MAN: Yes. And?

CHEF: And you don't serve actual desserts off the dessert tray!!!

SCARY MAN: You don't?

CHEF: What do you think this is? A Furr's Cafeteria?

WAITER: Imbecile!

CHEF: The buffet line at the Country Dinner Playhouse?

SCARY MAN: No, no, I don't think that this is ...

CHEF: Do you see little Barnstormers flitting around, singing you songs with your soft-serve non-vanilla bean processed ice cream?

SCARY MAN: Well, no, I can clearly see that you have cloth-

CHEF: YOU WILL HAVE THE CHEESECAKE!

SCARY MAN: Well, that's great. That's all I really-

CHEF: I cannot look at your ignorant face for one second longer! Goodbye!

(CHEF and WAITER dart into the kitchen. Pause. Pause. Wait for it ... Wait for it ... and ... huge burst of laughter rises from behind kitchen doors. SHORT-TIMER drops her head in disgust. WAITER returns with two slices of cheesecake.)

(But by now there is only one person left seated at the table.)

END OF PLAY

NO. 14: "THE BURDEN OF THE LIVING

CHARACTERS:

PETER, 34-year-old husband and father

FATHER ABBOTT: Slight Irish priest with a brogue

MALE SINGER

FEMALE SINGER

(As the play opens, PETER is kneeling in a church pew. FATHER ABBOTT can be heard conducting the Catholic liturgy, but not loud enough to be distinguished unless noted. A faraway MALE SINGER is belting a powerful version of the "Our Father." The following lyrics can be heard underneath and simultaneous to the dialogue as a gentle complement).

MALE SINGER:

“Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

On Earth as it is in Heaven

Give us this day

Our daily bread

And forgive us our debts

As we forgive our debtors

Our Father, which art in Heaven

Hallowed be thy name

And lead us not into temptation

But deliver us, deliver us from evil ...”

PETER: How or why I got here, I can't tell you. All I know is that on a typical early Saturday evening when I started out for the grocery store to retrieve a gallon of Tide and a loaf of bread for my wife, I ended up here instead, at the Holy Ghost Catholic Church, kneeling my way through a funeral mass I walked in on midway. Kneeling, even though they only kneel for a few seconds in a Catholic mass. You might say I've been brought to my knees.

I didn't know Lou Carbone, but from the smiling face on the front of the prayer card and the sad looks on so many of the sobbing faces around me, he must have been a good man. Deeply loved, I'd guess. I always thought the best measure of a man's life was the impact his death has on those who have to keep on living. These people aren't going to be over the death of Lou Carbone anytime soon. Good for you, Lou.

(At this moment, the man singing the “Our Father” reaches the high note of the song)

“For thine is the Kingdom, and all the power, and the glory ... foreeeever.” But the MALE SINGER, also a mourner who is overcome with emotion, breaks at the highest note, on the word “forever.”

MALE SINGER: I'm sorry (he breaks down, and takes his seat).

(Awkward silence follows as the churchgoers feel the singer's pain. PETER's resumed narration breaks the silence.)

PETER: I never know what to do at funerals. Just now, I was using the prayer card for Lou Carbone to scrape my fingernails. ... I envy that man. ... What's that? (he brushes away a tear). What a silly thing, a drop of dew for an 80-year-old man I never met. I can't even remember the last time. Let's just say the last tear to trickle down this face ran a much smoother course.

I fidgeted through six years of these masses as an altar boy in a church that looked a lot like this one. Mass after mass – 267 of them before losing count. I made it through by reliving Mack Calvin's latest game-winning shot for the Denver Rockets, or daydreaming of baseball games and model rockets to come, or my anticipation for ringing the communion bells.

FATHER ABBOTT: This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.

PETER: “Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.” (FATHER ABBOTT raises his chalice, and there is the sound of an altar boy ringing the bells).

PETER: Not counting funerals and weddings, I haven't found myself sitting through a mass – accidentally or on purpose – since it was an involuntary exercise. Lapsed Catholic? Yeah, I fit the mold. I once figured that because I went to Catholic school for 12 years, and in those dozen years I was required to attend mass twice a week, I could then justify skipping the next 12 years of masses entirely. After that, we'd still be even, God and I. To be honest, I've used that line at parties for years as a kind of a punchline. I only just now realized that, by my own logic, I really only was excused through the age of 30. Now I am a husband with kids of my own. Kids I always swore I'd put through the same relentless spiritual regimen, if only to get back at my own parents. What's my excuse now? Four years into the red.

I haven't heard a word this priest has said ...

FATHER ABBOTT: The Lord be with you.

PETER: “And also with you.” ... And yet he's pulling these involuntarily responses out of me that I haven't spoken in years ...

FATHER ABBOTT: Lift up your hearts.

PETER: “We lift them up to the Lord.” I didn't even remember that I remembered these lines.

FATHER ABBOTT: Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

Peter: "It is right to give Him thanks and praise." ... Jesus, what am I doing here? I'm a happy man ... Aren't I? Perfect career, perfect home, perfect wife, perfect children. They're perfect.

FATHER ABBOTT: Your order there is a bit out of whack.

PETER: What did you say?

(It was a moment that only took place in PETER's mind.)

FATHER ABBOTT: "Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might ...

PETER: "Heaven and earth are full of your glory..." (breaks off as the liturgy continues underneath) I remember when I was a kid one of the priests used to tell us that real happiness, or at least the Catholic definition of real happiness, requires the symbiosis of body, mind, heart and soul.

FATHER ABBOTT: Damn right, you fallaway heathen.

(That was another moment that only took place in PETER's mind.)

PETER: Body? Well, Right here, three rows from the back of this magnificent Cathedral in downtown Denver. Mind? Right now, my mind is trying to fathom how I lost my way driving here from my comfortable home in suburban Littleton. My heart is with my wife Diana, who adores me. And my soul? Wherefore art thou, my soul? Hasn't been heard from in a good, long while. Might as well be in Pittsburgh. Are you here? Is that what I'm here looking for? Were you on Diana's shopping list? "Get me a gallon of Tide, a loaf of bread, and check the bargain aisle. Damaged old souls are on special, and one of those is better than nothing."

Body, mind, heart and soul. What might it be like to have all four back, working together again, instead of racing away from each other? Imagine that.

But why am I contemplating these matters of the spirit here, of all places, within the same walls of the institution that I loved and rebelled against, embraced and fought against, finally taking Clorox Bleach to my brain and freeing myself from the hypocrisy and contradiction of every social and political position the Church has taken since God gave me the ability to think for myself?

Yet here I am, escaping the perfect world I have built

for myself in the place from which I escaped. Why? It's simple, really, just not so easy to admit. I got into my car and started driving to anywhere but ... my perfect home. I can imagine God with his staff, in his flowing robe and floor-length beard, chuckling at the irony. I know what you are going to say: That's not God, Peter. That's Moses. Doesn't matter. Ever since I saw "The Ten Commandments," it's impossible for me to imagine God as anyone else.

Yes, God must be enjoying a hardy laugh about now.

(Suddenly, PETER takes note of the voice of a FEMALE SINGER, another affected mourner who has begun the "Ave Maria," and the sad, dulcet tones filling the church chamber now wash over him. The singing continues under the following dialogue and action. As it begins, PETER feels, out of the blue, a momentary, paralyzing jolt down to his spine that sounds to him like an airplane engine taking off in his brain. As the singing continues, PETER falls back for the first time from his kneeling position in his pew to a seated position, disoriented).

FEMALE SINGER:

"Ave Maria

Gratia plena

Dominus tecum

Benedicta tu in mulieribus

Et benedictus fructus ventris

Tui, Jesus

Sancta Maria

Mater Dei

Ora pro nobis peccatoribus

PETER: (THE SINGER is now nearly but not completely through the song). I'm not sure if I just had a stroke or the most powerful moment in a lifetime of Catholic masses ... OK, the only powerful moment in a lifetime of Catholic masses. But I'm thinking clearly, I'm speaking ... and I'm crying again, dammit. But that's all good, because I'm OK.

FEMALE SINGER: "Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae, Amen."

FATHER ABBOTT: Now I would like to welcome anyone of the Catholic faith in good standing to approach and receive the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I would like to invite anyone who is not Catholic, or not a Catholic in good standing, to approach and instead receive a blessing. All you have to do is and cross your arms in front of your chest.

PETER: I know that I should go that way (indicating the exit) and not that way (indicating the altar). I know I should not receive Communion. I haven't made a Confession in 16 years. I must owe God 762 Hail Marys. It's against the rules. So I'm going to do it anyway. I have to stretch my legs, I don't care why. I guess I just want to get a closer look at this priest. See if some of his goodness might rub off on me. Relieve me. (PETER approaches FATHER ABBOTT.) I've been through this routine so many times I don't even have to think about it.

FATHER ABBOTT: The Body of Christ...

(PETER sticks out his tongue.)

FATHER ABBOTT: Maybe you should have...

(This time the dialogue between the two men is real, if surreal.)

PETER: Should have what?

FATHER ABBOTT: Thought about it! Listen Sonny, I don't take your sticking out your tongue at me as an offense, and I don't mind placing the Body of Christ on top of it, but the only folks who still do that are generally over the age of 75.

PETER: Sorry?

FATHER ABBOTT: You might as well just wear a sign that says, "Well, it's been a long, been a long, been a long, been a long time!" Now give me your hands.

(PETER raises his cupped hands.)

FATHER ABBOTT: The Body of Christ...

PETER (tears now stream freely down his face as he is handed the Eucharist): Amen. (PETER moves quickly to the side aisle).

FATHER ABBOTT: Young man?

(PETER stops and looks back at him, discovered, naked.)

PETER: Yes, Father?

FATHER ABBOTT: Whatever it is you came here looking for when you walked in here today, I pray that you found it.

(PETER stops and addresses the audience. The remainder

of the monologue is not in present tense. It's a memory.)

PETER: "Thank you, Father," I mumbled with embarrassment, feeling all eyes on the sniveling waste of a man this frail old Irish priest had singled out. They must have thought I really loved that 80-year old man Lou Carbone. I started walking as fast as I could, not stopping at the third to last pew. I jumped into my car and looked in the rear-view mirror, seeing the reddened, tear-stained face that had drawn the priest's attention. Tears of a clown, I thought with shame. I drove straight south, directly and furiously, toward my home. All that mattered now was wiping my mess of a face clean and getting back to my family. But how does one just wipe red eyes white? When I got home, Diana said nothing. She just hugged me fiercely. She looked into my eyes with compassionate, uninformed knowingness. She asked nothing of my being gone for so long, and she didn't even ask why I had come back without her gallon of detergent or loaf of bread. I was home.

END OF PLAY

NO. 20: "INANITIES"

CHARACTERS:

SCARY MAN

32 MARY KAY COSMETICS WOMEN

HOTEL CLERK

SETTING: Louisville, Ky. The lobby of the Galt House Hotel. It's the weekend of the Humana Festival of New American Plays ... and a Mary Kay Cosmetics convention. Simultaneously. SCARY MAN walks into the lobby only to find there are 200 women in pink standing in front of him waiting in line to check in. He exhales, then takes his place at the back of one of six lines, none of which ever moves. As the play progresses, no one will join in behind him. He is the end of the line. The mass in front of him is implied. Middle-aged white women, all in pink, some wearing ridiculous accessories and hats, will momentarily appear out of the darkness. In each instance, the women will turn to the audience, speak their lines, then turn back into the line and return to darkness. The play can be performed with as few as three women, or as many as 32. A muted light always shines on SCARY MAN.

WOMAN 1: I live in mortal fear of ... toe fungus.

WOMAN 2 (on a cell phone): Well, It's all there in the paperwork, Mort. That's the beauty of the system ... Paperwork. All ... right ... there.

WOMAN 3: I'm being sued by my client for neglect.

WOMAN 4: On what grounds?

WOMAN 3: Oh, I neglected her. But we're fighting it.

WOMAN 4: On what grounds?

WOMAN 3: On the grounds that it was ... excusable neglect.

WOMAN 5: So I'm in Cincinnati on business, and I'm sitting in this bar, and this guy comes up to me and says ... "Excuse me, is your name Grossener?" And I turn around, and guess who it is?

WOMAN 6: OK, let me guess ...

WOMAN 5: It was Bellamy!

WOMAN 6: Bellamy?

WOMAN 5: Bellamy!

WOMAN 6: But why was Bellamy in Cincinnati?

WOMAN 5: I know, right?!

WOMAN 1: Seriously. A fungus is always living there right underneath your toenail. It's a mold. ... It's like ... bleu-cheese dressing!

WOMAN 7: What are you reading?

WOMAN 8: Maya Angelou's "The Heart of a Woman."

WOMAN 7: Guess what I'm reading? ... Go ahead, guess!

WOMAN: 8: But I wouldn't know. I've never met you.

WOMAN 7: InStyle Magazine ... No joke!!!

WOMAN 9: How long have you been waiting in line?

WOMAN 10: A little over an hour. Thank God I used my MK Red Tea and Fig Body Spritzer this morning!

WOMAN 9: You're a Spritzer sister? Oh, we're going to be very good friends.

WOMAN 1: Of course, I never really knew toe fungus existed until I saw a late-night infomercial offering this miracle cure for toe fungus. That put the reality of ... toe fungus right in my head, you know. You never forget a thing like that.

WOMAN 11: So what's in the bag?

WOMAN 12: I can't tell you... It's a secret.

WOMAN 11: Oh you can tell me!

WOMAN 12: Oh, I could ... But then I'd have to kill you! (hysterical laughter.)

WOMAN 2 (on a cell phone): It's like I told you, Mort ... I always try to be persistent!

WOMAN 13: What's your name, sweetie?

WOMAN 14: It's Stacylynn ... Stacy because Stacy was my mother's name, and Marylynn because Marylynn was my grandmother's name... But they couldn't very well have called me Stacymarylynn, now, could they?

WOMAN 13: Why not?

WOMAN 14: ... (confused silence)

WOMAN 1: I don't believe in miracle cures. ... I do believe in toe fungus.

WOMAN 15: (To SCARY MAN): Excuse me, do you know all about the MK for Men Face-Cleansing Bar?

SCARY MAN: No, I don't.

WOMAN 15: Heck, sugar ... How about the MK for

Men Moisturizing Sunscreen? The MK for Men Domain After-Shave Balm? ... Heck, if you're sweet to me, honey, I'll give you a first-hand demonstration of our MK Tribute for Men Total Grooming Set. ... (flirtingly) and you know, that's the only place you're gonna find the MK for Men ... Total ... Body ... Wash.

SCARY MAN: Oh, um, I'm just, so

WOMAN 15: When I find out my room number, you can come on up and cash in your MK for Men "Pink Discount" ... if you know what I mean.

WOMAN 1: I believe in the known.

WOMAN 16: These shoes are killing my feet!

WOMAN 17: Really? Because I could wear these shoes for two days ... and no pain!

WOMAN 16: But how can that be? We're wearing the same shoes!

WOMAN 17: I know! How can that be?

WOMAN 16: Seriously, I'm going to have a funeral for my feet. I'm not joking!

WOMAN 17: I know!

WOMAN 18: Do you ever watch "Ellen?"

WOMAN 19: It is so cold here!

WOMAN 20: I know! It's only 70 degrees today!

WOMAN 19: No one at HQ told us to pack a god-damned parka!

WOMAN 20: I know!

WOMAN 21: Hey, my name is Stacy, too!

WOMAN 14: (Indignant) Excuse me? ... My name is Stacylynn!

WOMAN 22 (to SCARY MAN): Oh to be a man here with all these beautiful women. Captive audience. Why

mister, you must be in heaven.

SCARY MAN: I was thinking of someplace a little lower.

WOMAN 22: Guess my favorite color!

SCARY MAN: Oh, I don't know... I, um ..

WOMAN 22: Go on ... guess!

SCARY MAN: Really, I just want to read my paper.

WOMAN 22: (grabbing paper from him, demonically) ... I said GUESS!

SCARY MAN: Um ... Pink?

WOMAN 22: (returning to sweet civility): How'd you ever guess?

WOMAN 1: Of course if I could just get to sleep at night, I wouldn't have to lie awake worrying about ... toe fungus. That might be the bigger issue.

WOMAN 23: Tonight, we are going to a show.

WOMAN 24: Will it be any good?

WOMAN 23: Of course it will ... it's a musical!

WOMAN 25 (ending a cell phone call): My ex-husband just called me ... and I don't know why.

WOMAN 26: Did he leave you a message?

WOMAN 25: Yeah!

WOMAN 26: Are you going to check?

WOMAN 25: No!

WOMAN 27: Really, I think I'm in love.

WOMAN 28: Oh honey, he sounds perfect.

WOMAN: 27: Oh, if he weren't involved with that cult, he'd be marriage material.

WOMAN 29: Is this line ever going to move?

WOMAN 30: Oh, Louise, what's your hurry? Seriously,

what is your hurry? ... Just kidding! (bursts out laughing.)

WOMAN 31: Do you know when I like to turn on sporting events on the television?

WOMAN 32: No, when?

WOMEN 31: When they're over! (they cackle in hysterical laughter).

WOMAN 22 (to SCARY MAN): So what's your favorite color?

SCARY MAN: I don't really have

WOMAN 22: Oh, come on ... what's your favorite color?!

SCARY MAN: Actually, I'm color-blind ...

WOMAN 22: (grabbing paper from him, demonically) ... That's no excuse ... now, tell me!

SCARY MAN: Really, I just want to read my paper.

WOMAN 22: I am guessing it's ... PINK?

SCARY MAN: More like ... Blood red!

(The scene turns even more surrealistic. WOMAN 1 emerges from the crowd and stands next to SCARY MAN. They speak alongside one another, but it could be construed as if talking to one another)

WOMAN 1: The other night I tried to rip my big toenail off. Just ... rip it right off.

SCARY MAN: Where do all you people come from?

WOMAN 6: I eat off the floor.

WOMAN 15: The only true love I have ever known comes to me from a Taco Bell Super Burrito.

SCARY MAN: Please don't talk to me.

WOMAN 1: What have you been doing with your life?

SCARY MAN: Trying to forget I ever knew you.

WOMAN 1: I used to collect strands of hair from your pillow each morning and tape them to the small of my back, so that all through the day, even when we were apart, I would always feel close to you.

WOMAN 25: Why are there no mirrors in your house, Scary Man?

SCARY MAN: There is ... one.

WOMAN 11: In the bathroom! That doesn't count!

WOMAN 7: Why doesn't that count?

WOMAN 3: What have you got against mirrors?

SCARY MAN: So I don't wake up every morning and stare at my dismal fate in the face.

WOMAN 19: I have no God-given skills.

WOMAN 10: The word "fakeness," as I know it ... does not apply to me in the world ... as I know it.

WOMAN 29: If you talk to him, you can tell him to come on in here and kiss my ass!

WOMAN 13: I was only helping him kill time till his true love came around.

WOMAN 1: I miss your laughter ... Titillated, caustic, slightly stifled, but always revealing the possibility of wonder.

SCARY MAN: The power you have over me is unrelenting and absolute.

WOMAN 23: Oh, sounds like someone's wanting to have a pity party!

SCARY MAN (exploding): Don't you know that Mary Kay Cosmetics is nothing but a pyramid scheme?

WOMAN 27: Well ... you don't have to be cruel!

SCARY MAN: You try to talk every woman you ever meet into buying as much as you can possibly squeeze out of her because your sales incentives require that you buy more products than you can possibly ever sell. ... Maybe if you biddies hadn't all maxed out your God-damned credit-cards buying unneeded inventory just to acquire some stupid prize ... this fucking line would be moving!!!

WOMAN 2: I can assure you, Mr. Scary Man, that no one at this convention fits your description. This is a convention for the winners, not for the weeds.

SCARY MAN: Pyramid scheme!

(Pause)

WOMAN 12: I love pyramid schemes. Do you know why? They remind me of when I was a high-school cheerleader!

(Pause)

WOMAN 12: Because ... you know ... we made pyramids...

(Pause)

WOMAN 17: What is it that you really want, Scary Man?

SCARY MAN: To be permanently changed. Can you do that, Mary Kay? Is there an MK for Men Soul-Scrubbing Atonement Toner somewhere in your catalogue? Because I'm buying.

WOMAN 1: There is a pain beyond hurt.

SCARY MAN: I am alone in this world.

WOMAN 1: The one I love will never love me.

SCARY MAN: Is there an omega to all of this?

HOTEL CLERK: Next in line!

END OF PLAY

NO. 21: "YMCA"

CHARACTERS:

OLD YMCA MAN

MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN

SCARY YMCA MAN

MYSTERY YMCA MAN

Scene: Downtown YMCA men's steam room. Naked OLD YMCA MAN and naked MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN are guffawing like sheep in one corner. Not-naked SCARY YMCA MAN is as far removed into the corner as one can be. Wearing shorts, and with a towel over his head, he makes for a pudgy albino wallflower.

(OLD YMCA MAN and MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN guffaw some more).

MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN: OK, OK, pal ... uncle! That's enough for me. See you tomorrow.

OLD YMCA MAN: Same bath time ...!

MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN: Same bath channel ...!

(OLD YMCA MAN and MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN guffaw some more. BRIEF BURST OF STEAM RUSHES FROM WALL.)

SCARY YMCA MAN'S INNER VOICE: No don't go! Please God, don't go!

(MIDDLE-AGED YMCA MAN goes, leaving OLD YMCA MAN and SCARY YMCA MAN alone in the

steam room.)

OLD YMCA MAN: So ... today was one tough workout.

(NO RESPONSE FROM SCARY YMCA MAN)

OLD YMCA MAN: ... First day back from a little break.

(NO RESPONSE)

OLD YMCA MAN: ... Two whole weeks since my last workout! Feel like a 157-pound tub of goo!

(NO RESPONSE)

OLD YMCA MAN: So what's your story, fella? Haven't seen you around here before.... And I never forget a ... face.

(SCARY YMCA MAN gives up the ghost and pulls towel down from his head)

SCARY YMCA MAN: ... Been taking a little break.

OLD YMCA MAN: Oh yeah? For how long?

SCARY YMCA MAN: 18 years.

OLD YMCA MAN: Wonderful! Ahahhahahaha...

(PAUSE. OLD YMCA MAN stands up, kind of rubbing and slapping his wet, sweaty body loudly, as if his sweat were an application of a full-body cologne. PAUSE.)

OLD YMCA MAN: You know what I was thinking just now?

(NO RESPONSE)

OLD YMCA MAN: I was just thinking that the YMCA ought to offer us a shave ... right here in this steam room...

(NO RESPONSE. PAUSE.)

OLD YMCA MAN: ... with a NAKED barber!

(NO RESPONSE)

OLD YMCA MAN (correcting himself): And by that I mean a ... FEMALE naked barber, of course.

SCARY YMCA MAN: Of course! ...

(PAUSE)

OLD YMCA MAN: You know something? You're not naked.

SCARY YMCA MAN: Excuse me?

OLD YMCA MAN: You're not naked.

SCARY YMCA MAN: So?

OLD YMCA MAN: So, you don't see a lot of guys in here with their shorts ... on. What's that all about?

SCARY YMCA MAN: I don't know ... modesty?

OLD YMCA MAN: Oh I see... I wouldn't know. Never had that ... problem.

SCARY YMCA MAN: What ... problem?

OLD YMCA MAN: You know. The need to be ... modest. Me? I've never been insecure about my body. But then again, I've been blessed you know ... down there? Well, you have eyes. I don't have to tell you... hahaha ... I mean just look at me!!

(BRIEF BURST OF STEAM RUSHES FROM WALL)

(OLD YMCA MAN starts performing full-body naked vertical squats right in front of SCARY YMCA MAN)

SCARY YMCA MAN: I'd rather not.

OLD YMCA MAN: Yes, I understand, young man ... Envy is a terrible thing. A deadly sin, they say.

SCARY YMCA MAN: This isn't about size.

OLD YMCA MAN: It's not?

SCARY YMCA MAN: ... I don't think.

OLD YMCA MAN: Then what is it about?

SCARY YMCA MAN: I just wasn't born in a barn.

OLD YMCA MAN: Clearly. No one's going to be mistaking you for a barnyard animal.

SCARY YMCA MAN: Excuse me?

OLD MAN: If you could be mistaken for being hung like a barnyard animal ... well then, let's just say you wouldn't be wearing shorts.

(PAUSE)

OLD YMCA MAN: You know what? I was just remembering...

SCARY YMCA MAN: Please don't talk to me.

OLD YMCA MAN: ... The mayor was in here yesterday. Right in this very steam room.

(NO RESPONSE)

OLD YMCA MAN: Hung like a Hickenlooper.

(BRIEF BURST OF STEAM RUSHES FROM WALL)

OLD YMCA MAN: He's a very impressive ... mayor.

(NO RESPONSE. PAUSE.)

OLD YMCA MAN: There's no shame in it, you know.

SCARY YMCA MAN: Please don't talk to me.

OLD YMCA MAN: There's a reason they call people like me "well-endowed." Massive gifts like mine must be doled out ... discriminately ...

SCARY YMCA MAN: Oh dear God ...

OLD YMCA MAN: I mean if everyone were so well-endowed ...

SCARY YMCA MAN: Good Christ

OLD YMCA MAN: ... Well then men like me wouldn't be ... newsworthy!

(NO RESPONSE)

(BRIEF BURST OF STEAM RUSHES FROM WALL)

OLD YMCA MAN: You should just let it go, little man.

SCARY YMCA MAN: Say what?

OLD YMCA MAN: Just take 'em off. Right now.

SCARY YMCA MAN: No!

OLD SCARY MAN: C'mon!

SCARY YMCA MAN: I'm not going to get naked for you.

OLD SCARY MAN: Let's just have a little look.

SCARY YMCA MAN: What, are you hitting on me, you old perv?

OLD SCARY MAN: Oh, no, no no, don't get me wrong! I'm the one who wants a FEMALE naked barber, remember?

(BRIEF BURST OF STEAM RUSHES FROM WALL)

(In walks MYSTERY YMCA MAN. He is a big, nay,

enormous black man.)

MYSTERY YMCA MAN: Good afternoon, gentlemen.

OLD YMCA MAN: Good afternoon, former Mayor Webb ...

(AWKWARD PAUSE).

OLD YMCA MAN (whispering to SCARY YMCA MAN) ... May I borrow your towel?

(BRIEF BURST OF STEAM RUSHES FROM WALL)

END OF PLAY

No. 22: "WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU?"

CHARACTERS:

SCARY MAN

LEROY

Workplace elevator doors open. SCARY MAN and LEROY enter together. Doors shut. LEROY hits floor 6. SCARY MAN hits floor 7.

LEROY: Hey, I never see you anymore since they moved us down to the sixth floor.

SCARY MAN: Hello, LeRoy.

LEROY: So how are things on six?

SCARY MAN: Oh you know, we're still working.

LEROY: Hey, did you ever get married?

SCARY MAN: No.

LEROY: Why not?

SCARY MAN: Really?

LEROY: Yeah. How's some?

SCARY MAN: Oh, you know ... you can't just make someone you love ... love you back.

(Awkward silence)

SCARY MAN: Unless you're in Texas, of course.

(Awkward silence)

LEROY: Why Texas?

SCARY MAN: Never mind.

(Awkward silence)

LEROY: So you were saying ... Why didn't you ever get married?

SCARY MAN (Somewhat sinisterly): Because there's something wrong with me.

LEROY (unaffected): Oh yeah, what's that?

(Awkward silence)

LEROY: So what is it? You gay?

SCARY MAN: What?

LEROY: Are you deformed?

SCARY MAN: No.

LEROY: Parts not work?

SCARY MAN: Well enough.

LEROY: Are you small?

SCARY MAN: What?

LEROY: You know ... Un-en-dowed?

SCARY MAN: I guess you might say I'm just a loner and I'm afraid of commitment.

LEROY: Oh, one of thoooooose.

(Awkward silence)

LEROY: Hey, how's your dad?

SCARY MAN: Well, you know, he passed away.

LEROY: Oh no, I'm sorry to hear that. I saw him last year at the reunion dinner. When did he go?

SCARY MAN: Actually it was in 1997.

LEROY: Well, well ... Is that right?

SCARY MAN: Yeah.

LEROY: Could of swore I saw him just last year.

SCARY MAN: Nope.

LEROY: Well, how about that? Guess he must have a twin.

SCARY MAN: Nope.

(Doors open)

LEROY: Well ... Nice to see you. Tell your dad I said hi.

NO. 23: "TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF" (NON-DISASTER DATE No. 1)

CHARACTERS:

WAITER

SCARY MAN

OTHER

WAITER: I'll get your order in right away, folks. In the meantime ... Enjoy your cheesy bread.

SCARY MAN: Thank you.

OTHER: So ... Tell me something about yourself.

SCARY MAN: Oh yes, the ice-breaker. ... All right then, let me think ... Well, off the top of my head ... OK, here goes: I'm the kind of person who always says the wrong thing at a funeral - and I still beat myself up about it, 10 years later.

OTHER: Hahaha, that's funny.

SCARY MAN: Why is that funny?

OTHER: Huh?

SCARY MAN: I just told you something that's actually pretty painful about myself.

(Pause)

OTHER: Oh ... Well, we just met 45 minutes ago.

SCARY MAN: So?

OTHER: So ... You weren't being funny?

SCARY MAN: No, I'm not a funny person. ... On purpose, I mean.

OTHER: Wait, did I ask ... ?

SCARY MAN: You asked me to tell you something about myself.

OTHER: Yes, but I wasn't -

SCARY MAN: That's another thing that you should know about me.

OTHER: What?

SCARY MAN: I'm not a funny person. On purpose.

END OF PLAY

OTHER: Oh, well I just thought it was funny because ... well ... no one ever does that.

SCARY MAN: Does what?

OTHER: Denigrates themselves like that. On a first date.

SCARY MAN: No?

OTHER: No. When two people meet for the first time, and one asks the other to tell them something about themselves, there's a presumption that the person will say something flattering, possibly exaggerated ... or even blatantly untrue. To make a positive first impression.

SCARY MAN: Such as ...

OTHER: Such as ... "I do volunteer work for hemophiliac kids in my spare time."

SCARY MAN: You do?

OTHER: Of course I don't. No one works with hemophiliac kids in their spare time.

SCARY MAN: Well, I'm sure someone does ...

OTHER: The point is, people don't just up and volunteer something unflattering about themselves to someone they're presumably trying to impress ... Unless it's a scene in a play. ... A pointless play with lots of inexplicable scenes about ... I dunno, random, disastrous dinner dates.

SCARY MAN: So ... You would rather I lie to you?

OTHER: No, but ... I would like to know, say, whatever it is you do for a living ... before you dive into your funeral phobias.

SCARY: I see ... so something less revealing.

OTHER: Exactly.

SCARY MAN: Even though that's antithetical to the entire point of the conversation, which is to actually get to know the other person.

OTHER: Exactly.

SCARY MAN: All right then. I get it.

OTHER: Now, try again.

SCARY MAN: Let's see ... I live in abject fear.

OTHER: No. See, now ... that's not it either.

SCARY MAN: I'm sorry ... I can't help myself.

OTHER: I'll help you. Take me, for example. ... I recently backpacked through Guatemala. ...

SCARY MAN: That is impressive.

OTHER: No, I didn't go to fucking Guatemala. But do you see the difference?

SCARY MAN: I do.

OTHER: Good, now ... try again.

SCARY MAN: I will never master that long, awkward walk down the hallway at work. You know, when you pass a person for, say, the third time that day; that same person you've never bothered to stop and introduce yourself to in the 12 years you've worked there? That ever-present kind of daily awkwardness can be crippling.

OTHER: No. No. No. That's not what I mean.

SCARY MAN: But isn't this better?

OTHER: It's not at all helping your chances of getting laid.

SCARY MAN: Why don't you give it a try?

(Pause)

OTHER: Well ... it certainly would save time.

SCARY MAN: And cut down on the negative fallout of a positive first impression.

OTHER: Now, what's negative about a positive first impression?

SCARY MAN: It's as good as it gets. It can only be followed by the inevitable, never-ending progression of further disappointments.

OTHER: Relationships are nothing if not a progression of slowly revealed disappointments.

SCARY MAN: The ones that last.

OTHER: All right, Scary Man. I'll give your game a try.

SCARY MAN: Lay it on me.

OTHER: OK ... I'm never reliable when the person I'm dating is in the throes of a personal crisis.

SCARY MAN: No?

OTHER: No. Call and tell me that your dog has died, and I'll disappear on you for a week. Call me when you're over it.

SCARY MAN: Now, didn't that feel good?

OTHER: It did, actually. Give me another.

SCARY All right ... Recently, I noticed that I have taken on the unmistakable odor of my father.

OTHER: Oh, I get that one ... It means you're getting older, you know it, and you can't stop it. You can feel it.

SCARY MAN: I can smell it.

OTHER: That's horrible. Is he dead?

SCARY MAN: Very.

OTHER: Even better. And you're not even running away from it?

SCARY MAN: To the contrary, I am interjecting it into my first-date dinner conversation.

OTHER: I am starting to find you repulsively attractive.

SCARY MAN: Now you.

OTHER: My apartment smells of leather and shame.

WAITER: Do you two need anything?

OTHER: (To WAITER): I could use a shot of whiskey and a slap in the face. Have you got either of those?

(WAITER backs away without saying anything further.)

OTHER: (To SCARY MAN): Are you ready for this? I have something called "involuntary thought disorder."

SCARY MAN: I have broken down crying three times today.

OTHER: I have found zits in places on my body ... where they never told you could get them.

SCARY MAN: OK, you've got the idea.

OTHER: I resent young couples walking through parks with their children and their dogs.

SCARY MAN: ... Maybe a little too well.

OTHER: The other day I imagined myself doing a good deed.

SCARY MAN: What did you do?

OTHER: Oh, it passed. Still ... very unsettling.

SCARY MAN: For the past 10 years, I left myself fully open and exposed to the possibility of a miracle that I knew deep down could never happen.

OTHER: I've lived in denial of my sadness since I was 10. ...

SCARY MAN: I have only truly wanted for one thing in this world, and I'm never going to have it.

OTHER: True love?

SCARY MAN: Happy people don't understand that true love is not something you can have if you only want it bad enough. It's not an inalienable human right, or a favor you can just call in. Love that's not returned is a curse.

OTHER: Well maybe this ... us ... sitting here and getting to know each other ... honestly. Maybe this is the start of-

SCARY MAN: Oh, I'm sorry, no.

OTHER: No?

SCARY MAN: It's not you.

OTHER: I know, I know ... it's you.

SCARY MAN: No, I mean ... It's just ... NOT YOU. It's not your fault.

OTHER: So ... no other will do?

SCARY MAN: I'm lost inside a place where only one person one can ever find me.

OTHER: And they're ... ?

SCARY MAN: Not even looking.

OTHER: Which leaves you –

SCARY MAN: Lost. The only remaining trace of an aspiration I have left is to accept the storms of solitude that rage inside of me with some measure of grace.

OTHER: Then you're just ... biding your time.

SCARY MAN: That's the one thing that you absolutely must know about me.

(Pause)

SCARY MAN: I wish that you had known me during the good years.

OTHER: But, you and me ... this, right here ... We could both be looking for the same thing.

SCARY MAN: It's not you're fault. You're just ... late.

OTHER: And what if this ... biding ... what if we did it together? I mean ... what if that were enough for me?

SCARY MAN: Then I would wish for you ... the blessing of higher aspirations.

OTHER: And in the meantime ... What if I choose to stay?

SCARY MAN: Knowing what you know now?

OTHER: Really. I've had worse options.

(Pause)

SCARY MAN: Well then I think we should eat.

OTHER: Yes. Let's eat.

WAITER: Dinner is served.

END OF PLAY(S)