

WILD MEN OF THE WOODS

A Play

By

Elisabeth Karlin

# WILD MEN OF THE WOODS

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## WILD MEN OF THE WOODS

*In memory of a couple of wild men and as always, for Josh.*

### CHARACTERS

## WILD MEN OF THE WOODS

RYDE	A thirty-five-year-old boy who had everything and lost it. He retains the easy grace of WASP privilege. A drinker who never seems drunk.
DINO	A forty-five-year-old Italian-American artist with a rough edge.
WINSTON	A twenty-year-old African-American with glasses who has a goofy innocence. This actor also plays:
BRENT	A young executive. He is smooth.
PATTY	A thirtyish, tough emergency room nurse. This actor also plays:
KIM	A resentful office worker.
TANIA	An office supervisor in her twenties. This actor also plays:
NICOLE	A striving receptionist.

TIME: January 2001

PLACE: Manhattan

WILD MEN OF THE WOODS

# WILD MEN OF THE WOODS

ACT 1  
SCENE 1

*A cold, howling night in January. WINSTON is huddled in the doorway of a walk-up apartment building. He is writing in a battered spiral notebook and beside him is a bottle of cheap wine. RYDE runs in. He is not wearing a coat and an IV tube dangles from his bare arm. He leaps over Winston to get to the apartment intercom.*

**RYDE.** Excuse me. *(He buzzes an apartment.)*

**DINO.** *(Off-stage. Gruff and masculine.)* Yea?

**RYDE.** Patty?

**DINO.** *(Irate.)* What?

**RYDE.** Uh...Patty?

**DINO.** What?!

**RYDE.** Who is this?

**WINSTON.** It don't sound like nobody named Patty, that's for sure.

**DINO.** WHAT?!

**RYDE.** I'm looking for Patty. Is this...does she...I mean...

**DINO.** Get the fuck out of here...It's one o'clock in the morning, asshole!

**RYDE.** Yea, but is Patty there? Hello? Are you there? Wait, please, come back! Hello? Aw fuck! *(Ryde bangs his fist against the wall.)* I don't believe this shit. *(Ryde buzzes again, repeatedly.)* Come on...come on!

**DINO.** Listen you fuck...

**RYDE.** *(He and Dino yelling over each other.)* Could you get Patty...I need to speak to—

**DINO.** She aint here and if you buzz that thing one more time—

**RYDE.** Can you tell me where she is...It's an emergency—

**DINO.** ...I'm going to come down there and rip your balls up right out of your throat! You got that, motherfucker?! *(The force of Dino's voice makes Ryde back off from the buzzer.)*

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**RYDE.** This is great. This is all I need! (*Ryde paces as Winston watches him.*) What am I supposed to do now? Where the hell is she? (*Winston shrugs and shakes his head. His attention is diverted by a car driving by. He rises to go after it.*)

**WINSTON.** Hey! There's a speed limit here! (*Failing to stop the car, he turns back to Ryde.*) Did you see that? How he come whipping around the corner?

**RYDE.** I don't suppose you have a cigarette. (*Winston shakes his head. There is a pause as they regard each other.*) What's that you're drinking? Night Train Express? (*Winston looks at the bottle and nods.*) That's not going to keep you warm, you know.

**WINSTON.** It's doing okay.

**RYDE.** Alcohol decreases your body temperature.

**WINSTON.** So does not wearing a coat.

**RYDE.** You might feel warmer from the blood temporarily rushing to your skin, but your body is actually losing heat. Alcohol is the worst thing to drink in the cold. (*Pause. He is shivering.*) You could go into hypothermia.

**WINSTON.** You want some?

**RYDE.** Yea, I'll take a hit of that. (*Ryde takes a swallow and hands the bottle back to Winston. Ryde wraps his arms around himself and fidgets to warm himself.*) Shit. Where the hell is she? I guess I'll just have to wait for her.

**WINSTON.** Maybe you pressed the wrong number.

**RYDE.** (*Examining the buzzers, talking to himself.*) No, that's her name...Who is that guy? Did she get married? Nah, she wouldn't do that. (*Winston holds the bottle back out to Ryde who takes another swig and passes it back.*) Goddamn it. What do I do now? I really do not want to have to deal with a husband or boyfriend...I just want her to get this thing out of my arm.

**WINSTON.** Yea, what is that?

**RYDE.** An IV tube.

**WINSTON.** Let me see that. (*Ryde thinks about it and stoops down.*) Yea, I've seen these. You just got to pull it out like—

**RYDE.** (*Slapping Winston's hand away.*) Hey! Don't touch it. Patty's a nurse, she'll take it out.

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**WINSTON.** There's a hospital over on Amsterdam. They can take that out of you.

**RYDE.** No. I just came from there. *(Ryde settles on the stoop, across from Winston. They continue to pass the bottle back and forth.)*

**WINSTON.** You must be serious sick.

**RYDE.** I don't get sick.

**WINSTON.** Then why did you—

**RYDE.** I had a pain, that's all, and now it's gone. I'm fine.

**WINSTON.** I would say you're sick.

**RYDE.** I've never even had a cold.

**WINSTON.** Serious?

**RYDE.** And they thought they were going to keep me there...No fucking way.

**WINSTON.** It's not jail. They can't keep you there if—

**RYDE.** Oh no? They were talking some crap about putting me in detox and then shipping me out to some feed farm in Westchester...

**WINSTON.** *(As RYDE hands him back the bottle.)* Maybe you shouldn't be drinking this.

**RYDE.** ...And when Mitzi hears about this, I'm fucked.

**WINSTON.** Who's that, your wife?

**RYDE.** My wife? God no. She's my step-grandmother.

**WINSTON.** My grandmother was fearsome like that too. Even my brother was afraid of her. Serious.

**RYDE.** If Mitzi hears about this, she's going to...What are you writing there?

**WINSTON.** The license number on that car. It's illegally parked. I'll show it to the police and watch as they tow it away.

**RYDE.** What, is that like a job?

**WINSTON.** No, it's just for fun. *(Beat.)* I could use a job though cause I've been staying at my brother's and— *(Momentarily distracted, he rises and yells at a passing car.)* Hey! There's a stop sign there! *(Returning to Ryde.)* How about you? You have a job?

**RYDE.** Me? I do office work. Temporary office work. I can't be tied down.

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**WINSTON.** (*Making a note.*) Temporary office work. Hm. Can I ask you something? How much money can you make doing that?

**RYDE.** Not much. What do I need a lot of money for? A bigger apartment? I can only park my ass at one place at a time. I don't need money. I need freedom.

**WINSTON.** Uh-huh. Can I ask you something? What are you talking about, exactly?

**RYDE.** I'm saying I don't need to be a millionaire. I'm not one of these people who has to be somebody I'm not. Who would I want to be, who's any better than me? Huh, who? What, you think I need to be like, who? ...Like...Hugh Hefner or somebody?

**WINSTON.** Who?

**RYDE.** He's like ninety years old! I don't want to worry about dying any minute. There is nobody else I want to be. You think I want to be Steven Spielberg? No way. I don't want to wake up in the morning and feel like I have to make another movie. I don't want to be Brad Pitt and have his problems.

**WINSTON.** I liked this movie he was in...what was it...I saw it on Cinemax at my brother's...

**RYDE.** It's not like I can't do anything...

**WINSTON.** It was about this guy...and he's dead...Wait, he's not dead...It's like he *is* death...

**RYDE.** I happen to have a lot of interests...

**WINSTON.** "Meet Joe Black"! That's what it's called. That was good.

**RYDE.** I could've been a primatologist. That's what I was going to be.

**WINSTON.** Uh huh. A what?

**RYDE.** Someone who studies apes.

**WINSTON.** Apes, huh. I was watching this show at my brother's...I think it was the news and they were saying that there are almost none of them left cause the hunters hack them up for bushmeat. Now to me, that's just disgusting. Bushmeat? Who'd want to eat that?

**RYDE.** I bet she's home. What would happen if I buzzed again. I mean, what's he going to do? Kill me? Especially with you right here, a witness.

**WINSTON.** (*Moving closer to Ryde.*) Can I ask you something...?

**RYDE.** You're getting a little close, you mind?



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**WINSTON.** ...That temporary work, how do you get into that?

**RYDE.** You just pick out an agency and walk right in.

**WINSTON.** Right off the street?

**RYDE.** But it helps to have some computer knowledge.

**WINSTON.** I have a certificate!

**RYDE.** And a high school diploma.

**WINSTON.** I graduated from high school! What do you think? I was good in school too. Serious.

**RYDE.** Then they'll give you a test on your skills and send you out on a job the next day.

**WINSTON.** Just like that? What's a good agency to go to?

**RYDE.** There's lots of them.

**WINSTON.** Which one do you go to?

**RYDE.** Unique Temps...But you don't have to go there.

**WINSTON.** (*Writing.*) Unique. (*Looks up.*) Should I tell them you sent me? Maybe I should give them your name.

**RYDE.** (*Taking stock of this guy.*) No...you don't have to do that...There are no benefits you know but I'll tell you this, a temp agency is a good place to meet women.

**WINSTON.** Like a bar?

**RYDE.** Much better than a bar. Bars are lousy places to meet women, especially after midnight when it's strictly bottom fishing. (*Indicating Winston's notetaking.*) And you can quote me on that.

**WINSTON.** If I could get a job and a girlfriend all in one place—

**RYDE.** Who said anything about a girlfriend? How old are you?

**WINSTON.** I'll be twenty in February. Next month!

**RYDE.** I have fifteen years on you, so listen to me. You don't want a girlfriend.

**WINSTON.** Isn't that your girlfriend up there?

**RYDE.** Patty? She's not my girlfriend. I did her a couple of times but that's all. Having a girlfriend is not natural.

**WINSTON.** It's not?

**RYDE.** We're men, it's not in our nature to be monogamous. It's in our DNA to be with as many women as possible. It's our responsibility. I've been with two thousand women and—

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**WINSTON.** Oh my God, two thousand! You are really responsible! Serious! Hey, you know who I think is really pretty? What's her name Vanessa...something. You know who I mean? What's her name...she's on cable...Vanessa...I can't remember. You know...Vanessa! If she was my girlfriend, I'd be with her all the time.

**RYDE.** I don't even like it when a girl sleeps over.

**WINSTON.** You see, I think I would like that.

**RYDE.** No, because you do that and she's going to expect things in the morning. She's going to want juice. I just want her to leave and be by myself and she expects me to start squeezing oranges?

**WINSTON.** *(Nodding.)* Yea, I see...

**RYDE.** And you don't want to be the kind of guy who's going to jump through hoops to get laid. It's a waste of time because there are some women out there who just don't fuck.

**WINSTON.** I know.

**RYDE.** Girls with very long hair don't fuck.

**WINSTON.** *(Writing this down.)* Uh huh.

**RYDE.** The ones who strut around making a big show like they're dying for it...

**WINSTON.** ...Don't want none of it.

**RYDE.** Now you're catching on.

**WINSTON.** They just want you to look at them, right?

**RYDE.** You're a fast learner. *(Ryde takes the last drop of wine.)* I now pronounce this bottle dead. *(He hands the bottle back to Winston and rises and goes back to buzzers.)* I think that guy was lying to me. She's home. I feel it.

**WINSTON.** You know what? If she's home she can get that thing out of you and then we can go to your house.

**RYDE.** My house? Uh...don't you have to get back to...

**WINSTON.** My brother's? No, I had to leave there. I was going to see if I could stay at my cousin's but I don't know if that's going to work out.

**RYDE.** Sure it will.

**WINSTON.** I don't know. I got some funny people in my life. Do you have a nice place?

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**RYDE.** It's okay...*(Cautiously.)* But it's small. It's just a small studio apartment.

**WINSTON.** *(Impressed.)* A studio apartment!

**RYDE.** Yea...a studio...one room.

**WINSTON.** That's what that means?

**RYDE.** It's like a closet.

**WINSTON.** I thought a studio was like...you know...a studio!

**RYDE.** No, it's not MGM. It's really small.

**WINSTON.** Uh huh.

**RYDE.** I can barely fit in there myself.

**WINSTON.** My cousin, he's like funny...There's a lot we don't agree on...

**RYDE.** And anyway, I'm not going right home. I have to get this thing out of my arm.

**WINSTON.** Like I say, I'll wait for you.

**RYDE.** The thing is...what's your name, anyway?

**WINSTON.** Winston.

**RYDE.** I'm Ryde.

**WINSTON.** Ryde? Like ride'em cowboy?

**RYDE.** Yea. You see, Winston...

**WINSTON.** Ryde. I like that for a name. That's cool.

**RYDE.** The thing is, Winston, I don't think it's a good idea, you waiting for me.

**WINSTON.** I don't mind. I can wait. I can wait forever.

**RYDE.** It could be a really long time. I mean...who knows, I might stay over.

**WINSTON.** What about that man in there?

**RYDE.** You know, I just remembered that she has a brother. That must be him.

**WINSTON.** Her brother. Oh, so you think you might...

**RYDE.** ...Stay over. You know how it is.

**WINSTON.** Uh huh. *(Ryde goes back to the buzzers. Winston remains standing there.)*

**RYDE.** It must be pretty late. *(Beat.)* You should go to your cousin's. Or maybe back to your brother's.

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**WINSTON.** No, I can't go back there. *(Suddenly a great idea.)* You know what we could do? Give me your address and I'll come by tomorrow. How about that? *(Winston has his notebook and pen, ready to write. A difficult pause and Ryde reaches into his pocket and pulls out a couple of dollars.)*

**RYDE.** Here, take this. I owe you for the rotgut. I guess it did keep us warm after all. *(Winston accepts the cash and resumes his position, eagerly poised to take down the address.)* Well, I better get...you know... *(A pause, wherein Winston understands there will be no address. He closes his notebook.)* Goodbye Winston. *(Winston starts down the steps. Ryde looks after him and wants to say something but turns to the buzzers. Winston turns back.)*

**WINSTON.** *(Putting the best face on his disappointment.)* Hey, Ryde!

**RYDE.** Yea?

**WINSTON.** Don't forget— "Meet Joe Black," you got to see that.

**RYDE.** Right, I will.

**WINSTON.** *(On his way, he yells at a passing car.)* Hey! *(He turns back to Ryde.)* Oh my God, did you see that? He's on one of those cell phones, going through a stop sign *and* making an illegal turn. That's a three in one!

**RYDE.** *(To himself as he turns back to the buzzers.)* That kid's going to get himself killed. *(Ryde turns back around and calls out.)* Hey, Winston! *(Winston is gone. He waits a moment, and he buzzes the intercom.)*

**PATTY** *(Off-stage.)* Hello?

**RYDE.** Patty...Thank God...

**PATTY.** Who is this?

**RYDE.** It's me, Ryde.

**PATTY.** Ryde?

**RYDE.** Yea. It's been a while, huh? Listen Patty, I need to see you a second...

**PATTY.** What the fuck, Ryde? You know what time it is?

**RYDE.** Patty, I just—

**PATTY.** You better go.

**RYDE.** Patty please, I need you to get this thing out of my—

**PATTY.** You better get the hell out of here, Dino is on his way down. *(To Dino.)* Dino...wait! NO! What are you doing with that?! Dino, what the...DINO!!

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**RYDE.** Who's Dino? (*DINO appears with a baseball bat. Black-out. The sound of glass shattering.*)

### SCENE 2

*Patty's apartment. Ryde holds a piece of gauze to the spot where the IV had been attached. Dino, who has a bandaged right hand, is seething as Ryde prattles on to PATTY.*

**RYDE.** ...It says in my mother's will that I'm to get my money at thirty-five. Well, I turned thirty-five in October 2000 and here it is 2001, and what happens? I get called into some office and there's Mitzi, up from Palm Beach with her chauffeur, Mr. Blue, who's sitting behind her holding her purse...And she's got this attorney who is like twelve years old, reading from his papers about how I'm a danger to myself and incompetent to manage my affairs. I mean, you tell me, where does a ninety-year-old bag who can't even carry her own pocketbook get off calling me incompetent?

**DINO.** Who *is* this guy?

**RYDE.** I'm talking to Patty.

**DINO.** She got that thing out for you...It's time for you to go.

**RYDE.** Don't tell me, you lunatic with a baseball bat. I could've gotten hurt down there.

**DINO.** Believe me, if I wanted to hurt you, you'd be hurt.

**RYDE.** (*To Patty.*) Where did you pick him up? You could do so much better.

**PATTY.** Both of you, shut the fuck up.

**DINO.** Huh?

**PATTY.** He's right...Somebody could've gotten hurt.

**DINO.** I didn't do anything.

**RYDE.** You smashed the door!

**PATTY.** You and your Goddamn temper...Now you've really done it.

**DINO.** Nobody got hurt.

**PATTY.** You're going to have to leave.

**DINO.** What are you talking?

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**PATTY.** If it's not one thing, it's another. *(To Ryde.)* Look what he did to his hand. He put it through a plate glass door at work and got himself fired.

**RYDE.** Lunatic.

**PATTY.** Shut up.

**DINO.** I was chasing a shoplifter.

**PATTY.** You're not a cop. And look at all the holes in the wall I've got thanks to you. Now, the super is going to see that door in the morning—

**DINO.** It was an accident!

**RYDE.** When a guy shows up with a baseball bat and he doesn't have a ball, there are no accidents.

**PATTY.** I told you not to go down there.

**DINO.** This asshole buzzes the door at three in the morning—

**RYDE.** It's not three, and besides, you lied to me. You told me she was out.

**PATTY.** Dino, you have to get out of here. I can't deal with this. When the super sees—

**DINO.** But I live here!

**RYDE.** You live with this guy?

**PATTY.** When he sees that, he's going to have us both kicked out. You need help, man. These fucking rages of yours...

**DINO.** I never hurt you, did I? I never touched you that way.

**PATTY.** You want a medal for that?

**RYDE.** Yea, really.

**DINO.** *(To Ryde.)* You trying to start with me?!

**PATTY.** *(To Dino.)* You have to go.

**DINO.** I won't do anything again...I swear.

**PATTY.** And you have to hurry...What if somebody saw...

**RYDE.** Hey Patty...

**DINO.** It'll be okay. I'll pay for the door.

**PATTY.** Oh yea, how? You just have to leave till it blows over. If the super sees you here tomorrow he'll call the cops. I know it. And I don't need this shit.

**RYDE.** Patty...

**DINO.** I don't want to leave you.

**PATTY.** Just for the time being.

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**RYDE.** Patty...

**DINO.** Come on, it's you and me... Say it, you and me... (*Dino goes to Patty and tries to hold her but she squirms out of it.*) ... You and me. If you help me, we can work this out. You think I want to be like that? Like my father? If you tried to calm me down when I get like that maybe—

**RYDE.** Patty, can you listen a second...

**PATTY.** (*Turning at last, to Ryde, annoyed.*) What is it?!

**RYDE.** Patty, I need you to do something for me.

**DINO.** She don't have to do anything.

**PATTY.** I don't see you in what—two years? Not a phone call, nothing, and now I'm supposed to do you favors?

**RYDE.** I've been meaning to call... It's just that I left my jacket in the ER and I thought you could get it for me.

**PATTY.** Yea, right, that'll happen.

**RYDE.** What's the big deal? You still work there, right?

**DINO.** Patty, don't even talk to this guy.

**RYDE.** So, could you do that for me? It's a green ski jacket and I left it in one of the cubicles off to the side. I'm not saying right this second... maybe tomorrow though?

**DINO.** Get it yourself.

**RYDE.** I can't go back there. They'll lock me up.

**DINO.** You should be locked up.

**RYDE.** I can't go back there... Patty, please... I can't afford a new jacket right now and it's freezing out there.

**PATTY.** Okay, okay, I'll get it for you.

**DINO.** No!

**PATTY.** (*She turns her attention to Dino and gets him a bag.*) Let's get your things together for you to take.

**DINO.** No...no...this isn't happening... Please... Patty... come on... Where am I supposed to go? Why are you doing this?

**PATTY.** I'm trying to protect you! Do you want to go to jail?

**DINO.** Nobody's going to put me in jail.

**PATTY.** (*Packing.*) You want to take that chance? Because I'm not bailing you out.

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**RYDE.** *(Following Patty as she gets Dino's things.)* I appreciate you doing that Patty. It's my money and she's trying to tell me I can't get it till I go to some facility... *(She's ignoring him, but he continues to follow her closely.)* You hear me? A facility...a feed farm is what it is...

**PATTY.** *(Going to Dino who is despondent on the couch.)* You know the super already has it in for you and the neighbors think you're some kind of animal. Somebody left a pamphlet for abused women under the door.

**DINO.** I never touched you like that!

**RYDE.** *(Continuing on his own train of thought.)* ...And who do you think it was who gave me my first drink...?

**PATTY.** *(Batting RYDE away.)* You reek...what have you been drinking?

**RYDE.** ...It was Mitzi, that's who. Right after my mother's funeral, we all went to Mitzi's suite at the Sherry. I was nineteen years old, and both my parents were dead. What did I know? She handed me a Tom Collins and told me to drink it. She said it would make me feel better and you know what? It did. Not just better, it felt like I would live forever on a million dollars a year.

**PATTY.** *(To Dino.)* It'll just be for a few days, and we can still see each other.

**DINO.** This don't feel right to me. Where am I supposed to go?

**PATTY.** Let me think for a second.

**RYDE.** The thing is, everybody else I know got out of trust when they were eighteen, like normal people. Twenty-one at the latest. Okay, Kirby Mathers had to wait till he was thirty, but the guy was a junkie. Three days after he got his dough they found him dead in a shooting gallery in the Bronx. What an idiot... *(Ryde grabs Patty's arm and swings her around to him.)* ...But me, I had to wait till thirty-five and I don't even smoke pot.

**DINO.** Hey, get your hands off her!

**RYDE.** Do you mind, this is important. *(Ryde continues to follow Patty.)* Patty, there's something else...This situation with Mitzi...

**PATTY.** Who?

**RYDE.** I just told you, my step-grandmother.

**PATTY.** What has this got to do with me?



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**DINO.** *(To Patty.)* You're just throwing things in. They got to be folded. *(Dino takes out what Patty has packed and methodically and expertly folds his clothes.)*

**RYDE.** Okay, this is the thing...I'm going to be fighting it out with Mitzi in court if it comes to that, and I think it will...I'm getting a lawyer...It's my money!

**PATTY.** The point, Ryde...the point?

**RYDE.** If she finds out I was in Emergency...I'm fucked. I can't let her have that kind of ammunition. Maybe she knows already...I can't let her be able to prove it.

**DINO.** You got to fold these things a certain way.

**RYDE.** If there are records that have anything to do with me drinking...if she can prove it with records...I know they have a chart...

**PATTY.** Forget it, Ryde.

**DINO.** *(Looks up from his folding.)* Huh?

**RYDE.** All you have to do is swipe my chart.

**DINO.** Get the fuck out of here!

**PATTY.** Are you out of your mind? Even if I could...They've got it all in a computer...It's not just a matter of some chart I can pick up and walk out with. It's all in the system...The billing...your insurance...

**RYDE.** The computer...Yea...But I didn't give them any insurance information. I left before that.

**DINO.** Everything's on computer. Everyone knows that. Jerk.

**RYDE.** Okay, so, for curiosity's sake...How hard is it to get into the computer and like delete something?

**DINO.** Get the fuck out of here. *(Patty finally gives her full attention to Ryde and stares steadily at him.)*

**RYDE.** Is it possible? *(Pause.)* Patty? *(Pause.)* I'm just asking. I know it sounds—

**PATTY.** *(Her wheels turning.)* It's not impossible.

**RYDE.** It's not...?

**PATTY.** It could probably be done.

**RYDE.** Is it something you could do?

**DINO.** No!

**PATTY.** I probably could.

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**RYDE.** Would you do it?

**PATTY.** I could get into a lot of trouble.

**RYDE.** If you were caught.

**DINO.** Stop talking like this!

**RYDE.** But I know you. You're smart and you wouldn't get caught.

**PATTY.** Don't butter me.

**RYDE.** I'm not. I...

**PATTY.** I'm not saying I wouldn't do it. *(Pause. All eyes on Patty.)* There would have to be something in it for me.

**RYDE.** Of course! I'll pay you. Once I get my money—

**PATTY.** Not money.

**RYDE.** What...anything...I'll do anything.

**PATTY.** You mean that?

**RYDE.** Anything.

**PATTY.** Good, cause Dino needs a place to stay. Just a day or two while things cool off here. *(Ryde and Dino erupt simultaneously.)*

**RYDE.** WHAT?!

**DINO.** HUH?!

**PATTY.** If you take him in, I'll do it for you. And if you won't, fuck you, you can get your own jacket.

**RYDE.** I'm not taking this hyena home with me.

**DINO.** That don't matter cause I'm not going with him.

**PATTY.** Okay, then where will you go?

**DINO.** I've got people I can call.

**PATTY.** Who?

**DINO.** Then I'll stay here.

**PATTY.** Not an option. *(To Ryde.)* So, that's the deal.

**RYDE.** Patty, I would do it, I would, but my place is really small. It's a tiny little studio.

**PATTY.** That's the deal.

**RYDE.** When would you take care of that for me?

**PATTY.** I'm on tomorrow night. But listen, it doesn't mean that you can kick him out right after. Cause, trust me, you do that and you're dead meat—I'll blow the whistle.

**RYDE.** You're so tough. I always liked that about you.

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**PATTY.** You don't want to flirt with me now. So...?

**RYDE.** How long are we talking? What if he never leaves?

**DINO.** I'm not going.

**PATTY.** Dino, this isn't a break-up. Let's just get ourselves together. You need to focus on getting another job.

**DINO.** I am focused.

**PATTY.** I'm saying take advantage of our time apart. Do your artwork.

**RYDE.** Artwork?

**DINO.** And when can I come home?

**PATTY.** When the door is fixed and forgotten.

**DINO.** You said a day or two.

**PATTY.** Like I said, when it blows over.

**DINO.** You didn't have a thing with this guy?

**PATTY.** *(Getting Dino's easel and art supplies.)* No.

**RYDE.** What's all this? I don't have room for all this shit.

**DINO.** I'll leave it here. I don't feel like painting.

**PATTY.** *(Loading Ryde down with supplies.)* You'll have to help him carry this stuff.

**RYDE.** Jesus Christ. Okay. I'm keeping my part of the deal. You'll let me know if there's a problem, right? *(Grudgingly, to Dino.)* Well, come on.

**DINO.** *(To Patty.)* I'm calling you tomorrow.

**PATTY.** I'll be here.

**RYDE.** *(Grumbling as he goes out the door.)* I can't believe this...It's all Mitzi's fault. What the fuck. I'll get my money and move to Spain. That's what I'm going to do. Or maybe Florida. *(As Ryde's voice trails off, Dino stops and looks back at Patty.)*

### SCENE 3

*Ryde's apartment, where vines and ivy hang and wind their way around tropical plants. There are African violets, a rock collection, a fish tank, a turtle tank, and a gutted television set serving as a terrarium. The only furniture is a sofa bed and a table. National Graphic magazines are neatly piled on the floor, stuffed animals are scattered about, and maps and*

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*charts are tacked up on the walls as well as a couple of framed photographs. A humidifier is on high, making the tropical ambience palpable. Ryde and Dino enter.*

**RYDE.** Now, don't touch anything because I have certain rules.

**DINO.** *(His mouth dropping open.)* What the...It's like a friggin' rain forest in here. *(He goes to the fish tank.)* Hey, are these like tropical fish?

**RYDE.** The first rule is, don't feed the fish. *(He dumps Dino's belongings.)* And I don't want to see your stuff move out of this corner.

**DINO.** It's so hot in here.

**RYDE.** It's the humidifier. It has to stay on for the plants. Don't mess with it.

**DINO.** *(His attention turning to the other tank.)* What's in here? A turtle, huh.

**RYDE.** He's not just a turtle, he's a Red-Eared Slider. He begs for food but don't give him any, he's on a strict diet.

**DINO.** What's his name?

**RYDE.** Don't worry about his name, you're not going to be here long enough for a relationship.

**DINO.** I bought one of these in Chinatown. I made turtle soup. *(Ryde looks aghast.)* What? It's good!

**RYDE.** Lay a hand on him and I'll kill you. *(Dino reaches his hand out to pick up a specimen from the rock collection.)* And don't touch my rock collection.

**DINO.** What's with the TV?

**RYDE.** I didn't want to pay for cable so I turned it into a terrarium.

**DINO.** Great. I'm cut off from my girlfriend and I have no TV either. *(An awkward pause as Dino and Ryde stand looking at each other.)*

**RYDE.** So, you want a glass of wine or something?

**DINO.** Huh? Oh, yea, okay, I'll have some of that. *(Ryde pours two mugs of wine from a box with a spigot.)* Wine from a box, in coffee cups. *(Dino looks around some more. He points to one of the framed photos on the wall.)* Is that...?

**RYDE.** It's my grandfather with Jackie Kennedy. That should give you an idea of what I come from.

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**DINO.** You're a Kennedy?

**RYDE.** No, but it's you know...what I come from.

**DINO.** Oh, you mean being a rich kid.

**RYDE.** Do I look rich?

**DINO.** You were talking before...about all your money.

**RYDE.** It's not a lot of money.

**DINO.** But you're getting money and you don't have to do anything for it.

**RYDE.** Don't have to do anything?! I have to fight this old witch tooth and nail for it and it's my money! I was nineteen years old when my parents died, I should get something for that, don't you think?

**DINO.** What...a car crash or something?

**RYDE.** No, they went independently. First my mother left my father for some guitar plucker and then my father basically drank himself to death. *(Ryde downs his drink and gets another.)* You want another?

**DINO.** I just started this one. So, what happened to her?

**RYDE.** My mother? A few months later she got mugged and stabbed in an elevator. She actually held the door open for the kid who came in and killed her. She always had to be the big liberal.

**DINO.** *(Stiffly but sincerely.)* I'm sorry for your loss.

**RYDE.** Ancient history.

**DINO.** I need to call Patty. Where's the phone.

**RYDE.** I don't have one.

**DINO.** You don't have a telephone?

**RYDE.** If someone wants me, they'll find me. They let me use the phone at the bodega downstairs. Caesar down there, he takes messages and everything.

**DINO.** I need a phone. You don't have a cell or nothing?

**RYDE.** What do I need that shit for? It's just more complications.

**DINO.** What's so complicated about a telephone?

**RYDE.** I like simplicity. *(Ryde refills his mug.)* You sure you don't want a refill?

**DINO.** No but I am hungry, so...wait a minute...I don't see a kitchen.

**RYDE.** There's the hot plate.

**DINO.** And the refrigerator...? *(Ryde shakes his head.)* No refrig...what is this?

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**RYDE.** You want to know how low my electric bill is?

**DINO.** I don't give a fuck... Why didn't you tell me before? No, this aint right... And where am I supposed to sleep?

**RYDE.** I can make a nest for you.

**DINO.** A nest? What do I look like, a fucking blue jay?

**RYDE.** You better calm down. You're not going to be smashing any doors around here, I can tell you that right now. I can't have any trouble here. You got that?

**DINO.** This aint going to work. *(He is getting his things.)*

**RYDE.** What are you doing?

**DINO.** I'm going home.

**RYDE.** Hold on, you're not going anywhere until Patty does that thing for me. Besides, she kicked you out, remember?

**DINO.** *(Shoving Ryde aside and opening the door.)* I'm going home.

**RYDE.** You don't have a home! *(At that Dino stops in the doorway.)* Look, it's late and it's cold. Why don't you just stay the night... what do you say? *(He approaches Dino who remains looking out the door.)* You stay here. You'll be back with her soon enough. You should enjoy the break. You get to be a bachelor for a couple of days. Like me. Hey, come on... You hear me? *(Ryde puts a hand on Dino's shoulder.)* How about a drink?

**DINO.** *(Not turning around.)* Huh? *(He turns to see Ryde pouring them both drinks.)* You can really pour that stuff into you.

**RYDE.** Come on. You stay here for a couple of days.

**DINO.** *(Leaving his things and going to the couch.)* I'm not like some charity case, you know. Once I get a job... I need a job.

**RYDE.** I know.

**DINO.** I'm not a freeloader. I had a good job. It wasn't my fault. I saw that guy steal a pair of pants right off the—

**RYDE.** You want a job? I'll take you to my temp agency. Sometimes those things lead to permanent jobs.

**DINO.** Yea... well... I don't really do computers and shit like that. I've been mostly in sales.

**RYDE.** You can file, answer phones... If I can do it, you can.

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**DINO.** I wouldn't mind going back to her with a paycheck in my pocket. I want to be successful for her. And I'll pay you for being here, as soon as I get something coming in.

**RYDE.** You don't have to give me any money.

**DINO.** I'm not a freeloader. I'll pay you.

**RYDE.** I don't want your money.

**DINO.** (*Getting worked up.*) Are you trying to start with me?! I'm not a freeloader! What do you want and don't give me any of that "nothing." Tell me what! Tell me—

**RYDE.** Okay...wait...Look, I don't want your money— (*Dino makes a move toward Ryde.*) But I have an idea.

**DINO.** What idea?

**RYDE.** You're some kind of artist, right?

**DINO.** Yea...I draw and paint...a little.

**RYDE.** Okay, then paint me something. That'll be your payment.

**DINO.** Yea? My hand is kind of fucked up.

**RYDE.** You can try.

**DINO.** So, like, what? You want me to paint your portrait?

**RYDE.** My portrait? Who am I, Henry the Eighth? No, I don't need a picture of me.

**DINO.** You want something abstract?

**RYDE.** No fuck that shit. I want something real. (*Pause as he thinks about it.*) I know. I know what I want. (*Ryde goes rifling through his National Geographics and picks one out and turns to a page. He shows Dino.*) I want him. Can you do that?

**DINO.** That's a gorilla.

**RYDE.** Yea, I know. I mean it doesn't have to be him exactly—though I really like this guy.

**DINO.** Eh, an animal picture? Let me do an abstract.

**RYDE.** No, I don't want something I could paint myself. I want him...my mountain gorilla. My silverback. This is what I want. I've got a lot of pictures you can use as models. You can get started on it tomorrow. And we'll set you up with the temp agency and I'll introduce you to Caesar downstairs...Oh, and to answer your question—my turtle's name is Bunky. (*Ryde goes to Bunky's tank and talks baby talk.*) And he's my baby boy,

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yes he is! (*Back to Dino.*) We've got a big day ahead of us...you better get some sleep. (*Ryde gets sheets and a blanket.*) We'll make you a sleeping nest on the floor. That's how gorillas spend most of their days, searching for a good place to make their nest.

**DINO.** (*Rising unsteadily.*) This wine...it's like sneaky Pete. (*Together, they lay out the bedding.*)

**RYDE.** I was going to be a primatologist...before I dropped out of Columbia.

**DINO.** Why did you drop out?

**RYDE.** Eh, they wanted too much out of me. But I can tell you everything about gorillas. If you're going to paint him, it's important that you get it right. Like you should know that gorillas show all their emotion through their eyes...

**DINO.** I've been to the zoo, I know what they look like.

**RYDE.** You really don't—gorillas in the forest don't look like they do in the zoo where their hair gets dull from rolling around on cement. In the forest, they shine.

**DINO.** Yea?

**RYDE.** I went to Africa when I was fifteen.

**DINO.** You fucking rich kids...

**RYDE.** Oh, get over it. Now, imagine yourself in the forest. The sunlight is blocked from the canopy of plants. Every ecosystem is fascinating—every plant, mammal, insect, and fungus has its place. On the forest floor, nothing is independent. Fruit-eating hornbills high up in a tree call and red river hogs march in to feed on the fallen fruit. (*Ryde settles next to Dino as if telling a story by a campfire. Dino listens to him intently, looking straight at Ryde to follow every word.*) So, listen, there I was, in Uganda...walking along a path. It was quiet except for the buzzing of insects. A rustling in the woods made me stop cold. I stood very still, looking at the ground. I slowly lifted my head and there—this close to me—stood an enormous silverback male gorilla.

**DINO.** Get...the...fuck...out.

**RYDE.** I thought I was going to shit because even though gorillas are gentle by nature, he didn't know me and their experiences with humans have been horrible. I had come to Africa with a group to observe them but



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we hadn't encountered any yet and I was certainly not expecting to meet one on the path. So, I stood there, looking at him...

**DINO.** Yea...

**RYDE.** ...With my mouth hanging open, staring at him, even though I knew enough not to look a wild animal straight in the eye. He then stood up to his full height—like he just grew right in front of me with all this dignity and power...

**DINO.** And you're just standing there...

**RYDE.** And then he...he like very daintily plucked a leaf from a plant and placed it between his lips. (*Ryde downs his mug and gets a refill.*) At the time, I didn't know what that meant.

**DINO.** What did it mean?

**RYDE.** That I should get the hell out of there. When a silverback puts a leaf between his lips, all the other gorillas clear out because it means he's pissed off and ready to tear down anything in his way, even a member of his own group. But like an idiot, I go on staring at him.

**DINO.** Okay, so like I know he didn't kill you. What did he do?

**RYDE.** He reached his arms to the sky and opened his mouth—this dark, vast cavern. I could see right in there. Man, I could see the tartar on his teeth!

**DINO.** No shit.

**RYDE.** And then I heard what has been called the most explosive sound in nature.

**DINO.** What...what?

**RYDE.** He let out a roar.

**DINO.** A roar...like a lion?

**RYDE.** (*Slowly shaking his head.*) No...A lion's roar would be like a meow compared to this. This was a roar that shattered the stillness of the forest...that sent birds flying out of the trees and the animals on the ground beating a retreat for a safe distance. But this was between the two of us. He roared for me. He roared and then, all of a sudden, he went back to quadrupedal position and ran off into the forest, beating the ground.

**DINO.** Huh. Yea well, the thing is, if I'm going to paint him...I don't know, I need like an emotional connection. I mean, this is an animal. I don't know what's going on in his head.

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**RYDE.** Listen to me. We share ninety-eight percent of our genome with these animals. You want to know what's going on in his head? (*Dino nods.*) Gaze into the eyes of a great ape and you can't deny our kinship with them. They're us. They're able to communicate about their past and wonder about their future. They know grief and loss just like we do. They're us! And yet, it's a dark history between man and gorilla. The one I met that day was alone. He may have been a survivor of a group ravaged by men or maybe he was a lone gorilla without a group to belong to. There are solitary males who travel the forest, wandering from group to group looking to move into one where the dominant silverback will tolerate him.

**DINO.** You're saying that the one I paint...he could be one of those...wandering around and trying to fit in.

**RYDE.** What I'm saying is, that when I looked into those eyes—soft and dark and human— (*He cuts himself off.*) Just paint me my gorilla. You're the artist, you can figure out what's going on inside of him. All you really have to know is this one thing—Gorillas feel deeply, and they remember everything. (*Ryde downs his drink.*)

### SCENE 4

*Ryde's apartment, a couple of days later. Dino is at his easel, painting. Ryde enters and pours himself a drink.*

**RYDE.** Well...Have you talked to her yet?

**DINO.** Huh?

**RYDE.** Have you talked to Patty?

**DINO.** I left messages.

**RYDE.** Maybe she called back. Did you check with Caesar?

**DINO.** I've been going down there every two hours. He's starting to look at me funny...If he tries to start anything with me...

**RYDE.** Please, don't antagonize Caesar. That pit bull he's got down there isn't just for show. But come on, what's with Patty? I need my jacket. I'm walking around in this cheap windbreaker. But fuck that, she said she'd take care of that other thing and I haven't gotten any kind of confirmation.

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My whole life is depending on a flake who can't return a phone call. I'm not going to be locked up...I'm not. (*Ryde pours another drink.*) Can I pour you one? (*No response.*) I guess not while you're working, right? You've really been at it there.

**DINO.** Huh?

**RYDE.** I'm not going to look at it yet. I want to be surprised. (*Beat.*) Don't forget what I told you...about the weeds...the lobelias and senecios have those yellow and purple blossoms that really stand out against the dark green of everything else. (*No response.*) Hey, I've got good news! I was at the temp agency—

**DINO.** What did you say, good news?

**RYDE.** They got a job for you!

**DINO.** (*Stops painting.*) Oh yea?

**RYDE.** I told Nicole, the receptionist, I'd give this to you. All the information is here...And here's your time sheet. You start tomorrow at nine A.M. And guess what? She said this place is looking for someone permanent. Do I take care of you or what?

**DINO.** Permanent? Yea? It's not computers, right?

**RYDE.** No, no. It's right up your alley. Tomorrow's Friday which means they'll sign your time sheet and you bring it to the agency...I'll meet you there and show you where to cash your check. You see, I told you things would look up.

**DINO.** (*Returning to his painting.*) Patty will like that.

**RYDE.** That Nicole has a tight little body. I might ask her out. The only problem is that there are some hot looking girls coming through that agency...you know, models and actresses...and if I go out once with Nicole and she gets all psycho-possessive on me it screws up all those other possibilities. Nicole's cute but is she worth it? You saw her, what do you think?

**DINO.** (*Painting.*) What?

**RYDE.** Are you listening to me? Sometimes I can't tell with you.

**DINO.** Huh? Yea.

**RYDE.** I'll find a way around it. In high school I managed to sleep with every girl in my class, even the dogs so they wouldn't feel left out.

**DINO.** Huh?

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**RYDE.** Why am I always repeating myself with you? It's always "huh" or "what?" Are you hard of hearing or something?

**DINO.** I hear you.

**RYDE.** You sure?

**DINO.** Huh?

**RYDE.** Cause I know you're trying to concentrate on your painting but—

**DINO.** I hear you.

**RYDE.** Well, if you say you do...I guess I have to believe you... *(Ryde moves behind Dino, a little bit away and speaks in a normal tone of voice.)*

Dino, can you hear me? *(No response.)* Dino...You can't hear me, can you? *(No response.)* You know I nailed your girlfriend a couple of times. *(Dino keeps painting and doesn't react. Ryde grabs his arm, startling him.)* Dino!

**DINO.** What the...

**RYDE.** You can't hear!

**DINO.** What? I can hear!

**RYDE.** No, you can't. You don't know what I'm saying unless you're looking at me. You're reading lips.

**DINO.** Get the fuck out of here.

**RYDE.** You might not realize it, but that's what you're doing.

**DINO.** What, you think I'm deaf?

**RYDE.** Nobody ever told you this before? Nobody ever noticed?

**DINO.** Noticed what? There's nothing to...I'm not deaf.

**RYDE.** Maybe not stone cold but you're definitely hard of hearing. You need a hearing aid or something...You need to see someone about this.

**DINO.** *(Throwing down his paint brush.)* Aw fuck...you made me screw up here...

**RYDE.** What are you going to do...Live the rest of your life in your little deaf world? I can't believe nobody has picked up on this...Patty? Your family?

**DINO.** I can hear.

**RYDE.** Is it something new? They would have noticed if you were like this in school. Could you hear okay in school?

**DINO.** I don't know.

**RYDE.** What do you mean, you don't know?

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**DINO.** They kept me by myself...Fuck this shit. I'm going out. This place is getting small. *(Dino gets ready to leave. Ryde holds him back.)*

**RYDE.** Wait a minute...What do you mean they kept you by yourself?

**DINO.** You know...Like I had to eat lunch alone. When the other kids were in the cafeteria or on the playground...I had to eat lunch in this room.

**RYDE.** Why?

**DINO.** I don't know...Cause of fighting, I guess. I had to eat lunch in this room, with one wall-eyed nun watching me. And they always had me sit up alone by the teacher's desk to keep me out of trouble.

**RYDE.** Come on, let's talk about it.

**DINO.** I'm not deaf.

**RYDE.** Okay, you're not deaf.

**DINO.** Huh?

**RYDE.** I said, okay you're not deaf. But you're not going anywhere. Get back to work. Let me get a drink and see what you've got here. *(Ryde pours one and goes to the easel. He is deeply struck by what he sees.)*

**DINO.** Well? *(Pause.)* You gonna say anything? *(Pause.)* What? What? *(Pause.)* Is it okay...or what? Is this what you wanted?

**RYDE.** *(He's at a loss for words and can only nod. He looks at Dino as words return.)* This is...incredible. Why has nobody seen your work?

**DINO.** Are you kidding me? I can't even get a foot in the door. When I go into a gallery or something to talk to them, they think I'm the delivery guy.

**RYDE.** It's not like I know anything about art...but, man...

**DINO.** And I've been trying. I'm out there every day humiliating myself.

**RYDE.** Mitzi should see this. She collects art. I don't know if she knows anything either, but she has connections.

**DINO.** Yea? I've never had that...connections. I'm not like the kids who come into town these days with their master degrees and their parents.

**RYDE.** I'm going to call Mitzi.

**DINO.** You can do that?

**RYDE.** In the old days she would do anything for me. We used to get along great. I'd go down to Palm Beach every season and she'd let me drive her Silver Shadow, without a license even... *(He returns to the regrettable present.)* But Dino, before I speak to her, we have to make sure that Patty took care of that thing. Dino, look at me and listen. I don't want

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to call Mitzi until I know she doesn't have anything on me. Until I know she can't hurt me.

**DINO.** I'll go see Patty right after I cash my check tomorrow.

**RYDE.** Good...and don't take any excuses from her because we had a deal. *(Ryde goes back to the painting.)* There was a time I thought I'd be saving these guys from extinction.

**DINO.** You still could.

**RYDE.** Right. Me. Could you imagine some old silverback chewing on his bamboo seeing a drunk like me come stumbling up his mountain? He'd think "Who the hell is this clown?" Well, when I get my money I'll send them a check.

**DINO.** It's all connections. Sometimes it seems like everybody knows each other but me. I can't get a foot in the door, and they all know somebody.

**RYDE.** Now you know somebody too. You're lucky to have met me.

### SCENE 5

*Unique Temporary Employment Agency. The following day. NICOLE, the receptionist and Ryde are flirting and having a good time of it. A vase of flowers is on Nicole's desk.*

**RYDE.** ...I'm serious, once I get my money, I'm gone.

**NICOLE.** Yea? So, like where are you going?

**RYDE.** I'll probably move to Spain...Majorca or Marbella.

**NICOLE.** I'd love to travel.

**RYDE.** Who's talking about traveling? I want to go to a place and just be there.

**NICOLE.** I know what you mean, it's so much more restive.

**RYDE.** I think you mean restful.

**NICOLE.** Oh, yea, restful.

**RYDE.** Why do I need to travel? So I can get a picture of myself in front of the Eiffel Tower? Nah, I'm going to Spain.

**NICOLE.** Do you speak Spanish.

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**RYDE.** I'll learn. Shit, everybody comes here and learns English, I should be able to learn Spanish.

**NICOLE.** Languages have never been my for-tay. I learned Spanish but that was in school, and I hated school.

**RYDE.** I used to love going to school...Getting on that Madison Avenue bus in the morning with everybody looking at me.

**NICOLE.** Looking at you?

**RYDE.** Everyone would look at me. I'll bet even the bus driver was thinking "Now, there's a good-looking boy."

**NICOLE.** You're too much.

**RYDE.** What are you laughing at? I'm not kidding. Well, I don't have to tell you what it's like to be looked at. I'm sure people are looking at you all the time.

**NICOLE.** *(Taken by surprise.)* Well...yea, sure...yea.

**RYDE.** So, who got you the flowers?

**NICOLE.** Wouldn't you like to know.

**RYDE.** Yea, I would otherwise I wouldn't ask. Cause if you have a boyfriend, I'll leave you alone.

**NICOLE.** No...don't...I mean, they're not even mine. *(Beat.)* They just get them for the office.

**RYDE.** Well, they should be yours. They match your eyes.

**NICOLE.** But they're red.

**RYDE.** You know what I mean. *(Looking deep into her eyes.)* They bring out those little green flecks. You have pretty eyes.

**NICOLE.** What are you doing here anyway?

**RYDE.** I'm supposed to meet Dino.

**NICOLE.** Oh. That guy? He's at his job...He won't be here for hours.

**RYDE.** You want me to leave?

**NICOLE.** No...I mean, that's up to you. So, that Dino guy, what is he, a friend of yours?

**RYDE.** He's not my friend. He's just an acquaintance.

**NICOLE.** He's kind of weird.

**RYDE.** Weird? How?

**NICOLE.** I don't know...How old is he? I mean, what kind of man does office temp work?

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**RYDE.** I do it.

**NICOLE.** It's not the same thing. You're just doing it till you get your money. *(Beat.)* Right? *(Winston appears outside of the office. A lot of effort has gone into his appearance, as shabby as it seems. He is wearing a thread-bare, ill-fitting suit. Most likely bought in a thrift shop where its original owner probably left it in 1975. He takes a moment to prepare himself before entering the office. He has his notebook with him.)*

**RYDE.** I was thinking, maybe we could get together tomorrow night?

**NICOLE.** Yea? Maybe. Why don't you call me tonight?

**RYDE.** Why?

**NICOLE.** So we can talk about it.

**RYDE.** What's there to talk about? Do you want to or not?

**NICOLE.** I'll give you my home number.

**RYDE.** *(Humoring her.)* Okay, what is it?

**NICOLE.** Don't you want to write it down?

**RYDE.** I'll remember it.

**NICOLE.** Get out.

**RYDE.** I'm good with numbers. I won the Alfred H. Lawrence Math Award in eleventh grade. *(Winston enters. The moment Ryde catches a glimpse of him he subtly turns away so that he's not recognized.)*

**NICOLE.** I'll write it down for you. *(Winston approaches Nicole who is bothered by the interruption but mindful of how she appears to Ryde.)* Can I help you?

**WINSTON.** Good afternoon. My name is Winston—

**NICOLE.** *(Before he can get his name out.)* What?

**WINSTON.** I would like to find out about...I would like to work in... *(A little laugh.)* Excuse me, I'm a little nervous. Let me start that over. Good afternoon, I'm interested in working—

**NICOLE.** I think you may be in the wrong place.

**WINSTON.** I thought this is Unique Temporary Agency.

**NICOLE.** It is but I don't think it's the kind of agency you're looking for.

**WINSTON.** Can I ask you something? What do you mean, kind of agency?

**NICOLE.** We don't handle industrials here. Go to Fourteenth Street.

**WINSTON.** Fourteenth Street.



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**NICOLE.** Correct.

**WINSTON.** *(Preparing to write in his notebook.)* Do you have an address for that?

**NICOLE.** Fourteenth Street...I don't know...There's lots of them. Look in the phone book. *(Winston stands in place and glances at Ryde who tries to become invisible.)* Okay?

**WINSTON.** I don't really understand. So you're saying... *(Winston can see that she is done with this conversation.)* Okay. *(Winston starts to leave and Nicole immediately picks up on her conversation with Ryde, who continues to obscure himself.)*

**NICOLE.** So, you want my number? Hey, turn around. Hello? *(Winston returns.)*

**WINSTON.** Excuse me, ma'am...But I don't think you're right about this. I was interested in working in an office. I'm pretty sure this is where I'm supposed to be for that. *(Winston looks over to Ryde who looks down and away.)*

**NICOLE.** Whatever. Let me see your resume.

**WINSTON.** Oh. I don't have that yet. But I have a certificate from my computer course, right here... *(He shows it to her and she glances at it and hands it back to him, unimpressed.)*

**NICOLE.** What kind of office experience do you have?

**WINSTON.** None yet, that's why I wanted to start here.

**NICOLE.** I don't have anything for you now. Come back when you have experience and a resume.

**WINSTON.** What I was told...I was told that this was a good way to get that experience. *(Nicole does not know how to respond and hates Winston for that as well as for interrupting her blossoming romance. She glowers in silence. Finally, she speaks.)*

**NICOLE.** It doesn't work that way.

**WINSTON.** How does it work?

**NICOLE.** We don't just take anyone off the—I told you, try Fourteenth Street. *(Winston won't leave. Ryde wants to turn around and reveal himself but it's too late for that and the conflict is eating him up.)* That's all I can tell you.

**WINSTON.** What about the test? Can I take the test?

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**NICOLE.** What test?

**WINSTON.** You know...the test...so I can show you that—

**NICOLE.** There's no test.

**WINSTON.** Are you new here or something?

**NICOLE.** No, I'm not new.

**WINSTON.** Because why are you telling me there's no test. I would like to take it. *(No response.)* Is there someone else I can talk to about this?

**NICOLE.** There's nobody here now. Just myself.

**WINSTON.** I can wait.

**NICOLE.** You can't wait here.

**WINSTON.** I thought this was a waiting room. *(Preparing to write in his notebook.)* Let me see if I get this...There's no test...

**NICOLE.** That's not what I said.

**WINSTON.** Yes it is, that's exactly what you said.

**NICOLE.** Don't put words in my mouth.

**WINSTON.** Could you give me your name, please? *(A pause as Winston waits for her name.)*

**NICOLE.** *(Seething.)* You don't need that information.

**WINSTON.** There's nobody back there? Like maybe a supervisor or something?

**NICOLE.** I'll call security if I have to.

**WINSTON.** I didn't do anything. *(Winston leans against the desk as Nicole pulls back.)* Can I just show you how I can work on a computer? Let me show you on that one over there... *(As Winston points to a computer, he accidentally knocks over the vase. Nicole gasps and grabs the telephone.)* Oops. I apologize.

**NICOLE.** *(On the telephone.)* Security? Yes, this is Nicole up at Unique...

**WINSTON.** I can clean this up.

**NICOLE.** *(On telephone.)* I need you to send somebody up here right now.

**WINSTON.** It was an accident.

**NICOLE.** *(On telephone.)* There's a gentleman here, creating a disturbance and I need somebody to—

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**WINSTON.** I didn't do nothing! *(In frustration, Winston grabs some of the flowers and throws them across Nicole's desk and exits. Once he is gone, Ryde turns around and stands transfixed, looking after Winston.)*

**NICOLE.** *(On telephone.)* Never mind, he's gone. *(She hangs up.)* You believe that guy? Certificate...I'm sure it was forged. They do that, you know. *(Ryde keeps his back to her as he stares out after Winston. He doesn't hear a word she says.)* Look at this mess. I'm shaking like a leaf. Thank God, you were here, who knows what would've happened if I was alone. Anyway, where were we? Hello? Are you there? I was writing down my number for you. *(She writes.)* Tomorrow night would be good. Yes, I think I'm definitely available. What do you want to do? Do you want to make a reservation somewhere? What do you think? Do you like sushi?

### END OF ACT ONE

***THE PLAY IS NOT OVER!! TO FIND OUT HOW IT ENDS—  
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