

**A GAME OF RISK**  
**By GENE KATO**

# A GAME OF RISK

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# A GAME OF RISK

**THE SCENE:** The rather too clean apartment of KURT BIXLER. The room reflects the anal retentive nature of the pseudo-man that lives here. Everything is in perfect order. All of the bookshelves are fully stocked and all of the books are arranged in alphabetical order. There is a front door, various chairs and a sofa, a kitchen area, a bathroom, a door that leads off into a bedroom, a desk in which everything on it looks to have been lined up with a slide rule and framing square. Basically, the place looks too much in order.

**AT RISE:** Two men are discussing a daily event. The one speaking is clearly very upset...almost to the point of tears. This is KURT. KURT is really not a bad looking guy, it's his nature that makes him look like a dork. The other man is his only friend in the world, BOB GARRIK. BOB listens to KURT in stunned disbelief.

**KURT.** So, I say to myself, "Kurt, Ol' buddy, it's time to make your move – and I did just that. Oh, she didn't know what was about to happen to her. I kept my cool, mustered up all of the courage that I could, walked over to her, tapped her on the shoulder, and I asked her to go with me to the company picnic. BAM! Just like that. My adrenaline was flowing like crazy, my heart was beating overtime, my hands started to get clammy, my mouth became real dry as I waited for her response. She looked me over head to toe. I was shaking. Shaking like a frightened puppy. Finally, she lifted her eyes to mine and said, "Your fly is down and your Bart is peeking out."

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**BOB.** Your fly was down?

**KURT.** All the way. Cocked open like a little cloth vagina with metal teeth. There was a rush of humiliation. My mind raced to try to figure a way out of this situation. There were all sorts of thoughts that came to mind. I had to keep my composure or the whole thing would be lost.

**BOB.** Did you?

**KURT.** I'm getting to that.

**BOB.** Sorry.

**KURT.** So, she says, "Your fly is down." So, thinking quickly I said, "Yes, my fly is down-but you'll never guess what's up!"(Long pause.)

**BOB.** You didn't say that.

**KURT.** I did.

**BOB.** No, Kurt. No.

**KURT.** Yeah, I was trying to be witty. Light. You know? I meant that my spirits were still up . . .not, you know? But I blew the whole thing. She just looked at me and walked off shaking her head and mumbling something about the arrogance of men . . .or something like that.

**BOB.** That's a shame.

**KURT.** I know.

**BOB.** Your "Bart" was peeking out? That's an expression I haven't heard before.

**KURT.** It wasn't an expression. I had on a pair of Bart Simpson underwear.

**BOB.** No.

**KURT.** Yeah. (BOB starts to laugh) Don't laugh. I need to do laundry. Don't ask me where I got them.

**BOB.** Wasn't going to.

**KURT.** Can't you just picture this whole thing?

**BOB.** I'm really trying not to.

**KURT.** Here I was trying to ask this girl out and the whole time Bart Simpson is peeking out my zipper at her. This kind of thing that only happens to me.

**BOB.** What was this girl's name?

**KURT.** I don't know. I think it's one of the months of the year. April,

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May, or June. It's a short name. One syllable. That really doesn't narrow things down, does it?

**BOB.** Well, what does she look like?

**KURT.** A young Marilyn Monroe. She's gorgeous.

**BOB.** Hmm. (Pause) She's not going out with you.

**KURT.** Thank you for sparing my feelings.

**BOB.** Alright. You're right. Nevermind. (Pause) I just love Marilyn Monroe and women that look like her.

**KURT.** I think that this just proves my theory about myself.

**BOB.** Oh, Kurt, don't start this again. What happened to you today was unfortunate, but it does not mean that you are cursed. The woman didn't even say anything to you. Technically, you didn't even get rejected.

**KURT.** It's the curse, Bob. My family has been cursed by meekness since the first Bixler sashayed out of his momma's hoo-hoo. I simply cannot talk to women. Any woman.

**BOB.** You can.

**KURT.** I can't.

**BOB.** *You can!*

**KURT.** I can't.

**BOB.** *You just did! Today!*

**KURT.** Yeah, and look where it got me.

**BOB.** Jesus! Kurt! If your family has been like this for generations it's a wonder that you're even here.

**KURT.** Well, I tried.

**BOB.** You're not done. You're going to ask this woman out again.

**KURT.** I don't think so.

**BOB.** Yes, you are. This is not over.

**KURT.** As far as I'm concerned it is. It's just one more romantic dead end.

**BOB.** *Kurt, she didn't even say no!*

**KURT.** She didn't say yes, either.

**BOB.** It was an awkward situation.

**KURT.** She's too busy.

**BOB.** You don't know that.

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**KURT.** She's too beautiful.

**BOB.** She's just a woman, Kurt. Just like you are just a man.

**KURT.** I . . .

**BOB.**(Overlapping)You're making excuses. Now, come on. Live a little. That's what guy life is all about. Grabbing it and pulling hard. (Pause) Maybe that wasn't the best way to word that. You know what I mean. Take a chance.

**KURT.** I already did. It was a disaster.

**BOB.** It was nothing. If it was a disaster, that would at least be something. It wasn't anything. You need to give your life spice. Go out on a limb every now and then. Do something crazy. (Pause) Kurt, your life is boring. Watch this. (BOB crosses to the window and opens it up and yells out) Hey, you in the green dress! You look really nice in that! Yeah. It looks great on you! I have a friend here that would like to get to know you a little better. (KURT starts hyper-ventilating) What's that? You're married? Hold on a second. (He grabs one of the roses and tosses it out the window.) Tell your husband that he's a lucky man. Just know that every time you pass by this window, you will be watched and worshipped from afar. (A beat) Sorry. Yeah. I know that sounds creepy. Thank you. No, thank you for not calling the police. (He shuts the window).

**KURT.** Why did you just do that?

**BOB.** Who knew? You might have gotten lucky. I did it to make a point. You have to do crazy things sometimes to get yourself noticed.

**KURT.** I don't want to be noticed. How many times do I have to tell you that?

**BOB.** You want to be noticed. Everyone does. Why do you think we have Facebook and Twitter?

**KURT.** Stop telling me what I want. I'm far more qualified to make that judgment than you are. If I really wanted to, I could be assertive.

**BOB.** Oh, yeah?

**KURT.** If I really wanted to.

**BOB.** Boy, are you a one man tennis match. How do you play both sides of the court without running out of air?

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**KURT.** I don't want to talk about this anymore.

**BOB.** Fine. You win. End of discussion. (KURT starts going through his mail and comes to an envelope marked *FINAL NOTICE.*)

**KURT.** Oh, no.(He opens it and starts reading) Shit!

**BOB.** What's wrong? Bad news?

**KURT.** No, I always say shit and get upset when I read the mail. It's my medical bill. Final Notice before Collections Court. I could have my wages garnished. This is getting a little too tight to deal with. I don't know what to do? I can't live without my paycheck. (Pause) I'm doing the very best that I can!

**BOB.** How much do you still owe?

**KURT.** Just under five thousand.

**BOB.** Dollars?

**KURT.** No pesos. Yes, Dollars. Where am I going to get that kind of money in one lump sum?

**BOB.** I don't know. Garnished wages. That's rough. Have you been paying them at all?

**KURT.** No.

**BOB.** (After a pause) Well, it sounds like you've done everything humanly possible. I...(an idea)

**KURT.** What?

**BOB.** You know my fath . . .(The idea continues percolating)

**KURT.** What?

**BOB.** I might be able to help you out, Buddy.

**KURT.** Yeah, right. What are you going to do? Ask your sister to spend some time at the Navy base? That's a lot of money.

**BOB.** Can I use your telephone? Maybe if I make a one little call, I can come up with something.

**KURT.** If it will make you happy.

**BOB.** No, it will make *you* happy.

**KURT.** Whatever. (KURT goes to the bathroom. BOB crosses to the phone. It's a rotary phone. He stares at it.)

**BOB.** Jesus. A rotary phone. Let's see if I can remember how these work. Dad? Yeah, it's just me. Do you remember you said that you would do

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anything to put one over on Kurt? Yeah? Do you still mean that? Oh, yeah. I have a good one in mind. However, I need you to loan me five thousand dollars. (Pause) Hello? Yeah. Uh-huh. I know that it's a lot of money. Don't worry, though, you'll get it back. No. Look, I'll come by later and tell you what this is all about. I just need to borrow the money. Ok. I have to go. You're going to love this. Bye. (He hangs up) Kurt! Your problems are solved!

**KURT.** (Coming out of the bathroom) Why do I doubt that?

**BOB.** What would you say if I told you that I could get you the money tomorrow to pay off your bill?

**KURT.** I would say, "How did you manage that?"

**BOB.** How I did it isn't important. What *is* important is how bad do you want it? And even more important is how far will you go to get it?

**KURT.** I smell something foul in the air.

**BOB.** Do you want the money?

**KURT.** What's the catch?

**BOB.** Simple. You just have to get a date with a woman by Friday. (*Kurt stares at Bob.*) The only restriction is, I get to pick the woman. Any inkling of who that woman could be?

**KURT.** No.

**BOB.** Your Marilyn Monroe from work.

**KURT.** You don't really have the money, do you?

**BOB.** Yes, I do.

**KURT.** And you came into this money by . . . ?

**BOB.** Don't worry about it. (*Long pause*)

**KURT.** Telling me not to worry about it makes me worry. Besides, I'm not going to ask her out. It's too embarrassing under the circumstances.

**BOB.** Ok, suit yourself. Not much time to change your mind, though. (Pause) That is, *if* you decide to change your mind. The clock is ticking.

**KURT.** I won't change my mind.

**BOB.** Ok.

**KURT.** No, really, I won't.

**BOB.** I believe you.

**KURT.** No, you don't.



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**BOB.** Yes, I do.

**KURT.** No, I know you. You don't.

**BOB.** Yes, I do.

**KURT.** This is ridiculous. 5K is a lot of money to just hand over to someone.

**BOB.** It's a loan. It's not a gift or anything. You just won't have to pay interest on the balance or anything. No court fees, you know, things like that.

**KURT.** No, it's not worth the trouble.

**BOB.** Ok, if you say so.

**KURT.** I say so.

**BOB.** Personally, I think that you are making a stupid mistake.

**KURT.** Thank you. If I want your opinion, I'll ask for it.

**BOB.** Kurt, it's so simple. All you have to do is get this one woman to go out on a date with you before Friday. I don't care in what fashion. Dinner, lunch, dancing, a movie. Shit, I don't care if the two of you share a coke at some desolate coke machine. ANYTHING! What is so terribly hard about that? Men do this all over the world every second of the day, every day of the year, every year of the decade, every decade of the century.

**KURT.** We've been over this. (Pause) Do you have any idea how corny this whole situation is? This reminds me of one of those contrived plays that young playwrights write when they have nothing else better to do.

**BOB.** Ok, forget it. Nothing else will be said. You're on your own. (The doorbell rings)

**KURT.** (Crossing to the door) Where I should be. (KURT opens the door and standing there is MEG MONROE. Although, there is no connection through the last name, she does look a little like Marilyn Monroe. KURT can do nothing but stare at her. BOB, stands, aghast MEG holds a wallet in her hand.)

**MEG.** Kurt?

**KURT.** Yes. (He looks to BOB for help, however, BOB is transfixed on this vision of beauty and is of no assistance. KURT just nods his head.) I am Kurt. Which is my name...that...you...said to...me.

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**MEG.** (Handing KURT the wallet) You dropped this in the elevator at work.

**KURT.** (Bowing awkwardly) *THANK* you!

**MEG.** You're welcome. (Awkward pause) Well, I just wanted to return that to you. (Kurt bows again.) Well, I guess that was it. I'll see you at work. Bye. (KURT nods. MEG turns to go. BOB tries desperately to get KURT to stop her. MEG disappears)

**BOB.** (Trying to sound like KURT) What about the company picnic? (KURT reels on BOB and glares at him half in anger/half in mortification)

**MEG.** (Returning) What?

**KURT.** I . . . (Kurt bows)

**BOB.** (To KURT. Taking control of the situation) Company picnic? Did you ask this lovely lady to go with you?

**MEG.** The picnic. Right. May I come in for a few minutes?

**BOB.** Of course you can. I'll just be on my way. Miss . . . ?

**MEG.** Monroe. Meg Monroe.

**BOB.** No kidding? Any relation to . . . ?

**MEG.** No. No relation to Marilyn. Thank you though. People tell me that I favor her a little. Mr. . . ?

**BOB.** Garrik. Bob Garrik. It's so very nice to meet you. (He kisses her hand. She smiles. KURT glares) Ooooh, look at the time. Getting late. I'll just be on my way. See you later, Kurt. I'll see myself out. I'll give you a call later, my friend. (With a hint of smugness) Goodnight.

(To KURT as he leaves) You're on, Pal. Good luck. (BOB is gone)

**KURT.** Sorry about that. He can be an obnoxious pig sometimes.

**MEG.** Don't apologize. I found him quite charming. It's so nice to meet a man that knows how to treat a lady these days.

**KURT.** Oh.

**MEG.** I see that Bart Simpson has stopped lingering around . . .at least for the moment.

**KURT.** About that. I'm usually, I mean always try to make a lasting first impression with people and . . .

**MEG.** (Overlapping) Well, you certainly did that.

**KURT.** Yeah, . . .about the picnic, I'm sorry that I asked you to go. I

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realize that you must have a boyfriend, fiancé, lover, something . . .and it was presumptuous on my part to even ask. I'm sorry again.

**MEG.** Why are you sorry?

**KURT.** I'm not sure, to be honest.

**MEG.** I found it quite flattering.

**KURT.** So, does that mean you'll go with me?

**MEG.** No, I can't.

**KURT.** (Pause.) Oh. I understand.

**MEG.** How can you understand? I haven't told you why.

**KURT.** No, really. You don't need to tell me. The reason isn't important. I'm not the type of guy that you would normally date. Or maybe you're just not a lady who lunches.

**MEG.** I have plans for the day the picnic is scheduled. I won't even be there.

**KURT.** So, you'll have dinner with me some night? Really?

**MEG.** It would be fun.

**KURT.** This week?

**MEG.** Ok.

**KURT.** Is Thursday or Friday, ok?

**MEG.** No, I'm booked through the weekend. How about Saturday night?

**KURT.** NO!

**MEG.** I'm sorry, but that's all the free time that I have.

**KURT.** Saturday?

**MEG.** Saturday.

**KURT.** I . . .um . . .I'll have to get back to you on that. I . . .um . . .may have to do something. I'm not too sure about that . . .or . . .any . . .thing.

**MEG.** Suit yourself, I guess. I'll check in with you at the office. You can let me know then. How's that?

**KURT.** Hunky-dorey. (MEG looks at KURT, dumbfounded)

**MEG.** Yeah. Look, I'd better be on my way. I just wanted to make sure that you got your wallet back.

**KURT.** I do.

**MEG.** I know. (Awkward pause) Okay. I'll see you tomorrow.

**KURT.** Not if I see you first. (KURT laughs. MEG doesn't)

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**MEG.** Do I make you nervous?

**KURT.** (Very fast) Nervous? Me? Are you kidding? I'm not . . .no...nope. I'm not even breaking a sweat. Look, I can raise my arms because I'm sure. Nervous? Please.

**MEG.** Because if you are, I can assure you that you don't need to be. Okay?

**KURT.** I'm not. Really. You are . . .(He chokes) You are . . .

**MEG.** I'm what? (KURT clears his throat)

**KURT.** You're the . . .would you . . .I mean, are . . .If you could . . .I would . . .wonder . . .you . . .might . . .you could just . . .maybe . . .do the you know thing . . .to . . .have . . .just. (He faints)

**MEG.** Oh, my god. Are you dead? Do you need me to call a doctor, ambulance, what?

**KURT.** (Coming around. Groggily) I have a low melting point with fe . . .fee . . .fee . . .women. (He faints again)

**MEG.** (After a pause) He fainted on me. *TWICE!!* Maybe, I should cancel one of my appointments and go out with him. He seems harmless enough. If only he would stay conscious. I don't know. He is kind of cute in a strange sort of way. Different, but cute. Who knows what makes him tick? (Pause) Kurt? Kurt? (No response. She fumbles through her purse and pulls out a pen and a Post-it pad) Dear, Kurt. I've had a change in plans. Call me at 642-9807 and we can discuss dinner plans for Thursday night. Goodbye for now, Meg. (She sticks the Post-it on KURT'S forehead and starts to exit) I hope you're a better date than you are a host.

### FADEOUT

AT RISE:

It's late Thursday afternoon. KURT is trying to get his apartment in order (even though everything is already in place) and

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prepare for the evening. BOB is trying to get KURT in order. BOB clearly has the tougher of the two jobs. They are in the midst of getting KURT dressed. KURT is a wreck.

**BOB.** I can't believe it.

**KURT.** (Panicky) What?! Is something wrong? How does my hair look?

**BOB.** Nothing is wrong. You look . . . half dressed. But you got a date with her you weird bastard! I'm proud of you. You did good.

**KURT.** I feel like I want to vomit.

**BOB.** Completely natural. She's a looker. I would probably want to vomit as well.

**KURT.** There's so much riding on this evening.

**BOB.** Huh? What do you mean?

**KURT.** I want to make a good impression. Just not exactly sure how to do that.

**BOB.** Well, normally I would tell someone to just be themselves, but in this case that might be counterproductive. Just relax. (*Kurt tries a few awkward "relax" poses.*)

**KURT.** I can't relax.

**BOB.** You have to. Otherwise, this is going to be a very long night.

**KURT.** I hope that she doesn't find me boring. I don't think that I could take that.

**BOB.** Believe me, there is nothing about you that is remotely boring. Spastic, neurotic, paranoid, maybe. Boring, though? No.

**KURT.** My heart is racing.

**BOB.** Calm down. Do you have everything?

**KURT.** I think so. The food is cooking in the kitchen. I have some good music picked out. . .

**BOB.** (*Overlapping*) Music? What kind of music? That's important. The mood is crucial. If you mess that up, then you can forget it.

**KURT.** (*Looking at an old record*) I thought that we should have something that would set the theme that I had going for the evening. So, I picked out Chinese folk music. (*Bob stares.*)

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**BOB.** No, no, no, no, no, Kurt.

**KURT.** No?

**BOB.** You want to get this girl into a romantic mood, not make her feel like she's eating in a Chinese restaurant. You need to make the evening special for the two of you. Think romance.

**KURT.** Chinese music isn't romantic?

**BOB.** I'm sure it can be. But in this case, it might be a tad inappropriate. You need something sexy. How about something with a little sax in it?

**KURT.** A little sex in it? You mean like a porno soundtrack?

**BOB.** Sax! As in saxophone. You need something to set a sexy atmosphere. You know? Give you a little room to work in? Plan your moves?

**KURT.** My moves?

**BOB.** Yeah.

**KURT.** What moves would that be, exactly?

**BOB.** Kurt, the whole point of this evening is to charm the lady into wanting to come back for more.

**KURT.** More what?

**BOB.** More of . . .whatever! You like this woman, don't you?

**KURT.** Of course I like her.

**BOB.** (As if he is speaking to a small child) Okay, then! That's why we date, Bob. We date so that we can try to encourage someone to want to spend a greater amount of time with us than they will want to spend with someone else. Once that point is reached then you are in what is known as a relationship. Understand?

**KURT.** I'm not stupid.

**BOB.** Good to hear.

**KURT.** Ok, I need to get some saxophone music.

**BOB.** Jazz. (Pause) Call me stupid, but I just don't think that a lone saxophone would do the trick.

**KURT.** Trick? Trick? What trick? I'm not doing this to try to get her in . . .get her in . . .I can't even say it.

**BOB.** I understand. Do you have wine?

**KURT.** No! I need music *and* wine! Will you stay here while I go out?

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You know? Make sure that the place is in perfect order? I'll be back in just a few minutes.

BOB. Okay. Just hurry, I have plans myself for tonight.

KURT. Okay, I'll be back in a flash. If Meg gets here just entertain her until I get back.

BOB. Okay. (KURT runs out the door and is gone. BOB laughs and crosses to the window and looks out after him. He sees that he is truly gone and crosses to the door and opens it. MEG enters)

MEG. I thought that I was going to be on those stairs forever. What took you so long?

BOB. Sorry, I had to make some last minute adjustments on the evening. Okay, you know what you are supposed to do, right?

MEG. Yep. Got it. I feel kind of bad about this, though.

BOB. Why? I thought you loved practical jokes.

MEG. I do. I just hope that when he finds out that I'm not attracted to him that it doesn't make things worse for him than they already are. You know? Seems cruel.

BOB. It is cruel, but still funny.

MEG. You're a terrible friend. Do you realize that?

BOB. Yes, I do, and you are a terrific lover. (They kiss passionately) You know? I've only known you for three days, but these have been the best three days of my life.

MEG. That's a line and we both know it. You don't know how good of a lover I am because you . . .

BOTH. Haven't slept with me/you.

BOB. Sorry, my mistake.

MEG. (After a pause) Alright, give me the run down again? Just so that I know that you've told me one last time. That way if anything screws up, I can put the blame on you, where it no doubt belongs.

BOB. Okay, you and Kurt will start the evening with a little small talk. You got it? Blah, blah, blah. How are you? My what a nice tie and so forth. Easy enough? (MEG nods) Okay, next you let him do his dumbbell routine and . . .

MEG. (Overlapping) Wait! Dumbbell routine? What is his dumbbell

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routine?

BOB. Oh, that's what I call the movement of Kurt's mouth to form any type of intelligent words that we know come from the English language.

MEG. Oh, in other words anytime he talks.

BOB. Basically.

MEG. Gotcha.

BOB. You start to act like he's getting you all hot and bothered. He finally gives in to the temptation. The two of you prepare for a romp in the sack. You let him get undressed first. Tell him that it turns you on to watch a man undress in front of you. He strips down and I run in and snap the picture of him *in flagrante delicto*. Now make sure that you get him in an embarrassing position. That is of the utmost importance. My father is paying \$5,000.00 for this and he's going to want his money's worth. It's going on the family Christmas card this year. Don't ask. Someday, I'll tell you what he did to aunt Ruby. I'm going to leave the specifics of the positioning up to you and Lady Luck. Okay?

MEG. Okay, now what's in it for me?

BOB. Huh?

MEG. You heard me. I want to know what's in it for me. If I'm going to ruin what's left of a person's self-esteem, bearing in mind that he has little self-esteem to begin with; then I want it to be worth the strain on my conscience.

BOB. What would you like?

MEG. I don't know. What are you getting out of this deal?

BOB. I love to do stuff like this. I have a rather morbid sense of humor. I laugh at old ladies that trip on curbs and nearly deaf people that yell, "Huh?!" I've done this all of my life. It's how I relieve tension.

MEG. Relieve tension? You mean? *(She gestures to her crotch. There is a weird pause.)*

BOB. Well, I wouldn't go that far. Let's just say that I like doing this a lot. This is just fun. Besides, Kurt needs to be shaken up a little bit. He lives his life in a shell. It's unhealthy.

MEG. You have no reservations about this?

BOB. None. *(MEG shakes her head)* Are you passing moral judgments



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on me? You agreed to be part of this, you know?

MEG. He's not my friend. I can walk out on this anytime I feel like. Besides, he's not going to realize that I had anything to do with this. You're going to burst in here and take the picture. I can just feign ignorance and I'm in the clear. It's not so simple for you. (Long pause)

BOB. I'll take that chance. I love a good joke.

MEG. Fine.

BOB. Good. He should be coming back anytime now. (He crosses to the window) Yeah, he's running up the street now. Why don't you go into the bathroom and I'll see you later on.

MEG. When are you coming back?

BOB. About nine.

MEG. *Nine?*

BOB. I have things to do. Besides, you were going to go out with him anyway. I'm giving the two of you time to have your date. (He kisses her again) Now go. (She looks at him and then exits into the bathroom. BOB runs into the kitchen. The door opens and KURT enters, carrying a record and wine. He is out of breath from running. He calls out to BOB)

KURT. BOB?! I'm back! (BOB enters)

BOB. Oh, good. That wasn't too bad. I hardly noticed that you were gone.

KURT. Good. Is she here yet?

BOB. Yeah, she's in the bathroom. What music did you get?

KURT. The only thing they had. It's one of those K-Tel albums.

BOB. A K-Tel album? What is this 1974? Maybe you should stick to the Chinese music, after all.

KURT. (Suddenly panicky) *Is something wrong?* What is it?!

BOB. No, nothing really. Now, come on. Don't panic! Look, just use your best judgment, ok? (KURT nods) Ok. Everything is going to be just fine. I'm counting on you.

KURT. Bob, what if this evening is a disaster? What if I say the wrong things? What if I faint? What then?

BOB. You won't.

KURT. Yeah, but what if I do?

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BOB. Do you want to make a fool out of yourself?

KURT. No.

BOB. Then don't. (Long pause)

KURT. I'm so glad that you're my friend, Bob. You've been so helpful to me. I'm glad that I have someone pulling for me. Thanks. (Long pause.

BOB looks uncomfortable)

BOB. Don't mention it. Have a good time. *(He leaves. KURT looks after him and then turns to face the task at hand. He looks nervously around the room. Not really knowing what to do, he puts on the K-Tel album to create the proper mood. The music starts playing and it just doesn't have that feel that he was looking for. He tries to make a few dance steps, but he looks more like a crane trying to attract a mate or something of the like. He turns the music off and puts on the Chinese music and instantly we feel like we are in a Hunan restaurant waiting for the hostess to seat us. He begins to do some steps to this music and looks even more ridiculous than before. The door to the bathroom opens and out steps MEG.)*

MEG. Hello.

KURT. Oh, hi. How are you?

MEG. I'm okay. I'm glad that you're here, finally.

KURT. Yeah.

MEG. That's interesting music. Where did you get it?

KURT. You don't like it?

MEG. It's so . . . Asian.

KURT. I'm trying to get you in the mood so that I can make my moves.

MEG. Oh, really? Is that what you're doing?

KURT. Well, Bob said that I should get some music with a saxophone in it, but all they had was K-Tel music. I didn't like what I heard so I thought that I could just play this. Is it getting you hot and bothered? That's the effect that I'm supposed to be striving for. At least, that's what Bob said. Are you?

MEG. No, not yet. What are we having for dinner?

KURT. Well, I thought that we could have one of my personal favorites. I wanted to impress you by my choice of food. So, I thought that we would

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have fried chicken, French fries, and for an aphrodisiac I have some artichokes soaked in oyster sauce.

MEG. What's oyster sauce?

KURT. Oh, I can't tell you that. It's a home recipe.

MEG. Great. (Pause) I'm a vegetarian.

KURT. That's okay. I'm cooking chicken. Can't vegetarians eat chicken?

MEG. Well, some can. Not me, though. I can't eat any animal that was slaughtered in any of the Faces of Death movies. It turns my stomach.

(Pause) Sorry.

KURT. What about the artichokes in the oyster sauce? Seafood is okay, isn't it?

MEG. I'm afraid not.

KURT. Oh. Well, would you like to just eat French fries on the floor?

MEG. Okay. If we must.

KURT. Great. (Pause) I think that this evening is going to go along just swimmingly. (He winks at her and exits to the kitchen. MEG looks out the window, sighs, and goes over to the sofa. She takes her shoes off and makes herself comfortable. She tries a few sexy positions on the sofa before finally giving up and just rolling her eyes. She sits pondering over what she will do next. KURT enters with two plates of French fries that have a sea of ketchup next to them.)

MEG. This is certainly an economical dinner. Very Idaho inspired.

KURT. The only problem is: now that we aren't eating the artichokes, I have nothing to get you in the mood.

MEG. Let's just take this slow, okay?

KURT. But Bob said that I needed to make my moves.

MEG. He did?

KURT. Yeah, that's what this evening is supposed to be for. It was all planned to give me a little room to work in. I think that's what he said.

MEG. You haven't dated a lot, have you?

KURT. (Long pause) Me? Oh, sure. Are you kidding? The women just beat down my door. I have one woman that likes to lick my doorknob. I got tired of having my knob licked so I figured it was time to step out on a real date again.

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MEG. (Pause) This is going to be a very long night.

KURT. Would you care to dance?

MEG. You dance?

KURT. No, but I'm willing to try. (Pause. He looks hopeful) Come on.

MEG. Ok, I'm game if you are.

KURT. Great. (Pause) Let's . . .bugger!

MEG. I think you mean . . . (Pause) Nevermind. Let's just dance. (KURT puts on the Chinese music) No, I can't dance to this. I feel like I should be stabbing myself with a samurai sword or something.

KURT. Oh, okay, how about this? (He puts on the K-Tel album. A 70's love ballad blares and he starts dancing like he's on fire. He doesn't have a shred of rhythm in his entire body. MEG stands there and just watches him, flabbergasted.)

MEG. What are you doing?

KURT. I think I'm dancing.

MEG. That's not dancing. It looks like you're trying to save yourself from a swarm of bees or something. This is dancing. Watch. (She dances) Now you try it.

KURT. I can't do that.

MEG. Sure you can. Come on, try it.

KURT. No, really, I can't do that. I might slip a disk or something. I need to dance my own way . . . (Pause). . .without rhythm.

MEG. Look, why don't we dance slow? You don't need rhythm to do that.

KURT. Why don't we just skip the fun and get to the date. (Pause) French fry?

MEG. No, now let's try this. I want to get to know you. We can get really good and close this way. I feel the need to establish a close relationship with everyone I meet. It's one of my endearing qualities.

KURT. I don't have any slow music. We can polka or hokey-pokey.

MEG. That's okay, we really don't need music. Come here. (KURT walks over to MEG with a little fear. She places her arms around him and the two begin to sway. After a few seconds, KURT steps on one of MEG'S toes and she lets out a scream. He jumps at the sound of the scream and accidentally steps on her other foot. She limps to the sofa and sits down,

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rubbing her feet.)

KURT. I'm sorry, I told you that I couldn't do it! I'm not very coordinated.

MEG. I've never met anyone in my life that couldn't slow dance.

KURT. Yeah, I'm a wonder.

MEG. Maybe we should just eat.

KURT. These fries look good. If you want, I have pop tarts for dessert.

MEG. I can't wait. (They start to eat)

KURT. Can I ask you a question?

MEG. That depends. Is it going to hurt me as much as your dancing?

KURT. I don't think so. (Pause) Why did you decide to cancel your appointment for tonight?

MEG. I don't know. You were . . .intriguing. Different. Somehow, I knew that if I didn't spend this evening with you that I would regret it.

KURT. Why?

MEG. I don't know. (Pause) I just felt compelled to come here.

KURT. (Suddenly dropping his geeky quality) You know that the practical joke that you and Bob are playing on me is cruel. (Long pause)

MEG. You know about that?

KURT. Of course I do. I heard the entire telephone conversation that he had with his father. I was in the bathroom. These walls are not that thick.

MEG. It was his idea.

KURT. I'm sure. (Pause) So, have the two of you been seeing each other very long?

MEG. You know . . .? I guess you do. Three days. (KURT nods. Pause) How did you know all of this?

KURT. I'm not as dumb as I seem. This whole evening has been an act. You see, I like to string people along myself. I'm really pretty confident. Had you and I ever been formally introduced at work, you would have known that. But, I've been trying to put one over on Bob for a long time. I'm getting sick of his practical jokes on people. He has never truly known the real me. You see, this image that I put forth is my way of protecting myself. I want people to like me for me, not for who they think that I should be. People are fake in their day to day lives for no reason. I'm fake for a purpose. I saw you at work, you were the most beautiful

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woman that my eyes had ever rested on. Not to mention the fact that you favored Marilyn Monroe. Bob has a Marilyn fetish. I know that . . .he knows that. I thought to myself, "What better way to prank the prankster?" So, I approached you, knowing full well that you wouldn't go out with someone like me. Dropping my wallet was a little risky, but I gambled that you were at least minimally interested in this "basket case" that asked you out. Well, luckily it paid off. I invited Bob here strictly for the purpose of telling him about you. You showed up the same night. It was one of those beautiful celestial happenings or something. You were here, Bob was hooked, and I was on my way. That was just the beginning. (Long pause)

MEG. Who are you?

KURT. I'll show you who I am. (He takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. She melts at his touch.) That's who I am.

MEG. I think I'm going to need some water.

KURT. You'll need a lot more than that before this night is over with. (She stares at him. They kiss again) So? Care to trick a trickster?

MEG. Uh-huh. (She kisses him again)

KURT. Good. Now, what time is he supposed to return here to snap my embarrassing picture?

MEG. Nine.

KURT. Oh, we have plenty of time. Would you like to go out and eat real food? (MEG nods) Are you really a vegetarian?

MEG. Yeah, that was true.

KURT. Do you like Chinese?

MEG. I love it! As long as I don't have to dance to the music.

KURT. Good, let's go out and have a great time . . .and plan!

**FADEOUT**

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**AT RISE:** The lights come up on KURT and MEG giving the place a final look around. They walk back and forth readjusting the things in the room to look like a small chase has happened. Pleased with the look of the room, KURT walks over to MEG and places his arms around her and gives her a kiss. When they break, he says . . .

KURT. Okay, we're good to go.

MEG. I feel terrible that I was going to actually help him.

KURT. You can make it up to me later.

MEG. Okay, it's a deal.

KURT. Okay, now I called Evan and he said that he would be here as soon as he could after nine. What time is it?

MEG. It's about ten minutes until nine, now.

KURT. Okay, then. He should be here any minute now and I need to be in an embarrassing position. Help me think.

MEG. Well, first you need to strip down to at least your underwear.

KURT. (*Smiling*) At least, huh? Was that part of the plan or an added but for you?

MEG. That was the whole point. You see, I was supposed to tell you that it excites me to watch a man undress.

KURT. Bob thought that up, didn't he?

MEG. Yeah, how did you know that?

KURT. Does it really excite you to watch a man undress?

MEG. No.

KURT. I rest my case.

MEG. Uh-huh. Wait a second! Why don't we just hit him with a little reality?

KURT. I don't follow you.

MEG. Why don't we just let him come in here and interrupt us in the middle of . . . whatever we're doing? He won't expect that. I'm supposed to be helping him set you up, remember?

KURT. I get it. That's a good idea. I wonder what he's going to pull

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exactly and how he's going to pull it.

MEG. I'm not too sure about that. He just kept going over my part of the plan, he was really ambiguous about his end of the deal.

KURT. Well, let's just play along with whatever he tries at first and then we'll let him in on the fact that we know what he's up to. Get some blankets from the bedroom and throw them onto the sofa. I'm going to make a call. (MEG goes into the bedroom and gets the blankets. KURT crosses to the phone and dials) Hello, Henry? Yeah, this is Kurt. Could you do me a favor? Yeah, are you still in uniform? Great. Don't change clothes. Yeah, just come over here now. I have something that I want to discuss with you. Great. No, don't get undressed. I'll fill you in later. Yeah. Thanks. See you in a few. Bye.

MEG. (Making up the sofa) Who's Henry?

KURT. He's a policeman friend of mine. Bob doesn't know him. It will add a good touch to the whole thing. That looks good.

MEG. Why do you go along with these pranks that Bob pulls? I mean, why don't you try to tell him to just stop? Tell him that you don't like it.

KURT. That's like trying to tell the sun that you don't want it to go down because you like to sit in the rays and get tan. No matter what, it still goes down. Pranksters are the same way. They get off on these things. I mean, when you really think about it, this prank that he was attempting to pull was really pretty stupid.

MEG. Do you think that tonight will make any kind of impression on him? Anything of significance, I mean. Maybe we're just splitting hairs of crappiness.

KURT. It's difficult to say. Bob is a tough nut to crack. One can only hope. (Pause. MEG puts her arms around KURT)

MEG. I know what I hope for, now.

KURT. What's that?

MEG. I'll tell you later. (She kisses him)

KURT. This is nice but we really don't have much time. Let's get ready. (They both look at one another for a second and then start to take off a piece of clothing here, a piece of clothing there. They don't get too far into the undressing when they hear a rapping at the door. KURT dashes



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for the lights and turns them off. MEG jumps under the covers as KURT follows close behind. They just get covered up when the door opens and a masked figure enters. He looks around and, seeing no one, he enters and shuts the door. There is the sound of two people in the throes of passion under the blanket. The INTRUDER stops and looks at the two of them. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a gun. He checks to see if it's loaded and replaces it back into his pocket. He grabs a chair and sits watching and listening to the sounds from under the blanket. Finally, after a few seconds, KURT and MEG come out from under the blanket. They look a little confused and a lot perturbed that they weren't interrupted.)

KURT. Aren't you going to say anything? Or are you just going to sit there all night looking like a pervert? (No response)

MEG. He knows, Bob. I told him.

KURT. Wait, Meg. I thought that we were going to string this out awhile.

MEG. I'm sorry. I get nervous. I need rehearsals for things like this. I'm terrible cold.

KURT. (Getting up and turning on the light) Well, you'll need light to snap your picture, Bob. I'm not too sure what you're going to take a picture of, but I'll give you some light. (The lights are turned on)  
There.

MEG. Bob, I should explain.

KURT. And then I will.

MEG. I was really going to help you with this, but the more I got to know Kurt . . . the more that I liked him. He's sweet. Kind. Gentle. Sexy. I found all of this out in one evening. We just clicked. What can I say? Sometimes people just hit it off and there's nothing that can intervene. You know? I'm sorry. I know that this must come as a shock. God knows, if it were me, I'd just want to die. However, I think that you can handle the breakup. I mean, we've only been together three days. We weren't that close. Right? (No response) Right. (No response) Well, if that's all that you have to say, then I'm glad to be rid of you. Jerk.

KURT. Is that all that you wanted to say?

MEG. That's it.

KURT. Now it's my turn. Hi, I'm the Kurt Bixler. The one that you've

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never met. The one that has a spine. The real one. I'm sorry that you have to lose so much this evening, Bob. There is no medical bill that I have to pay. That was all made up to make a fool out of you just like you were going to make a fool out of me. Tit for tat. Well, it just didn't happen. Won't happen, for that matter. Your pranks are harmful, Bob. They're not . . . (He is confused by the mask.) A mask. That's new. Who are you supposed to be now? Bob?

INTRUDER. (Producing the gun) I'm the one holding the gun.

KURT. I guess that's supposed to scare me. Okay. If it will make you feel better. Ooooooooooooooooooooo. There. That's how afraid I am.

INTRUDER. Just be quiet.

KURT. Look, don't you think that's a bit much?

MEG. This isn't funny, at all.

KURT. Come on. Just give me the gun, put it down, whatever. Don't be an asshole. I don't find this type of gag funny.

INTRUDER. Well, maybe you'll find this funny. (The INTRUDER fires a shot and hits KURT in the leg. He falls. MEG screams.)

KURT. (Writhing in agony) It's . . . real! Just . . . just . . . don't hurt . . . her.

INTRUDER. *Money! Give me your money!*

KURT. In my desk drawer. Take it! Oh, god! This hurts like hell!! (The INTRUDER walks over to the desk. MEG tries to help KURT up.)

INTRUDER. *Get away from him!*

MEG. He's hurt! I'm not going to . . . (The INTRUDER fires the gun at MEG. She is hit. She falls to the ground. KURT screams and pulls himself to a standing position. The INTRUDER fires another shot, hitting KURT. He falls. The intruder sets the gun down on the desk, takes off his gloves, and rummages through the drawers until he comes to the money. He pockets the money as he hears the sound of someone at the door. He goes to the window, leaving the gun behind. He exits as BOB enters with his camera. He sees the ghastly sight and screams.)

BOB. Oh, my god! Kurt?! Meg?! (He feels their pulse. He looks around the room and sees the gun and picks it up.) Gun is still hot. (HENRY enters)

HENRY. Okay, Kurt, What's . . . (He sees the sight and Bob with the gun.

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Instantly, he pulls his out) Drop it! Drop the gun I said!

BOB. But, I . . .

HENRY. I said to drop the gun! You have to the count of three or I open fire! One! (BOB drops the gun)

BOB. I didn't do this!

HENRY. Be quiet! (He looks at KURT and MEG) Oh, my god! (To BOB) You! Sit over there! (He gestures to a chair. BOB sits)

Put your hands behind the chair. (BOB does. HENRY handcuffs him to the chair. HE then crosses to the phone and dials 911.) Yeah, I need an ambulance sent to 1068 Hazelworth, Apartment 17G. I have two people here with gunshot wounds. Both appear to be in critical shape. Yes, and please hurry. (To BOB) You had better hope that these two pull through okay.

BOB. Please, Officer, listen to me. I didn't do this. I came by to play a joke on a friend of mine and shoot a few . . .

HENRY. (Overlapping) Some joke. Shooting two people in the chest is real funny.

BOB. Please, listen to me!

HENRY. Save it, Pal. You're under arrest for assault with a deadly weapon. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law . . .

**CURTAIN**

**INTERMISSION**

# A GAME OF RISK

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## ACT 2

### AT RISE:

It is two hours later. BOB is no longer handcuffed. Instead, he is pacing around the room nervously. HENRY watches him like a hawk. EVAN DODSWORTH, the police chief, is whispering something to HENRY. HENRY nods. Finally, EVAN speaks to BOB.

EVAN. Ok, Mr. Garrik, now explain this to me one more time.

BOB. There's nothing to explain!

EVAN. Oh, quite the contrary. There's a great deal to explain, Mister. You're the prime suspect in a possible double homicide. Now, if you'll excuse me, because I'm not a college graduate, but that doesn't seem like "Nothing to explain".

BOB. I've told you everything.

EVAN. Then, I would suggest that you do it again.

BOB. (After a pause) What do you want to hear?

EVAN. Everything. Take it from the top!

BOB. It was all just a practical joke that I was going to play on a friend of mine. It was all harmless fun.

HENRY. You have an interesting view of "harmless fun".

BOB. I've already told you, I didn't shoot Kurt and Meg.

EVAN. Try to see this whole thing from my perspective. I'm phoned by a friend and asked to come over to his house. I leave my work, assuming that he wants to talk to me about the weather, golf, or something else that doesn't require a loaded gun at my side. I arrive here just a shade later than expected, and what do I find? There's an ambulance and police cars all over the street. I get up here just in time to see one of my best friends and his beautiful companion strapped onto stretchers and carted off to the hospital in critical condition. Critical condition caused by shots fired from a gun that, not only has your fingerprints all over it . . . *BUT ONE THAT ONE OF MY MOST RESPECTED OFFICERS HAD TO FORCE YOU AT*

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*GUNPOINT TO DROP!!* Do you see my dilemma here? Do you see what I'm getting at? *DO YOU SEE WHY I'M A LITTLE TENSE? DO YOU SEE WHY I'M EDGY? DO YOU SEE WHY I'M NOT SO HOSPITABLE TOWARD YOU?!* (Pause) Do you see that?

BOB. I see that.

EVAN. Good. (Pause. He smiles) Now, I'm willing to give you the benefit of the doubt. But tread softly on your explanation. Your whole future might depend on it. (Long pause)

BOB. I'm a joker. (Pause) I like to play pranks on people. I have always liked it. For some reason it gave me a rush to see someone completely at the mercy of one of my little shenanigans. I don't know. I get really excited by the fact that someone is going to look like a fool for a brief time.

HENRY. Excited? You mean it's a sexual thing?

BOB. Why does everyone think that?

EVAN. Go on.

BOB. Anyway, I saw the perfect chance to really get Kurt good. My father and I were going to work together on this one. The trap was set. All we had to do was to lure Kurt into it.

EVAN. Hold it. (To HENRY) The father is an accomplice to the crime. Radio in and have him brought to the station for questioning.

HENRY. Righto. (HENRY exits)

BOB. Wait! He didn't do anything!

EVAN. That's for me to decide.

BOB. But there was no crime committed by either of us!

EVAN. Then, neither of you have anything to worry about, do you?

Please, continue. I want to know about this trap. Trap. Interesting word.

BOB. Well, you see, Kurt is a weenie. He's always been a weenie. That's his downfall.

EVAN. A weenie?

BOB. Yeah.

EVAN. And your definition of weenie is?

BOB. Kurt.

EVAN. Oh, I see.

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BOB. Yeah, so I wanted to really put one over on him. Shake him up, you know? Give his miserable existence a little meaning.

EVAN. You took it upon yourself to try to change the course of his life by humiliating him? Is that what you're saying?

BOB. Well, I wouldn't use those terms exactly, but . . .

EVAN. Can I stop you for a second?

BOB. Do I really have a choice?

EVAN. (Smiling) I'd watch that tone if I were you.

BOB. I'm . . . sorry.

IVAN. That's better. (Pause) My problem with your story comes from the fact that your definition of Kurt Bixler and my definition of Kurt Bixler are two completely different ways of looking at the same person.

BOB. I don't follow you.

EVAN. Well, Kurt isn't a "weenie" at all.

BOB. He's not?

EVAN. No.

BOB. I beg to differ but he is.

EVAN. (Evan clicks on his pen a few times.) Go on.

BOB. He told me about this terrific looking woman that he worked with. He said that she looked like Marilyn Monroe and he asked her out to the company picnic. (Pause)

EVAN. Yeah? So?

BOB. So, he thought that she wouldn't go with him because she didn't answer his invitation.

EVAN. You're losing me. But I'm not sure if it's from confusion or boredom.

BOB. He thought that it was because his fly was down and he had on Bart Simpson underwear. (Long pause. More clicks.)

EVAN. Uh...huh.

BOB. He needed to do laundry. At least, that's what he said.

EVAN. Go on.

BOB. He tells me this story. He's thumbing through his mail and the he comes across his bill from when he was in the hospital. \$5,000.00. My father was going to give me the money . . .

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EVAN. (Overlapping) Now, we're getting somewhere. Blood money is involved. That just upped the stakes of your situation, Bob.

BOB. It wasn't blood money. I was going to make a small bet with Kurt.

EVAN. What kind of bet?

BOB. Well, all of this happened on Monday. So, I bet him the \$5,000.00 that he couldn't get a date with Meg by Friday. If he could, then I would've loaned him the money to pay the debt off.

EVAN. Don't be ridiculous. No one, I don't care how close you are, no one would loan a friend \$5,000.00 on a bet.

BOB. Sure I would.

EVAN. Right, but only if he won. I mean, suppose he lost. What then?

BOB. Then he doesn't get the money. I thought that was obvious.

EVAN. Precisely my point.

BOB. Now, I'm confused.

EVAN. You're putting conditions on your relationship. I'll give you the money *if*, I'll do this for you *if, if, if, if!* Do you see? That's not friendship.

BOB. He accepted.

EVAN. Of course he did! What was he supposed to do? If these things are as you say they are, then he was between a rock and a hard place. You didn't help him out! All you did was push the rock a little closer to him. (Pause) Con...tin...ue.

BOB. Well, Meg showed up Monday night. Just minutes after he told me about the day. He was right, she was terrific looking.

EVAN. Marilyn?

BOB. Yeah.

EVAN. Love, Marilyn.

BOB. Yeah.

EVAN. Too bad she's...dead.

BOB. Yeah.

EVAN. Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's beside the point. I'm trying to find out why you shot them.

BOB. *You said that you were going to give me the benefit of the doubt! I did not shoot them!*

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EVAN. Allegedly shot them. My deepest apologies. (HENRY enters)

HENRY. The father should be in custody within the hour, Sir.

EVAN. Good. That's good.

BOB. This is crazy! I can't believe that I'm standing here accused of shooting a friend of mine!

EVAN. Do you like Marilyn Monroe?

BOB. What?

EVAN. I asked you if you like Marilyn Monroe? (Pause)

BOB. Yeah, I love Marilyn Monroe.

HENRY. Did you guys see *Niagara*?

EVAN. Henry?

HENRY. Yes, Sir?

EVAN. Shutup. (Pause) Tell me about this love of Marilyn Monroe that you have.

BOB. I like her. She's hot. Some Like it Hot. (Pause) I'm a little lost here. What does this have to do with anything?

EVAN. Um-hmm. (Clicks pen once for effect.) Loves Marilyn Monroe.

HENRY. Ooooooh, Garrik. You are one sick puppy.

BOB. Sick puppy? Why?! Because I like the movies of Marilyn Monroe? That's not a crime.

EVAN. Let me ask you this. Do you ever think that you see Elvis going into K-Marts or Stop-n-Gos around the country? Do you travel a lot?

HENRY. Are you one of those guys that if cable TV was hooked up accidentally, you wouldn't report it?

EVAN. Do you own a chia-pet?

BOB. Once. No. Yes. Yes.

EVAN. Are you a pathological liar?

BOB. No!

EVAN. All pathological liars say that! Maybe you're lying right now.

BOB. I'm telling you the truth! I swear it!

EVAN. Yes, that's what you say. Perhaps you're telling me the truth - perhaps not. All I know is that two people are fighting for their lives right now, and I can't fmg out a damn thing!

BOB / HENRY. Can't fmg?



## A GAME OF RISK

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HENRY. What exactly does "fing" mean, Sir?

EVAN. Ignore that. It's a typographical error in the script.

HENRY. Okay.

BOB. (A Beat) Wait just a second. What's going on here?

EVAN. Not a whole hell of a lot. Lot of blabber. Little information that we know to be facts. Two people hurt. . .hurt badly.

BOB. Who are you? (HENRY looks nervously at EVAN)

EVAN. I'll ask the questions around here if you don't mind.

BOB. Let me see your badge.

EVAN. No.

BOB. Why not?

EVAN. It's in the shop. I'm having it buffed and polished.

BOB. (After a pause) You two aren't cops. This is all some sort of gag isn't it?

HENRY. No, we are cops.

BOB. I'm supposed to believe that? You asked me if I'd ever seen *Niagara*, owned a chia-pet, or had ever come in contact with Elvis Presley in a convenience store. That is not a line of questioning that a real policeman would ask a suspected murderer that could have killed a friend of his two hours before. (Pause) You are no cop! I'm leaving! (He starts for the door)

EVAN. Hold it right there!

HENRY. Police! Freeze!

BOB. Tell Bixler that this was good. He's good . . .but I'm better. See you around boys. (BOB looks at them, smiles, then exits. HENRY and EVAN speak more casually to one another.)

HENRY. What are we gonna do now? Kurt's gonna be mad.

EVAN. I don't know. I guess we have to call him. Damn! (He crosses to the phone and dials) Hey, Kurt. . .yeah . . .No, he just figured it out and left. . .Yeah . . .No, come on down . . .It's clear. (He hangs up the phone) They're on their way down here.

HENRY. I hate it that we botched this up for him. I mean, we had that Bob guy on the go there for awhile. He really thought that we were cops.

EVAN. (Dejected) Yeah.

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HENRY. What's the matter?

EVAN. Henry, we're actors. We couldn't keep up the act. That means we stink at our craft. Do you realize that?

HENRY. (Long pause). Well, doesn't that just put a damper on the evening? Now, I get to go home, make a bowl of chili, watch celebrity bowling, and ponder over how much I suck. Thanks for that.

EVAN. Sorry.

HENRY. I mean, why didn't you just take my gun and shoot me? It would have been more humane.

EVAN. I said that I was sorry. Besides, the gun isn't real.

HENRY. Maybe we're in the wrong business.

EVAN. We're actors. What else are we qualified to do?

HENRY. Oh, yeah. (Long pause. The door opens and KURT and MEG enter.)

KURT. Okay, you two . . .

EVAN. Don't even say it. . . I feel bad enough as it is.

KURT. No problem. We'll just go back to the drawing board and get the little son of a bitch some other way. Simple as that.

HENRY. I'm a bad actor.

KURT. No, you're not. You're just not very good at improvisation.

HENRY. I used to be good at improvisation. Top of my class.

KURT. What happened?

HENRY. Oh, that makes me feel real good. I think I'll go home and poison myself. Does anyone have any roach motels that I can open up and lick?

EVAN. Don't do it. I'm going to need your help later. If that fails . . . lick away.

MEG. What now?

EVAN. Well, Bob doesn't know the real story about us, yet.

EVAN. That's a good point. I'm not sure what he's going to say about all of this. He saw you wounded, but he knows that we aren't policemen.

HENRY. That would make me real good and screwed up in the head.

EVAN. Bad news, Henry. You already are.

KURT. All of this raises a good point. He either thinks that this is all a

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gag and we aren't really hurt. Or else, he thinks that we are really hurt and you two are somehow connected with the shooting. Or else . . .(Pause) I'm, not too sure what else.

MEG. I have a headache. This is all too much for me to try to concentrate on.

HENRY. Do you think that the chia-pet question was what did it? I mean, gave us away?

EVAN. I'd put money on either chia-pets or Elvis.

KURT. Wait a second! You two were asking him about chia-pets and Elvis Presley?

EVAN. We didn't know what else to ask him about.

KURT. How about why he was trying to pull a cruel joke on me? That would have been a good start. (Pause) Chia-pets?

HENRY. It was the first thing that came out.

EVAN. I should have watched more episodes of *Dragnet*.

MEG. Are we going to plan anything else tonight? I'm getting tired. Could someone give me a lift home? I hate riding a bus at night.

HENRY/EVAN/KURT. Absolutely!

KURT. I'll take her home! She's my date!

MEG. There's no need to fight over me, guys.

KURT. No fight. I'm taking you home!

MEG. Fine. No argument here. (She kisses him)

KURT. I'll get my car. (Pause) Be right back. (KURT exits)

MEG. (Suddenly bitchy) Okay, boys. I thought he'd never leave. Have you two laid the plan out?

EVAN. It's ready, Meg. This is gonna be hard to get Kurt and Bob together as soon as we wanted. Bob's leaving took us completely by surprise.

MEG. Just a little setback. Nothing that we can't overcome. I just don't want to put my lips on Kurt any more than I have to.

EVAN. I can certainly understand that.

HENRY. I would hate that.

EVAN. You sound stupid when you talk. I don't like to see your mouth move. It frightens me.

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HENRY. Is that what scares you about me the most?

EVAN. No, I'm afraid you'll reproduce and there will be a little version of you that dresses like you. Now get out of my face.

MEG. We don't have much time, you two. I want to try to get them together tomorrow night. Can we swing it?

EVAN. We can try.

HENRY. Don't you two think that this might be a little dangerous? I mean, . . . I don't know what I mean. (Pause) I'll shutup.

MEG. Don't worry, Henry. I'll take care of everything.

HENRY. Yeah, that's what you said in Seattle when that painter . . .

MEG. (Overlapping) *WE ARE NOT GOING TO BRING THAT UP! I SAID THAT I NEVER WANTED TO BRING THAT UP AGAIN! DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME?!*

EVAN. He. . . didn't mean that.

MEG. Good. Now, get to work! I want all of this over tomorrow! Is that understood?

EVAN. Perfectly.

MEG. Good. Then I guess we have nothing more to say tonight. Until we meet again. (She, sarcastically, blows them a kiss then exits. HENRY and EVAN look at one another and shake their heads.)

EVAN. She's a bitch.

HENRY. I hate her.

EVAN. I'm not sure that I want to do this with her anymore.

HENRY. You know? It would be awful if something were to happen to her.

EVAN. (Smiling) Tragic.

HENRY. I just don't know if my heart could take it. I mean . . . losing her.

EVAN. Okay, it's settled. Let's kill her as well.

HENRY. Okay.

EVAN. Okay. (Pause) You want to go bowling or something?

HENRY. Okay.

EVAN. Okay?

HENRY. Okay.

EVAN. Okay. (They both laugh maniacally as the lights fade out.)

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**AT RISE:** It is the next day. BOB and KURT are pacing back and forth. They cross by one another, stop, look at their watches, look at each other, and then continue pacing. Finally, KURT breaks the silence.

KURT. This is madness. Utter madness.

BOB. Do you think they know that I know that they know that I know?

KURT. I think so. They seemed pretty convinced of the fact that they were all bad actors when I left yesterday.

BOB. This is getting too complicated. I'm starting to lose track of who is trying to put a prank over on whom. I'm getting a headache.

KURT. Why does everyone say that when they come over here. I'm going to start charging people for aspirin, I could make a killing.

BOB. Okay, what exactly are we doing here?

KURT. Simple. My hunch is that Meg, Henry, and Evan are in cahoots with one another. They're trying to pull a fast one on us.

BOB. They shouldn't even know one another.

KURT. Shouldn't being the operative word there. Last night, when she wanted to leave, she asked if someone would take her home because she didn't want to ride the bus.

BOB. So?

KURT. She was my date.

BOB. She was *my* date.

KURT. No, really she was my date because she decided that she didn't really like you.

BOB. Maybe, that was all part of the plan.

KURT. Who's plan?

BOB. Our plan.

KURT. Yours and hers.

BOB. Absolutely.

KURT. No, I know that she was genuine about that.

BOB. Kurt, she's a con artist. Just like all of the rest of us. We spend great amounts of time trying to pull the wool over people's eyes. You know that. You need to come to grips with the fact that she liked me

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better than you.

KURT. You need to realize that you are not God's gift to women. She liked me better.

BOB. Give me a shred of evidence to support that and I'll bow out gracefully.

KURT. She plotted against you with me.

BOB. Only after she plotted - with me - against you.

KURT. That doesn't make any sense.

BOB. Of course it does.

KURT. No, if she plotted with me second, then that means she grew tired of you and wanted to stick you good and go along with me.

BOB. (Long pause. He starts to say something then only says . . .)

Shit. You're right. Damn! I hate being wrong.

KURT. Anyway, what difference does it make? Point being, she should've just assumed that I was going to take her home. But instead, she asked around the room for a ride and there was a lot of unsaid familiarity that was floating around.

BOB. That bitch!

KURT. Now, now. Be nice.

BOB. That . . .so in so!

KURT. She's a con, alright. But, turnabout is fair play and we are about to turn about!

BOB. How?

KURT. Okay, what we're going to do is get them all over here. Tonight. I don't know how.

BOB. We could say that we wanted to invite them over for dinner.

KURT. Too easy.

BOB. We could say that you were kidnapped by Columbian coffee bean examiners.

KURT. I won't even dignify that with a response. Where do you come up with these things?

BOB. I don't work very well under pressure. (The doorbell rings)

KURT. We need to figure out how to get them here. (KURT opens the door and standing there is MEG, HENRY, and BOB)

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MEG. Hi! (KURT slams the door)

KURT. It's them!

BOB. What?

KURT. It's them! Get in the bathroom! Quick!

BOB. But . . .?

KURT. Just go! I'll let you know when it's clear! (BOB runs into the bathroom. KURT opens the door)

MEG. Well, if you don't want to see me . . .

KURT. (Overlapping) Sorry, the door slipped out of my hands. I need to get some . . .stickum. (Pause) Come in.

MEG. Are you ready to plot?

HENRY. Yeah.

MEG. Not you, Silly, Kurt.

KURT. (To himself) Silly?

EVAN. So, let's try to figure out what we're going to do.

KURT. Okay. let's look at what we do know. We know that Bob knows that you two aren't cops. We also know that he also has a Marilyn Monroe fetish. We need to somehow fuse these two things into a solid, easy, yet foolproof plan!

EVAN. Right.

MEG. Any ideas?

EVERYONE. No. (Long pause. EVERYONE paces)

**MEG.** Okay, I have it.

**THE MEN.** What?

**MEG.** Simple. I seduce Bob, you two run in and take a picture of the two of us, then . . .

**KURT.** (Overlapping) We can't do that.

**MEG.** Why not?

**KURT.** Because that was Bob's plan in the first place.

**MEG.** That's the irony of the situation. Hit him with his own bag of tricks. That's how you really put it to him. He hates that.

**HENRY.** Wait just a second, Meg. That sounded a little too . . .I can't think what I want to say. (Pause) Bottom line is . . .just how well do you know him?

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**KURT.** What's it to you?

**HENRY.** What's it to me?

**KURT.** Yeah. (Pause) You don't know Meg very well . . .do you?

**HENRY.** I . . . (HENRY looks to MEG for help)

**KURT.** Wait a second. What's going on here?

**MEG.** Come on, guys. We're supposed to be trying to . . .

**KURT.** No, just a second. I know you from work. Where do you know Henry from? (Long pause)

**HENRY.** We have to tell him, Darling. We've been caught.

**KURT.** Caught? Caught? What did I catch you in?

**MEG.** Henry is my . . .step-brother.

**KURT.** You've got to be shitting me.

**MEG.** No, we really are. Related, I mean. That doesn't affect our business relationship, though.

**KURT.** What business? We're trying to pull a little joke, here. What business is that?

**EVAN.** (Producing a gun) This is the business of ending your life, Kurt.

**KURT.** Not this again. The toy gun, Evan? He's not going to buy that.

**MEG.** The gun is real this time. I'm sorry, Kurt, but I've decided that I'm in love with my step-brother. You and Bob know too much about us. I'm afraid your time is up. (To HENRY) Come on over here and give me a little lip lock. (HENRY crosses to MEG and they lock in a passionate kiss)

**KURT.** Okay. Time to vomit.

**EVAN.** No tossing your Toll House until they get finished. (Pause) It's a pseudo-family thing.

**MEG.** (Breaking the kiss) We're finished. Shoot him.

**EVAN.** Do you have any last words?

**KURT.** No, I leave you with this thought. What makes you think that there are any bullets in that gun? I'm just as good a con as you are. I know and continually anticipate every move that you are going to make. I climbed into your bedroom window last night and replaced all of the bullets in your gun with realistic looking blanks, Evan. I've known that you've been double-crossing me from the start.

**EVAN.** Don't be absurd. Blanks. You are about to meet your maker.



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**KURT.** Fire the gun, then. See if I care.

**EVAN.** Goodbye, foolish Kurt.

**KURT.** Oh, that's so melodramatic! Make sure you raise the gun in slow motion for heightened effect. The shot is going to be anti-climactic as it is. So, milk it until cottage cheese drops from your bum.

**MEG.** Just shoot him!

**KURT.** Shoot me!

**EVAN.** Goodbye, fool! (EVAN fires the gun. There is a loud bang, but nothing happens to KURT.)

**KURT.** Blanks.

**HENRY.** Uh-oh.

**KURT.** Now, if the three of you are quite finished with all of this foolishness. . . (Pause) Bob! Come on out. (All eyes turn to the bathroom. BOB enters carrying a gun)

**BOB.** All of you just relax. Make any false moves and I'll pull the trigger.

**MEG.** But how could you have possibly . . .?

**KURT.** The next time that you want to bug my apartment, at least put the bug in a place that's a little less obvious, okay? (KURT crosses to a potted plant and pulls out the bugging wire)

**MEG.** Evan, you schmuck!

**EVAN.** It's not my fault that he found it.

**MEG.** Oh, not your fault, huh? Well, in that case I guess Henry and I will just take the responsibility. You were the one that planted it!

**EVAN.** Well, I guess that I just suck!

**KURT.** Evan?

**EVAN.** What?

**KURT.** Act your age.

**EVAN.** Thank you, Mother.

**KURT.** Well, the problem that we face now is what exactly to do with the three of you. I mean, the one thing that Bob and I neglected to tell you is that we belong to a bizarre religious cult that eats human flesh. By rights we should eat you.

**MEG.** Religious cult?

**KURT.** Don't mock our faith.

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**MEG.** You're going to eat us?

**KURT.** No, you're lucky. You caught us on a week that we're fasting.

**HENRY.** Satanic holiday?

**BOB.** Indigestion. Which, in our religion, is like Lent.

**KURT.** That's why we don't know what to do with you.

**BOB.** Why don't we just shoot them. They were going to shoot us! Why should they get any less treatment than that which they were going to give?

**KURT.** That makes sense. Any objections to being shot?

**MEG\HENRY\EVAN.** Aye.

**KURT.** That's exactly where I'm going to shoot you. Between the eyes. (Pause) The wonderful thing is, we are going to play a little game to see who is going to be shot first. I'll be right back. (KURT exits into the bathroom)

**BOB.** Do you guys like the shell game? (No response. KURT enters with a small table with three shells on it)

**KURT.** Thanks for setting this up while I was stalling out here.

**BOB.** Hey, I needed something to do in there. (KURT suddenly stops the action and sets the table down)

**KURT.** This is stupid.

**MEG.** (No longer frightened) What is?

**KURT.** A set up shell game in the bathroom? Where in the hell did I think of this? Was I drunk?

**MEG.** It is a little contrived.

**HENRY.** Not to mention convenient.

**EVAN.** Very corny.

**KURT.** (To BOB, who has set down the gun) You want to comment on it?

**BOB.** Nope. All of the good "C" words are used up.

**KURT.** We have to think of something else.

**HENRY.** Without running the risk of being a spoil sport about this whole thing . . .we don't have the time. The deadline is tomorrow. We have to get this thing in the mail by tomorrow, or we all lose our jobs.

**MEG.** I don't care what we do, let's just do something.

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**KURT.** I don't hear your mouth sputtering forth helpful possibilities.

**MEG.** Look, I've hated this practical joke story line since day one. Remember? I was the one that wanted to do the simple love story. But, all of you wanted to something funny, different, new! Well, here we are. It's the night before a major deadline and we are stuck with nothing but easy to guess, thickly contrived, wet and wispy plot twists. I wanted Godiva chocolates . . .I'm forced to chomp on licorice! (Pause) Now, this was all your idea, Kurt. I've been working on *The Flawless and The Flamboyant* as a writer for three years. I'd better not lose my job over your stupid idea for a story. If I do . . .God help you. Now, I don't care what you write . . .*JUST WRITE!!!!!!*

**BOB.** I should have taken that job at Disney. I hate daytime TV.

**KURT.** Look, you know the way all of this works. We have to come up with the best story. You need to go out on a limb every now and then to get yourself noticed by the executives. That can equal more money in the long run. Sure, this story is a risk. However, all of you know that writing is a game of risk. We may fail, but we can have the peace of mind that we stuck with our hunch. Good or bad. We played the game.

**MEG.** That's terrific. While I'm sitting in some alley starving to death I can say, "I did it my way." No thank you. I have expensive tastes. I want to eat at good restaurants. I want to be able to afford Nutri-System. I want to go to the symphony, waste energy because I can, I don't want to have to recycle old beer cans for my livelihood.

**HENRY.** Me either.

**KURT.** Okay, okay. We'll get this right. Gosh you guys are touchy tonight.

**EVAN.** We're all just tired, Kurt. We've been working on this for days and we're all just getting a little worried. You knew that this practical joke storyline was going to be a hard sell.

**HENRY.** I have to ask you something, Kurt. Why do we have to have the incestual relationship between the girl and the supposed actor/cop? That's kind of sick and twisted isn't it?

**KURT.** Of course, it is. But, it sounds like something that would be on daytime TV and that stuff gets ratings.

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**BOB.** I think it's all stupid.

**EVAN.** You would. You hate all of this stuff that takes thought to drink in.

**BOB.** What thought? This is for a soap opera. People that watch those things shut their brain off for an hour anyway. What difference does it make what we put in the story? They're gonna like it because of the nature of the situation.

**KURT.** I don't think that you could have made that set of sentences more confusing if you were to try. (Pause) Look, I'm the one that got us into this . . . I'll be the one to get us out. Why don't the rest of you just go home? I'll stay up and figure all this out.

**BOB.** Fine with me.

**EVAN.** You sure?

**KURT.** Yeah, it's my ball of wax. I'll mold it.

**HENRY.** I'm out of here then. Goodnight.

**MEG.** I'm not leaving.

**KURT.** There's really nothing you can do, Meg. I'll get it done.

**MEG.** Forget it. I'm staying.

**KURT.** Fine. I'm not going to argue with you on this. If you want to stay, then stay. Just don't get in my way. I need lots of quiet to think. So, shhh.

**BOB.** Well, I guess the rest of us are out of here. See you two tomorrow. (Pause) Be good, you two. Don't do anything that I wouldn't do.

**MEG.** Like think?

**BOB.** Bitch. (They exit)

**MEG.** Come here, you. (KURT crosses to MEG and they embrace in a passionate kiss)

**KURT.** I don't know how long I can keep this act up, Meg. I love you so much. I hate acting like I hate you in front of the guys.

**MEG.** I know. It's just a little while longer. I promise. Then we will be able to be together on a regular basis.

**KURT.** Okay. This is just . . .

**MEG.** (Overlapping) I know. (They kiss again)

**KURT.** I'm hungry. Are you?

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**MEG.** Yeah, I haven't eaten all day.

**KURT.** Do you want me to make you something? I think I'm going to make an omelet. I have too many eggs. I need to use them.

**MEG.** I have a better idea. Why don't you start to work on the script and I'll make it for you. I'd rather sentence myself to a few minutes behind the frying pan than have you lose your train of thought and me end up unemployed tomorrow. You work. I'll fry.

**KURT.** Sounds good to me. (MEG kisses KURT on the neck and exits to the kitchen. KURT sits down and begins pondering over the pages)

**MEG.** (Off) Are you pleased with your story, at all?

**KURT.** Yeah, it just seems to be a little . . . I mean, there's something missing. I don't know what it is. (MEG enters with a frying pan)

**MEG.** You'll figure it out. I have faith in you.

**KURT.** I don't know. Maybe if I just sit here and try to clear my mind it will just hit me.

**MEG.** I'm sure it will, My Love. (MEG raises the frying pan high in the air and whacks KURT over the head with it. He falls over onto the floor, dead) One down. Three to go.

**BLACKOUT**

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**AT RISE:**

MEG is pacing furiously around the room. She checks over every little detail of the place. She takes a handkerchief and wipes off things that she's touched. The doorbell rings and she takes a deep sigh and crosses to the door and opens it. EVAN, BOB, and HENRY are on the other side.

**MEG.** Did you find him?

**HENRY.** Nope. We looked everywhere we could think of to look.

**EVAN.** He's just . . . vanished off the face of the Earth. No one that we know has seen him since yesterday.

**BOB.** Should we call the police?

**MEG.** NO! (Pause) I mean . . .no. They're so busy.

**EVAN.** Too busy to look for a missing person?

**HENRY.** Uh . . .technically he's not missing yet. A person has to be missing 24 hours in order to be considered a true missing person.

**BOB.** That's the stupidest thing that I've ever heard. You mean, that if went to the cops and told him that Kurt is missing, they wouldn't believe us until the clock strikes whenever?

**HENRY.** That's right.

**BOB.** But I have a problem with that. I mean, it's difficult to tell exactly when a person disappears. How do they know when it's been 24 hours? If we knew the exact time that he vanished we would be able to tell where he was because we were with him when he disappeared. That's stupid. That's like the bank charging you for insufficient checks. They want to take more of what you don't have to begin with! I have a headache.

**EVAN.** (To MEG) Do you know if he finished the script?

**MEG.** No, I went ahead and took my story in this morning so that all of our jobs were saved. Kurt never bothered to show up.

**EVAN.** That's really unlike him. He's usually Mr. Dependable.

**MEG.** I guess we all slip sometimes.

**EVAN.** No, I don't think so. I mean, I know Kurt pretty well and I just don't think that . . .

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**MEG.** I think that you gentlemen should just accept the fact that your so called friend screwed you over.

**BOB.** But what would he gain by doing this? I mean, if anything he had the most to lose. It was his idea that we do the joke story, he was the one that took on the responsibility to write it. He was the forerunner to all of this.

**MEG.** It looks like he just choked, you know? Cracked under the pressure? Flipped his lid?

**HENRY.** Can I ask you a question, Meg? (She stares at him) Why are you so quick to jump on the negative about Kurt? What did he ever do to you?

**MEG.** What did he do to me? (Pause) What did Kurt Bixler do to me? Take a seat. I'll be happy to tell you.

**HENRY.** That's good because that's what I asked you to do... tell me. (She glares at him) I'm all ears.

**MEG.** I'm a writer, Henry. Not a lead writer on a major soap, just a second fiddle writer. I'm also a woman, in case you hadn't bothered to notice. I've worked for seven years to get to the position I have. You have no idea of the amount of shit that I've had to go through to be able to call myself that. I'm from a small town. I realize that all of you have grown up here in the city and haven't had to endure the hardships that someone like myself must endure in order to make a name for herself and try to have a career. You see, all my life I have been called "Blondie", "Ditzo", "Dizzy Dame", and crap like that by men who think that I should just stay in my little town and forget all of the years of education that I treasure so dear. I'm supposed to be stupid. Men think that. I'm supposed to fill out a W-4 and be an airhead for a living. Obviously, you three don't know what it's like to have to prove yourself to anyone. . .at least not like I've had to. Do you know how tired I am of being told that I look like Marilyn Monroe? I hate it! People have told me that all of my adult life. Having the last name Monroe didn't help the situation, either. I had to constantly dodge groping hands, not answer the phone, lock my door whenever I was home alone because of all of the nutcases that I had encountered. Finally, it was more than I could bear. I moved to the city. The new hope for my life. The land of opportunity! It was all going to be

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mine. (She pauses and remembers) I was finally going to be a writer. I met this woman who worked on the soap and she got me in the door. My first true break. I knew that I had to start at the bottom, but that was okay. I was good. I'd work my way up to being a head writer in no time. Well, I sat there and wrote. Gradually, the years changed and I hadn't moved up, I hadn't moved down . . . *I hadn't MOVED!!* New writers were brought in, old ones left, people moved up and down the chain. . .but not me. No, I stayed right there in all man's land. They said a couple of weeks ago that they wanted all of us to submit story ideas. Remember? That was going to determine who was in charge of the writing staff? Kurt got it. (Pause) My story was good. Better than any joke story that he could come up with! My scripts were finished! I had been writing on them for years! Kurt turned in a half done version of an idea . . . *an idea!* The next day, BANG! He gets the job. Well, that just about killed me. I knew at that point that this was all just some sort of sexist game and I was just a pawn to be forgotten, doomed never to cross the board and become queen. (Long pause) Never. I just want to be the best! Is that so much to ask? I've served my time, I've paid the price, I've earned my chance! I just want someone to give me a break! *I DESERVE IT!!!!* (There is another long pause. All of the men look at her)

**BOB.** Meg? Do you know where Kurt is?

**MEG.** When he got the job I could've just killed him! That was mine!

**BOB.** Meg?

**MEG.** He was a nobody. I was somebody.

**EVAN.** Meg?

**MEG.** (Long pause) Yes?

**EVAN.** Do you know where Kurt is?

**MEG.** I know. He's in a place where he can't hurt me anymore. (She starts to laugh. Then cry) I killed him. I really killed him.

**HENRY.** Oh, god.

**MEG.** He was a threat. I always get rid of threatening things in my life. He was expendable.

**EVAN.** Meg, where is he? (Long pause. She ponders)

**MEG.** I don't think that I should tell you that.



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**EVAN.** Why not?

**MEG.** Because, he's dead. He doesn't look very good.

**EVAN.** Meg.

**MEG.** He's in the closet, okay? There. Are you happy? (EVAN goes over to the closet and opens it up. KURT falls out. HENRY screams.)

**BOB.** Why did you do that? You knew that he was in there.

**HENRY.** I'm sorry. I've just never seen a real dead body before. It gave me the willies. The only time I've ever had the willies was when I saw a hillbilly from Philly named Billy.

**BOB.** Don't be silly. Why the willies?

**HENRY.** It was chilly.

**MEG.** Is he dead?

**EVAN.** What do you mean "Is he Dead?"? You're the one that killed him!

**MEG.** Oh, yeah. Sorry, for a second real plots and fake plots just slipped on the banana peel of my mind.

**HENRY.** What are we going to do? Should we call an ambulance?

**EVAN.** Why? He's dead.

**HENRY.** I know CPR. Maybe we can bring him back to life!

**EVAN.** Henry, he looks like he's been dead for quite some time. He's stiff. I mean, if you want to go kissing on a stiff dead guy, then that's your business. However, . . .

**MEG.** (Overlapping) Please! Can we just stop all of this chatter? You really don't need to go through all of this. It's all so unnecessary.

**BOB.** Why is that?

**MEG.** You guys haven't put it all together, yet?

**THE MEN.** No.

**MEG.** I'm going to kill all of you.

**HENRY.** You're not killing me.

**MEG.** Oh, okay, Henry. Since you put it like that, I guess I won't kill you. What do you mean "I'm not going to kill you"? Of course I am. All of you represent a potential threat to my career. I can't allow the three of you to live. I mean, besides the fact that you'll turn me in to the police - I just can't work with you guys. I hope that you aren't offended by that. I'm

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just a better soap opera writer than the three of you combined.

**HENRY.** I'm not offended. Are you guys offended?

**BOB/EVAN.** Offended? Are you kidding? No. Constitution of steel.

**MEG.** Oh, good. I wouldn't want to hurt your feelings. I mean, it's bad enough that I have to deprive you of your life. You understand.

**BOB.** I do have one small question for you. There are three of us and only one of you. How do you think you're going to off all three of us?

**MEG.** (Producing a gun) Simple. I have the gun.

**HENRY.** Makes sense to me. Very good. You've thought this thing through well.

**MEG.** Thank you.

**HENRY.** Only one problem.

**MEG.** What's that?

**HENRY.** (Producing a bigger gun) I have a bigger gun.

**MEG.** Shit! I didn't think of that.

**HENRY.** I've decided that I want that position at work. I'm not that good of a writer, but I'll take all the undue credit that I can get. I'm sorry, but I'm going to kill all of you.

**EVAN.** I'm afraid that I can't let you do that, Henry.

**HENRY.** Just how are you going to stop me?

**EVAN.** (Producing a bigger gun) I, too, have big guns at my disposal.

**MEG.** Your gun is so big.

**EVAN.** Yes, I know.

**MEG.** Can I touch it?

**EVAN.** Not on your life, Toots. Stay right where you are. I'm gonna off all of you and take the dough.

**MEG.** What is this Guys and Dolls meets the Manson Family? Toots?

**EVAN.** Very funny.

**BOB.** (Producing a tiny gun) Hold it right there, Evan.

**EVAN.** You're gonna shoot me with that little thing? What is that? A B.B. gun?

**BOB.** Look, it's not size that counts . . . it's quality. My gun may not be big, but it can really pack a punch. I'm going to take the glory and the story. Do you all here that? All three of you are going to jail.

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**HENRY.** I wouldn't say that in a room full of gun toting lunatics.

**BOB.** It's true. You will all be spending time in the state penitentiary while I'm soaking sun in Ixtapa. . .enjoying my new found success. What do you think about that?

**HENRY.** Personally, I think it sucks.

**EVAN.** I'm certainly not going to jail in order to further your career.

**BOB.** Well, I would say that we just put all of this behind us, but . . .

(Pause) I mean, look at us. We're standing here with guns pulled on each other. Look, why don't we just put the guns down, I'll call the police, and that way no one gets hurt.

**EVAN.** No.

**BOB.** I beg your pardon.

**EVAN.** I said, "No.", I'm not going to put my gun down.

**BOB.** Evan, this really doesn't need to get nasty. Besides, where did you get that attitude? Rude!

**EVAN.** You're calling me rude and you have a gun pulled on me?

**BOB.** You pulled a gun on me first!

**EVAN.** I was provoked into it! Anyway, I didn't pull the gun on you . . .I pulled it on everyone. Nothing personal. You were just in the room.

**MEG.** Look, this is all very amusing, but I really have to have time to dispose of all of your bodies.

**EVAN.** Look here, you bitch, I'm not going to let you shoot me. Do you understand that? Blondie? Dizzy Dame? Ditzo?

**MEG.** I'm not listening to you. Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.

**BOB.** Wait! Why does it all have to come to this? We have a successful story line . . .or at least we will. Why can't we just all share in the glory and profit together. Kurt is out of the way, there's no reason for all of us to fight. We have a common bond. It would be stupid for any one of us to go to the police. Kurt was our rebel . . . our weak link. He's gone now. So, with all of our connections . . .

**HENRY.** He's right. We can do this. (Pause) Can't we?

**EVAN.** I don't know.

**BOB.** Come on, Evan. Meg?

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**MEG.** Well, since you all have bigger or better guns than me . . . I guess so.

**BOB.** Evan? It's up to you.

**EVAN.** (Thinks this over) Okay. Count me in.

**MEG.** I'll get the champagne out of the kitchen. It looks like it's been sitting there for a long time. (She exits to the kitchen, setting her gun down)

**BOB.** Okay, boys, on the count of three we will all set down our guns . . . slowly. One . . . Two . . . Three! (ALL THREE fire their guns and fall to the floor, dead. MEG enters with the champagne and two champagne glasses. KURT stands up)

**KURT.** Damn, those three are long winded! I didn't think that they would ever shutup.

**MEG.** Well, we did it.

**KURT.** No, they did it. Do you have the new script ready?

**MEG.** Yeah.

**KURT.** Where is it?

**MEG.** In my apartment.

**KURT.** Shall we go get it?

**MEG.** All in good time, My Love. All in good time. First, we toast our new success and life as a collaborative team. (She pours the champagne)

**KURT.** That sounds like a good idea.

**MEG.** To all the dead writers of the world . . . May they rest in peace. (They clink the glasses. She drinks, he doesn't. Instead, he goes into the kitchen and enters with a Coca-Cola and a new champagne glass. He pours the Coke into it)

**KURT.** (Suddenly menacing) Coca-Cola looks funny in a champagne glass, doesn't it?

**MEG.** What are you doing?

**KURT.** Well, I wanted to drink something that I hadn't laced with poison, so I got myself a Coke.

**MEG.** Poison? You . . . ?

**KURT.** Yes, a rather appropriate end to it all. Don't you think so? Don't worry, Dear. I promise you that your death is going to be painful.

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**MEG.** Why?!

**KURT.** I'm getting to that, My Darling. You see, things in this world are not always the way that they seem. People are not always the way that we view them. I, for instance, am not exactly the way that you see me. True, you were the best lover that I've ever had. On that fact, I almost hate killing you. However, it needs to be this way. You see, I also am from a small town. As a matter of fact, I'm from the same small town that you are from. We went to school together, although, you wouldn't remember me. I was always looked at as a freak case, an outcast, a worthless person that had no chance to make any amount of success with her life. (Pause) I wanted for someone to just like me. That's all. Just give me a kind word every now and then, but no . . .no. You wouldn't remember me as Kurt Bixler. No, back then I had stringy shoulder length hair and I went by the name of Angela Daniels. Remember?

**MEG.** Angela Daniels? The Lesbian?

**KURT.** *(Pause. He smiles)* Thanks for making me feel like a piece of bruschetta with a smear of shit pate on it. You still cut me with your judgment. I loved you from afar, Meg. Sitting behind you in math class and wanting so badly to just run my nails through your hair. I pictured what it would be like to lie next to you at night, even if it was just as friends. You wouldn't give me the time of day. I guess you had made up your mind that my life consisted of nothing but flannel shirts and mullets. *(He sets his coke glass down next to the champagne glass)* Well, I moved to the city when you did. I've kept close tabs on you from the start. I had an operation and I changed my name to Kurt Bixler. Now that I was a man, maybe I could get you to go out with me. Being Kurt opened up my life. There was a new world of possibilities for me. *(Pause)* The fulfillment of a lifelong dream. Now, you're just in the way. So, to quote Cole Porter, "Goodbye, little dream, goodbye." *(The poison starts to take effect on MEG)*

**MEG.** How? How could you do this to me?

**KURT.** It was easy. I just put a little cyanide on the inside of the glass and . . .the rest is . . .

**MEG.** I . . .I . . .

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**KURT.** History. (MEG falls over, dead. KURT laughs at her and walks over to the glasses. Without looking, he accidentally picks up the poisoned champagne glass. He drinks it, realizes what he's done, and sets the glass back down. He crosses to the phone and dials.) Hello, June? Is that you working tonight? Great. This is Kurt. Could you please send an ambulance to my apartment? Yeah, I have a friend that's in really bad shape. What? I don't sound worried? Well, a person can only do so much. Yeah. Thanks (He hangs up the phone and crosses to the door and unlocks it. Then, he crosses to the sofa and sits down on it, thinking) Shit! *(He looks out at the audience)* Irony sucks.

**BLACKOUT**

**CURTAIN**