

# **C Y B E R**

*a play by*

**DAN SANDERS**

**"LISTEN -- THERE'S A HELL OF A GOOD UNIVERSE NEXT DOOR; LET'S GO."**

*e.e. cummings*

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**REPRESENTATION:**

**ERIC GIBSON**

**JANA LUKER AGENCY**

**1923-1/2 Westwood Blvd. Suite 3**

**Los Angeles CA 90025**

**(310) 441-2822**

CYBER was first presented by the Shelterbelt Theatre in Omaha, Nebraska on April 14, 2000. It was directed by Don Nguyen, and assistant directed by Christa Miller; set and sound were designed by Don Nguyen; lighting was designed by Matthew Fowler; choreography was by Don Nguyen and Liz Micek; stage manager was Jay Hannah. The cast was as follows:

BECKY ..... Alicia Dunn  
BLAINE ..... Don Nguyen  
JEFF / TIFFANY ..... Scott Fowler  
PRODUCER / JOHNDK / THERAPIST ..... Kelcey Watson  
MARCIA / SECRETARY / JODI26 ..... Theresa Sindelar  
HOLLY / SERVANT GIRL ..... Christa Miller  
HOWARD / TRIPOD ..... Dan Rischling  
ONLINE HOST ..... D. Lauren Pickle  
BEACHBRAT / EROTIC DANCER /  
GIRL IN THE ALPS / FLAMENCO DANCER ..... Liz Micek

## CHARACTERS

BECKY, *mid-thirties.*

BLAINE, *late thirties.*

HOLLY, *late thirties. Actress also plays a Servant Woman.*

JEFF, *mid-thirties. Actor also plays Tiffany.*

TRIPOD, *forties. Actor also plays Howard and a Waiter.*

BEACHBRAT, *mid-twenties. Actress also plays an exotic dancer, a flamenco dancer, and Blaine's Girl In The Alps.*

ONLINE HOST, *forties. Actor also plays a therapist, JohnDK, a film producer, and a minister.*

MARCIA, *forties. Actress also plays Jodi26.*

### SETTING:

*An upper-middle-class home in Los Angeles and  
a lower-middle-class home in rural Oregon.  
Mid-February through late May, 1996.*

*All songs are by The Who.*

# ACT ONE

## SCENE I

*Night. Winter of 1996; Valentines' Day was yesterday.*

*As house lights subside, the rainfall-piano-kettledrum opening of Love, Reign O'er Me plays at high volume.*

*Two rooms. An opulent den in Los Angeles; a child's wildly unkempt bedroom in small-town Oregon. Cloven by a great jagged sheet of opaque glass.*

*In each room is a computer desk. One is expensive, with a working screenwriter's trappings. The other desk is a kids' set, battered, primary colors, with the clutter of a girl in her early teens. Lights up on the latter desk as music fades.*

*At the kids' desk is BECKY, a plain-speaking woman of slender fortune. She wears a godawful bathrobe and slippers; the kind of clothes we're alone in.*

BECKY: See, I don't like underdicked men -- they tend to be wrapped in a *lot* of problems. Kind of like owning a British car.

*Strewn casually downstage are three OTHERS, two male, one female. It's a computer-online "chat room." The mood is light, a tribe sprawled about a pleasing fire.*

BECKY: Hey Steve, how was your Valentines' Day?

TRIPOD: All three gates, JawsMomma. Mouth, north and south. Triple play.

BEACHBRAT: Tripod, I'm amazed you're still alive.

TRIPOD: I called her while The Old Lady was in the shower and outlined every amoral thing I had in store for her.

BECKY: Does she switch or just bottom? Jeff likes me to do both.

TRIPOD: Right now she's pure sub but hope springs eternal.

*Becky leans back, completely comfortable, a can of Rainier Ale and a pizza's carcass by her side. She types, thinks, smiles, enjoying rare leisure time on an online service.*

*This chat room is Becky's domain, and she runs it like the tough-cookie saloon proprietress in a cowboy movie.*

*Lights up on the set's other half. Upstage is a sleeping woman on a couch, back to audience, snoring softly. The cathode light from an offstage TV washes over her; one can hear the faint cacophony of a lurid talk show. A door slams offstage.*

BLAINE:                   *(offstage)* That checkout line at Gelsons' was slower than the Second Coming of You-Know-Who.

*His wife doesn't stir. BLAINE enters, rain-soaked, with two bags of takeout and two wine glasses.*

*He is a prosperous screenwriter, withdrawn, a touch forbidding, full head of hair, dressed affluent-casual. Blaine sees his wife's unconscious form and his shoulders sag.*

BLAINE:                   Holly. Holly. HOLLY.

*His wife snores on, comatose. Blaine gazes at her with sad contempt. Then he crosses to his desk, turns on his computer. Opens one of his scripts and begins editing it as he eats. On Becky's side, a rich, friendly voice:*

ONLINE HOST:       Tiffany has entered the room.

TIFFANY, *a man in his thirties dressed in drag, enters onto Becky's side.*

TIFFANY:               I want a man to take me like the dirty little slut I am.

BECKY:                 Not even so much as a what's-your-sign?

TIFFANY:               I'm nineteen, five foot six one oh five, thirty-six-C.

BECKY:                 Okay Thirty-Six-C, what's your panty hose size?

TIFFANY:               *(he hesitates, then)* Extra Medium.

BECKY:                 Nitey nite, tic-dick --

*Becky works the keys with quick virtuosity. Tiffany vanishes.*

ONLINE HOST:       Tiffany has been expelled from "Sensual Intelligence" by Room Host JawsMomma.

BECKY: The Internet, where the men are men -- and so are most of the women.

BEACHBRAT: They should just change its name to the LiarNet.

BECKY: So anyway, this morning on my way out of the shower, Jeff jumps me. I'm babbling at him "But I'm meeting Pastor Lee's wife at ten." He just says, "I know," the big deviant.

*During this... Blaine can't concentrate. His wife's turned back seems to mock him. He fiddles with the computer mouse. There is the sound of a modem dialing, then engaging screechily.*

ONLINE HOST: You're ON -- with Online Nation. ...Entering Talk Exchange. Here's a rundown of tonight's chat rooms.

*Blaine begins browsing for a "room."*

ONLINE HOST: Dirty Thirties.

FEMALE: OH FUCK ME HARD OH YES SPLIT ME IN TWO FUCK ME THROUGH THE FLOOR OH YES YES FUCK ME INTO THE NEXT AREA CODE WITH THAT BIG THROBBING --

*Blaine makes a face and tries another room.*

ONLINE HOST: Adult Truth or Dare.

MALE VOICE: -- as big as your LEG! Then, when I was thirteen --

*Blaine moves on.*

ONLINE HOST: The Dungeon.

*There is the sound of chains clanking, a whip cracking.*

HELGA: Lick my BOOT, you little worm!

SUBMAN: *(whining)* Yes, Mistress.

HELGA: I am Helga, She-Wolf of the S.S. --

BLAINE: You're a mess.

*He clicks into another room.*

ONLINE HOST: Sensual Intelligence.

*Blaine likes the sound of this and on pure whim clicks the mouse.*

ONLINE HOST: Ishmael has entered the room.

BECKY, REST: *(rough unison)* Hi Ishmael.

BLAINE: *(shy)* Hello.

BECKY: BeachBrat, where you from?

BEACHBRAT: Fort Lauderdale. Fem twenties.

JOHNDK: Mmm, I love it there. Bikini candy shop. JawsMomma, what about you?

BECKY: Oregon. Ishmael, you?

*Blaine isn't sure about this.*

BECKY: -- Ish-may-el?

BLAINE: I grew up in Oregon, too.

BECKY: Zattafact? Anywhere near Estacada?

BLAINE: Sort of. Scappoose.

BECKY: Scappoose? Oh my. I'm afraid we had to kick your ass for Homecoming again this year. Fifty-three to six.

BLAINE: *(smiling)* Death, taxes and we can't beat Estacada High.

BECKY: Amen. Did they fire your coach again?

BLAINE: I'm sure I don't know -- I live out of state now. But how's things back in the Motherland tonight?

BECKY: Raining like a bastard. Absolutely douching it.

BLAINE: Here too. It's nice.

BECKY: Not for me. My kids make this house itty fucking bitty. So you defected, huh? Where to?

BLAINE: Los Angeles.

BECKY: Wow. You really flew the coop, Scappoose.

BLAINE: Had to. Sorry. But I miss Oregon a lot.

BECKY: Well, I think they're about to officially declare it a California exile colony.

TRIPOD: Yeah, I'm in Montana, we get a lot of Californicators up here, too.

BECKY: Rich shit-heels, blow in here with all their money, treat you like a hillbilly, pork the housing market.

BLAINE: Just as many of us moved down here.

BECKY: Why did you?

BLAINE: Movies.

BECKY: Were you lucky?

BLAINE: Yes.

JOHNDK: Have I seen you?

BLAINE: No. I'm offscreen, and pretty far down-chain. Just a writer.

BEACHBRAT: What do you write?

BLAINE: I develop script properties.

BECKY: And just what would be a "script property?"

BLAINE: We option a script, and I take what's unproduceable about it and rewrite to make it produceable.

BECKY: More tits and explosions, you mean.

BLAINE: *(far from offended)* Precisely.

BEACHBRAT: What rooms on this do you hit a lot?

BLAINE: Me? None. Online Nation junk-mailed me a disk. I'm just soaking them for the five free hours.

BECKY: Then you'll quit?

BLAINE: Yeah. Hey, no offense. You guys seem all right. But I get a feeling that all this is nothing but a reincarnation of CB radio. Ten Four?

*This is bait to Becky and she takes it.*

BECKY: Ishmael, want to be alone with me?

BLAINE: *(considers, then --)* All right.

JOHNDK: God save you, Ishmael.

BECKY: Pinch it off, John. Okay Blaine. Hit Control-R and when it asks the name of the private room you want type, uh... "Horse Cock."

BLAINE: Is -- that two words?

BECKY: Uh-huh.

*Blaine complies, mildly amused. Lights down on the others.*

*From this moment on, the one thing all this is not is two people typing at desks.*

ONLINE HOST: You are now in private room "Horse Cock."

BECKY: ...Come into my lair, said the spider to the fly.

BLAINE: *(lording it over the peasant)* Well now. You're quite the freethinker.

BECKY: Wrong, Scappoose. I'm a nice churchgoing lady.

BLAINE: So what's this online crap for you, Jekyll and Hyde?

BECKY:                   Something like that.

BLAINE:                   Why do you call yourself "JawsMomma?"

BECKY:                   Three kids, no sleep. Where do you get "Ishmael?"

BLAINE:                   *(light)* "His hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand shall be against him."

BECKY:                   Who wrote that?

BLAINE:                   No one knows. Moses, maybe.

BECKY:                   Wait, I know. That's -- Genesis. Everybody's against you?

BLAINE:                   Oh, only when I'm pitching to Disney.

BECKY:                   So you're a writer? That's your living?

BLAINE:                   Yeah.

BECKY:                   Is that hard?

BLAINE:                   Yes. For movies, sure.

BECKY:                   Not as hard as acting, though, where you're in front of everyone. If you fuck up acting, everybody sees.

BLAINE:                   No, acting is easy. You just know your lines, hit your marks, and keep your eyes off the producer's wife. Writing, see, you start with nothing. You create out of thin air. Alone.

BECKY:                   Ishmael, c'mon.

BLAINE:                   Look, I know what I'm talking about. I started out as an actor.

BECKY:                   Yeah? I see you in anything?

BLAINE:                   Hope not.

BECKY:                   Were you good?

BLAINE: I thought I was.

BECKY: Tried hard?

BLAINE: Tried everything.

BECKY: And it wasn't enough. Nowhere near.

BLAINE: ... No.

BECKY: *(beat; then, breezy)* I have a special gift for quickly discerning the bane of one's existence.

*Pause.*

BECKY: What's your real name? Mine's Becky.

*Blaine is leery.*

BLAINE: "Call me Ishmael."

BECKY: *Moby Dick*, I read it. What's your real name?

*Blaine hesitates.*

BECKY: *(pure command)* Come on Melville, I have no time for charades. Mine's Becky, what's yours?

BLAINE: It's Blaine.

BECKY: Blaine, how urbane. Irish, right? What's it mean?

BLAINE: Something like "thin." Used to fit.

BECKY: Rebekah means "ensnarer."

BLAINE: Does it, now.

BECKY: Is there a woman in your life?

BLAINE: Yes.

BECKY: Is she pretty?

BLAINE: She is.

BECKY: So cowboy, what brings you here to "Horse Cock"?

BLAINE: There's... things she won't do for me and I miss them.

BECKY: What went wrong, Blaine?

BLAINE: Same as everybody else. Work kids time. One of us is always tired. She's a morning person, I'm a night-watcher.

BECKY: So you're married too. How long?

BLAINE: Seven years.

BECKY: God, you're just a baby. We hit *seventeen* years in June.

BLAINE: I can't imagine someone putting up with me that long.

BECKY: It seemed that way to me on the front end, too. But... it just sort of piles up. Your wife, though – she's *prim*, right?

BLAINE: Yeah. "Oh well." Fortunes of war. Anyway, she's got it where it counts -- she's a superb mother.

BECKY: Mm. The tough thing about "superb mothers," though – they don't come into your office when you're alone, bend over your desk and growl "Jungle-fuck me to Mars, you bad boy."

*Blaine digests the truth of this.*

BLAINE: Do you like to talk to men like that?

BECKY: On this, sometimes. In R.L.? Real Life? Only one, ever.

BLAINE: Really?

BECKY: I got married four weeks out of high school, just after Mount St. Helens blew. To my first boyfriend.

BLAINE: Mama mia. And you've never *ever* had...?

BECKY: (*quiet, rock-firm*) No. I made a promise and I mean to keep it.

BLAINE: Me too.

*The treaty is drawn. Both relax a bit.*

BLAINE: Mount St. Helens. I'm doing the math. You're 36. (I'm 39.)

BECKY: Uh huh. You just like women?

BLAINE: Only. Yeah. I, uh, really like being straight. I mean, I have nothing to base this on, but my guess is if you're straight the parts fit together better. The other way, I don't know. You might violate the warranty. Like using the wrong bag on your vacuum cleaner.

*Becky laughs. She has a big, great laugh.*

BECKY: Ah, The Internet, Bringing Together Twisted Souls Since 1968.

BLAINE: That's why the Pat Robertsons and all their check-mailing sheep want to kill it. Nothing scares those guys more than free expression.

BECKY: Won't work. The second or third thing *any* new technology is used for is always erotica. Charcoal on a cave wall, printing press, camera, phone, now this. It's old hat.

BLAINE: You're pretty bright to grasp that.

BECKY: I get I.M.'s from all these guys who're just looking to grasp something else.

BLAINE: What's an I.M.?

BECKY: In chatrooms you can send an Individual Message to anyone, like whispering in their ear. Alt-I.

BLAINE: Thanks. So you get a lot of those, huh?

BECKY: By the bushel. Most starting out with something real elegant like "I want to shit on your chest." I didn't see *that* Cary Grant movie. But you've talked to me four minutes and minded your manners. You're what the English call "well brought up."

BLAINE: *(quiet)* I wasn't brought up at all.

BECKY: Well, you got it somewhere. So. Just where have you found wifey-poo wanting?

BLAINE: Just call her my "wife," okay?

BECKY: Okay, Ish. I like your devotion. So, what?

*Blaine doesn't respond.*

BECKY: The two of you ever knock off a quick one in the closet of your best friends' bedroom at a party?

BLAINE: No.

BECKY: In the minivan, at the edge of the parking lot?

BLAINE: No.

BECKY: I handed Jeff a note last summer in the middle of church, informing him that, at that particular moment, I was innocent of panties. We left the kids with his folks and dashed out to the car. See, if you don't want each other at all the wrong times you've lost it.

BLAINE: It's not bad, really. It's just kind of -- managed.

BECKY: By her.

BLAINE: And contained. It's...

*The writer is at a loss for a socially acceptable phrase.*

BECKY: *(simply)* You're a strong man, with strong needs.

BLAINE: Is that illegal now?

BECKY: I don't know. Not with me.

*Small pause.*

BECKY: So now you want to cyberfuck an old lady. Talk about the last act of a desperate man.

BLAINE: Old? Meg Ryan is older than you. So am I.

BECKY: Why not just call One Nine Hundred Knob Job?

BLAINE: I need a real person.

BECKY: "Real." That's me. I'm not an attractive woman, Blaine.

BLAINE: That is a terrible thing for you to say about yourself.

BECKY: What's wrong Ishmael, I just pop your fantasy?

BLAINE: No, I like the idea of talking on this and saying exactly what you want.

BECKY: Like I just did.

BLAINE: I just don't know what'd make you mutiny against yourself that badly. What is it?

BECKY: Just -- the way things are. All those pregs, and c-sections, and ...

BLAINE: And what?

*Becky crumples a bit. Recovers.*

BLAINE: How old are your kids?

BECKY: *(biting her lip)* There's Angie -- I'm in her room right now -- she's thirteen and has every single answer in life. Kevin is nine. Ian is four.

BLAINE: Ian. That's *my* boy's name. And he's four.

BECKY: Really? Hoo, cosmic. He got any sibs?

BLAINE: No, he's it. I want more, but it's a tough sell with my wife.

BECKY: Make the sale, Blaine. An only child, it flips the authority structure. The kid becomes Head of Household. Elvis was an only kid. So was Hitler.

BLAINE: I want a girl.

BECKY: *(connects with this)* Most men don't say things like that. All fairness though, your wife has a point. She does all the work. You get a good orgasm.

BLAINE: True.

BECKY: You rich? We used to be.

BLAINE: I guess I would be in Oregon. In L.A., I'm middle class. Me and maybe nine others.

BECKY: What part of L.A.?

BLAINE: It's called Pacific Palisades. West side, by the ocean.

BECKY: Never heard of it. I got a cousin in West Covina. Is it close to that?

BLAINE: God no.

BECKY: "Pacific Palisades." Sounds snotty.

BLAINE: It is. My mortgage is eighty-six hundred dollars a month.

BECKY: Eighty-six hundred? That's ten times ours. Eighty-six *hundred*. My god, what's your house do, give head?

BLAINE: It's just a nice three-bedroom.

BECKY: One for each of you?

BLAINE: No; it hasn't quite come to that. One's for my wife's painting.

BECKY: She's an artist?

BLAINE: She teaches art, at the junior high in Malibu.

BECKY: You made it, your wife didn't. Sounds like trouble. (*pause, then, abruptly*) Well, nice talking to you. Guess your five hours are almost up.

BLAINE: Hold on. Did I say something?

BECKY: No. But you're right, you don't need this. What do you care about me? Some high-mileage house-frow?

BLAINE: In my business, I -- don't meet a lot of genuine people. And you're someone from home. I miss it like crazy a lot of the time.

BECKY: But with your job, you must have young lovelies swarming to rip it out of you by the roots.

BLAINE: I've had my chances. But -- no.

BECKY: An honest man in Hollywood. You're like Abraham in Sodom.

BLAINE: That was his buddy Lot, actually.

BECKY: Oh god that's right. But -- faithful in Hollywood. (*very intrigued*) Oooh.

BLAINE: Look, I'm not trying to come off all holy here. But my job, I see a lot of men screwing around, and mostly they look like dumbfucks. Sneaking around, lying, midnight phone calls out in the garage --

BECKY: And getting caught. You *do* get caught.

BLAINE: Yes. Because the Girlfriend always tells.

BECKY: It doesn't even take that. A friend of mine from church, she knew when her husband went out and bought new underwear.

BLAINE: That's all it took.

BECKY: Yeah, because it was the first time he'd shown any concern about what they looked like.

BLAINE: But even if the guy *does* hide it, Girlfriend rats the guy out. They always get caught the week after Christmas.

BECKY: ...Oh, yeah. Because Girlfriend feels all deserted while he's off celebrating with his family.

BLAINE: Right. So the very next day she goes to The Missus' work and introduces herself.

BECKY: In her nastiest miniskirt.

BLAINE: Uh huh. The whistle blows for half the fuck-arounds in America on December 26th.

BECKY: You always get caught. Sure as losing in a casino.

BLAINE: Exactly. The percentages against you are granite.

BECKY: The only time I see it brought off is when both of 'em are married. Then you both have that ultimate weapon aimed at each other.

BLAINE: Ultimate...? Oh, right. Then there's the same threat to both.

BECKY: Yeah. Like what America and the Russians used to call "Mutual Assured Destruction."

*Pause.*

BECKY: Okay. Name me three Things you haven't done.

BLAINE: Mm...three women. And -- I never had an Arabic girl; big premium on virginity in their culture, they're very tough. And...what?

*Pause. He's honestly stumped.*

BECKY: You can only come up with two. You bastard.

BLAINE: Sorry. I was a single guy in the movie business. Everything I've wanted to do, I've done.

BECKY: You just haven't done it for seven years.

BLAINE: ...Right.

BECKY: So what fills things in for you?

BLAINE: Work, what else. When love ends we turn to money.

BECKY: No Heidi-Hoe on your speed-dial?

BLAINE: That's not for me. There's – enough commerce in marriage.

BECKY: No step-outs in seven years? Not even a little champagne kiss-and-grab at the Paramount Christmas Party?

BLAINE: Nope. And you don't believe me.

BECKY: No I do, I just -- what keeps you sane? You go to strip joints?

BLAINE: Nah. They took me to one the night before I got married and I thought it was just a bunch of freshman prickttease crap.

BECKY: So I'm the first leak you've sprung.

*Blaine has no answer for this.*

BECKY: My husband goes to titty bars sometimes. I found the Visa bill.

BLAINE: He just wants some...variety, Becky. It doesn't mean anything.

BECKY: Look who you're siding with.

BLAINE: I'm helping *you* understand. Now. Chances are, he's just sitting there squinting in the corner with his Blitz Weinhard's, praying his uncle doesn't come in.

BECKY: Cops busted a couple girls in the parking lot with the head of the school board.

BLAINE: If he was doing *that* you'd be hearing from your mortgage company in a week. Nah, he just wants to look. Most guys are fine with that. Me, I don't *want* to just look.

BECKY: Hey, me neither. So fuck him.

BLAINE: There is one reason that men pay for it. There's something their wives won't do for them and they want to do it.

BECKY: You are wrong. Jeff and I do everything, Blaine. *Every Thing*.

BLAINE: ...That was a little smug of me, Becky. I'm sorry.

BECKY: That's okay. But you say you don't want to just look, then come to me where you can't look at all.

BLAINE: "I can see for miles and miles."

BECKY: Ahhh, The Who. I adore them.

BLAINE: Really? I adore *you*. "Quadrophenia" got me through Scappoose Junior High. That kid was me -- an ever-bonered, rollercoasting little crap from the wrong side of the river.

BECKY: Ever go back?

BLAINE: I did for the first time last summer, for my high school reunion.

BECKY: Los *Angeles*.

BLAINE: It's as different as I could find from that freezing frontier hole I crawled out of.

BECKY: I don't know how you can take that place. I don't know how it maintains. Especially since that O.J. Simpson thing.

BLAINE: Oh, great museums, Izods in February, and the drive up Coast Highway... But you're right. Things *are* different here since that butcher walked. The match is lit. If somebody's a different color than you -- you walk by them, you can just feel their hate on your scalp.

BECKY: Jeff was ready to go down there and stick a thirty-thirty slug in O.J.'s goob. From a golf-course tree as he was standing over a putt.

BLAINE: Your husband really planned this?

BECKY: Maps and everything.

BLAINE: *(Nervous)* Um, how -- good a shot *is* he?

BECKY: Oh, damn good. But he gets these panic attacks out in public and I pointed out to him that L.A. has a lot of public. So O.J. got to play all eighteen holes.

BLAINE: I auditioned him for something about a month before it happened.

BECKY: Geez. Really? What was that like?

BLAINE: A bore. I felt sorry for him. He was a sad, burnt-out kissass. I pushed the button to my secretary and she came in and acted like I had a big phone call.

BECKY: We got to L.A. six years ago, our holy pilgrimage to Disneyland. Everything is so expensive down there.

BLAINE: Just another California gold-rush town. A big steaming hive of addicts and fuckups. You just have to remember what happened to the first guy who looked for gold here.

BECKY: Sutter. He found it.

BLAINE: That's the Social Studies version. But in what you call "R.L." he died broke and crazy.

BECKY: You don't sound like you like it there much.

BLAINE: It's where they make movies. No MGM in Oregon, right?

BECKY: You'd be surprised. Hey, we're in the movie business too.

BLAINE: In Estacada?

BECKY: Well, we're somewhat "down-chain," also. Jeff's assistant manager at a video store.

BLAINE: Oh yeah?

BECKY: Has its perks. All the movies we can watch. And there's the looks on customer's faces as they skulk out of the porno section.

BLAINE: Sounds action-packed.

BECKY: It's not bad. Jeff *had* a job logging for five times the money, but a cute little spotted owl flapped its wings and took it away.

*Pause.*

BECKY: So...you wake up in a universe where we're both single, what would you want to do?

BLAINE: Dinner, what else?

BECKY: You'd feed me first? You *are* a find.

BLAINE: I propose a new holiday. Once a year, there should be a Prom Night for grownups.

BECKY: Yes. Get a limo, a huge white one. Dinner in *Malibu*. Is Malibu nice, really, not like that condemned whorehouse our tour bus guy told us was Hollywood?

BLAINE: Apart from the Twelve Plagues of Egypt when there's rain or drought, Malibu is quite pleasant.

BECKY: Okay, Malibu. Someplace nice but quiet. You order for me and know enough to tip the wine steward.

BLAINE: That's me.

BECKY: And when the girl selling roses comes by, I'd like a man that bought me one.

BLAINE: That matters.

BECKY: It does. Come on, you know the charade. The girl with the basket comes to the table and asks the man, "A flower for the lady?" And the guy can't stand the idea of spending ten bucks on a flower so he says to his date "Do you want one, honey?" And of course she gives him the out and says no. Just once, I'd love to have a man *buy the flower*, pure impulsive waste on me.

BLAINE: So we leave, and you're holding the rose, and we get in the limo and go for a ride – up the Coast Highway. Lots of fog. Cold.

BECKY: And we neck like kids in the back. That first taste a kiss gives you.

BLAINE: I hit the button for the drivers' partition with my foot and up it goes. I cup your --

BECKY: Not just yet. There's a deserted stretch of Malibu beach -- this *is* a fantasy after all -- and you tell the driver to stop. He does and we open the sunroof and stand up, heads out of the car, and that ocean fog swirls over us.

BLAINE: Please keep the driver out of this. I'm feeling selfish.

BECKY: Oh, it's his break time – and there's a Starbuck's a half-mile down the road.

BLAINE: So I pull a Ulysses off the clip and tell him to go get a double-triple-something-or-other and walk slow and he does. Slow. He has a wooden leg.

BECKY: Alone. You kiss patient, soft, along my jaw, just under my ear to my neck.

BLAINE: And I put one hand between your neck and your chest, barely touching. Kissing your shoulder now and I hit The Spot and you sigh out loud and drop the rose.

BECKY: You kiss me really hard. I feel You against me. Then you grab me and lift and up I go, sitting on the roof of the car, my feet hanging through the sunroof. The fog stings. I unbutton my blouse and you reach behind me and pop my bra in a half second and I lean back on my hands. You're kissing the inside of my calf --

BLAINE: Then up your thigh slow, slow, long as *Hey Jude*, then I get to that spot right at the inside base of your leg, where it joins. There's that soft cord of muscle right there and I just barely bite it.

BECKY: And I push your face towards --



BLAINE: Or maybe it's the fact that sex now has a Death Row.

BECKY: Whatever reason: I love the Internet, Blaine. So will you. It's the Wild West, the Final Frontier. I can be – *(sings)* “Anyway, anyhow, anywhere I chooose...”

BLAINE: Just be yourself with me though, okay? I need truth. I don't get much of that. Promise me. Truth, nothing but.

BECKY: *(not lightly)* I promise. But that's what's great, you can *tell* the truth here, really say what you think.

BLAINE: That's what I need.

BECKY: Given anonymity, a woman's mind is just as dirty as a man's. You okay with that?

BLAINE: Yes, it's what I want. The real you.

BECKY: Most men on this want to think they're talking to Miss November.

BLAINE: You don't like the way you look, do you?

BECKY: No.

BLAINE: What? Are you -- heavier than you should be?

BECKY: *(hedging, but not a lot)* Fifteen pounds.

BLAINE: Fifteen? That's a few weeks.

BECKY: *(out of nowhere)* I'm diabetic.

BLAINE: Then you have to lose it. You have to stick around for your kids.

BECKY: *(weak)* You're right, I know.

BLAINE: Yes, I am. My dad died when I was three.

BECKY: *(low, heartfelt)* Ohhhh.

BLAINE: Lose it, Becky. Single parenting is a smiley-faced fraud.

BECKY: Yes. That's why we stayed together, After.

BLAINE: After what?

BECKY: Not now. Some kids are fine with just one parent, I think.

BLAINE: Look, I can't speak for women or girls. But I've been a boy and I've been a father and I know one thing. *A boy needs a father.* Over and out.

BECKY: That's the best reason I've ever heard to take care of yourself.

BLAINE: I tell God at night, "The day that boy is grown and gone, You do what You want to me. 'Til then, I'm on the same health plan as You."

BECKY: *(soft)* You're wonderful.

BLAINE: So what am I doing on this?

BECKY: Telling me what you can't tell anyone you know.

BLAINE: This is the very first time I've ever done anything on my wife.

BECKY: Yeah? I feel as honored as one can feel when they're half-disgusted with themselves.

BLAINE: It feels strange...dealing seconds.

BECKY: What's that mean?

BLAINE: It's from gambling. Something you're not supposed to do. Something that can get your legs broken.

BECKY: So we can just talk. Anyway, most computer sex is just people showing how retarded they can be.

BLAINE: But you *were* having fun on top of that limo.

BECKY: Sure, for awhile. But Estacada's always waiting for me when I'm done. Anyway, in R.L., I'd scrape my butt on the edge of the sunroof, or a seagull would crap on us. Real life, I only get one prom night.

BLAINE: That's one more than I got.

BECKY: Oh -- it was nothing, Blaine, really. Pack of scrubbed little shits sizing up each others' corsages. Me and Jeff, we did it right. Got utterly smashed at it. And pulled the truck over on the way there and took care of First Things First.

BLAINE: Hold it. You guys did it *before* the prom?

BECKY: Yes, and I recommend it highly. We got there and felt this wonderful power over all the other kids. I mean, we had already *done* what they were all struggling so mightily to do. A great feeling it was, like I was a boxer who knocks out the other guy during the referees' instructions.

*Pause.*

BECKY: So. There you were with me in that limo on the beach, nibbling at the base of my thigh while squeezing my Firm-Yet-Tenders.

BLAINE: Yes. There I was, on Final Approach.

BECKY: From what I'm told, a man doing "that" for a woman is like tap dancing. Either he can do it or he can't. Thank the Maker: Jeff *can*. Oh my, I love it so.

BLAINE: It's purer, somehow, because there's a generosity... to it.

*Becky laughs, shudders pleasantly.*

BECKY: And Bingo, just as our driver is emerging from the fog. I'd kind of collapse back into the car. You catch me.

BLAINE: Then I'd ease you down onto the seat, stretch you out on your stomach.

BECKY: Put your jacket over me.

BLAINE: Then I lie down too, resting my head into the hollow of your back -- an exquisite fit.

*Pause. Becky sits back, smiling. A teenage girl's voice calls from offstage.*

GIRL'S VOICE: Mom, my chatroom meets at ten, okay?

BECKY: Fine.

GIRL'S VOICE: Can Jennifer spend the night?

BECKY: Yeah, if she can find room in this sty of yours.

GIRL'S VOICE: *(insubordinate)* Then we need the room *now*. Please.

BECKY: Blaine, my daughter wants to use this.

BLAINE: It's okay, I should go. I have to ask some people for money in the morning.

BECKY: Huh?

BLAINE: I have a pitch meeting. That's my job, going into strangers' offices and asking them for fifty million dollars.

BECKY: Get 'em, Scappoose.

JEFF: *(offstage)* Honey.

BECKY: Yeah Jeff.

JEFF: "Time to be a wife."

*The girls giggle offstage. Becky smirks.*

BECKY: Blaine, I... have a meeting, too.

BLAINE: Can we -- ?

BECKY: Tuesday. Would that work? I should have Ian asleep by two.

BLAINE: All right.

BECKY: *(childlike)* ...Blaine -- is this adultery?

BLAINE: *(beat; then earnest, soft)* No. You're not here.

*DARK*

## SCENE II

*On Becky's side of the stage, a young EXOTIC DANCER twirls around a post to Squeeze Box. She trades familiar waves with a delighted JEFF. He is gregarious, large but somehow punctured. With him are two scared men. All three wear colorful, ugly shirts emblazoned "Video Village."*

JEFF: So Kevvie homes in on their fullback on about the twenty, gets an elbow under his mask like I showed him and THOMP the other kid goes down like a dropped melon. Took five minutes to scrape him off the grass. Becky 'bout shot me. I'm telling you, by the time my boy's sixteen he's gonna give Scappoose High some *very* bad Friday nights.

*Lights shift to Blaine's half: HOLLY slumps in a chair opposite a male THERAPIST.*

HOLLY: -- so there's always this big tug-of-war, what Blaine wants to do, what I want to do. It wears me out.

THERAPIST: That's a fact of life with every couple, a running gunfight over The Agenda.

HOLLY: What's so sacred about him? *It's all Blaine.* We go somewhere and everyone begs to know what he's working on and there's these hosannas and then they get to my paintings and there's this "oh great."

THERAPIST: It can be very hard to watch someone else's dreams come true. Especially when you're married to them.

HOLLY: He makes the money so he makes policy outside the house, big purchases and social stuff. So inside the house is mine; seems fair. He could have tried a little harder to get my artwork to someone.

THERAPIST: That would be a reasonable expectation.

HOLLY: I know, but he gets real patronizing about how "delicate" all his contacts are. Couldn't he help? Just a little bit?

THERAPIST: He won't do anything for you? That *is* disheartening.

HOLLY: It is, because I have some new watercolor stuff that --

THERAPIST: No, what I mean is, I've cooked a script that would be perfect for that company of his. Okay, get this. This legion of Satan's demons burrows out of the ground, right between a boy's detention camp full of Brad Pitts and a girl's camp full of Reese Witherspoons. You can mention it to him, right?

*Day. Three weeks later. Blaine comes in, works the computers' mouse. Becky's already there with the room's regulars.*

ONLINE HOST: Ishmael has entered the room.

BEACHBRAT: Tell them, Jodi.

JODI26: I feel too stupid. You tell them.

BEACHBRAT: Okay. Nine days after they trade picture files, Tripod flies in on one of those \$89 cheapo fares and fucks her all weekend. So Jodi takes him to the airport Sunday night, all the way to O'Hare, and just as he's getting on the plane he mumbles "This isn't going to work out," and slinks off. Not even an e-mail since, the rectoid.

JODI26: No more face-to-face. That's it, I'm cured.

ONLINE HOST: Tripod has entered the room.

TRIPOD: *(rushes in, breathless)* This is a lie.

JODI26: I have his ticket to Chicago. I'll scan it to everyone.

BEACHBRAT: Tell 'em the rest, Jodi.

JODI26: He was a little imaginative with his height and weight, too, along with one other vital stat --

TRIPOD: DAMMIT, JODI -- I'LL REPORT YOU TO ONLINE SERVICES --

ONLINE HOST: Ishmael, you have an Individual Message from JawsMomma.

BECKY: Blaine. How are you for getting me the hell out of here?

BLAINE: Thank you. The usual?

*Lights down on the others.*

ONLINE HOST: You are now in private room "Horse Cock."

BECKY: Hey sweetie.

BLAINE: Hey. How was your choir solo at church?

BECKY: Guess I did all right. Jeff liked it.

BLAINE: I'll bet. You up there all pious, him knowing better.

BECKY: Yeah well, we *needed* hymns to the angels yesterday. My firstborn got busted at Wal-Mart for shoplifting.

BLAINE: Say now, there's a rite of passage.

BECKY: Not for me it wasn't. Did *you* stoop to that when you were a kid?

BLAINE: Had to, I was hungry.

*Small pause, then Becky counters.*

BECKY: So. Your last name is Trombley.

BLAINE: (*unnerved*) How'd you get that?

BECKY: Easy. You mentioned last Thursday that you were one of the writers on "Thunderhand" so I pulled it off the shelf at Jeff's work and watched the credits.

BLAINE: And there was Blaine.

BECKY: Yep.

BLAINE: So what was your daughter stealing? Let me see, she's thirteen... lipstick? CD's? Jeans?

BECKY: A home pregnancy test.

BLAINE: Holy god. Beck, I'm sorry.

BECKY: Thanks. It's -- okay. It wasn't for her. Her best friend Jennifer thought she might need it, so Angie heroically took it on herself to help out.

BLAINE: Well... if she got caught, she can't be doing it very well -- or very much.

BECKY: Oh, the store detective very helpfully informed Jeff that the three things that people try to steal most are rubbers, hemorrhoid creams, and female necessities.

BLAINE: Stuff people are embarrassed to buy.

BECKY: Right, so of course the stores really watch that stuff. Our police chief -- the honorable drip-dick Harold Boyle -- screeched up with his siren and lights, and Angie flipped out pretty bad. So did Jennifer, when we had to tell her mom. The little thing is having unprotected -- I mean, her mother has to know about something like that.

BLAINE: Of course she does.

BECKY: Goddam Chief Boyle *handcuffed* the girls, the pervo. That cheesed me over big-time, even though I had to tell Angie she deserved it.

BLAINE: You're right, that's going too far.

BECKY: Ah, it didn't last long. Soon as Chiefie figured out Angie is Jeff's kid, the cuffs came off. With apologies.

BLAINE: Oh, they're friends?

BECKY: No way. In school Jeff used to give Harold "brownies" one-a-week. But see -- last year at Jeff's video store, the Chief *meant* to put his rental of *Terminator* in the night-drop box, but instead he put in there this real swell video of himself with his very sporting wife.

BLAINE: Oh, geez. Becky. Did you make a...

BECKY: (*merrily*) Of course. You'd be amazed how it can brighten a really bad day. Jeff and I watched it again last night. Gee, Chief Boyle sure is nice to us *now*. Jeff can drive fast as he wants and nothing happens.

BLAINE: So what's the dutch for Angie?

BECKY: She's grounded for a month, plus no friends over, no phone, no Nintendo, no Online Nation. And when she goes to juvie-court she'll have to pay the fine with her babysitting money. Hey, can I ask a favor?

BLAINE: Go.

BECKY: It's about someone famous. I want their autograph.

*Blaine squints edgily.*

BLAINE: ...Uh huh.

BECKY: You can get stuff like that, right?

BLAINE: Sometimes, yeah. You know.

BECKY: I'm a huge fan of this guy and so are all three of the kids. Is this okay?

BLAINE: *(bracing himself)* Well -- who?

BECKY: Weird Al Yankovic.

*Pause. Blaine sits back, mildly stunned.*

BLAINE: Weird Al?!

BECKY: Yeah. You know him?

BLAINE: Well -- no. *(suppressing laughter)* That's it? That's who you want?

BECKY: If it's a problem --

BLAINE: No, that's okay. I should *(giggles)* I should be able to swing that. I'm just -- he doesn't show up on many peoples' wish lists. I thought you'd want -- someone else.

BECKY: No, that's my guy. He's the one singer both me and my kids like. Hey, thanks for trying on this.

BLAINE: Sure.

BECKY: You see famous people around L.A. a lot?

BLAINE: A flunkie like me? Yeah, some. But it loses its gloss pretty fast.

BECKY: I can see that. Last summer I saw Tom Cruise when he was up here making that western. He is *little*.

BLAINE: That's everybody's reaction when they meet a star. You're jarred by how... shrunken they are. And how scared.

BECKY: What about you? How scared are you?

BLAINE: (*shrugs*) I chose this with my eyes open.

BECKY: Uh-huh. So, that Hagoopian producer guy, he's your boss?

BLAINE: Cecil B. his own self.

BECKY: I saw him on *20/20* once. Where's he from?

BLAINE: He's an exotic cross-breed of Armenian and bumblefuck.

BECKY: What happened to his face? He looks like a beam-up accident on the *Enterprise*.

BLAINE: He has this huge sunlamp, always shining down onto his desk.

BECKY: Going for that George Hamilton, hm?

BLAINE: Actually, the results are somewhat closer to a week-old corpse left rotting in the Mojave.

BECKY: Well, *20/20* should have had subtitles when he talked.

BLAINE: It's just...he tends to go a very long time between good ideas. Basically, I try to synthesize his fuckups into something people will impulse-grab at your husband's video store on Dollar Night.

BECKY: All those nubile starlet girlfriends. Quite a guy.

BLAINE: Oh, yeah. His idea of great sex is watching a twelve-year-old girl eat an ice cream cone.

BECKY: Okay, so, he's a sleazy producer. Isn't that redundant, anyway?

BLAINE: No, even the other sleazies are afraid of him. Actually, he's in a great mood today; they finally installed his blow-job light.

BECKY: Which is Moviespeak for --

BLAINE: That's a light over the door into his office that means Do Not Disturb. Now he can switch it on when some actress with a "winning attitude" goes in there with him alone. I've never seen him happier than when he was flipping the switch to that goddam thing. Aw, fuck him. Anyway, it's taken two years, but I've come up with something that's finally going to get me out of there.

BECKY: Great, what is it?

BLAINE: It's a hockey script. No one's ever done a really big film on that.

BECKY: That's because sports movies are tough. Women don't care about 'em. And you have to sell tickets to something people get on TV for free.

BLAINE: True.

BECKY: And how you gonna improve on the real thing -- like that time we beat the Russians in hockey, or Tonya Harding, or what that little girl did in the Olympics with a broken foot?

BLAINE: Write a good script.

BECKY: But Blaine, sports is real, that's why people like it.

BLAINE: Wrong. Pro jocks are high-pressure shoe salesmen who want fifty dollars to sign your kid's ball. People have to go to the movies to see one they like.

BECKY: But if it's fake -- movie stars are mostly ex-drama geeks who as kids got picked last for ball games. In the movies it shows.

BLAINE: (*edge*) Well, I must be doing something right. InfraKinesis Pictures optioned it this morning. They never option *anything* without making it.

BECKY: Really?

BLAINE: Uh-huh.

BECKY: (*wary*) I was just trying to -- understand this.

BLAINE: We'll see. Nothing's signed yet. Believe it when the check clears.

*During this, Becky casually takes a small blood-test kit, pricks her finger with it, and reads its results.*

BECKY: Blaine, that was you, that kid who's in all the school plays, huh? Sorry I said that.

BLAINE: It's all right. That's not your bill to pay.

BECKY: Well, it sort of... Jeff used to rag *so* bad on our Drama Kid.

BLAINE: So did the Jeffs at my school. Until that bright spring day I graced the front page of the *Scappoose Hillbilly*, or whatever the local fish-wrap was called, letting 'em all know I'd just gotten into Yale. (*bleak laugh*) Of course, it got me lynched on the way home.

BECKY: Long ago and far away, Blaine. Let it go.

*Pause. Blaine is agitated.*

BLAINE: In school you and Jeff were pretty royal, right?

BECKY: Yes. He was starting wingback and I was the queen for the Timber Carnival, so, yeah.

BLAINE: The Duchess of Estacada.

BECKY: Well, everybody's dad worked for mine, so they kind of had to vote for me.

BLAINE: Girls like you never talked to me.

BECKY: They do *now*, though, right?

BLAINE: Every damn one, once they find out what I do.

BECKY: People like you slay me. All your lucky breaks and you're still bitching about Sally Fleabomb not dancing with you in eighth grade.

BLAINE: You wanted to know. That's the deal with you and me, plain truth, remember? Asked and answered, Beck.

BECKY: Look. You've got success *now*. That's the best time to have it, trust me.

*But Blaine seethes just a bit.*

BECKY: Ever think about coming back up here?

BLAINE: All the time. Oregon, it's Home. L.A., it's -- The Front.

BECKY: So what'll you do when the war's over?

BLAINE: Oh... get a college job, if I can find a university that'll hire a white guy. Yeah. That wouldn't be bad, after I'm driftwood.

BECKY: Drift -- oh. "Washed up."

BLAINE: You got it.

BECKY: The old perffesser, hm? Good gig. Sixty grand a year and all the coeds you can eat.

BLAINE: Yeah, if I owned my house free and clear. And if I get one of my own scripts made and it rakes up a pile.

BECKY: *When* you're washed up. You don't usually talk like that.

BLAINE: Just being real. I have maybe five, seven good years left, Becky. Then I'll make producers nervous, an old guy trying to be hip to kids.

BECKY: Come on. There's lots of people older than you making movies.

BLAINE: A few have the track record to hang on. But it's a young people's game, mostly. That's who's going to see movies, so that's who they want to write them.

BECKY: Makes sense, Blaine.

BLAINE: Yeah. But age is this pandemic neurosis here. The other day I went by my agent's and they were prepping some kid they'd just rushed out of USC Film for an intro meeting at Paramount. So they ask him how old he is and he answers, "twenty-four." The agents trade these oh-shit looks and one of 'em says to the kid, "Tell Paramount you're twenty-one."

BECKY: Fucking mad. So -- for you, it's getting dark out there.

BLAINE: Yes. But I'm close now. I can feel it.

BECKY: You're like an old ballplayer who's never won a title.

BLAINE: Yeah. It's like, okay... in hockey, the championship is called the Stanley Cup.

BECKY: I've seen that, on ESPN. That silver trophy, big as a wedding cake, real shiny.

BLAINE: Yeah. When they bring it out for the winner, it's carried by these four Sean-Connery-looking gentlemen, wearing perfect white gloves.

BECKY: My, how proper. That loud guy on NBC says it's the hardest title to win in all of sports.

BLAINE: He's right. And getting a script made is like winning that Cup -- you're in a cold, slippery place, chasing something small and elusive, while some very nasty people are trying to kick the pee out of you. But when you win it --

BECKY: Yeah, I love it when each guy on the team gets to skate around the rink, holding that huge trophy over his head, bloody but grinning, the cheers, just that -- pure male triumph.

BLAINE: *That's what I want, right there.* But it's very hard and I'm running out of chances. In this racket, you -- you have a short shelf life.

BECKY: We all do. And you should think very hard about coming home.

BLAINE: Not yet. I have to know if I've got that One Big Script Sale in me. Then I can walk away. Five, seven more years.

BECKY: No. Don't throw that time away.

BLAINE: What do mean by that?

BECKY: It's never going to happen, Blaine.

BLAINE: *(soft spot poked)* What are you saying?

BECKY: You're too nice a guy. Look. You didn't get pissed when I stopped in the middle of cyber that first time we talked. You won't cheat on your wife. And you didn't blow me off just now about that autograph. It won't happen.

BLAINE: Becky, I can't even *think* about thinking like that. And -- what the hell do you know about it?

BECKY: *(careful, sad)* You're right, of course. Forget I said that.

BLAINE: Please don't ever question my work. God damn, don't put *that* voice in my head. It's over when I say so.

BECKY: You're a little raw for a guy who just sold a movie script.

BLAINE: Not sold, optioned. Listen, I'm not at my best right now. I got a little surprise this morning under the sink in my wife's bathroom.

BECKY: *(prescient smile)* A vibrator.

BLAINE: How the hell did you know?

BECKY: Same way I knew my son's dirty magazines would be under his mattress. It's just where women tend to stow such basics. You sound surprised.

BLAINE: Yes. I was, a bit.

BECKY: Well, it's never a good idea to look through your spouse's things.

BLAINE: I wasn't! I was just getting some soap.

BECKY: So what did you say to her?

BLAINE: Nothing. What would I -- that's her business, like this is mine.

BECKY: Good man, don't begrudge her. And what does Mothers' Little Helper look like, a, uh, ahem -- "toothbrush holder"?

BLAINE: No, more like an electric shaver.

BECKY: A "massager." How yuptrified. Mine is big as a cruise missile and screaming purple. I named it "Barney."

BLAINE: "Barney The Vibrator." Soon to be a major motion.

BECKY: She there right now?

BLAINE: No, she's on a date with *her* other beloved, Sergio the Cash-Sucking Therapist. Ian's at pre-school.

BECKY: I'm alone too, for a bit. My Ian's over at Jeff's folks. But hey, I've kept you awhile here. Maybe you'd better get back to making Mr. Sib Fallopian happy.

BLAINE: Fuck him. That *millstone*.

BECKY: Oh, honey. Is he giving you a bad time again?

BLAINE: Yeah, he's such a prick. No, wait -- that's got a head on it.

BECKY: Mr. Sib, can Blainie come out and play?

BLAINE: Yeah, fuck him.

BECKY: You're always saying "fuck him." I think what's therapeutic right now is for you to fuck *me* in his big rich house.

BLAINE: Steal his house key and stash you there when he's off at Cannes with his teenage girlfriend.

BECKY: And I'll wait for you to come back from all your boring meetings.

BLAINE: "Hi honey, I'm home." It's just not mine.

BECKY: I've put music on and not much else.

BLAINE: Miles Davis, something from his cool-blue phase.

BECKY: You get in the door and pin me against it, your hands everywhere. Your mouth invading mine.

BLAINE: You're pulling me against you just as hard as you can.

BECKY: I love that Fuck-Time-Crush. I stay in it until I feel you pushing down on my shoulders. I kneel. I claw at your belt.

BLAINE: I lean back against the door and watch you.

BECKY: I want to kneel and worship at your -- let me.

BLAINE: Well... okay. I like it when you look up at me.

BECKY: And smile my lewdest. Yes.

BLAINE: Finally I can't stand it and I pick you up.

BECKY: You put me over your shoulder and start towards The Boss' stairs.

BLAINE: I lose my balance climbing the first one and down we go in a heap.

BECKY: *(laughing)* And I start crawling away from you up the steps and I feel you grabbing me.

BLAINE: I get my knees inside of yours, kiss the back of your neck and find your ...

BECKY: *(low, teasing)* What? You find my what?

BLAINE: Is -- that word okay with you?

BECKY: I think I can handle it. There *is* a point at which it becomes that.

BLAINE: It's not disrespectful, that word, when it's just a very direct noun instead of a, a hissed *title*.

BECKY: You like to hear it called that.

BLAINE: It's just something that's forbidden and it feels good in the right context.

BECKY: You like to say it.

BLAINE: I do. The forbidden is a mighty aphrodisiac, isn't it?

BECKY: Yes. Yes yes.

BLAINE: I'm not allowed to say that word with my wife, or "fuck."

BECKY: Neither am I.

BLAINE: It's just -- pruning the hypocrisy. Look, we're animals. With eyes in the front of our heads, not the sides, meaning we are Predators.

BECKY: Very slow, you and I roll back down the stairs to the kitchen. Get on our knees, me over you, and we feed each other and laugh.

BLAINE: We are going to make this huge mess of Sib's house. So when he gets home he'll feel all "violated" -- *(heavy accent)* "My god, they FUCKED on my bed! They ate my food! They sat in my tub! I can't stand it I'm calling Century 21 right now." After that, whenever he dicks with me, inside I just smile and think: Boss, I fucked in your bed harder than you'll EVER fuck me on a contract.

BECKY: Gimme a sec.

*Becky briskly injects insulin into her thigh.*

BECKY: Blaine, have you told anyone about you and me?

BLAINE: No.

BECKY: Me neither. My friends would really *know* I'm a loon instead of just being mostly sure.

BLAINE: How would I explain this to anyone?

BECKY: We're not the only ones thrashing this out. I saw on Oprah last week, some guy in Kansas hacked his wife's online files and now he's saying in divorce court that her cyber constituted adultery.

BLAINE: I think Holly might see things his way.

- BECKY: We could always -- get conventional. Trade pictures and phone numbers and all the rest.
- BLAINE: No, I like it just like this.
- BECKY: *(small grimace)* Me too.
- BLAINE: It's just, my plate's too full for something like that.
- BECKY: And mine's too empty.
- BLAINE: Come on. You guys are bigger stuff around your town than I am in mine.
- BECKY: Ancient history, but it was fun while it lasted. Twenty years ago, my big brother had the only Porsche registered in the whole county. The little kids around town would ask him for autographs.
- BLAINE: So you had no reason to leave after high school.
- BECKY: Right. Oregon State had already told Jeff he was too slow to play for them and, anyway, he was busy poking me the night before the SAT's. So that was out. But who cared? People were always going to need wood.
- BLAINE: When did it -- change?
- BECKY: The mill closed seven years ago. Most Honorable Takahashi Bank sent many brave samurais to lock the doors. On December Seventh, which gave me pause.
- BLAINE: Your poor dad.
- Becky's eyes mist.*
- BECKY: Blaine, you sweetheart, thinking about him right there.
- BLAINE: Is he -- ?
- BECKY: He hung on for a year. The mill and the Other Thing were too...
- BLAINE: What other thing?

BECKY: Blaine, no.

BLAINE: Becky. What?

BECKY: Not yet. Don't ask again. (Please.)

BLAINE: If it's part of you, I have to know.

*Pause. Becky suddenly seems very tired. She takes some pills.*

BECKY: I wonder sometimes what brought us together, Blaine.

BLAINE: Some people just connect.

BECKY: It's that simple?

BLAINE: For once, yes, it is.

BECKY: There's a -- meshing. The one thing that works in my marriage is the one thing that doesn't in yours.

BLAINE: Yes. Between the four of us we're the perfect couple.

BECKY: You have a beautiful heart.

BLAINE: For a writer, that's like an actress with a boil on her nose. But I'm glad you think that.

BECKY: You know something else I love about you?

BLAINE: What?

BECKY: You're aware that there's two "its" words. One with an apostrophe and one without.

BLAINE: That's nothing.

BECKY: Blaine, you don't realize. That is a very rare attribute in a man. Bad grammar is the online equivalent of bad teeth. I still think you're too nice for the work you do, though.

BLAINE: *(feeble joke)* Shut up, bitch.

BECKY: *(gently)* You're brave to make a living doing what you do, in that rancid place. And a little stupid. And that's how I like my men, brave and a little stupid.

BLAINE: That's me. All this – I'm throwing lit matches into your house.

BECKY: Nah. I just like to think about being with you. Not only -- that, but just being together. Just sitting back to back with a few friends, sharing a drink or a joint and laughing.

BLAINE: That sounds wonderful.

BECKY: But -- it's like we're *tied* back to back. I wish we could just take some time out of our... lives and be together.

BLAINE: Maybe that's what marriages need. Cease-fires.

BECKY: But it can't happen.

BLAINE: No, it can't.

BECKY: Like I said when we met, I'll never ever touch another man.

BLAINE: You already have.

*Becky smiles, as sweetly as any young beauty.*

BECKY: So where are we gonna close this deal, luv?

*Blaine leans back.*

BLAINE: There's this mammoth sunken tub in the downstairs bath.

*At the word "tub," Becky begins trembling, not altogether pleasantly.*

BECKY: You know. I'm not sure I can in the – *(choked)* Blaine...

BLAINE: *(oblivious)* With close to a hundred candles. I pick you up and put you in the water. Then I get in too, behind you.

*Becky stabilizes.*

BECKY: I want your Truth now, Blaine.

BLAINE: I want yours, too. What Happened?

BECKY: Not that. This. Us. You. Tell me. What you miss. What she won't give you. Everything you want. Tell me everything. Anything. Blaine. Tell me.

*Lights build to full along with the music: the great, terrible breakdown at the end of Love, Reign O'er Me. Louder, louder, blotting out their voices. At the exact instant of the guitar shriek Blaine and Becky lunge to the floor downstage onto their chests. Stage goes dark but for two spots tight on their faces. Both look up, eyes open.*

*BLACK*

## ACT TWO

### SCENE I

*Music: I Can't Reach You.*

*Four weeks later, April. Becky's husband JEFF alone on stage.*

JEFF: Our reception was at the Masonic, a month after we tore up the prom there. In the parking lot Becky's dad yells "Catch" and tosses me some virgin car keys. I look over and my god there's this brand-new Chevy pickup all decorated with "Just Married." So I'm helping Becky get in and three of my uncles come up and they wink and mumble how "smart" I am. Now they come in the store to rent stuff and they look at me like I got a dick growing outta my ear.

*Pause. In his sphere men don't complain about circumstance.*

JEFF: Hey. Richer-poorer. You know. It's just... I was led to believe that this would be a somewhat easier ride. This ain't what I signed up for.

*Pause. Jeff pops a Rainier Ale, strains a smile.*

JEFF: Still got the truck; it'll be Kevvie's when he gets his license. *(comes clean)* I stayed with Becky because, since the day It happened, she's never ever once blamed me for it. Every other woman I've ever known would've held it over me. *Every other one.* She's a champ. And she knows if she *did* try to hold it over me I'd be gone so fast there'd be steam shooting outta my ass.

*Jeff exits. Lights up on both halves. Becky's already there, waiting. Blaine rushes in and tears off his rain-drenched coat. He turns on his computer and begins typing eagerly, shedding his soaked clothes.*

ONLINE HOST: You're ON -- with Onl -- Entering Talk Exch -- Private Room "Horse Cock."

BECKY: *(soft)* Hi baby.

*Blaine strips down to his underwear and undershirt, towels off.*

BLAINE: Hi. Sorry, they kept me late at the studio. And it's raining here again.

BECKY: Yeah, here too. Dammit.

BLAINE: It always rains when we talk.

BECKY: Blaine, that was so incredibly sweet of you. He phoned last night, just before a show he had in St. Louis.

BLAINE: Oh, Weird Al called? Good.

BECKY: (*awed by Blaine's sorcery*) Blaine, he talked to us for *ten minutes*. The kids went crazy, handing the phone around, singing songs with him. It was fantastic. I hope it wasn't any trouble.

BLAINE: No, it was just... a couple calls. Our agents started out together, cleaning toilets at William Morris.

BECKY: (*"my hero"*) You darling. And Blaine, send me a bill. After you and me, uh, interfaced the other night, Jeff came home, took one look at me and threw me over his shoulder.

BLAINE: Really? Amazing.

BECKY: Yes, it was. We did it until the kids were pounding on the door screaming for their breakfast.

BLAINE: No, I mean it's amazing that -- my wife went on the prowl that night, too.

BECKY: No shit? I got Sleeping Beauty out of the glass coffin?

BLAINE: Yeah! Complete with nasty lingerie.

BECKY: Amazing. They *sense* it, Blaine.

BLAINE: I know. It's this primal thing, we all still have it. Probably goes back to the cro-magnons, *knowing* in their sleep that the sabre-tooth is sniffing around the mouth of their cave.

*Pause.*

BECKY: They cut Jeff back to thirty hours. A Blockbuster just opened across town.

BLAINE: I'm really sorry, Becky.

BECKY: Jeff tried to close out my online account and I damn near brained him. He seemed kind of shook. (*dense male voice*) "Must be some great fuckin' chicken recipes on that thing."

BLAINE: You going to be all right?

BECKY: Oh, yeah. Hey. We took Ian to UpChuck's last night for his fifth birthday.

BLAINE: Where?

BECKY: UpChuck E. Cheese's. My perfect, genius boy was absolutely ecstatic there. All three of my kids were. Who in Hades *devised* that place? Acid-trip animals, screeching video games, and pap-smear pizza.

BLAINE: Thank God they don't have one of those here on the Westside. My room in Hell will look just like it. At least my roommates'll be happy.

BECKY: Roommates?

BLAINE: Yeah, Kathie Lee, Kenny Rogers, and Nancy Reagan.

BECKY: Whatever. Chuck really puts a weed up my ass.

BLAINE: Yeah? Like me and Disney. I have been fired from Disney twice and have come to joyfully loathe them. I call it "Mouschwitz," or "Duckau."

BECKY: I feel helpless about Disney. My kids love everything they do.

BLAINE: Detox them, Beck. The real Trilateral Commission is comprised of Disney, Starbuck's and Blockbuster. In about ten years they'll metastasize into the Fourth Reich. You're warned.

BECKY: Anyway, we didn't stay at UpChuck's that long. Jeff, thank god, had a panic attack. I was so grateful to him for it, when we got home we played "Long-Suffering-Senators'-Wife-And-The-Pageboy" for two hours. So how are *you*?

BLAINE: Well, the L.A. city council really let me down today.

BECKY: What?

BLAINE: Oh, they voted down this bill that would have let the cops paddle the butts of gang kids that spray stuff on walls.

BECKY: We're starting to get kids like that. Thanks for sending 'em up here.

BLAINE: No, see, I was going to quit my job with Sib and become Chief Engineer In Charge of Dispensation of Corporal Punishment, Female Offenders Division.

*Becky giggles. Blaine hefts an imaginary paddle like Babe Ruth.*

BLAINE: Had my speech to the girls ready and everything. "Now Kaneisha, Conchita, Shanequa, Juana -- you've all been VERY bad girls."

BECKY: Missed your true calling.

BLAINE: A job I'd love, public good, woulda been a natural.

BECKY: *(amused)* You're really coming out of your shell, Blaine.

BLAINE: All your fault. Hey, things are good, actually.

BECKY: What? *No.*

BLAINE: Yes. InfraKinesis bought that hockey script.

BECKY: BLAINE!

BLAINE: Yeah. I deposited the Baby Check this morning.

BECKY: Fantastic. I've never been so glad to be wrong.

*Pause.*

BLAINE: Beck -- I'm sorry. I shouldn't gloat when...

BECKY: Blaine, no, I am so happy for you. You really deserve this, honey. *(completely delighted)* I've got this image of you skating around a rink with this giant grin, holding up that big shiny Stanley Cup. So what from here?

BLAINE: They gave me some minor rewrite stuff, I'll be doing that for a month. Then I get the Daddy Check.

BECKY: Hoo boy.

BLAINE: Once they sign off on the rewrite it goes into production. Can't wait to see the look on Hagoopian's face when I quit. I've got my fuck-you speech down cold.

BECKY: *(mimics Howard Cosell)* "The wily veteran, in the twilight of his career, ascends the summit."

BLAINE: Hey. Speaking of which. I think I might have crossed the border into middle age yesterday.

BECKY: What happened?

BLAINE: I was -- thinking about what I wished would happen.

BECKY: Fantasizing.

BLAINE: Yeah.

BECKY: Tell me. All of it. Like my man Richard Pryor says, "Tell me some lies and make me stop thinking 'bout the truth."

*BLAINE'S GIRL, twenties, enters, sits downstage.*

BLAINE: I'm with a woman. Twenties. Long dark hair, slim-curvy, a face like she played Juliet in college. That perfect skin Oregon girls have from the rain. She's dressed casual expensive, a snug purple sweater by Versace and nice jeans. We're in the Swiss Alps, winter. Furious blizzard. We're in a huge silver BMW, driving up the mountain to this fantastic chalet. She puts her head on my shoulder and rests it there, total trust, while I barrel that big Krautmobile through the storm.

BECKY: Then she leans over and sucks you 'til your eyes bleed.

BLAINE: No. NO. That's the point, shut up and hear me out, okay? So we get to this house. Get inside. It's a glorious place -- cathedral ceiling, mammoth stone fireplace, ten-foot windows. I get the fire going and we're warm.

BECKY: And then -- ?

BLAINE: That's what's scary. I just sit there. For hours. *(quiet)* I look out at the storm, empty my head of all the showbiz fear and pain, and -- I rest. She doesn't speak. She just sits by the fire. Every few minutes our eyes will meet and we trade smiles. She has an exquisite smile, pure affectionate incandescence.

BECKY: Mmmm.

BLAINE: So, there I sit the other day, spinning this nice VH-1 fantasy, choosing what I want more than anything in the material world, and it goes on for a half an hour and all I want is to sit there and trade smiles with this girl in absolute vacuum quiet. But then all of a sudden I hear this rough voice from the other side of my brain: "Say man, when you gonna *fuck* this girl?"

*Becky laughs loud.*

BLAINE: *(laughing too, testosterone voice)* "You got this walking violation of the Mann Act ten feet away, c'mon man, LET'S GO!"

*Becky is still laughing.*

BLAINE: But I just wanted quiet. I think that fantasy was the overture for my middle age.

*Blaine's Woman glides off.*

BECKY: *(pure bile, watching her go)* I hate beautiful women.

BLAINE: Why? What?

BECKY: I hate what you want and I hate you for wanting it. *(scornfully)* "Twenty-seven. Oregon skin."

BLAINE: Beck, attraction is just biology, okay? Twenty-seven's prime childbearing age. Clear skin means a good immune system, healthier kids. With a man, big shoulders mean hunting and protective skills.

BECKY: Okay Spock, what about a big boinker? Why do I like *that*?

BLAINE: I don't know, shorter commute for the sperm cells, maybe. All I'm saying is, it's all just nature and it's idiotic for people to deny it.

BECKY: Look how women kill themselves, trying to look like what Calvin Klein says they should.

BLAINE: It's a two-way street. Show me one TV commercial where a man and a woman disagree and the man is *right*. Doesn't exist.

BECKY: Not just TV. Us. Everything. Women have to look a certain way or else.

BLAINE: And men have to earn a certain amount. Same thing.

BECKY: Uh-uh.

BLAINE: It's the exact same thing. You're a man, you're judged by how you make a buck. "So, what do you do?" It was the very first thing you asked me. If Mel Gibson was waiting tables and living in a one-room hole in Van Nuys you would not feel the same way about him. Put Gwyneth Paltrow in the same place and she'd be sugar-daddied to Beverly Hills in a week.

BECKY: It's not the same thing.

BLAINE: (*trump tone*) It is a *precise* countergrievance.

BECKY: And, uh, what age was your Mystery Date back there?

BLAINE: Oh... say twenty-five, twenty seven.

BECKY: You want a girl fifteen years younger than you? You should go to jail.

BLAINE: Why? What?

BECKY: For -- Assault With a Dead Weapon.

BLAINE: It's not real. It's just what I want. So crucify me between two thieves.

BECKY: You guys always want 'em so young. Shit.

BLAINE: Yeah, we do. But not for why you think. It's -- so many women, when they hit thirty or thirty-two, this cynicism and paranoia grabs them. There's The Clock. And a lot of 'em are sick of working and want an All Day Pass. But a few years before that, they can still *light up* for a man, they can still be *curious*. It's wondrous.

BECKY: I'm looking for a symbol on my keyboard to express contempt.

BLAINE: Just type "Fuck you, Honest Man."

BECKY: Oh, go piss chunky style.

BLAINE: Okay, fine. "What I really want is Faye Dunaway -- now that's a *handsome* woman, by jings." Becky. All of you can legislate these male impulses out of the realm of acceptable expression, but it is HOW I FEEL and you said you wanted the truth and I generously gave it to you.

BECKY: Blaine, I'm having a tough day, could we just fuck?

BLAINE: (*a little aback*) Becky.

BECKY: What? That's how *I* feel, am I allowed?

BLAINE: Okay, yeah. Sure. Ummm...

BECKY: Just go. Do it, now, what you'd like to do, no manners. Get me away from all this. Go.

BLAINE: Fourth of July, sunset, on my friend's boat in Marina del Rey with four other couples. We're sitting on the forward deck. Leaning back against the wheelhouse --

BECKY: I'm sitting beside you, a blanket over us. I press against you as we talk and laugh with our friends --

BLAINE: Your head tilts back onto my chest and --

BECKY: I keep talking to one of the women but I'm taking your hand and guiding it over --

ONLINE HOST: JawsMomma, you have an Individual Message from JohnDK.

BECKY: Hold on. I'm getting I.M.'d.

*Pause. Blaine grimaces impatiently.*

BECKY: Do you mind if another friend of mine joins us?

BLAINE: Okay. But my lip's out.

BECKY: There there. Don't pout. You'll like him, he's funny.

BLAINE: Laughing isn't in my flight plan right now.

ONLINE HOST: JohnDK has entered the room.

*JOHNDK enters. Forty, unwell, wasted physically. Bronx accent, congenital smirk.*

BECKY: John, Blaine. Blaine, John.

JOHNDK: Hi Blaine.

BLAINE: Hello.

BECKY: You at work, John?

JOHNDK: Yeah. Market dropped to hell's basement, everybody's blubbering.

*Small pause. In the light, small purplish sores on JohnDK's face and neck are visible.*

BECKY: Blaine. You've never been with a guy, right?

BLAINE: I am straight. The decision of the judges is final.

BECKY: Any famous man ever make a pass at you?

BLAINE: Just one. Rudolf Nureyev.

JOHNDK: Really? Whew.

BECKY: Where was this?

BLAINE: New York, eighties. At a party I was waitering at. He was very nice -- in a pillaging-Cossack sort of way.

BECKY: Too bad you didn't try him. What a story that'd be.

BLAINE: I wouldn't be here to tell it.

BECKY: Huh?

JOHNDK: *(still haunted tone)* Nureyev died of AIDS, Becky.

BECKY: My god. How could I have forgotten that?

JOHNDK: So. Nureyev. What did he do?

BLAINE: He walks up, glances at my crotch and says something about me being "party size." I didn't understand him with the noise and his accent and all. I thought he was saying "the party is nice" so I look back at him with a cute smile and say "Yes, it's *very* nice."

JOHNDK: Hmm. Then what?

BLAINE: Oh, you know, the usual I-want-to-make-like-a-Hoover-on-your-ding-dong kind of stuff.

BECKY: Nothing every actress hasn't gone through.

JOHNDK: Nureyev. Whew. You must have sculpted haunches.

BECKY: John...

BLAINE: *(to self, dismayed)* Oh boy.

ONLINE HOST: Ishmael, you have an Individual Message from JawsMomma.

*JohnDK crosses to Becky's side. Speaks low.*

JOHNDK: What do you say? Just try.

BECKY: Blaine -- he wants me, too.

BLAINE:           Okay. I'll go.

BECKY:           No. Stay. He wants you to help.

BLAINE:           ... How?

BECKY:           Not sure.

BLAINE:           I don't know... I don't want anything -- *with* him, okay?

BECKY:           Just a minute. You know, John, we're sort of immersed here.

JOHNDK:          Are we now. Should I "immerse" him in some of that poetry you tried to post anonymously on --

BLAINE:           Who *is* this?

JOHNDK:          She's fun for awhile, Blaine m'boy, then she goes right into that weepy-barmaid mode. Give her the punt before that.

BECKY:           John, go eat a bowl of fuck.

*John exits, smiling and coughing. Becky overturns a bag on the desk and a half-dozen candy bars spill out. She stares at them for a moment.*

BECKY:           We need a vacation. Barcelona.

*Becky rolls a small beach set downstage into strong sunlight. Sand, a huge umbrella, and a pair of low-slung chairs -- separated by a smaller sheet of the same jagged glass. She sits down and Blaine does too.*

*Becky whistles loudly and a SERVANT WOMAN enters with a huge palm-leaf fan which she slowly waves up and down onto Becky like she's Cleopatra. A WAITER enters with a tray of tropical drinks in pineapples, mangoes, etc.*

WAITER:          Señor?

*Blaine takes one, then leans back grandly and claps his hands twice.*

BLAINE:           Amuse me!

*A beautiful FLAMENCO DANCER enters and begins moving languidly in front of Blaine to Mary Anne With The Shaky Hand. He watches her, appreciative but not leering.*

*Blaine stands and crosses to the dancer. He begins to dance with her, or at least near her; it's casual, playful.*

BLAINE:            Becky.

BECKY:            Yeah.

BLAINE:            If this is off the reservation say so, but --

BECKY:            Hey, nothing is with you and me, remember?

BLAINE:            Well... Jeff – "pleases" you, right?

BECKY:            Ayem and peeyem.

BLAINE:            So what do you need me for?

BECKY:            Oh, screwed-up people like me need complete and repeated genital gratification, don't you know.

BLAINE:            What makes you think you're scr --

BECKY:            The fact that I'm Loop the Fucking Loop is not "off the reservation." The particular *origin* of it, however, is. Got me?

*Blaine, unnerved, stops dancing with the girl; she leaves. Becky rises from the beach chair, withdraws the set. She starts eating the candy, slow, savoring.*

BECKY:            So continue. The boat, fireworks, the blanket over us.

BLAINE:            Tell me.

BECKY:            ...Your hands like a pickpocket's, under my sweater onto my belly, patient, just light soft inquisitive touching. Then tracing the underside of my ribs, like you're sketching --

*In Blaine's home, his gate buzzer goes off. Again, long, insistent.*

BLAINE:            Who the hell -- Becky, hold on a sec.

*Annoyed, he gets up and works the intercom.*

BLAINE: Yes?

MARCIA: *(squawky, through intercom)* Hi, is this the Adler residence?

BLAINE: Well, yeah, that's my wife's name. Whatcha need?

MARCIA: Housekeepers. Mrs. Sanchez has gone back to Mexico for awhile, so the agency sent us.

*Blaine buzzes them in. Looks around, exasperated. MARCIA and HOWARD, forties, enter, wearing aprons and lugging pails of cleaning supplies.*

MARCIA: *(nice, smiling)* Hiiiiiiii. I'm Marcia, this is my husband Howard...

*BLAINE and HOWARD are both quite shocked. They know one another.*

BLAINE: Howard, how are you?

HOWARD: *(stricken, but braving it out)* Very well Blaine, you?

MARCIA: Oh, Blaine Trombley! I thought I recognized you. You and Howard were on Don Simpson's staff together, right?

BLAINE: Yeah, and I've almost recovered.

*Tense laughter. During all this, Becky eats more and more of the candy.*

MARCIA: Well, I'll start on the kitchen. Howard, why don't you dust in here...

*She leaves, motioning subtly to her husband towards Blaine. Howard pulls out a feather duster and begins working it about the room inexpertly.*

BECKY: Blaine, you there?

BLAINE: Yeah. It's -- there's a guy cleaning my house right now who is an Emmy winner.

BECKY: *(genuine)* Ohhh, the poor man. What did he win for?

BLAINE: Beck, he was head writer on *Topeka Malice*.

BECKY: I loved that show. I was crushed when it got canceled.

BLAINE: I knew he hadn't worked in awhile, but... my god.

HOWARD: Still with Sib Hagoopian, Blaine?

BLAINE: Yeah, but I'm close on a script InfraKinesis likes, so I'll be free from Massah Sib in a month.

HOWARD: Studio gods willing.

BECKY: Blaine, you need a minute there?

BLAINE: Yeah, thanks. *(to Howard)* You writing much?

HOWARD: Oh, like a fiend. Three features, two sitcoms.

BLAINE: Great.

HOWARD: I do this a few hours a day, gets me out. You know, just something to hold us until I make a sale. Screenwriting, hey, it's like farming. Good years and bad.

BLAINE: And you gotta throw lots of shit on something before anyone will buy it.

*They share a meager laugh. Howard brandishes the duster.*

HOWARD: Hey, maybe this'll be a good career move. Yesterday I left my sci-fi script under Fran Coppola's pillow.

BLAINE: Yeah, who knows.

HOWARD: Blaine, you're still repped by Elite Artists, right?

BLAINE: Yeah.

HOWARD: Is Ben taking on any more list?

BLAINE: I dunno Howard, but I'll be glad to ask.

*Marcia enters, exerted.*

MARCIA: All right, I'll move on to the bathrooms now --

*A vase Howard was dusting slips from its shelf, falls and disintegrates. Howard looks at it limply as his wife pounces on the wreckage and begins sweeping it up.*

HOWARD: Oh god. Oh no.

MARCIA: Uh -- yeah -- you know how they break a bottle on a new ship? This is kind of like that. *(tries to laugh)* Just tell us where you bought this, Blaine, and we'll --

BLAINE: No, don't worry... it's okay, it's new. We lost all the heirloom stuff in the earthquake.

HOWARD: I am the biggest dumbkopf in the history of our planet.

BLAINE: *(scribbling a check)* Howard, no. Really, it's -- thanks, Marcia, that's fine. Anyway, Holly just wanted the kitchen done, so you guys can --

MARCIA: The agency invoice said the bathroom and the liv --

BLAINE: No, that's all she wanted, really. She told me so this morning, it was just during breakfast and I wasn't listening.

*Blaine thrusts the check at Marcia.*

MARCIA: Okay. Well, take care, Blaine, nice to see you...

HOWARD: I could maybe Crazy-Glue --

MARCIA: *(instant snap to pure, atomic rage)* HOWARD! HE SAID THAT'S FINE!

*Howard looks down. His wife pulls him towards the door.*

BLAINE: Howard.

*Howard turns back to Blaine, eyes blank.*

BLAINE: Phone Ben in the morning. His secretary's name is Jeannie, she likes me. I'll call tonight and tell her to open up a slot.

*Howard half-nods and Marcia pulls him out the door.*

BLAINE: I'm back. *(pause)* The boat stops at the edge of the harbor. No noise but the hiss of the first skyrocket. My hands drift up a bit. I want to hold your breasts until I can feel the tiny little crepe ridges you get when the blood rushes to --

BECKY: I want to see how far we can go without our friends knowing. So I talk and laugh with them. I take your hand and kiss it then I touch my tongue to it, light light light, then ease it under the blanket slow, casual.

BLAINE: I catch someone's stare. It's my friend's wife. She's looking at us, half-smiling, half intrigued. She knows.

BECKY: And I don't care. The fireworks go off and it lights up everyone's faces. You share your drink with me and I reach to un --

GIRL'S VOICE: *(offstage)* Mom, I'm sick, they sent me home.

BECKY: Oh shit. My oldest just came home with the flu.

BLAINE: ...Oh. Should you go?

BECKY: Well, I don't think it'd quite do for my girl to find her mother masturbating at her computer. Uhhh... give me thirty seconds.

*Becky goes offstage. We hear a young girl retching.*

BECKY: It's okay, honey, there you go, is that all of it? Get in my bed and rest. That's my girl.

*She returns.*

BECKY: I'm back. Blaine, I'm sorry, this is really a shitty day.

BLAINE: That's fine. You gonna be all right?

BECKY: Oh... yeah. I'll watch my video of Police Chief Boyle hosing the missus and I'll be just fine. Sorry.

BLAINE: No. That's okay. I'll -- e-mail you.

BECKY: Wait. Let me finish this.

BLAINE: Beck, really, you don't --

BECKY: No. I want to. Let me. Sit back.

*Blaine does. Becky hides the candy wrappers in her clothes.*

BECKY: Everyone else on the boat is watching the fireworks, so they don't see what we're doing.

BLAINE: The breeze picks up over the water and whips at us.

BECKY: And it's my holy mission to get you murmuring my name and squeezing the breath out of me. I want that perfect match of tempo with you looking through my eyes past the back of my mind --

GIRL'S VOICE: *(offstage)* MOM -- *(sobbing, retching)*

BECKY: Ahhh shit, Angie is barfing again. I have to go.

BLAINE: *(strangled tone)* Fine.

BLAINE/BECKY: *(unison)* E-mail me.

BECKY: Sorry about this. Hey, that's wonderful about your movie. 'Bye.

BLAINE: Goodbye.

BECKY: Blaine?

BLAINE: Yes.

BECKY: Don't ask about What Happened again, unless you want what The Who called 'Maximum R and B.' Emphasis on the 'B.'

ONLINE HOST: JawsMomma has left the room.

*Blaine leans back, looks up. Pure frustration. Smashes the keyboard against his desk.*

*DARK*

## SCENE II

*Four weeks later. Music: the first line or two of Sea and Sand. A SECRETARY walks Blaine into the office of a PRODUCER in his late forties.*

SECRETARY: Blaine Trombley, Mr. Finegold. Can I get you something?

BLAINE: *(jaunty)* Yeah, club soda'd be nice, thanks.

SECRETARY: Sure.

PRODUCER: Sonia, does this folder have his contract and check?

SECRETARY: *(beaming at Blaine)* Sure does.

*She exits. Blaine crosses to Producer as if he's about to be knighted.*

BLAINE: Hello Irvin.

*Producer doesn't look up, leaving Blaine's hand in the air.*

PRODUCER: Sit down, Blaine.

*Blaine does. Producer glares at him.*

PRODUCER: Okay, I skimmed your rewrite this morning. Who the fuck told you that you could write a romance?

BLAINE: Wha --

PRODUCER: And you left out my bit where the hockey puck flies in the stands and chops off that lady's ear.

BLAINE: I couldn't fit --

PRODUCER: Blaine, what you have done with this script, it is so *ten minutes ago*. Sports movies, you're asking people to buy what TV gives 'em for free. We shoot this and it'll end up on Cinemax at 3 a.m., an eighty-million-dollar NIGHT LIGHT.

BLAINE: Irv, slow down. Just tell me what needs work --

PRODUCER: *You do*, starting now. Because I am burying this. Consider it embalmed.

*Producer tears the check to tiny shards.*

BLAINE: Irvin --

PRODUCER: Big No, Blaine. BIG NO. What did you do, take a stupid pill? You're lucky I don't jam Legal up your ass for Breach.

BLAINE: Goddammit Irv, I can give you what you want --

PRODUCER: No you can't. You didn't. One hour of my time is worth five hundred dollars and you flushed two of them. Now, next time you get something this far, it is my fervent hope that you *stay on story* and --

BLAINE: *(low, glacial)* Irv, next time you're riding the Concorde to go bugger Jansen's wife, make sure it has nice loose wing bolts.

*Producer jabs furiously at a button on his desk.*

PRODUCER: You goddam goy hack -- get out of my --

BLAINE: And when it's going down, make sure you stand right next to the cockpit recorder so I get to hear you sniveling as you think about how you'll taste to the fish.

*Blaine stalks out, shaken. Producer's secretary pokes her head in, scared, holding a bottle of club soda.*

SECRETARY: Here's your club soda, Mr. Trombley --

PRODUCER: YOU STUPID SOW, DON'T GIVE HIM THAT! CALL SECURITY.

*The Secretary spasms involuntarily in pure animal fright. Blaine grabs the soda, shakes the bottle and sprays it about the room.*

PRODUCER: GODAMMIT SONIA, GET ME SECURITY. MY GOD.

*Blaine retreats. Lights up on Becky's side.*

*Blaine trudges into his home, sits at his desk, works the computer mouse.*

ONLINE HOST: You are now in private room "Horse Cock."

BECKY: *(mildly)* Late again, hon.

BLAINE: Well, you got me now. What's left of me.

BECKY: Something's happened. Your script.

BLAINE: Yes.

BECKY: What?

BLAINE: Let's make this quick. It got torpedoed and sank.

BECKY: Oh honey --

BLAINE: Okay, let's just drop it. Don't try and cheer me up. This is a great big shit-storm, to grin my way through it is a lie.

BECKY: You're right. But I'm sorry you're so hurt.

BLAINE: It always hurts, when they don't want your work.

BECKY: Of course. Because you're not selling screwdrivers. The product is You. So it *is* personal, that stupid business, all of it. And -- it hurts.

BLAINE: *(quiet)* Pain's as much a part of it as the popcorn.

BECKY: So start over. Today. Now.

BLAINE: *(nettled)* Oh yeah.

BECKY: You know I'm right. Get up.

BLAINE: Just like that.

BECKY: Blaine, don't insult me when I'm trying to help you.

BLAINE: There *is* no help for me, not right now. I told you. Now drop it.

BECKY: The people I'm asked to feel sorry for.

BLAINE: I don't want your sympathy. I told you.

BECKY: You think you've been beat up, try having four kids.

*Blaine starts.*

BLAINE: Four.

BECKY: Well...

BLAINE: Becky, I trusted you. God damn it.

BECKY: Shit.

BLAINE: Get your fucking story straight. You told me you had *three* kids. You promised to tell me the truth about everything.

BECKY: Just stop.

BLAINE: Don't you see what this does? Now, how can I believe anything you say to me?

BECKY: Blaine, you are out of line.

BLAINE: (*loud*) When we first met you said you were fifteen pounds overweight. Did you leave a zero out? Or hey, are you really a guy? If I've got one teensy hang-up, it's a woman with a cock.

BECKY: BLAINE.

BLAINE: So "Bob," do you even have any kids? Is it three or four? Son of a --

BECKY: I *had* four. I *HAVE* THREE.

*A long, stunned pause. Blaine is mortified.*

BLAINE: Oh, Becky...

BECKY: You rat bastard prick.

BLAINE:            Becky.

BECKY:            Fuck you to hell.

BLAINE:            I don't even know how to begin to apologize to you.

BECKY:            A Drano enema would be an okay warmup. FUCK YOU.

BLAINE:            You should have told -- tell me.

BECKY:            No.

BLAINE:            Becky, tell me how it... *tell me*. Please. It's time.

BECKY:            Can't.

BLAINE:            *Please*. She was a girl, wasn't she?

*Becky is startled by this bit of clairvoyance for a second and considers.*

BECKY:            Yeah.

BLAINE:            A baby. How old?

*Becky steals a very deep breath.*

BECKY:            She -- Alyssa was mine for eighteen months, five days, sixteen hours and fifty-three minutes.

BLAINE:            Alyssa. When?

BECKY:            Seven years ago last December eighteenth.

BLAINE:            You're kidding. Sorry — I mean —

BECKY:            What?

BLAINE:            That was the day after I got married. The first day of my honeymoon. I can even tell you -- it was a Monday.

JEFF:             Yeah, it was.

*Jeff has entered and sits downstage, his back to his wife and Blaine. Until his last two lines, his tone is low and flat, the corked emotions of the sawmill foreman.*

JEFF: It was just -- six or eight things went wrong at the same time.

BECKY: They'd just closed my dad's mill ten days earlier, so everything was ass over teakettle anyway.

JEFF: I'd lost my foreman job, so I was home.

BECKY: I'd gone to get Angie from soccer practice and mail the last Christmas cards. Just before I left I started the bathtub for Kevin and Alyssa. Jeff was going to get their baths going and I'd finish up in a few minutes when I got back.

JEFF: Alyssa was saying "Tiggabubba, Tiggabubba." She wanted the Tigger bubble-bath stuff, so I put some in.

BECKY: I didn't even kiss her good-bye.

JEFF: I got their clothes off and put them in, then all their toys and stuff.

*Pause.*

BECKY: The phone rang downstairs.

BLAINE: No no no no no no no.

JEFF: It was about a mill job in Molalla and I went downstairs to answer it. If I live to be a hundred I will never know why I left them alone. I was just -- scared of not working.

BLAINE: No. No no.

BECKY: It was so fast. Jeff got blown off for the job and he hung up the phone and turned around to start upstairs and there was Kevin, wet and naked.

JEFF: He sort of coos at me, "Lissie sleeping."

BECKY: They found a bruise on her temple. She hit her head on the faucet.

- JEFF: I didn't know I could move half that fast. I pulled her out and cursed my sorry ass for not listening in health class when they taught CPR. She just flopped around, so I called 911. They were there in two minutes flat, friends of mine.
- BECKY: Meanwhile I'm turning onto our street, bitching about the crap they're playing on KGW. I hear Angie say "Mom," this weird still tone.
- JEFF: One of the paramedics takes one look at Alyssa then he looks at me. *Through* me.
- BECKY: I ignore Angie and she says "Mom" again, more insistent, and I look where she's pointing, at the ambulance in our driveway. Then -- I saw that its doors were *left open*. Something about those careless doors made me...
- She trails off.*
- JEFF: The other medic was pounding at her little chest and Kevin says real chipper "Wake up Lissie! Mommy home!" and he runs down the stairs.
- BECKY: Kevin bounces out the door, naked. Behind him is Jeff, holding Alyssa. He kind of short-circuited, yelling, peeing, flailing. Nothing he did woke Alyssa up.
- JEFF: I don't remember any of it once I got outside.
- BECKY: I had never seen him get hysterical before. I could only decipher two words. "Alyssa" and "Dro --"
- Blaine weeps.*
- BLAINE: Oh baby -- no -- oh god I'm so sorry. Becky --
- BECKY: I could hear this strange tearing sound. It wasn't until the next day that I realized that had been *me*, screaming. The awful stares from those neighbors we hated.
- BLAINE: Baby no no baby no no no --
- BECKY: I just knew, Blaine. She was so *white*. Nothing that color could hold life. They flew her to Emmanuel in Portland, where I'd had her, but...

BLAINE: Becky. Oh honey.

BECKY: Yeah. Merry Fucking Christmas.

BLAINE: I want to hold you so much. Oh god.

BECKY: *(slow, teary, enraged)* You shouldn't have to pay them when your baby dies. We still get collection calls from the hospital sometimes.

BLAINE: Becky, sweet Becky.

BECKY: I shouldn't be so -- they tried.

*Pause.*

JEFF: In every hospital, there's this little room just off the emergency room where they let you -- detonate after they tell you It's Over.

BLAINE: *(struggling for composure)* I -- I didn't know that.

BECKY: *How would you?* Years later I talked to one of the nurses and she told me they have to repaint that room once a year.

JEFF: Something about what those walls soak up -- it's weird but the paint fades in there so fast.

BECKY: They herded us in there, closed the door, and I -- fragmented. The *tones* that came out of me... my chest hurt for more a year from making that noise. What no one like you knows is, grief is *physical*. Jeff just curled up in this little ball in the corner. It went on until my parents got there.

JEFF: For just a second, they both looked at me. Then they -- stopped.

BECKY: Then Jeff went right into Efficient Mode, made all the calls. I just sat there. Since then we've traded styles.

*Small pause.*

BECKY: And *that's...* why I'm loop... the fucking... loop.

BLAINE: I feel completely -- ineffectual right now.

BECKY: Blaine, no.

BLAINE: I'm in awe that you... continue. My sanity wouldn't survive that.

BECKY: I get it over with early in the day. I slip into the shower every morning and I cry. That way I don't upset the kids. I take very long showers.

BLAINE: Your husb -- Jeff?

BECKY: He got Post-Traumatic-Stress from it, that's where his panic attacks come from.

JEFF: I was on Disability for four years, a total retard.

BECKY: He -- he'll never be the same. Of course nothing will. People don't get that.

JEFF: The state made me go to a shrink to get the checks. The only thing I remember the guy telling me was, "there's no statute of limitations on grief."

BECKY: But everyone we know, they think Alyssa's memory is something you leave out for awhile, then one day pack it into a crate and stow it on a nice neat shelf. NO.

JEFF *(savagely)* Fuck them.

BECKY: After a couple years they squeeze your arm and tell you to "get past it." We tried to do it their way, that's why we had Ian, to fill things.

JEFF: Fuck them all to death.

BLAINE: I know. From my father -- it never ends. I know. How fucking DARE they.

BECKY: *Yes. Yes, Blaine. I love your fire. (numb)* It never ends. Last Sunday, in church, there was this girl in there, twenty-one maybe, she'd just had her second baby and I was watching her other daughter while she took care of the newborn. Her oldest is a year and a half...just like...

BLAINE: Honey.

BECKY: *(starts to cry again)* Oh Blaine, from the back she looked so much like Alyssa, the sweet blonde curls, the little sashay walk. I lurched toward her for just a second, pure reflex.

BLAINE: Because --

BECKY: I was going to grab her and run out of the church and keep running and running. Of course my brain switched back on and I stopped. I couldn't put someone else through what we...

BLAINE: I want to kiss you. I want to kiss you.

BECKY: Not this face you don't. I look like the Wrath of God right now.

BLAINE: Then... you told me once that all your kids were c-sections. So there's a scar.

BECKY: There's four of them. Alyssa's is right between Ian's and Angie's, an inch north of what they politely call the bikini line.

*Blaine crosses to her for the first time, though they never make eye contact. He sinks to his knees and his arms encircle her middle.*

BLAINE: Then I'd kiss you there for awhile. Both of you.

*Pause. Becky manages a smile for an instant.*

BLAINE: The other night Ian came upstairs crying that he couldn't sleep because there was a tiger in his closet.

BECKY: My Ian has dreams like that too.

BLAINE: So I carried him downstairs and got in bed with him and stroked his sweet red hair and murmured, "Don't worry, Ian. Daddy will stay here, and chase that big bad tiger away."

BECKY: I'm the tiger in his closet, Blaine. It's me.

*Pause. Blaine rises and pulls away, though he remains in proximity to her.*

BECKY: Angie, she's Daddy's girl. Kevin likes his mom and dad about the same. But Alyssa -- she was *mine*. She lit up for me in a way she did for no one else. Everyone marveled at it. She was mine. I want to touch her with every breath. And you.

*Blaine is unable to answer.*

BECKY: Blaine, you there?

BLAINE: Yes. I'm sorry, I'm just -- (*from his depths*) I am so sorry that happened to you.

BECKY: Honey, Blaine, it's okay. You're so -- oh Blaine. Most people run like hell from us. All our old friends...

BLAINE: (*soft, disconsolate*) So much fucking pain in this world. Oh god. So much pain.

BECKY: Blaine. It's all right. Darling.

*Blaine composes himself. Jeff exits.*

BLAINE: One thing you have to understand. You did nothing wrong, Becky. It was not your fault.

BECKY: That's not too relevant Blaine, but -- yes, I know that. It's... Jeff's fault and it's God's fault.

BLAINE: Don't.

BECKY: Why does God destroy perfection?

BLAINE: Becky, He let His own --

BECKY: But Mary got thirty-three years with her Baby. I didn't get a twentieth of that.

BLAINE: But you and Jeff, you held things together. Nine times out of ten something like that kills the marriage.

BECKY: We still had Angie and Kevin. Then Ian later. Maybe it's better it wasn't another girl.

BLAINE: You stayed. You kept your family together. You've been married for almost a generation and your spouse still desires you. That's a huge accomplishment. One I can't claim.

BECKY: It's a smoking wreck.

BLAINE: No. You're -- there's a saying in another language for what you are. *Aishess Khayil*. It means "Woman of Valor." It is penultimate praise.

BECKY: I'm a fat grouchy "Mom" in a little shit-town, popping Online Nation instead of Prozac.

BLAINE: No. You're like an angel to me, there but not there, watching out for me. You're an angel.

BECKY: I'm just the mother of one.

BLAINE: No, love.

BECKY: Alyssa's the angel.

BLAINE: Well, where'd she get that from?

*Becky collapses to the floor.*

BECKY: Me? An angel who switches sides. I talk to both of Them.

BLAINE: Becky, stop it.

BECKY: This isn't God's backyard, you know. It's the other guy's. The elements are his fingers. Fire, air, and... water.

BLAINE: STOP. Listen to me. Look at you and -- look at your husband. You stayed with him. You *stayed*. So did he. Love him for that.

BECKY: *(pulling out of it)* I do. Of course. I mean -- Jeff, he doesn't have brains to come in out of the rain, but -- he's handy. If he hadn't gotten a deer two years ago, after his benefits ran out, I don't know what we would have eaten. Things were that tight. But he came through. He drove up with that eight-point buck on the hood and that fucking grin.

BLAINE: Yes. The two of you -- you're -- One Flesh.

*He sees.*

BLAINE:           And I'm --

BECKY:            What?

*Blaine rubs his forehead with both hands, looks up.*

*Then he removes his hairpiece. It was a very good one and something about the act of taking it off seems to defrock him.*

BECKY:            Blaine, you there? You okay?

BLAINE:           Yeah. Yeah. It's just... when you're a writer, you've got this special clock in your skull. I always feel that change of gears when a script goes into the last act. A script or -- anything else.

BECKY:            And?

BLAINE:           I just felt that.

*DARK*

## SCENE III

*A week later; mid-May. The Sensual Intelligence stalwarts are standing as at an altar, backs downstage, as we hear Song Is Over. Becky's off to the side, not watching them, not watching anything. She's in her old bathrobe, just out of a very long shower.*

MINISTER:           *(New Zealand accent)* -- for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, as long as ye both shall live, Jodi26?

JODI26:             I do.

MINISTER:           And – er, “Tripod,” is it? Do you take...

*He drones on as lights come up on Blaine's side. Holly is asleep on the couch as in the first scene.*

ONLINE HOST:       Ishmael has entered the room.

BEACHBRAT:       *(whispering to Blaine)* Just in time, Ishmael. The minister's tapping in from New Zealand --

*Lights off them and they exit, leaving Becky and Blaine.*

ONLINE HOST:       You are now in Private Room "Horse Cock."

BECKY:             Hello, Blaine.

BLAINE:            Hi, Becky. Still raining there?

BECKY:             No, it stopped. Jeff took the kids to Dairy Queen.

BLAINE:            You know. I was thinking. For Memorial Day I could treat you guys to a weekend away at the beach, Salishan Lodge maybe.

BECKY:             Salishan. My dad used to take us there. It's so expensive, how would I explain it to Jeff?

BLAINE:            You won it in a contest on the radio.

BECKY:             That's not bad. But -- I can't, Blaine. That's a special weekend for me now, I always put new sod on the grave, clean the stone, stuff like that.

*Brief silence. Becky is unusually subdued.*

- BECKY: It's nice, I have the place to myself. No one goes to the cemetery on Memorial Day anymore; it's just another excuse to get drunk.
- BLAINE: You're right, I'd forgotten that. When I was a boy we'd go and there'd be this huge line of cars going in, people with flowers.
- BECKY: I got a letter from the hospital that Alyssa's bill was paid. Was that you?
- BLAINE: It was.
- BECKY: That was -- splendid of you.
- BLAINE: It was my privilege.
- BECKY: I'm very grateful Blaine, but... I sort of wish you'd asked me first. I'd gotten to rather enjoy telling Diane In Collections what a dried-up twat she is.

*Blaine smiles to himself.*

- BECKY: What about you? I'm so sorry about your script.
- BLAINE: Aw, it's okay. This woman I sort of know at Warners' picked it up on Thursday.
- BECKY: Good.
- BLAINE: Her office gatekeeper stood in the door to stop me and I body-checked the little dink into the potted ficus. No more nice guy.
- BECKY: So she... bought out the option? See, I'm learning.
- BLAINE: Yeah. Of course she wants it re-made in her holy image, so back it goes into development.
- BECKY: That means quite awhile.
- BLAINE: It means I start over.
- BECKY: I've changed my mind. You'll do it.

- BLAINE: We'll see. How was your week?
- BECKY: I made a nice friend on this. This girl in North Carolina, she's twenty. Her husband's in the Army, off in the Middle East. She had a baby and he only lived a day. She wants to try again when her husband gets back. So we talk.
- BLAINE: Write her every day, Becky. Even just a couple lines.
- BECKY: Yeah. I told her not to give up. And that her baby and mine are playing together and laughing.
- BLAINE: Of course they are.
- BECKY: She calls me "ma'am" -- it's so cute.
- BLAINE: She's in your debt and respects you.
- BECKY: Nothing I deserve. Speaking of which. We haven't played around on this for so long. What happened, you find some desperate young actress down there?
- BLAINE: No, you're plenty. Believe me.
- BECKY: I miss our sweet and salty nothings.
- BLAINE: Me too. But Holly's here right now.
- BECKY: She's there with you?
- BLAINE: She's asleep, but, yeah.
- BECKY: Blaine, don't worry about her. It sounds like she loves you. She'll find her way back to you before long. And she'll give you that daughter. That's — what we call at my church a righteous desire of the heart.
- Blaine doesn't reply.*
- BECKY: Do you ever think about what it'd be like to meet somewhere?
- BLAINE: Yes.

BECKY: So do I, all the time. The little shock you get when you see someone's face for the first time. You know. You have to reconcile your mental picture into reality.

BLAINE: It's a nice fantasy.

BECKY: If we did -- if you hugged me, it wouldn't be wrong, would it?

BLAINE: Of course not.

BECKY: What if you kissed me? On the mouth, real quick?

BLAINE: No harm.

BECKY: I'm just trying to figure where the border would be. What if we danced to something as old and slow as we are?

BLAINE: Still okay.

BECKY: Now what if we drove out into the Columbia Gorge and I rested my head on your shoulder?

BLAINE: Warning light.

BECKY: And we went to Multnomah Falls, climbed up to that little footbridge?

BLAINE: *(smiling)* I used to take girlfriends there.

BECKY: And if we held each other?

BLAINE: Still okay, but...

BECKY: And we leaned against the rail, out towards the falls, and kissed and kissed?

BLAINE: Pushing things.

BECKY: Kissing and touching all over.

BLAINE: Just *how* all over?

BECKY: Squeezing, stroking, over clothes, under them. So what? It's really in the same phylum as dancing.

BLAINE: I'm going to say it's not quite treason. But it's right at Checkpoint Charlie. You're trying to sort it out, aren't you?

BECKY: Blaine... I can't meet you unless I have drawn a line in my head, so I don't cross it.

BLAINE: Lines like that don't matter when it really happens, you know that.

BECKY: So what you're trying to say politely is, we better not?

BLAINE: It is. But I'd really like to read your words for awhile.

BECKY: That's a little patronizing of you.

BLAINE: I know. But I'm trying to stay on the right side of that border, too.

BECKY: Nothing that happens on this is a threat to anything outside it.

BLAINE: Fine, then let's keep it here.

BECKY: Why?

BLAINE: There's too much to sort out.

BECKY: What's to sort out? We care for one another.

BLAINE: I don't even know how to explain this to *myself*. Getting like this about someone I've never – it's too new. There isn't... language for something like this yet. A few years ago, *all* this would've been science fiction.

BECKY: So let's -- (*blurting*) 18720 Old Mill Road, Estacada. My last name is Dreezen. Six three eight, five four one three --

BLAINE: Becky, stop.

BECKY: Come on, I showed you mine. Now you --

BLAINE: In what I do, paranoia isn't an affliction, it's an essential job skill.

BECKY: This isn't "what you do." Now return the favor.

BLAINE: Becky -- do you remember in school learning about Cortez?

BECKY: The explorer. Yes.

BLAINE: When he got to the New World, what was the first thing he did?

BECKY: I don't know. Blew his navigator?

BLAINE: No. Becky, Cortez torched his ships. Now, why?

BECKY: No turning back.

BLAINE: Right. Either you make it here or you don't make it. He had to eliminate the alternative of cowardice.

BECKY: Is that what the Net is? The New World?

BLAINE: It's one of them. But infidelity is another. And once you're there...

*Blaine glances at his slumbering wife.*

BECKY: Look. The past ten years have shoved me through bankruptcy court, four therapists, three labors, a diabetic coma, and two funerals. All I want is for you to swoop in out of the sky for a day or two and make me forget it all. I hate all of this.

BLAINE: You should. I've thought about this. You went right from the house you grew up in, with Mom and Dad's rules, straight to the house you share with your husband and kids. You never got to have an apartment with a couple girls, and date, and -- all of it. You missed out and you feel cheated.

BECKY: Stick the condolences. *I have to see you.*

BLAINE: Not yet.

BECKY: Green Brook Cemetery. Route 314, right between Estacada and Eagle Creek. Memorial Day. I'll be there from noon on.

BLAINE: Becky.

BECKY: Alyssa is in the back, under a big willow. I'm about five-four. I'll be wearing a big straw hat.

*Blaine gauges her height with his hand for a moment, trying to picture her.*

BLAINE: No, I'm sorry.

BECKY: What's the hurt?

BLAINE: Becky, I couldn't be with you and not touch you.

BECKY: So you touch me. Then we'll have lunch.

BLAINE: All this -- it isn't mine to take.

BECKY: Blaine, what we talk about -- Jeff doesn't want that part of me. Holly doesn't want that part of you. So it's okay.

BLAINE: I have to work all weekend. Sib's going into production on his latest dung-heap and I'll be finishing the script.

BECKY: Work on it here. The Timberlee Motel has modems in every room.

BLAINE: *Becky.* Jeff.

BECKY: He's been to the grave exactly once. It's the safest place on earth.

BLAINE: I won't visit a second bereavement on that man.

BECKY: Well, aren't you just a prince. You'll cyber-fuck his wife, but you won't have lunch with her.

BLAINE: You're talking about two different universes.

BECKY: You cook this little fantasy and don't want to trade it for a real person. All your harping about truth, when it comes down to facing it you're devious as a thief.

BLAINE: Becky, there is no percentage in us taking things to that... Holly would turn into a life *sentence*. Now, look. I care more about laughing with my boy every day than anything else. Everything else. I will not endanger that.

BECKY: No one's suggesting --

BLAINE: It's exactly what you're... if anybody should understand a parent's tie to their child, it's you.

BECKY: *Don't ever call that part of me into question.*

BLAINE: All right. All right. It's just, I -- I don't think I could stay on my side of that border.

BECKY: "Your side" -- listen to you. What do you think you'd find on *this* side, some hick -- when our family dog drops one in the yard, I *do* go out and clean it up.

BLAINE: I want to be safe.

BECKY: Bullshit. You're afraid you'll find me plain as dirt and there goes your fun. Well -- allow me to expedite things.

BLAINE: Becky, hold on.

BECKY: But I'm sure you still want to be "really good friends."

BLAINE: Of course I do.

BECKY: God damn you. You only want me through this? This is truth? This is all you can -- that's it. Fin.

BLAINE: Becky, wait. Don't. Let me help you.

BECKY: You want to help me? Then fly first class out of the clouds and come and LOOK at me.

*Pause.*

BECKY: Well, okay then. Consider me enlightened.

BLAINE: Becky.

BECKY: What, dammit? Come on, do you want a blindfold and a cigarette first? C'mon, let's pull this trigger.

*Blaine can't respond.*

BECKY: Come ON, let's do it. Time on this is costing me three bucks an hour. That's a lot to us backwater piss ants.

BLAINE: I want -- I want to help you. I want to send you something. For your kids.

BECKY: Blaine. Why would I take anything from you if I don't want to talk to you?

BLAINE: A trip for you and Jeff to be alone. May I?

BECKY: *(pure disdain)* Oh, Blaine.

BLAINE: Becky, let me help. Please.

BECKY: I'm going to change my online name. Promise me you will too. Promise.

BLAINE: *(low, sapped)* I do.

BECKY: Promise me you won't try to find me on this, and that you'll never go back to that room where we met.

*Pause. Blaine is very distraught.*

BECKY: BLAINE. PROMISE.

BLAINE: ...I do. Becky...are you going to be all right?

BECKY: I'll be fine. We finally got a nice fucking day here and I'm going *outSIDE*.

*Becky starts to exit the online program, then she lunges at the machine's power cord and yanks it from the outlet. Her half of the stage goes black, extinguished.*

ONLINE HOST: JawsMomma has left the room.

*Blaine mutely looks into the screen.*

*Then he gets up and dials the phone.*

BLAINE: Sib, it's Blaine. Yeah, I know what time it is, my mom taught me. Listen, I won't work this weekend... it's Memorial Day, I'm going to the cemetery. I am *utterly* serious. And Sib, just to fill you in -- I'm fired.

*Blaine breaks the line, then dials again. Holly stirs from his aggressive tone.*

BLAINE: Yeah, I'm at 2113 Arroyo Palacio in the Palisades. L.A.X. Now. Yeah, *now*. Send the fastest, most desperate Green Card you got. I'll be out front.

*Blaine hangs up the phone, pockets his wallet. Grabs his house keys, then sets them on the desk. Walks out. Slams the door; it wakes Holly, who looks about, instinctively frightened.*

*BLACK*

*Curtain music: A Legal Matter.*

THE END

*For Laura, July 27, 1988 - December 18, 1989*