

VENOM

A Play in Two Acts

By

Richard Bonte

By Richard Bonte

(venom.4.rtf)

© 2018

3409 54th Dr. West #H104

Bradenton, FL 34210

Cell: 941-524-3576

richard@richardbonte.com

www.richardbonte.com

VENOM

By Richard Bonte

“Venom” is the absurd story of a neurotic and dangerous patient, FRED STONE, who wants to enter the psychotherapy institute of his analyst, DR. HERB WHITE, so that he can work alongside his mentor as co-psychotherapist.

Act I

FRED, a mild-mannered archivist or ‘file man’ working in a library, is annoyed with his psychotherapist HERB’s behind-the-scenes secretary, DOLORES MUJER, who has too much influence on the doctor and has recruited two new patients, MARCY STEMKOWSKI and EDWARD SMART, to take valuable analysis time away from FRED. Jealous of these patients, FRED hides in the Institute and spies on HERB’s sessions with them. Satisfied with his newfound knowledge of his enemies’ weaknesses, he then leaves, only to return three days later and announce to HERB that he is ready to join him as his colleague. Not wanting this at all, HERB rejects and humiliates FRED who vents his bottled-up rage, attacks HERB and takes over the Institute.

Act II

Act II begins with FRED now claiming to be the director and chief psychotherapist of the institute. Still wanting to take his rage out on HERB’s new patients, he tells DOLORES (via interphone—because we never see DOLORES in the mysterious ‘back passage’ of the office—to schedule MARCY STEMKOWSKI and EDWARD SMART *together* for their weekly therapy sessions. FRED then forces them at gunpoint to participate in a ‘staged’ couples’ session he has concocted. They are initially incredulous and then overwhelmed by anguish as the fake ‘DR. HERB’ puts his neurotic stamp on the proceedings. The tension becomes unbearable for the two patients until DOLORES appears and spins FRED’s scabrous yet accurate vision into a surprising climax.

Cast of Characters

Fred Stone: A man, aged anywhere from thirty to seventy

Marcy Stemkowski: A dancer aged twenty to forty

Herb White: A man, anywhere between thirty and seventy

Edward Smart: A man, twenty to forty

(Dolores Mujer): (A woman, anywhere between twenty and forty. May be played by Marcy (in silhouette)).

Scene

An isolated psychotherapist's office.

Time

The present.

Act I, Scene 1: late Saturday afternoon.
Act I, Scene 2: a few moments later.
Act I, Scene 3: late afternoon, four days later.

Act II: late Saturday afternoon, three days later.

PRODUCTION HISTORY OF “VENOM”

Staged reading, March 28, 2019 at SAPS, Sarasota Area Playwrights Society, Sarasota, Florida. Staged reading as “The File Man,” Theatre 40, Beverly Hills, 1990.

BIOGRAPHY OF WRITER, RICHARD BONTE

Richard Bonte is a Bradenton, Florida resident and a native-born New Yorker. He has lived much of his life in Canada, California and Western Europe. He has worn many hats including playwright (lifelong DGA member), bi-coastal actor, teacher, writer, linguist and phonetician. He has advanced degrees from Berkeley, UCLA and the Sorbonne. Richard has written fourteen novels (including ‘Curmudgeonly Yours’ (2017), been given the FAPA (Florida Authors and Publishers Association) 2018 Silver Award for Humor), several plays and screenplays. He has just finished a novel with co-writer, James Crew Allen, on Covid-19 entitled “The Wuhan Plague.”

PLAYS

SCREENPLAYS

Ten-Minute Play: “Smarter Than You” (2020)	Screenplay: “Terry's Upside,” (2019)
Short Play: “Yakery” (2017)	Screenplay: “Waste” (later entitled “Against Nature”) (1995,2020)
Full-length play: “Open House” (1995; 2020)	Unauthorized Speculative Screenplay: “The Lüneburg Variation” (1995) based on the book, “The Lüneburg Variation” by Paolo Maurenzig
One-act play: “A Meets B”; 1986, 2020	Screenplay: “Taken” (re-named “The Queens Mate”) (1992) - *being readapted 2020
Full-length play: “Venom”; (also adapted to French and translated as “Langue de Vipère,”) (1990, 2004, 2018)	
Short Play: “Old Movies” (1990)	
Short Play: “John Hall” (1990)	
One-Minute Play: “Diversity ‘R Us” (2020)	
One-Minute Play: “Joe’s Tattoo Parlor” (2020)	
Ten-Minute Play: “The Empire One-Act” (2020)	

ACT I

Scene 1

SETTING: An isolated psychotherapist's office. Down right is a large mirror. In front of it are a small couch, a beanbag, and a waste paper basket fitted with a basketball attachment. Center stage may be found a desk and two chairs. On top of the desk are a small computer, telephone, and metronome, as well as a large double-faced clock, for both therapist and patient.

AT RISE: Late Saturday afternoon. FRED STONE has been there a full forty-five minutes already. Nervously pulling his hair, HE stares out at the mirror. From back stage, a WOMAN'S VOICE, is complaining loudly. Now, MARCY STEMKOWSKI, an attractive woman in her late twenties, appears briefly upstage: SHE glares at FRED who looks away. SHE disappears. Finally HERB WHITE also appears from upstage.

HERB

Hello, Fred.

FRED
Hi, Herb.

HERB
How are we feeling today?

FRED
Oh, not so bad...Who was that?

HERB
Her? Why don't you ask Dolores? She found her.

FRED
I don't want to ask Dolores.

HERB
Beautiful girl, isn't she? Dolores certainly knows how to pick them.

FRED
What does she want?

HERB
I'm not sure, Fred. But even if I were, I wouldn't want to waste your good money talking about her.

(There is a LOUD SOUND of a flushing toilet back stage)

FRED
You told me you were going to repair that.

HERB
Are you calling the shots around here now, Fred?

(HERB goes to his desk and picks up some papers that HE proceeds to roll up into little balls and toss systematically into the basketball garbage can across the room)

FRED
Herb, those are our clients' questionnaires.

(FRED runs to the waste paper basket)

HERB

Sit down!

(FRED does so. HERB continues to shoot baskets)

Yes, she's a beautiful girl. Bet you'd like something like that?

FRED

I don't know her.

HERB

She's seeing this quack choreographer. Such a shame. I think he's got her hoodwinked.

(Pause)

FRED

I was thinking about what you were saying the other day -

(HERB walks upstage)

HERB

Did you see the second office back here?

FRED

When did you get a second office?

HERB

Dolores didn't show you?

FRED

Did you just have it built? I was here four days ago.

HERB

I had some very fast workers in here, Fred.

FRED

You had it built for me, right?

HERB

Why? You want to take a look?

FRED

Is it for me? Did you have it built for me?

HERB

Got to expand, Fred. Got to expand.

FRED

You're not going to give it to Dolores, are you?

HERB

Dolores works where I tell her to, Fred. You know that. Besides, it's just a back passage. That's all it is. I needed to enlarge the back passage.

FRED

Yes, but am I getting it? I want it. I've been here a lot longer than she has.

HERB

You know I use two types of therapeutic processes?

FRED

So?

HERB

So depending on the patient, I'll either be able to see them in the front room or in the back room.

FRED

You're saying I'm "front room" material?

(HERB stares at himself in the downstage mirror)

HERB

Exactly. You're a special patient, Fred. You're very special.

(pause)

What's wrong?

FRED

Nothing. Nothing at all.

HERB

Now, now, now. No secrets here.

FRED

What you're actually saying is that I'm still just a -

HERB

Did you really think she was good-looking or are you just trying to humor me?

FRED

Now you're talking about that woman again!

HERB

Who do you think I was talking about? I know you don't like Dolores.

FRED

I told you! She was very good-looking. Are you going to listen to me?

HERB

Sure. Hope I haven't kept you too long?

FRED

About forty-five minutes!

(Pause)

HERB

So that's what's wrong! I'm sorry, but it happens sometimes. I'm very much in demand--and when one patient comes in late, well...let's just call it the domino theory.

(Pause)

FRED

I get it.

HERB

Yes?

FRED

That woman delayed you!

HERB

And you.

FRED

That woman is a new patient!?

HERB

How does that make you feel?

FRED

About her!?

HERB

No. About being one of the dominos.

(HERB picks out of his desk drawer a couple of steel balls attached by string to a central attachment. Holding the center piece, HE bounces these balls up and down as HE moves to the mirror to admire his reflection).

FRED

Herb, would you not use those today? I'm trying to tell you something important.

HERB

You know the rules of life, Fred. When you keep people interested, they always listen to you. When you don't, well -

FRED

I'm paying you to listen to me!

HERB

No, you're paying me to be your mirror.

FRED

If you don't want me round here anymore, I-

HERB

You said that, not me! Remember, I didn't say that.

FRED

Please stop bouncing those balls!

(HERB does so, sitting down in front of

FRED)

FRED (cont.)

Sorry about raising my voice. I was trying to tell you how I feel.

HERB

But never in words, Freddie, you know that. Use your emotions. That's elementary. Even Marcy knows that.

FRED

Who?

HERB

Marcy. My new patient. She wasn't afraid to express herself. She got to the meat of the matter, my boy. The meat of the matter.

FRED

So she is your new patient?! Marcy! I knew it! Well, Marcy's a woman. I guess it's easier for women to express themselves emotionally.

HERB

In only her second session? Were you ever able to do that?

(HERB stares out at his reflection in the mirror)

You don't begrudge me another patient? She only associates with guys full of confidence, my boy. Only with the crème de la crème, if you understand my meaning, the crème de la crème.

(Pause)

FRED

I'm feeling a bit depressed today.

HERB

I knew it! That's how Marcy was too. I told her to snap out of it.

FRED

Just like that?

HERB

Just like that. That's what I'm going to tell Ed too, when he arrives depressed.

FRED

Who's Ed?!

HERB

I haven't met him yet, but apparently Ed's like you used to be, but younger, of course. Very, very much younger. He's got real promise. At least, that's what Dolores tells me.

FRED

Are you trying to tell me you're taking on two new patients as well as Dolores?!

HERB

We wanted to make it a surprise for you. See how you'd react in a therapeutic situation. You know territoriality and all?

FRED

Well, I don't like it.

HERB

(HERB runs over and smashes his fist into the beanbag)

Hit it!

FRED

I don't want to hit that bag.

HERB

Hit it!

(HERB hits it again. FRED doesn't)

Now don't worry. We're going to give you the same attention as before.

FRED

Wait a minute. What's all this "we" business? You're still grooming me to take over for you, right?

HERB

I'm grooming you for the big one, Fred.

1-1-9

FRED

Just you and me, ok? We don't need that Dolores girl.

HERB

Don't worry about her. She won't act up like that again. I promise.

FRED

I suppose we could leave her in her secretarial position.

HERB

(HERB admires himself in mirror)

She'll never work her way up to therapist, Fred. She's got to put in the time for that. Just like you have.

FRED

What about Ed? Do you think he'll be with us for a long time?

HERB

Edward? As a patient? I don't think so.

FRED

You don't even know him! Maybe he wants to become a therapist too? Learn the ropes from you!?

HERB

Relax, Freddie, he's not going to take your place.

FRED

You've got to understand I've been waiting a long time for this.

HERB

Of course you have...No, apparently Edward's too smart for all this. Too much on the ball. That's what Dolores tells me.

(pause)

How long have you been with me now?

FRED

Ten years.

HERB

Ten years, eh? Oh well, some things take time.

1-1-10

FRED

But you told me when I started it would only take three months?

HERB

That was then, this is now, Fred. That reminds me, you don't mind if we cut this short today, do you?

FRED

What?!

HERB

Marcy's coming back. She needs to work some things out.

FRED

But I've been waiting almost an hour already!

HERB

Come on, Fred. How long have we known each other?

FRED

But we're talking about my pre-paid session here. For my therapy. Mine. That's what I'm paying you for.

HERB

And when you start working for me, I'll be paying you. So it all evens out.

(pause)

Don't make that face. I'll make it up to you in a few days, alright?

FRED

With all due respect, Herb, you're cutting me shorter and shorter every week.

HERB

Time. That's all it is. Time. No big deal. Snap out of your depression. I'll only charge you for a mini-session.

(calling out)

Marcy!

MARCY

(marching in)

You told me it would only take five minutes.

(seeing FRED)

Oh! Hello.

HERB

Fred was just on his way out the door.

MARCY

I thought you two had finished.

HERB

No need to feel guilty.

(to FRED)

Say good-bye, Fred-o.

FRED

But-

HERB

Close the door on the way out.

(FRED stands there, not moving)

Come on.

(Finally, FRED leaves. There is a commotion back stage. A door slams, then opens again)

FRED

(Off)

I'M SOR-RY!

(The door slams again)

HERB

I make my patients excuse themselves when they lose their temper.

MARCY

Who was that?

(HERB pulls out a hard chair from in front of his desk, and places it down center. HE motions to MARCY to sit in it)

HERB

A patient I've known for a long time. He's been on the rag

HERB (cont.)

lately, but normally he's very cooperative. I don't know what's gotten into him. He's an extremely bright guy with a lot of money.

MARCY

Is he married?

HERB

You like them married, eh? No, for a guy like that--a hard worker, a winner with a Protestant work ethic--where are you going to find a woman good enough for him? One who is not only beautiful, like yourself, but who is also bright: Give him the quality Ph.D., and you don't have to put anything else on his plate.

(Pause)

You got through high school, didn't you?

MARCY

I had to finish up my diploma in correspondence school since I was always touring with the dance company. But I got accepted into junior college just last week.

HERB

Oh, really? What are you going to major in?

MARCY

P.E.

HERB

Physical Education? A fine major. I notice you have firm, bouncy sneakers.

(HERB now nestles into a couch with a stack of papers)

MARCY

I'm always exercising.

HERB

That's marvelous. Now Marcy, before we go any further, you understand that therapy is not always easy, that things I say may not be what you want to hear?

MARCY

That's why I'm here. I really want to solve my problems.

HERB

You sure, now?

MARCY

Fire away. I'm not afraid of anything.

HERB

Good. As long as we understand each other. Anyway, did we clear all that up from before?

MARCY

My problems with my boyfriend? Not really.

HERB

You just have to raise your expectations of him. It's as simple as that.

MARCY

How?

HERB

Listen to the positive. Get rid of the negative. You love him, right?

MARCY

Well yes, but does Joe love me? Maybe he thinks I'm not good enough for him?

HERB

Maybe you're not. Or maybe he's not good enough for you. You want my advice? Forget Joe and think Marcy. You don't think Joe would pay good money to see a shrink only to wonder what Marcy thinks about him, do you?

MARCY

You're saying I'm not important to him?

HERB

No. You're saying that.

MARCY

He's been going out a lot lately with the other dancers. And

MARCY(cont.)

in our line of work, that's natural. I can't hog him all to myself. But we're never alone anymore.

HERB

He doesn't have a place for you?

MARCY

No. And I feel I'm special--at least in his life--I feel I should have a special place -

HERB

You want to be his Queen - that's only natural...

MARCY

Exactly! And now one of the other dancers, this Dinky bitch --that's her name, Dinky--she's trying to take over my spot as lead dancer. But I'm the best one in the group!

HERB

All my patients are the best.

MARCY

But I am! Joe thinks so.

HERB

He does? So you are important to him!

MARCY

Yeah, but the times we are together, he seems distant. We're together, but we're not, know what I mean? And lately I've noticed he's been spending a lot of money.

HERB

What on?

MARCY

That's what I'm worried about.

HERB

So am I.

MARCY

Why? You don't think - ?

HERB

Go ahead.

MARCY

You don't think he's being unfaithful?

HERB

When are you getting married?

MARCY

What does that have to do with it?

HERB

You have no plans for marriage?

MARCY

Not really.

HERB

Well, there you go then. Joe's doing what Joe's gotta do and my job is to make Marcy do what Marcy's gotta do. If you're not married, you take what you get.

MARCY

So you're saying I can't count on Joe?

HERB

You said that, not me. Remember, I didn't say that.

(HERB pulls out a large pillow from a closet. HE begins hitting it. Then HE holds the pillow out to MARCY).

HERB (cont.)

Forget about Joe. Hit this.

MARCY

Why?

HERB

Hit it. Come on, hit it.

(MARCY does so)

Harder.

(MARCY does so)

Again.

HERB (cont.)

(SHE hits the pillow even harder)

That's right. Again.

(MARCY lays out a various assortment of blows to the pillow that HERB has now wrapped around his stomach)

HERB (cont.)

Yes. Oh, yes. Oh, my digestion. Again. Yes. I love it. Oh, please, Marcy.

(MARCY stops)

That all?! You're not angry enough. You ought to work out with Fred.

MARCY

Fred? What are you talking about him for?

HERB

He likes to hit, and he hits hard. Fred's a man, Fred knows what he wants. Do you know what you want?

MARCY

Well, yeah, but -

HERB

You want therapy, here we go. This is how I get results with my patients. Now, tell me the good things about Joe.

MARCY

Well, he makes me feel -

HERB

Hit the pillow.

MARCY

Why? I'm telling you the good things.

HERB

Just do it.

(SHE does so)

"He makes me feel" what?

MARCY

I don't know. He makes me feel like a woman.

HERB

What kind of woman?

MARCY

You know...feminine, I suppose, very feminine.

HERB

You mean 'wanted'?

MARCY

From a woman's point of view?

HERB

Yes. Hit the pillow.

MARCY

I don't want to hit the pillow!

HERB

Touchy. We're getting touchy now. You sure you're not confusing feeling "feminine" - those are your words - and feeling "wanted" - those are mine?

MARCY

No.

HERB

Does he ever ask for your advice?

MARCY

Sometimes. But most of the time he doesn't need to because he's got this bitchy mother he's always calling, and she tells him what to do.

HERB

Sounds like a mama's boy to me.

MARCY

Oh no, he's very masculine.

HERB

Then, maybe he's some sort of latent homosexual even if he appears to be very masculine. You're not saying that, though?

MARCY

Oh no, no.

HERB

You're not saying there are a lot of homosexuals and perverts and other assorted nasties out there making it tough for the rest of us, are you?

MARCY

Oh no, of course not.

HERB

What did you say he did for a living again?

MARCY

Joe? He's my choreographer.

(The toilet backstage flushes loudly)

MARCY

Pretty loud toilet.

HERB

The back passage is out of order.

(HERB hits the intercom switch. It buzzes loudly back stage. There are a flurry of footsteps. HERB barks)

HERB (cont.)

Dolores, take a hike. Go to dinner. You're disturbing us.

(Silence)

Maybe she's gone back to that can.

(Buzzes. Into intercom)

Go on, beat it!

(No answer. To MARCY)

I think she's jealous of you. That's one thing you'll have to be careful of: jealous women.

MARCY

How can you say that? She brought me here.

HERB

She did not! She met you in a deli, told you about me, but you called up the office. Remember, never let the other girl know she's the enemy. You're a beautiful girl,

(HERB approaches MARCY and guides HER to the couch. HE sits on the bean bag)

and many women are going to give you problems, only because they're jealous. It's no reflection on you as a person.

MARCY

It's funny you saying that. Joe told me the same thing, told me the men were no problem. He said I should watch out for the women in the company.

HERB

But you're going to have to watch out for Joe too. Like you said before. Joe's a bell-ringer. He's a spear chucker.

(HERB now moves from the beanbag onto the edge of the couch)

HERB (cont.)

And I know you don't have the heart to get rid of him -

MARCY

Why would I?! But I can do it, if I have to.

HERB

No, you can't. You want me to do it for you?

(HERB edges slightly closer to MARCY)

MARCY

I didn't say that!

HERB

But you implied it. Let's not get nasty here. Remember what I said about therapy.

MARCY

He says he loves me.

HERB

Of course he says so. But I say--and don't get angry when I tell you this because I believe in 'no-holds-barred' therapy--I say he gets to use you like a receptacle whenever he wants.

(HERB touches MARCY'S chin.
MARCY jumps).

MARCY

That's a disgusting thing to say!

HERB

I know, but it had to be said. Hold on, let me look at something.

(HERB takes both hands and attempts to gently move MARCY'S face upwards, as if HE were a medical doctor examining HER. SHE pulls away)

MARCY

Leave me alone.

HERB

Don't get hostile just because the truth hurts. Look at yourself in the mirror. Your eyes are down. Your shoulders are hunched over. What are you looking at? What do you think Fred would say?

MARCY

You got a thing with Fred?

HERB

No, I don't have a thing with Fred! And don't try to change the subject, either. You don't know what he wants!

(HERB takes his right hand, slides it across MARCY'S shoulders and gently holds MARCY'S chin level).

HERB

Now I want you to forget about Fred and Joe and Schmo and just feel the warmth your own gaze gives off.

MARCY

What are you trying to do?

HERB

The eyes shine forth light, Marcy. Concentrate on the light, and the man of your dreams will feel your heat.

(HERB continues to massage MARCY'S chin, all the while drawing in closer to snuggle HER).

MARCY

I thought you wanted me to forget the man of my dreams, and to concentrate on me?

HERB

Yes. But by raising, fixating and finally propelling your regard onto the mirror of the world out there, you will eventually entice all other eyes towards you.

(HERB points at HIMSELF in the mirror).

See yourself as more beautiful, more talented, and more successful than you ever imagined.

(HERB'S hands have now begun to gently rub her back. Neither HE nor MARCY notice FRED who arrives pulling his hair upstage left. HE watches THEM)

HERB (cont.)

Repeat after me: I am beautiful, I am soft, but I can also be positively assertive.

MARCY

I'm not sure what you're getting at, but -

HERB

Just do it. I-am-beautiful, I-

MARCY

"I am beautiful, I am soft, but I can also be positively assertive". Is that what you want me to say?

(The lights fade slightly).

HERB

No! I am beau-ti-ful! I-am-soft! But I can also be pos-i-tive-ly as-sert-ive!

MARCY

"I-am-beau-ti-ful-" Oh, Herb, that does feel good.

HERB

Sure it does. I-am-soft-

MARCY

"I-am-soft-"

(HERB loosens his collar slightly. FRED, continually pulling his hair, watches THEM warily as HE timidly takes a step towards the light switch. HE stops as HERB now pulls out his steel ball contraption from the desk and begins to knock the balls together)

HERB

I am soft-

MARCY

"-but I can also be positively assertive".

HERB

Slowly, my dear. In rhythm to the banging balls.

(HE clicks the balls together in one hand while HE continues to massage her back with the other. FRED takes another step towards the light switch)

MARCY

"Pos-i-tive-ly-as-sert-ive". Oh, Herb.

HERB

You're getting drowsy. You're getting drowsy, my dear.

(Lights fade again, as HERB continues to
click the balls together. FRED'S HAND
is almost on the switch.
The toilet flushes loudly.
HERB freezes.
FRED flicks off the lights)

(BLACKOUT)

HERB

Who's there?!

(The toilet flushes again.
Noise of running footsteps)

DOLORES!?

END OF SCENE 1

ACT I

Scene 2

AT RISE: BLACKOUT.

Moments later.
Noise of a scratching on the wall
up left.

UNKNOWN VOICE

Dr. White?

(The lights come up suddenly.
EDWARD J. SMART, a man aged twenty to
forty, has found the light switch first,
but is nose to nose with HERB)

EDWARD (cont.)

Dr. White?

(HERB doesn't move).

You're Dr. White?

HERB

Who the hell are you?

EDWARD

Edward Smart.

HERB

How did you get in?

EDWARD

The door was open.

HERB

You stay here. Dolores!

(HERB runs backstage. A door slams.
(off)

Who turned off the light?!

1-2-25

(DOLORES' VOICE inaudible)
You don't know?! What do you mean, "you don't know!?" You
were trying to entrap me!
(DOLORES' VOICE inaudible)

HERB (cont.)
I told you to hold all my appointments until Marcy left!
(DOLORES' VOICE inaudible)
I know he's a patient!

(HERB runs back in, and consults his
appointment agenda)

HERB (cont.)
(reading)
Edward J. Smart.

EDWARD
Yes. I hope I didn't cause any trouble. I had an
appointment.

HERB
Appointment, eh? What, in the dark?

EDWARD
I was looking for the light.

HERB
So was I. Communication problem, I bet? No big deal.

EDWARD
If you want me to leave...?

HERB
Oh no...No, no, no.

(EDWARD looks at MARCY)

EDWARD
But your secretary told me it was going to be a private
session.

HERB
She did, huh? Dolores told you that, too?

EDWARD

Hey, I'm really sorry.

HERB

Oh no, nothing to be sorry about.

MARCY

That's all right, Herb, I was on my way out.

(Unseen by the others, FRED appears
behind a curtain, up right)

HERB

(to MARCY)

You sure, my dear? I don't want to rush you out of here.

MARCY

I think we got to the root of my problem today.

HERB

Well, I wouldn't go that far, but we're getting there.

(to EDWARD)

Edward J?

EDWARD

Edward.

HERB

Let me introduce you to another new patient, Marcy
Stemkowski.

MARCY

(shaking hands with EDWARD)

Hi.

EDWARD

Pleased to meet you. And once again, I'm sorry about -

HERB

(also shaking EDWARD's hand)

- And I'm Herbert E. White, Ph.D., chief analyst and director
of the White Institute of Mental Psychotherapy or W.I.M.P.,
at your service. Please, call me Herb. So we had a little
misunderstanding. But what can you do, you can't always get

HERB (cont.)

the help you want these days.

(motioning back stage)

That Dolores back there...well, I won't talk about her...
Did she say your appointment was in the front or back office?

EDWARD

I don't know. Is this the front office?

HERB

Yes, it is. This is where I normally work, but I'm
expanding, see, and she's been going around telling people I
have staff for that back passage--I mean, the back office--

HERB (cont.)

when really, I have no competent therapists at all, except
for myself, of course. Basically, she's just trying to
glorify her own position, and get the back passage for
herself.

(FRED makes an audible movement behind
the curtain)

HERB (cont.)

(calling out)

Dolores?

(to MARCY and EDWARD)

See what I mean? You never know what she's going to do from
one moment to the next.

EDWARD

This is a psychotherapy clinic, right?

HERB

Don't you worry about a thing, Edward.

(to MARCY)

Thank you, Marcy.

(MARCY starts to leave)

There's a good girl.

MARCY

Good-bye, Dr. White. Good-bye, Edward.

(SHE exits)

HERB

We're very informal here.

(beckoning to the chair opposite the mirror)

Have a seat.

(EDWARD remains standing)

Is there a problem, Edward?

EDWARD

I'm sorry, but do I have to stare at myself in this mirror?

HERB

No. You look at me. I'll be standing right behind you.

EDWARD

But I can see my reactions.

HERB

Exactly.

(Pause)

Is this your first time in therapy? Don't be afraid.

EDWARD

But I thought...

(HE tries to look at HERB directly.

HERB eases HIM into his seat and makes

HIM look in the mirror)

I thought you lied on a couch when you went to the psychiatrist?

HERB

You mean 'lay' on a couch, don't you? There are different ways of doing things. I sometimes have my patients lie on a couch, sometimes sit on a hard chair, and at other times look in the mirror. Sometimes they have to be doing something when they talk to me, even silly things like hitting the bean bag, or,

(HE motions to the computer)

playing video games.

EDWARD

But how do you know who should do what?

HERB

I know. The important thing for you to do is relax and be honest. Honest with yourself and honest with me. Looking in the mirror will keep you that way. You see, my sessions are tough because I'm looking for hard answers to hard questions. So many times, you're going to feel very uncomfortable. But don't shy away from discomfort because when you're uncomfortable, when you're feeling pain, that means we're getting somewhere. That feeling means you're getting better. Do we understand each other?

EDWARD

I think so.

HERB

You got to be rugged, you got to be man enough to go through with this.

EDWARD

I am rugged.

HERB

You got to be more than rugged. I'm afraid you also have to have a skin like a rhinoceros.

EDWARD

Don't worry. I got what it takes. I'm a salesman.

HERB

Well then, what can I do for you?

EDWARD

I came because I think there's something wrong at work. I don't know what it is, but I'm feeling out of sync, sort of in the way. Like I don't belong there anymore.

HERB

Is this a recent development?

EDWARD

I'd say about the last three months.

HERB

And you came on your own to see me?

EDWARD

Yes.

HERB

Well, that's good. That's half the battle: recognizing when there is a problem, even if you don't know what to do about it. So, no one told you to come here?

EDWARD

No.

HERB

No higher authority in your life, no job supervisor?

EDWARD

No. I saw your ad in a deli, though.

HERB

Oh yeah? Which one? Mort's? Marvin's? Sammy's?

EDWARD

Sammy's.

HERB

Sammy's. Good choice. Excellent food.

EDWARD

You like the Matzo ball soup?

HERB

No, I like the bran muffins.

EDWARD

Yes, so do I.

(Pause)

Anyway, it's not that I have a big problem or anything. It's not that.

HERB

You're not hiding anything from me, are you Edward?

EDWARD

No, of course not.

(EDWARD tries to look at HIM, but FRED

EDWARD (cont.)

turns EDWARD back to face the mirror)

But I thought that maybe I needed some type of communication enhancement. Some sort of boost.

(HERB brings his chair behind EDWARD and sits down. THEY continue to talk to each other through the mirror)

HERB

What do you do?

EDWARD

I sell computer dating systems to big companies.

HERB

(writing)

"Computer dating systems to big companies". You like your job?

EDWARD

Very much so.

HERB

What kind of people do you work with?

EDWARD

All sorts, really...

HERB

What? Young? Old?...

EDWARD

Mostly young, I suppose.

HERB

High pressure?

EDWARD

The people or the job?

HERB

Both.

EDWARD

It's funny you ask that because that's one of my problems.

EDWARD (cont.)

There seems to be a lot of stress in this job.

HERB

And that's why you need the 'boost', right?

EDWARD

I guess.

HERB

You see, we've been talking about a 'communication enhancement' here, but who needs the 'enhancement'? Maybe you're not the one who needs it? Maybe it's the other guy who has the communication problem? Did you ever think of that?

EDWARD

That's possible, I guess. But I don't work with any guys.

HERB

Really? Only women?

EDWARD

Sort of. Actually, I'm on my own in the field. All the men are. My problem is when I go into the office. All the people in the office are women.

HERB

Oh yeah? What kind of women?

EDWARD

Well, they're young -

HERB

Tough?

EDWARD

Tough? I suppose. They have to be. We all have to be. They're very business-oriented.

HERB

Like Marcy?

EDWARD

Marcy? You mean the woman who was just here? No. She seems sort of athletic.

HERB

She's a dancer. You like that type?

EDWARD

I hadn't even given it a thought.

HERB

You hadn't? Sounds like you should. Otherwise, you're left with these tough cookies, right?

EDWARD

Yes.

HERB

I don't want to put words in your mouth. Don't let me put words in your mouth.

EDWARD

No, I agree with you one hundred percent.

HERB

Because that's what we're here for. We're here to listen to you, to listen to your problems.

EDWARD

I couldn't agree with you more.

HERB

I ask the questions, you give the answers, right?

EDWARD

Of course.

HERB

But you've seen them, haven't you? The power-tech types? You know, shoulder pads, short hair, femininity turned warrior?

EDWARD

"Power-techs?" I guess you could call them that.

HERB

You bet we can.

(HERB starts up the metronome. FRED's head pops out from behind the curtain to observe them)

(The toilet flushes loudly)

HERB

Goddamn it! When's she going to get that fixed? I told her to call the plumber.

(back to EDWARD)

So the women work upstairs, right, in so-called white collar sanctity?

EDWARD

Yes, why? What are you implying?

HERB

I never imply, Edward, that's one thing you will learn about me - just ask Dolores back there - or even Fred, one of my best patients - I deal in facts, not fiction.

(HERB adjusts the metronome so it ticks faster)

EDWARD

But I'm a white collar worker, too.

HERB

Yes, but you're in the field, they're on the phone. You're doing the work, bringing in the money. They're sitting on the phones, blabbing away, talking about this, talking about that, doing their nails -

EDWARD

They're making our sales arrangements, coordinating -

HERB

Oh, for Chrissake! Stop seeing the other guy's point of view for once in your life. The fact is, Edward, we're dealing with white collar Strongwomen here who've got you in a bind.

EDWARD

Who are you talking about?

HERB

Your bosses.

EDWARD

They're not my bosses. They're my colleagues.

(HERB stops the metronome. SILENCE)

HERB

Well, who's the Top Honcho? Who's the Big Enchilada?

EDWARD

You mean, who do we work for?

HERB

Yes. Who's the Head Ding? What's his name?

EDWARD

His name? My boss is also a woman.

HERB

Oh, no! Oh, for Chrissake! What kind of woman?

(HERB starts the metronome up again.
It ticks faster than before)

EDWARD

What do you mean?

HERB

A strong woman?

EDWARD

I don't know.

HERB

A weak woman?

EDWARD

What's going on here?

HERB
Is she weak?

EDWARD
No, she's not weak!

HERB
Strong as an ox?

EDWARD
What are you talking about?

HERB
As strong as your mother?

EDWARD
What's my mother got to do with it?

HERB
She got you in a bind?

EDWARD
You're crazy!

HERB
She got you in a bind?!

EDWARD
No woman's got me in any bind, Herb!

HERB
Come on, now. I can tell.

EDWARD
You're barking up the wrong tree.

HERB
I'm on to something.
(EDWARD rises to go. HERB lunges at HIM
and holds HIM down)
Sit down!

EDWARD
Let me go!

HERB

Sit down! You're resisting!

EDWARD

I am not resisting!

HERB

You're hiding something. I can tell! Out with it, boy!

EDWARD

(struggling)

Let me go, fuck!

HERB

What did you say, you goddamn little coward!?

EDWARD

Let me go!

HERB

She's got you in a bind!

EDWARD

No, no!

HERB

She's got you in a bind!!

EDWARD

Let-me-go-o-o!

HERB

SHE'S GOT YOU IN A BIND!!

EDWARD

No-o-o-o-o-o! No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o! No-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o!

(HERB stops the metronome)

(Silence)

HERB

Feel better?

(EDWARD is slumped over)

You told me you could take it. I took you at your word. I'm doing this for your own good, don't you see? It's not for

HERB (cont.)

me. But you have to get rid of all this poison inside you.
All my patients go through with it.

(EDWARD doesn't move)

It's nothing personal. I have no axe to grind.

(Lights begin to fade. FRED tucks
his head back behind the curtain.

HERB gets up and walks away)

I'm going to the back passage now. I need to relax and calm
down. Why don't you relax too for a bit, take it easy?
Afterwards, Dolores will come in and take your next
appointment.

(BLACKOUT)

END OF SCENE 2

ACT I

Scene 3

AT RISE: Four days later. HERB'S office as before, except that there are now three huge file cabinets up right. As the lights come up, HERB is wheeling a large covered structure into the closet. HE is about to put back a hammer and chisel that HE's holding when the buzzer rings. HERB jumps, dropping the tools as HE does so.

DOLORES ON INTERCOM

Fred Stone here to see you.

(HERB runs to his intercom)

HERB

He doesn't have a session now. What's his problem?

DOLORES

I'll send him in.

HERB

Goddammit, Dolores!

(HERB races to the closet, slamming the door and making sure that it is locked. But HE has forgotten the hammer and chisel. HE shoves them in a corner and throws his coat on top of them. FRED STONE, nervously pulling his hair, walks in)

HERB (cont.)

Hello, Fred!

FRED

Hi, Herb! Hope I'm not disturbing you?

(HE points questioningly to the cupboard door)

HERB

I was just finishing my creative work.

FRED

I'm sorry, but I had to see you.

HERB

That's what I like to hear: spontaneous desire. You have it, so do I. I may do psychotherapy for a living, but I'm really a creative sculpturer at heart.

FRED

You never told me that.

HERB

Because you always paid me to listen to you.

FRED

Are your sculptures in there?

HERB

Those are my works of art. I keep a private stock of them.

FRED

Could I see them?

HERB

Can't have you do that, my friend. You might get jealous. That's your major stumbling block: jealousy. So...Not feeling well again, are we?

FRED

You can hear it in my voice?

(The toilet flushes loudly)

HERB

I can hear Dolores as well. No further problems with her?

FRED

Herb?

HERB

She's got a great body, don't you think? Almost a liability working with her. That's why she works in the back passage. Always ready for the big one.

FRED

Herb? I've been meaning to talk to you about myself.

HERB

Yourself?! That's what you're here for. But I'm going to have to charge you double for this emergency session.

FRED

Why?

HERB

You know the rules, Fred. No appointment, you double the rate, ok?

FRED

But I'm almost a colleague of yours, an equal!

HERB

"Almost" only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. If I can't teach you discipline, how are you going to dish it out to your patients, not to mention Dolores?

FRED

Ever since that woman arrived, our practice hasn't been the same.

HERB

My practice right now. It's not yours yet. I'm in charge here.

(The toilet lid clanks shut)

FRED

Yeah? Well, why don't you take charge of Dolores? You told me she's always in that toilet?

(There is a loud sound of rushing water)

And when are you going to fix that thing?

HERB

I think you're jealous, Fred. Jealous of Dolores and her bimbo lifestyle. Not cerebral enough for you.

FRED

I am not jealous of her and she's no bimbo.

HERB

That's not the feeling I get.

FRED

I'd prefer just talking about myself if you don't mind.

HERB

It's your session, Fred. All yours.

FRED

Anyway, maybe it's me, I suppose, but -

HERB

Your hair. You're pulling your hair again. What do you think your future patients are going to say?

FRED

Sorry. Anyway, this is a very hard thing for me to say, Herb-

HERB

Spit it out, Fred.

FRED

Yes, well, not to beat around the bush, I've been coming to you for about ten years now, and frankly, I haven't been able to get to the central core of my problems.

(pause)

HERB

Very good, Fred, very good!

FRED

What?

HERB

When you let off steam, you're not afraid to give me both barrels.

FRED

So maybe it's time for me to become a therapist myself?

HERB

Well, listen to Fred! The cat's out of the bag. I've underestimated you. We've been trying to get you to this point

HERB (cont.)

for ten years. This is a break through, my boy, this is an historic moment! We'll have Dolores bring out the champagne!

FRED

You don't have to go that far.

HERB

Damn right, I don't! You think this is news? You think you're telling me something I don't know?

(HERB reaches into his desk and fishes out his steel ball contraption. HE begins to bang the balls together as HE speaks)

Obviously, no therapist solves his own problems, let alone that of his patients'? That's why he becomes a therapist. But at the very least you got to have a minimal level of maturity and presence. Anyway, we discussed that last week.

FRED

But the session was cut short.

HERB

Are you saying it's my fault?

FRED

Well, no, it's not a question of fault, just of fact. The fact is -

HERB

No need to be pedantic now, Fred. We always deal in facts here.

FRED

We all know I have to change, we all know that.

HERB

You know that. You have to change.

FRED

Yes, I keep forgetting. I have to change, but have I?

HERB

Changed? Do you want to?

FRED

What do you think I've been coming to you for ten years now? Will you please stop banging those balls?

(HERB puts his ball contraption away.
HE lies back on the couch and begins
pulling his own hair in imitation of
FRED)

HERB

Do you really want to change? That is the question. You say you want to, you've been coming here for ten years--hell, Sisyphus kept trying to push a rock up a hill his whole life, but instead of working hard to get it up there, he kept calling time out to eat a doughnut, then the rock would roll back down again--get the picture?...I try to use different ploys to make you change, but what happens? You don't want to. And if you don't want to, you won't change. You can't just give a flimsy effort in fits and starts.

(pause)

You're going to have to change a lot more than that to become a therapist.

FRED

But I'm trying...

HERB

Who isn't? But what's really happening? Let's look at the facts. Have you stopped pulling your hair? No. You haven't. So who's kidding whom here, Fred?

FRED

I don't like that tone of yours.

HERB

It's called the "Guilt by Intimidation" tone. You know it, I know it. Have I ever babied you, Fred? No. Sure I'll let you bite on the carrot, but then I'll give you the stick. No slip-ups, no bum raps.

(HERB moves to FRED and slaps his head where FRED's fingers are pulling his hair)

I think there's some sort of devil working inside you. Some lousy, crummy thing that you have to squash. Just like that.

HERB (cont.)

Crush it! It takes will, it takes guts, and all the therapy in the world won't do you a bit of good unless you have it.

(Pause)

How's your job going?

FRED

I'm feeling hemmed in by it, not free.

HERB

Do you want the couch?

FRED

Why?

HERB

I want you to tell me about your job.

(FRED lies down on the couch. HERB reaches into his desk, pulls out a tape recorder, and turns it on. The following utterances of HERB's are recorded)

"I want you to tell me about your job".

FRED

You know I'm having a problem there.

HERB

"You're not telling me you lost your job again?"

FRED

Oh no, of course not.

HERB

"Don't lie to me now".

FRED

I'm not lying to you.

HERB

"Then don't lie to yourself either".

FRED

I don't feel I can expand my mind now like I used to in this job. It's getting to be too much of the same thing.

HERB

"Change it...The routine -"

FRED

Shut that damn thing off!

(HERB does so)

Don't do that to me today! You know I'm not in the mood for that!

HERB

Maybe you need a hobby--besides coming here to hold my paternal hand--maybe you need something that'll get you out of those manila folders you sort all day?

FRED

What manila folders?

HERB

Aren't you in the folder business?

FRED

I used to be a literary critic, but I've been an archivist

FRED (cont.)

now for many years! And one of the best and well-known in the country! But now I'm studying to be a psychotherapist. Where's your memory gone?!

HERB

You can make a living doing that? "File Man"?!

FRED

I am not a "File Man"! I'm the Head Archivist in the Downtown Public Library!

HERB

You sure you haven't lost your job?

FRED

Herb, I'm in the top creative talent pool in the country right now--I think I've gone right to the top of my profession...

HERB

...But?

FRED

...ironically, being at the top is not enough.

(HERB turns on the computer and begins to play a video game)

FRED (cont.)

In fact, the last thing I feel is creative. Maybe that's why I come here. So that I can become a creative psychotherapist one day.

HERB

You're here at least twice a week. And get rid of that word, will you?

FRED

Creative? What do you want to call it? Ingenious? Anyway, I have all these ideas, right?, but the guys in the office, they don't want to know about that, they want me to tow the party line, they want me to do research in an "esprit de corps" type-vain. But I find that anti-ingenuous-

HERB

Creative-

FRED

Anti-Creative. I don't want to work along party lines.

HERB

So you quit?

FRED

I told you. I have not lost my job!

HERB

Did I say that?

FRED

I'm doing the best I can! And I'm still trying to get rid of my problems through therapy, after all these years. I'm trying to explain the problem to you, but-

HERB

Look out, you're starting to go into transference-

FRED

I am not in transference, and I have not lost my job!

(FRED runs over to HERB and his computer and shuts off the video game)

HERB

Sit down!

(HERB throws FRED onto the couch. HE moves in front of the mirror)

HERB (cont.)

You're in transference. You're talking to Herb, here, not some schmo from your past. Now here I am in one of the most creative--to use one of your words--fields you can think of, psychotherapy, but is that enough for me? Do you think I worry about being stimulated intellectually by my patients' neuroses? Their problems with money, problems with sex, their careers, their lack of careers, respect, no respect,

HERB (cont.)

what they want, what other people want? Hell no! Sure, these may be very interesting, intelligent people I know, but look at what they worry about? Their problems are all guilt-related. Their problems are boring. That's why I have my sculptures...

FRED

(nodding towards closet)

In there? Could I see them?

HERB

No.

FRED

Why not?

(FRED moves towards the closet. HERB moves quickly over to block FRED's passage towards the door).

HERB

Door's locked.

(HE leads FRED over to his three large file cabinets).

I have a better job for you.

FRED

What job?

HERB

You were planning to come work for me?

FRED

Not for you, "with" you. Together.

(HERB reaches into one of them and pulls out an enormous bag of invoices, clippings, old papers etc., as well as a lot of manila folders and a felt marker pen).

HERB

Would you mind filing these? Here are the files, and a big red felt marker pen that you can keep after for your own

HERB (cont.)

personal office. I want you to have it for your pains.

FRED

Bills, receipts, invoices, old bits of paper?

HERB

Those old bits go under "miscellaneous".

FRED

Is this some sort of joke, Herb?

HERB

No, just find out the subject matter of the item, use the A-Z system, and cross-reference any ambiguous subject matter. Like with the item "Bills": they could go under "I" for "Invoices", or "B" for "Bills". But then you'd have to be able to suitably subdivide them also-

FRED

I'm asking about the filing, Herb. This is what you want me to do?

HERB

Didn't you say last time you wanted to work together?

FRED

Yes, but I didn't think -

HERB

You got to start somewhere, Fred. You can't just call yourself a psychotherapist because you've done a little analysis, or because you've got some doctoral degree as a File Man.

FRED

I am NOT a "File Man"! I am an Archivist! Listen! I've been in therapy with you for over ten years!

HERB

That's nothing to what I've spent.

FRED

And I've jumped through every hoop you can possibly imagine-

HERB

Next, I'll have you file my patients' case histories, and after you've done that, I'll let you file the tape recordings I've made of my sessions with them. And maybe after that, you can listen to them, too.

FRED

But when am I going to have my own patients? Why can't Dolores file those!?

HERB

Dolores?! Are you going mad? She's my receptionist.

FRED

Well, what does that mean?

HERB

It means you'd better watch your p's and q's, Freddie.

(FRED pushes past HERB, runs to the closet door, and tries the handle. It is locked. HE nevertheless persists in trying to open it).

HERB (cont.)

What's the problem? Do you need to go to the bathroom? You know where it is.

(motioning up stage)

It's back there. Don't start using mine now.

FRED

I want to see your sculptures.

HERB

Easy with that door. You're going to break it.

FRED

I want to see your ingenious sculptures.

HERB

They're not finished.

FRED

Come on, let me in. I want to see what you've created.

HERB

If you need the back passage, go back there. But this here's my bathroom.

FRED

What are you talking about? I want to see what you've created.

HERB

I'm turning this closet into a bathroom.

FRED

Well, that's great, but why won't you let me see your sculptures?

HERB

Did you hear me? I'm turning this closet into a bathroom!

FRED

I don't get the connection. I just want to see the sculptures.

HERB

Look, you silly little parrot, if you must go to the john, do so back there, but stay away from my bathroom. This is my can, do you understand my meaning? This place is my can!

(FRED has left the door handle alone,
and now advances slowly on HERB).

FRED

What did you call me?

HERB

Come on now, Fred, I was just getting a little impatient. You know I have a lot of patience normally, but sometimes I feel irritated, upset, not always in control, maybe a little in transference, I suppose, but...

(FRED shoves HERB and continues to
advance as the latter backs away).

HERB (cont.)

Never do that.

FRED
Why not?

HERB
I'm going to call Dolores, Fred. I don't want to have to do that.

FRED
Silly little parrot?

HERB
Come on, Fred, it was just a gesture of impatience. That's all it was. Don't make me call Dolores. You don't want to make me do that.

(FRED shoves HERB again).
You know what happened after your session last time? You don't want it to happen again, right?

FRED
I don't give a shit about Dolores.

HERB
Oh yes you do. Remember the last time. You were humiliated.

FRED
Shut up!

HERB
You crawled out of here, Fred. I told her all about it.

(FRED shoves HERB violently this time. HERB stumbles, but quickly recovers his balance as HE slowly backs up towards his desk).

HERB (cont.)
I'm going to give her your job, Fred. That's all there is to it. I'm going to make her my right hand man.

(HERB lunges towards the intercom, but FRED, anticipating his move, slams his hand on the phone and throws HIM down. Then HE jumps on top of HIM, and starts to choke HIM).

1-3-54

(The intercom crackles and DOLORES' voice whines out: "Marcy Stemkowski here to see you").

FRED
(imitating HERB's voice)
You'd better cancel her, Dolores.

DOLORES
Is everything all right, Dr. White?
I heard some banging.

FRED
Oh yes, Dolores, Fred has been very good today. Tell Ms. Stemkowski I'll make it up to her next time. And Dolores? Please take the day off. I'll see you Saturday.

(The intercom shuts off).

HERB
Son of a bitch!

(HERB's face turns red as FRED continues to choke HIM. The struggle continues until FRED suddenly knocks HIM out with a punch to the head.

The LIGHTS BEGIN TO DIM as FRED walks to the closet door. HE tries the door handle again to no avail. HE looks around for something to open it with when HE spies HERB's coat. HE picks it up and discovers the hammer and chisel lying underneath.

THE LIGHTS CONTINUE TO DIM as FRED attacks the door handle with these instruments. As the LIGHT FADES TO BLACK, FRED pries the door open.

END OF SCENE 3
END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

AT RISE:

Three days later.
Saturday afternoon. HERB'S office.
The file cabinets are upstage.
SPOTLIGHTS on FRED, whose back is
to the audience, and the FILE
CABINETS. HE is putting files away
into the drawer of an open file
cabinet.
The spots fade to black.
The lights come up to half
revealing FRED who continues to
file things away.
A door bell rings.
FRED stops and looks up. Then HE
recommences filing.
The doorbell rings again.
FRED stops filing and walks to the
closet.
On the closet door, in
phosphorescent green, is a new
sign, "TOILET". FRED walks in and
closes the door. A moment passes
and a "chipping" sound can be heard
from inside.
The intercom BUZZES.
The "chipping" noise stops and FRED
runs out of the closet, and engages
the intercom.

DOLORES' VOICE

Marcy Stemkowski here to see you.

FRED

Send her right in.

(FRED clicks off, runs back to the
closet
and locks the door. Then HE sits

himself back at HERB's desk. MARCY walks in. SHE stops abruptly).

MARCY
Hi.

FRED
Hello.

MARCY
Herb around?

FRED
He's not here.

MARCY
We have a session now.

FRED
I know. We can start soon if you'd like.

MARCY
With who?

FRED
Dr. White put me in charge.

MARCY
You? Why? Where did he go?

FRED
Tahiti.

MARCY
Tahiti?! Why didn't he tell me? Was this a vacation?

FRED
Of sorts. He just felt that if you knew there was going to be a substitute therapist, you might not come, and he felt you badly needed your therapy.

MARCY
Wait a minute. Aren't you that patient he introduced me to

MARCY (cont.)

last week?

FRED

Yes, I met you briefly, but no, I'm not Dr. White's patient.

MARCY

I thought Herb said you were?

FRED

I haven't been anyone's patient in years. If anything, Dr. White's been more of a patient to me -

MARCY

Herb went into a long speech about you.

FRED

Really!?

MARCY

Yes. He said you were a very fine man and one of his best patients.

FRED

Well, there you go, see? He recognizes everything I did for him. Better late than never. Between you and me, though, I taught him everything he knows.

MARCY

He also said you were going through some tough times.

FRED

Well, if you knew Dr. White as I know him now, you'd say that was a bit of a projection.

MARCY

What's that?

FRED

Let's just say Herb's the one with the problem.

MARCY

You mean, Herb was going through tough times, so...

FRED

...he projected all that onto me? Yes...See the new addition

FRED (cont.)

to the office?

MARCY

The sign? Yes, I noticed it.

FRED

You don't like Dr. White's little touch?

MARCY

It's pretty showy.

FRED

Dr. White needed some color here. The office was looking a bit drab.

MARCY

So he had a neon "toilet" sign installed? Oh well. Looks like he's got some new file cabinets too.

FRED

Good-looking, aren't they? Very attractive. We thought we'd spruce up the entry way there closer to Dolores' office.

MARCY

Funny. There seems to be a lot more space here.

FRED

Especially in the back passage between the offices. The back passage. The folders are in proper order now, and are completely filed and cross-referenced. You can thank Dolores for that.

(MARCY has been uncomfortably shifting her weight from side to side)

MARCY

Yes...Do you mind if I...

(FRED motions questioningly to the "TOILET" sign over the closet. Then HE stands in front of it and points backstage)

FRED

Why don't you use Dolores'?

MARCY

What?

FRED

She's also got a new toilet back there.

MARCY

Now you're embarrassing me. I didn't think you noticed I wanted to use the bathroom.

FRED

It's not a bathroom, it's a toilet.

MARCY

Whatever.

FRED

There are two toilets here, now, and they both work the same. When this one's finished, I'll let you try it out. Herb had it built especially for his patients.

MARCY

Fine.

FRED

Dr. White's no plumber. He thinks he is, but believe me, I know better than that. That's why I keep it locked. Don't want people to go in there before their time.

MARCY

Yes, excuse me.

(MARCY exits upstage, and FRED immediately runs to the closet and opens it with his key. HE disappears inside and closes the door. The "chipping" sounds recommence. The doorbell rings. The "chipping" stops briefly, then begins again. A moment passes and EDWARD J. SMART

enters the room. Seeing no one, HE wanders around the room, noting the change in the furniture arrangement. Suddenly, there is a tremendous noise of a toilet flushing, and a flood of water rushing through pipes. EDWARD is startled. HE looks over towards the "Toilet" sign and approaches the closet. As soon as HE is about to put his hand on the door handle, FRED throws the door open, forcing EDWARD to jump back)

EDWARD

What the hell!

(FRED slams the door shut behind HIM, and locks it. HE then stands protectively in front of it)

FRED

How did you get in?

EDWARD

The door was open. Just like last time. Where's Herb?

FRED

Never mind that. How did you get by Dolores?

EDWARD

The secretary? I didn't see her. Who are you? Are you having a session with Herb?

FRED

No, I'm not having a session with Dr. White. He'd be having a session with Dr. Stone, would be more like it.

(HE runs to his desk and looks at his calendar).

FRED (cont.)

What is wrong with her? She keeps making the same mistake.

2-1-61

EDWARD

What mistake?

FRED

She's got you and Marcy penciled in at the same time.

EDWARD

Well, this is the only time I can take my therapy. I have no time in the week.

FRED

Why? Do you work eighteen-hour days, like all the other young men I know?

EDWARD

What's going on here? I didn't see Dolores, Herb's not here and his office is changed around.

FRED

First of all, it's not his office, it's my office now. And secondly, I'm in charge. Dr. White put me in charge while he went to Tahiti.

EDWARD

Tahiti?!

FRED

Anyway, one of those South Sea Islands. I'd love to go there, wouldn't you? But I've never been able to afford anything. Dr. White, or Herb, as you call him, has all the money. Do you think he earned that money by himself? I taught him what he needed to know. I was his mentor. And now he thinks he's doing me a favor by letting me play substitute.

EDWARD

Psychiatrist?

FRED

Are you kidding? Him? Psychotherapist is more like it.

(MARCY enters and starts as SHE sees EDWARD).

That's why Marcy wasn't here to greet you, Ed. She must have gone with Dolores to the toilet.

MARCY

Would somebody mind telling me what's going on around here?

EDWARD

Ditto.

FRED

Marcy, meet Ed. Ed, meet Marcy.

EDWARD AND MARCY

We've already met.

FRED

Oh? When?

EDWARD

Last Saturday.

FRED

Don't tell me. You're both eighteen-hour-a-day working professionals? That's why you take your therapy on the weekend? I see.

(HE picks up a couple of files).

FRED (cont.)

So. Is everyone ready for couples' therapy?

EDWARD

Wait a minute!

FRED

Yes, Ed?

EDWARD

Name's Edward.

FRED

Is that what your friends call you? Ok, Edward, I'm your friend too.

EDWARD

First of all, I've prepaid a session with Herb White -

FRED

"Herb White, Ph.D". Not M.D. Ph.D. -

EDWARD

- Yes, Dr. Herb White, and not - what's your name?

FRED

Dr. Frederick Mark Stone, Ph.D., but you can call me Fred, for short.

EDWARD

You're not the Fred that Herb was talking about?!

MARCY

I think so. Herb was obsessed with Fred.

EDWARD

- And second - and this is no offense to you, Marcy -

(FRED hits the metronome)

EDWARD (cont.)

- but I've prepaid for an individual session, not a "couples session". I'm sure Marcy would agree with me.

FRED

Did you have to prepay things as well, Marcy?

MARCY

When?

FRED

Was prepayment part of the Herb billing profile?

MARCY

What are you talking about?

FRED

Simply put, did Herb make you pay in advance for your sessions?

MARCY

Since this is only my third time, we didn't discuss payments, but I have paid in advance for these sessions.

2-1-64

FRED

(touching the intercom switch)

Dolores! Review Billing Profile, category "Ed-Edward, subroutine, Marcy", and delete down to a standard 50-50 handshake procedure.

DOLORES' INTERCOM VOICE

Roger.

EDWARD

What's that supposed to mean?

FRED

It means, you will both receive a 50% credit off your bill for today's session.

EDWARD

That's ok, Fred, why don't you give it to someone else? No offense, Marcy.

(HE gets up to leave. FRED shuts off the metronome)

FRED

Well, hold on, Edward, I'm offering you and Marcy a two-for-the-price-of-one deal, and am willing to spend as much time as you want on analyzing your problems. You can think of it as a mini-group therapy session, or, if you don't like the term, think of it as a "couples' session".

EDWARD

But she's a complete stranger and Marcy and I are here for entirely different reasons.

FRED

How do you know? Maybe you two could learn a lot from each other?

EDWARD

Is this some sort of joke between you two? Herb seemed to think we might hit it off as well.

MARCY

He never talked to me about it.

FRED

No. But it's all here in the psychological profile of Edward J. Smart. What's the "J" stand for?

EDWARD

He had no right to give you my file.

FRED

Relax, Edward. He didn't give it to me. It was right here in the file cabinet...So, what's the initial stand for?

EDWARD

Joseph.

MARCY

That's my boyfriend's name.

(FRED is scanning EDWARD'S psychological profile).

FRED

(reading)

It says here, "lives with mother". Is this true?

EDWARD

What's wrong with that?!

FRED

Well, how old are you?

(There is a tremendous flush from the back stage toilet, followed by the sound of water flooding through pipes. ALL THREE start suddenly)

2-1-66

FRED

Dolores, again. While the workmen were putting in the new bathroom in there,

(motioning to "toilet-closet")

they found they had to redo all the pipes in the office. As for the toilet, Herb requested a custom built water tank, equipped with a resonating chamber. Later on, I'll allow you to consult the manual of suction pressure and hydraulic release.

(There is a noise of a dull thud which comes from the on-stage "Toilet").

EDWARD

What was that?

FRED

Just an aftershock from the new water system...So? What do you think? Shall we begin? Herb had your interest at heart when he left me in charge.

MARCY

I suppose.

FRED

It wouldn't hurt you to try it out, Ed. You live with your mother, right?

(EDWARD just stares at FRED).

FRED (cont.)

Do you mind if I tell you two a story before we begin? It'll have some bearing on our session. Is that all right?

(SHE nods. EDWARD remains standing and staring at FRED).

FRED (cont.)

(to EDWARD)

You're going to get tired standing there. Why don't you go look at yourself in the mirror?

(Ignoring EDWARD, HE moves his chair to face MARCY).

2-1-67

FRED(cont.)

You see, you remind me, Marcy, of a woman I once met in Italy. She looked a lot like you, except she was a gypsy and much older. She had this similar quality. But unlike you, she was smelly and unkempt, her skin was bad, and she was as skinny as a rail. Anyway, this woman was dressed in every color imaginable, and was extending a long pointed finger at me. It looked like a witch's finger, all veiny with red scabs and all...And look, I don't know how she got there. Maybe she just crawled out of a rock or something. Anyway, there she was, in the road, beckoning me to come join her. And I thought to myself, even though she seemed to be the only person for miles around..."Why me!?"--I don't want to get next to this stinky, filthy person." So I looked around, thinking she meant someone else. But then she moved closer and stared at me.

(FRED moves closer to MARCY as HE says this).

FRED (cont.)

and I started getting scared. "I know you!" she tells me, moving closer. "Yeah, it seems that way"--I wanted to get the hell out of there, see--"From another life!", she said..."You used to be a prince, but you died when you fell off your father's horse. Your father was King Giancarlo Fanculo di Sardegna!..."

(FRED moves even closer to MARCY).

FRED (cont.)

"No", I said to her, "I didn't know that"... "King Fanculo was killed off by one of his own brothers, Gianfranco, who was in love with your mother...Anyway, you fell off your horse and died later of complications and - "... "Look, my friend"--I had to stop her, this was getting ridiculous, "tell this fantastic tale to someone else..."... "It's not fantastic"--she seemed indignant at my remark--"...they used to call you Prince Stallone, but now they call you Fred"...--I was getting

FRED (cont.)

pissed off now, since she seemed to know my name--"...Look," she said, "I can prove I know you very well..." "How?"...I ask her.

(FRED'S face is now quite close to MARCY'S).

FRED (cont.)

"...Well," she says, "Prince Stallone Fanculo had a very distinctive bone in his stomach that had the shape of a dog, and if you feel here..." -

(FRED gently beckons MARCY to touch his stomach).

FRED (cont.)

That's right, go ahead, touch it..."you can feel the dog-shaped bone..."

(MARCY touches FRED'S stomach).

FRED (cont.)

RUFF! RUFF! RUFF!

(FRED barks like a dog, very savagely and loudly, at MARCY who jumps away).

EDWARD

Christ!

(MARCY runs to the door. It is locked. SHE runs to the other door. Also locked. SHE advances on FRED).

MARCY

Let me out of here!

FRED

You can't go out! You've got to face the truth, Marcy! I'm not keeping you in. You're keeping yourself in. You're constipating yourself with all these useless details.

(There is a thud in the toilet. FRED freezes).

EDWARD

Who's in there?

FRED

No one.

(EDWARD runs to the toilet, tries door)

Stay away from there!

(EDWARD doesn't move).

I said, get away from there!

EDWARD

Why is that door locked?

(FRED moves quickly to MARCY, pulling a gun out of his jacket pocket. SHE attempts to scream, but HE stifles HER)

FRED

Do not scream. If you do, I will blow your head into the toilet back there. If you cooperate, I will let you go peacefully. No one can hear you. Dolores and I have completely sound-proofed the walls. The doors are locked. The telephone lines have been cut. And there is plenty of toilet paper. But, there is nothing to be alarmed about.

(to EDWARD)

You!

FRED (cont.)

(FRED throws HIM the keys)

Open the toilet door. We are going to continue our session.

(FRED draws MARCY next to the closet door. EDWARD hesitates)

Open it!

(EDWARD does so)

Now, drag him out of there.

(EDWARD drags HERB out. HE is bound and gagged, and in a seated position).

Don't tell me he fell off it again. He had a comfortable seat on the throne back there, but now he's going to face the big one.

(HERB shakes his head violently at this. FRED whips EDWARD across the back with his gun)

Come on, Edward, you're a strong boy. Put him in that chair.

(EDWARD pulls the shaking HERB into a chair).

Put another rope around him to stop him from trying to abdicate.

EDWARD

What rope?

FRED

In the toilet, boy, and bring out the eighteen-rollers as well.

(FRED covers HIM with his gun as EDWARD goes into the toilet, and reappears with two eighteen-roll packs of toilet paper and a long rope)

FRED (cont.)

Alright now, Marcy, you place those two chairs on either side of Herb, and you, Edward, hogtie the King to his throne.

(HERB, who has been fidgeting, is tied securely to the back of his chair)

FRED (cont.)

Alright, Edward, sit down to the right of the King. You will be Prince Charming. And you, Queen Marcy, place the bibles there between you, Prince Charming, and the King.

MARCY

What bibles?

FRED

Those eighteen-rollers there. Set them up like coffee tables in front of His Royal Highness and next to the Prince.

(MARCY obliges FRED).

FRED(cont.)

Now sit down, my Queen, next to His Royal Highness, and place your right hand on a Bible.

(MARCY does so)

FRED (cont.)

Now raise your right hand.

(Pause).

Do you solemnly swear to tell the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, so help you, Herb?

(silence)

Do you!!

MARCY

I do.

FRED

I swear?

MARCY

I swear.

(FRED is momentarily distracted by MARCY when EDWARD seizes his chance to go for FRED'S gun. The sudden movement makes FRED drop his weapon. FRED quickly picks it up and fires it at EDWARD. There is an explosion, but EDWARD remains standing, frozen to the floor. MARCY screams but FRED quickly silences HER by aiming it full in her face)

FRED

Must have been one of the blanks. I was expecting the young, rash Prince to make an attempt to save his Lady Love. But what the young fellow does not understand is that the gun is indeed loaded with two real bullets, but we don't know which cylinders are going to do the dirty.

(MARCY and EDWARD look seriously at FRED).

FRED (cont.)

Good. Now that we understand each other, we can begin our family therapy. Marcy and Ed, I want you to join hands in Holy Unity.

(THEY do so).

FRED (cont.)

Great. Now, go to it. Relate.

MARCY

What do you want me to do, Fred?

FRED

Dr. Stone to you, my Queen. Go on, relate. It doesn't matter who starts.

EDWARD

We don't understand.

FRED

No, you don't understand. I want you to relate, Prince.

EDWARD

Who to?

FRED

To Your Queen.

(to HERB)

Isn't that the way it's done, My Liege, just tell them to do it?

MARCY

What do I do?

FRED

What's the matter with the two of you? You start talking to each other. We're relating now, we're going to talk.

MARCY

You want us to talk to each other?

FRED

I want you to relate.

MARCY
What should we relate about?

FRED
Anything!

(to HERB)
What should they talk about?

(to OTHERS)
Ah, don't ask Him anything. He's got nothing to say.
(to MARCY)

Find out about your Prince. Look out for someone else
instead of always thinking about your lousy dancing career.

(HE indicates her psychological
questionnaire on his desk)

FRED (cont.)
I mean, that is what you do, yes? You're a dancer?

MARCY
Find out what?

FRED
Relate meaningfully! Commit!
(to HERB)
I'm on the right track now, King Herb?

MARCY
Ed?

FRED
Prince Edward?

MARCY
Prince Edward?

EDWARD
Yes?

FRED
Yes, My Queen!

EDWARD
Yes, My Queen?

MARCY

Do you know what he's on about?

FRED

No! Not me! You!

(to Edward)

My Prince, grab hold of both hands of your Queen.

(EDWARD does so).

Remember, you're on a spiritual trek. Be the participants.
Now...Marcy?

MARCY

I guess we'd better do what he says.

FRED

DO WHAT I SAY!

MARCY

Uh, Prince Edward?

EDWARD

Yes, My Queen?

MARCY

What do you do?

FRED

(to HERB)

I knew she'd ask that.

EDWARD

For a living?

FRED

What else'd it be for? You're a job category, My Prince,
believe it.

EDWARD

Well...

FRED

Come on, My Prince, open yourself up.

EDWARD

Well...I've sold computer dating systems for some years now. Outside of that I have very little time, but I'm working on -

FRED

On what? On having more time?

EDWARD

Yes.

FRED

Don't answer me. My Queen?

MARCY

You're into computers, Prince Edward?

FRED

(to HERB)

"Into" - I love it.

EDWARD

I love computers.

FRED

And? Tell us about your goddamn computers.

EDWARD

Well, they've brought us all a complete revolution in information storage. There is so much information out there, so many details to process. My job is to take this info in, bunch it up and send it out in neat little packages.

MARCY

Sounds like you tie the ribbon?

FRED

Bravo! Very good, My Queen! Come on, really tie the knot, now. Relate.

MARCY

Another question, Dr. Stone?

FRED

If that's how you do it, My Queen.

MARCY

Sounds like you have no time for social activity, Prince Charming?

FRED

Are you kidding? After his eighteen-hour days?

EDWARD

You mean, do I go out to bars?

FRED

Don't be so proletarian, My Prince. Clubs, elegant soirees, balls, polo. Not bars.

EDWARD

To be honest, after work, I'm so tired I just go to bed.

MARCY

How old are you, My Prince?

EDWARD

Early thirties. What about you, My Queen?

FRED

Bor-ing! Bor-ing!

MARCY

Mid-twenties.

FRED

Yeah, right?!

MARCY

I am!

FRED

Yeah? How mid?...Look you two, if King Herb weren't gagged up, he'd be yawning right now. Let's get going.

EDWARD

My Queen, what's your boyfriend like, aside from his resemblance to me?

FRED

Now we're getting somewhere.
(HE prods MARCY with the gun)
Your boyfriend! Your boyfriend!

MARCY

We've been seeing each other for some time.

FRED

"Seeing". I love the verb. Does he let you see his front piece?
(HE prods MARCY with the gun).
Come on, explore your feelings towards Joe. Relate! Commit meaningfully!

MARCY

Lay off me!

FRED

Dr. Stone. Now don't forget the transference, and above all, don't be afraid to project.
(to HERB)
That's telling them right?
(prodding MARCY)
Come on, I'm in a rush.

EDWARD

To go where?

(FRED levels the gun at EDWARD and pulls the trigger. Once again the gun fires, but EDWARD remains standing)

FRED

DON'T GET ME MAD, ED! One more time and you're gone. You're very lucky that was another blank!
(HE jumps away from EDWARD, and opens the cylinder chambers of his revolver for all to see. There are four blanks with black dots on them, and two bullets with red dots. FRED spins the chamber, and levels the gun at THEM)
The red dots are bullets...Well, come on, My Queen. You keep telling us Prince Edward looks like Joe...

MARCY

I don't see the connection.

FRED

The Prince is your boyfriend now. Talk to him as if he were Joe, get it? Go on!

MARCY

I pretend he's Joe?

FRED

That's right. Joe is Edward, Edward is Joe.

MARCY

I'll try.

FRED

Prince Edward? All you do is sit back and enjoy it.

MARCY

I just wish...

FRED

(prodding EDWARD with gun)

Help her!

EDWARD

What?!

MARCY

I just wish he'd make something-

FRED

"You", Marcy. "You". Pretend the Prince is your boyfriend.

MARCY

I just wish you'd make something of your life. I-...

FRED

That's good, that's very good, My Queen.

MARCY

I-...just wish you'd go out there and take what's yours, because I need you to give of yourself to me, but unless you've got what it takes yourself, unless you feel you can stand on your own two feet...like that, Dr. Stone?

FRED

That's perfect, My Queen!

(to EDWARD)

Hear that? "Stand on your own two feet!"

MARCY

...unless you feel you can stand on your own two feet, by yourself, even though I want you, I can't let myself be pulled down...

EDWARD

Pulled down?

MARCY

That's right, "...pulled down by these endless periods of self-hate coupled with that bitch always interfering -

EDWARD

Who are you talking about?

FRED

You're so thick!

MARCY

She's always telling you what to do-

EDWARD

Who is?

MARCY

She's got you under her thumb. She's telling you what to do, don't you see?

EDWARD

My mother?

MARCY

Yes.

EDWARD

No, she isn't -

MARCY

She is!

EDWARD

No, she isn't! What are you talking about? If you're getting sucked in here, Marcy, by all this talk -

MARCY

She is! Of course she is! I try to do my best, I try to believe in you, but she's holding you back, can't you see, you're an emotional cripple, she needs her little boy to confide in. Look at you! And maybe you're trying, maybe you are. But why, why would she always tell me, "He always used to try hard, even when he was a little boy...", as if you weren't trying anymore -

EDWARD

Try what? My Queen, you're talking to Edward.

MARCY

And it gets me so mad when I hear that. "...He was such a sweet little boy. That's what she's always saying now.

EDWARD

(to FRED)

What is she doing?

FRED

She's going into it.

MARCY

"...I used to take you on my lap. You were so sweet."

EDWARD

I see what you're trying to do!

FRED

Good, Edward.

MARCY

"...I'd take you down for malts..."

EDWARD

I understand!

FRED

Keep quiet!

MARCY

"...and you'd always order the chocolate ones,..."

EDWARD

Strawberry ones! You watch it, Marcy. I don't know where you're getting your information but I'm not going to stand for too much of -

FRED

Shut up, or do the same!

MARCY

"...and you'd always be satisfied..."

EDWARD

You're moving into dangerous territory-

MARCY

"...not like the other little buggers. You were much more appreciative. And I brought you up to be polite, to say please and thank you..." -

EDWARD

Yeah?! And what has it done for me?

MARCY

"...just the way I was brought up..."

EDWARD

You goddamn little -

FRED

Now, now, Eddie...

MARCY

Why did you let her change you?! Why did you have to change!

EDWARD

(to MARCY)

I didn't have to change and I haven't changed. And you know that. You're just snooping and prying like you always have and like you always will, trying to make me say something I don't want to say.

MARCY

Don't let your mother change you!

EDWARD

It's not my fault!

FRED

Of course it is!

EDWARD

It's not my fault!

MARCY

Of course it is! You're letting it happen! You won't defend yourself.

EDWARD

Why did you have to tell everybody about those strawberry malts? You know that was between us!

MARCY

"...Such a sweet little boy!..."

EDWARD

There are people around here and they're all listening to us. You didn't have to tell them. I told you to keep it to yourself. I'll always be your son, you know that! I'm not going to leave you in the lurch now! I'm trying to make you understand! I'm trying -

MARCY

But you're not trying hard enough! I'm talking to you now but you're not listening. You're screaming away, stonewalling anything I say. You're being held back, don't you understand that. You're not letting yourself go! I'm telling you.

EDWARD

You're not going to tell me anything, you little slut! I saw that guy sneaking around behind Dad's back, massaging you on the carpet. You didn't think I saw that! You thought I was in school but I was watching from the side! I've seen what you'll do for a favor. Don't try and run me down when you were screaming like a cat on that carpet!

MARCY

You seemed to like it. We were having a great time until SHE called! And then Mommy's little boy had to answer the telephone! And there she was again, laying all over us like a smelly blanket.

EDWARD

I'm on your side, don't you see! We're equals now but all you do is talk down to me. How long is it going to take you to understand that I'm an adult just like you are?

MARCY

You're a Peter Pan, you're screwed up, I know this, but you've also got other qualities, you're so gentle, you're so cute sometimes -- but sometimes, sometimes I feel so alone. Oh God, I don't know what takes over me anymore -- and then you come through for me, you plug that void, maybe you don't even know it, you fill me in.

EDWARD

I'm always coming through for you, doing your crap! Don't you think I have anything else to do? And then you make these demands, and talk to me about all your lousy, shitty friends. They're wasting my time and so are you, do you understand my meaning?! You're wasting my goddamn time!

FRED

I love it! Both of you!

MARCY

Your nasty smile, I want it...and I'll rub your feet for you, I'll cook for you, anything, but you've got your own life...we, we're together, you and me...and I know you make mistakes, but I just sit here helplessly while you make them, because...

EDWARD

I make mistakes because I'm constantly dealing with what you want so I can never deal with what I want and need. Don't I have the right to live my life!?

MARCY

What about my life?! What about my life with you?! I'm not really a part of your life, am I? Not me. Not me! She is! The bitch! She is!

EDWARD

You know how you've always felt about my friends? You never wanted them there in the place. They weren't good enough for you or Dad, so how did you ever expect me to bring a woman around? I wouldn't even want a woman in the place because you'd always be criticizing her! You think you're smarter than any woman around!!

MARCY

...She thinks she can do everything better than me, right, yeah! She says she can, well...let me tell you...I can do better than her, sure I can, I'm not gonna feel hurt anymore, no, I'M NOT GONNA FEEL HURT ANYMORE!...

EDWARD

She's not going to hurt you, don't you understand that! So why do you want to hurt her? It's going to work out. You know it will. But you don't want it to because you might lose control. You know something? You've already lost control.

And all you're doing now is holding me back! You're holding me back!

MARCY

I am not holding you back!

EDWARD

Yes you are!

MARCY

I'm not your mother!

EDWARD
You're holding me back!

MARCY
I'm not your mother!

EDWARD
You're holding me back!

MARCY
I'm not your mother, I'm not your mother, I'M NOT YOUR MOTH-
E-E-R-R-R-RRR!!

(Silence)

FRED
Thank Herb you're not mine either.
(to MARCY)
How old are you?

MARCY
What?

EDWARD
I think he wants to know how old you are.

MARCY
(to FRED)
What are you talking about?

FRED
Well?

MARCY
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT!!?

FRED
Ok. Tell me how old Joe Edward's mother is.

(MARCY lets out a loud prolonged
scream).
(Silence)

FRED (cont.)

What do we do now, Herb? The one-on-one? Eh? The one-on-one?!

(MARCY is now bent over and sobbing in her chair.)

MARCY

I'm feeling sick. Can I go to the bathroom?

FRED

Number one or number two?

MARCY

Please!?

FRED

Edward, go in and drag out the culprit.

(EDWARD hesitates, but then FRED shoves HIM violently with his gun. EDWARD walks inside the closet and wheels out the sculpture. It is an extremely regal, five-foot tall toilet with a marble back. On the right of it is a fully-operable, huge chrome flushing lever. The bowl is three-quarters finished).

FRED (cont.)

(staring at HERB)

To think I could never finish it for you. Now, we come to the big one!

(HERB begins to shake violently.
To EDWARD)

FRED (cont.)

Go on. Untie him and put him on his throne where he belongs.

(EDWARD drags HERB out of the chair and puts HIM up on the toilet seat, into which HE falls slightly).

2-1-87

FRED (cont.)

Now, open up one of those Bibles and toss me a roll. Marcy and Edward, you'll be finishing up the sculpture. Watch me, and start with the feet.

(FRED demonstrates this by walking around HERB with the toilet paper, wrapping his feet and the legs of the chair first).

FRED (cont.)

Like that. But don't cover his head. I want him to see all of this.

(Throughout the following speech, MARCY and EDWARD each take a roll and, imitating FRED, follow each other around HERB, wrapping him from foot to neck. FRED continues to wave his gun and a roll of toilet paper at them as HE speaks)

FRED (cont.)

Looks like the toilet's full of shit now. Get ready for the big one!

(HERB shakes his head violently)

Right, Herb? You would have had a lot of work to do with these two, but now that work is mine. And it won't take me another ten years to finish them off either.

(to MARCY and EDWARD)

What do you think this guy can do for you, sitting up there on the throne, watching everyone else? What do you think he sees? You think he's capable of understanding your problems with your boyfriend, Marcy? And what about old Ed's maternal babbling? His information anxiety, and robot-directed angst? Are you kidding? Old Herb, farting away on ye old and quaint shitbox up there, charging \$350/hour to analyze others while his own life runs amok?

(to HERB)

How about it, Herb? You ready for the big one?

(HERB is trying to rock out of the toilet, but HE is stuck in. FRED has run to the closet door and is pointing

2-1-88

to the "Toilet" sign written above it)

FRED (cont.)

That's right! I've found a place for you all! Waddle down from your lofty heights and shut yourselves in back there! Right back there!

(FRED is now jumping up and down and pointing at the closet door)

FRED (cont.)

That's where you belong! That's where you should stay! You know what the problem is?! Do you know what the problem is?! Do you?!!

(HE opens the toilet door and slams it shut).

FRED (cont.)

We don't spend enough time in there! WE DON'T SPEND ENOUGH TIME IN THERE!!

(HERB's head is still shaking violently. Pushing MARCY and EDWARD aside, FRED runs over to HIM and finishes the final wrapping of HERB's head in toilet paper.

All of a sudden, there is a NOISE and a FLASH OF LIGHT and DOLORES MUJER is standing at the entrance, taking in the whole scene. SHE is the same build as MARCY, and about the same age, and is wearing a massive blond wig. As SHE moves, a REAR SPOTLIGHT follows HER, completely effacing her features and exaggerating her silhouette to ridiculous effect. SHE pulls out a long, sharp, wooden hair pin from her hair and holds it threateningly in the air)

DOLORES

(approaching)

Hello, Freddie.

FRED

Oh please, Dolores.

DOLORES

You went too far, Freddie.

FRED

I know. I didn't mean to.

DOLORES

Of all Herb's patients, we didn't expect it of you.

FRED

I know. Please spare me.

DOLORES

After all this time. Shame on you, Fred.

FRED

Please, Dolores, I didn't kill him.

DOLORES

It doesn't matter.

FRED

He'll be alright later.

DOLORES

You understand, it's not my decision. I do what I have to do. Lie down at my feet now, and I'll make it extremely soft for you.

(FRED lies down at her feet, his body in the embryo position).

FRED

You won't hurt me?

DOLORES

You won't feel a thing.

(The spotlight still behind HER, SHE stands atop HIM, straddling HIM with her

2-1-90

legs. Holding her hair pin with both hands, SHE raises them slowly, as if SHE were about to perform a ritualistic killing)

DOLORES

Fred?

FRED

Yes?

DOLORES

Do you want to work for me?

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY