

Success!
a musical play by
Michael Johnson

"Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need."
-Emily Dickenson

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Cast of Characters

<u>ENTOURAGE:</u>	Timothy's devoted trio of followers
<u>TIMOTHY O'KEEFE:</u>	a notable art critic
<u>NICHOLAS QUITE:</u>	a metrosexual, adoptive brother of Gregory
<u>CHARLES LEANDRES:</u>	a gallerist
<u>GREGORY QUITE:</u>	a painter, adoptive brother of Nicholas
<u>STREET KID:</u>	a street kid
<u>AMANDA WOLANSKI:</u>	a gallerist
<u>GAZLAY:</u>	a landlord
<u>MIKEY:</u>	a painter
<u>JULIE:</u>	a Wall Street professional
<u>NORA GALLAGHER:</u>	a painter
<u>COMPANY:</u>	partygoers, waiters, a hostess, patrons

Scene

Brooklyn, New York, and Portland, Oregon

Time

The beginning of the 21st century.

ACT I

Prologue

[Brooklyn, New York. A chilly November evening in the SHHH gallery where NICHOLAS QUITE is employed.] Upstage, a spacious counter top supports an opulent spread of expensive meats, cheeses, wines, soft drinks, fruit, and chocolates flanked by high stacks of crystal tumblers and wine glasses. The whole spread is decorated with flowers and flanked by a gigantic ice sculpture of a swan. At stage left a flight of stairs leads up to an upstage loft area. In large letters across the back wall are painted the words "Gregory Quite: Success". TIMOTHY O'KEEFE is surveying the paintings while scribbling in a little notebook. Following him around the gallery are his ENTOURAGE: three young, attractive, fashionable hipsters who are all wearing trucker hats. Music starts: Quodlibet For Cool Kids.

ENTOURAGE

WHO IS THIS GALLERY KIDDING,
PASSING THIS CRAP OFF AS ART?
THE SUBTEXT IS OVERBEARING.
IT'S RELIANT ON CLASSICAL TROPES.

HIS LINES ARE TOO CONFINING.
A BLATANT NOD TO BACON.
HE'S FULL OF CRUDE ROMANTICISM.
VACUOUS AND EMPTY.

I AGREE WHOLEHEARTEDLY.
HE THROWS THE PAINT HAPHAZARDLY.
COMPLETE INSCRUTABILITY.
SOMEONE BURN HIS ART DEGREE!

HIS VISUAL MUTATIONS
OF TACTILE SENSATIONS
JUST LACK IMAGINATION.
HE DROWNS IN SELF-INDULGENCE.

CLAUSTROPHOBIC HEAPS OF PAINT!
HYPERBOLIC IMAGERY!
WOEFULLY CONVENTIONAL!
DRAB COMPARATIVELY!

HE'S A SELF-INDULGENT ROMANTIC
WITH AN OBVIOUS LOVE FOR CEZANNE.
HIS DATED CULTURAL VISIONS
ARE ALMOST BUZZINGLY DULL.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ENTOURAGE (cont'd)

TRITE PHYSICAL REPRESENTATION.
CONTRADICTIONALLY REPRESSED.
DEVOID OF ALL HUMANITY,
HE DREDGES UP TIRED IMAGERY!
OPPRESSED BY HIS INFLUENCES!
VACUOUS AND EMPTY!
ABYSS OF CONSUMERIST CULTURE!
SOMEONE BURN HIS ART DEGREE!

BUT, WAIT! LET'S HEAR FROM TIMOTHY.
OH, WHAT DO YOU THINK TIMOTHY?
YES, WHAT DO YOU THINK TIMOTHY?
TELL US, TIMOTHY, WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The music stops as ENTOURAGE holds a tense chord on "Hmm". TIMOTHY considers his notebook. He rips out the page he's been scribbling on, crumples it, and speaks.

TIMOTHY

(to the COMPANY)

I love it. It's ambitious, uncompromising, a feast for the senses.

ENTOURAGE stops humming and lets loose cries of agreement. They ad lib things like "Oh, yes, I love it too.", and "Brilliant!", and "I couldn't agree more." They go silent as soon as TIMOTHY speaks again.

TIMOTHY

But, I have to be honest. He's a nobody.
Without a name, without a reputation, I'm afraid
I can't possibly do a feature on him.
Gregory Quite will have to resign himself
To painting pictures in a world
Where nobody knows he exists.

ENTOURAGE sings under TIMOTHY in barbershop style as he sings the following:

TIMOTHY

GREGORY QUITE WILL NEVER BE SUCCESSFUL,
HE'LL NEVER SELL A PAINTING, NOT IN THIS LIFE AT LEAST.
HE'S THE KIND OF ARTIST WHO WILL NEVER BE SUCCESSFUL,
NOT UNTIL WELL AFTER HE'S DECEASED.

Music begins for Something Special, as TIMOTHY exits followed by his ENTOURAGE, who are nodding and ad-libbing in agreement. As soon as TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE leave, NICHOLAS appears at the top of the stairs, spreading his arms, smiling wide, and slowly descending.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Welcome!

As soon as he speaks, a flock of chattering, attractive, fashionable PATRONS flood in from the wings and backstage, among them is CHARLES LEANDRES, looking very excited.

COMPANY

WELCOME!

NICHOLAS

Welcome!

COMPANY

WELCOME!

NICHOLAS

Welcome!

COMPANY

WELCOME!

During the following fantasy sequence, NICHOLAS and CHARLES circulate, chatting and selling the paintings. CHARLES talks to the PATRONS and puts red stickers on the walls next to the paintings while NICHOLAS buzzes around the stage, mingling as he sings.

NICHOLAS

WELCOME! MY FRIENDS WE'RE SHOWING SOMETHING SPECIAL.
AN ENERGY IS BUZZING THROUGH THE GALLERY.
WELCOME, MY FRIENDS, TONIGHT IS VERY SPECIAL.
SPECIAL AS I'M SURE YOU'LL AGREE!

HAVE SOME STRAWBERRIES OR SPARKLING WINE,
COOKIES, CRACKERS, CHEESE.
THE CAVIAR WILL SIMPLY MAKE YOU SWOON.
THOSE GORGEOUS GRAPES ARE JUST DIVINE,
BUT WATCH OUT FOR THE SEEDS.
YOU'LL FORGIVE ME OF COURSE
IF MY VOICE SOUNDS HOARSE;
I'VE BEEN SHOUTING ALL AFTERNOON

ABOUT TONIGHT! TONIGHT YOU'RE IN FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL:
THE WORK OF MY ADOPTIVE BROTHER GREGORY.
POOR BOY'S BEEN SLAVING OVER SOMETHING SPECIAL,
SOMETHING THAT I KNOW YOU'LL WANT TO SEE.

GATHER 'ROUND AND WITNESS HISTORY.
WHY HE'S STILL OBSCURE'S A MYSTERY.
SO STEP RIGHT UP AND BUY ONE.
THE SHRIMP ARE SCRUMPTIOUS TRY ONE!

(CONTINUED)

COMPANY

THEY'RE SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL, INDEED!

Music resumes under the following.

CHARLES

(approaching NICHOLAS)

Nicholas, your brother's paintings are a hit!
They're eating them up! My gallery is saved!
You said if I only gave him a show, we'd pull through.
You were right, Nicholas! You're a genius!

NICHOLAS

Oh, Charles. An eye for beauty just runs in my family.
Do you doubt it? Take a look at me:

*CHARLES and the guests swirl around NICHOLAS as
they sing.*

BOYS

HE BUYS HIS SUITS AT NORDI'S.

GIRLS

HIS SHIRTS HE BUYS AT SAK'S.

NICHOLAS

THE SALESGIRLS THINK IT'S SPORTING
WHEN I SCRUTINIZE THEIR RACKS.
THEY'RE ALWAYS UP FOR HAGGLING
BEFORE JUMPING IN THE SACK.
YES, THE BEST POSTURE FOR BARGAINING
IS LYING ON YOUR BACK.

GIRLS

HE ALWAYS SHOWS UP TARDY
TO A FASHIONABLE PARTY,

BOYS

SO AS TO SHOW THE HOSTESS
WHO IS BOSS.

NICHOLAS

AND WHEN FINALLY I ARRIVE
THE DYING SHINDIG COMES ALIVE,
AND WHILE I ENTHRALL HER GUESTS
SHE GETS MORE AND MORE DISTRESSED,
'TIL THE HARPY LEAVES
THE PARTY TO ME
AND RUNS OUT TO GET SAUCED.

BUT YOU SOMETIMES SEE
A PART OF ME
THAT'S GENTLE AND REFINED.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

A NIGHT OUT AT THE SYMPHONY
HELPS ME TO UNWIND.
I DEVOUR GREAT THICK NOVELS
I DRINK UP HEADY PLAYS.
OF COURSE I HAUNT THE GALLERIES
AND NOT JUST ON FIRST THURSDAYS.

GIRLS

ALL THE SPA GIRLS FIGHT FOR HIM
WHEN HE GOES IN FOR A RUB.

BOYS

ALL THE BOUNCERS BOW TO HIM
WHEN HE PULLS UP TO THE CLUB.

NICHOLAS

RIISING FROM MY SILVER CAR, I'M QUITE A SIGHT TO SEE
OH, BUT PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, MY FRIENDS,
PLEASE, TAKE IT EASY, FRIENDS
PLEASE, THAT'S ENOUGH ABOUT ME!

YOU'RE HERE TONIGHT
BECAUSE WE'RE SHOWING SOMETHING SPECIAL
THE ATMOSPHERE IS FRAUGHT WITH ELECTRICITY.
YOU LUCKY SOULS ARE IN FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL...

*A tense chord sounds as suddenly reality kicks in:
the PATRONS begin to drift off the stage. NICHOLAS
wanders among them, protesting and motioning for
them to stay. The music continues as CHARLES peels
the red stickers off the walls and again
approaches NICHOLAS, this time wearing a sour
expression.*

CHARLES

Nicholas, you're fired.

NICHOLAS

Come again, Charles?

CHARLES

This gallery is struggling. No press.
Not a single painting sold.
I trusted you, Nicholas. God knows I trusted you.
I took a risk on your brother and, surprise!
He came up short. You both came up short.
Now, here's what's going to happen:
I met an artist in Portland through your friend Nora.
Unlike you and your brother, he's very dependable.
I'm canceling this show and putting up his work.
You can pull these paintings down,
Clear out all of your things,
And leave your key on the way out.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(with a distracted expression)
Yes, Your Highness.

CHARLES

And you're going to pay me back
Every cent you wasted on this, this...

NICHOLAS

Swan. It's a swan.

CHARLES

Whatever. Do you understand?
Tomorrow. All of this. Gone.

NICHOLAS

Gone in a hiss of flame and a puff of smoke.

CHARLES

Good.

NICHOLAS

It's settled, then.

CHARLES

(extending his hand)
Goodbye.

NICHOLAS

(not shaking it)
Indeed.

*CHARLES exits, leaving NICHOLAS alone on stage.
Downcast, he heads to the bar and pours himself a
drink.*

AH, YES, TONIGHT, TONIGHT COULD HAVE BEEN
SOMETHING SPECIAL.

IF NOT FOR MY ADOPTIVE BROTHER'S MEDIOCRITY.

I COULD REALLY HAVE MADE THIS EVENING SOMETHING
SPECIAL.

AS IT IS IT'S ONLY A DREAM.

Scene 1

*[Same.] Enter GREGORY QUITE, Looking disheveled as
though he hasn't slept in days. He wears a rumpled
coat, a hat, and gloves. He rushes into the
gallery, shivering, wiping back tears, with one
hand in his pocket. He shuts the door and notices
NICHOLAS with a start.*

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(appraising him)

Gregory.

GREGORY

(moving his hand from his pocket)

Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

(opening a bottle)

Krug Brut?

GREGORY

I'll pass. You're enjoying father's money.

NICHOLAS

Not father's money. Charles's money. I blew through
Most of the money father left us supporting you.

GREGORY

He didn't leave it to us. He left it to me.

NICHOLAS

Fine. But he charged me with helping you manage it.

GREGORY

Nice job you did, blowing it on your luxury life.

NICHOLAS

(laughing)

Ah, yes. My luxury life. Financed in part
By my lucrative occupation as a salesman of art.
A job I added to my resume of menial "work"--
Shoe salesman, perfume peddler, front desk clerk--
Only to support my deadbeat brother's "painting habit",
Not to mention to pay for the cold water flat we
inhabit.

GREGORY

You call the crumbs you've been tossing me support?
And your jobs! Six months on a job, and you fall apart.

NICHOLAS

What can I say? The 9 to 5, the swing shift;
They're certain death to a man of my sizable gifts.
Anyway, if you're so concerned, why fob
The responsibility off on me? You could get a job.

GREGORY

I'm a painter. Matisse didn't have a day job.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

You compare yourself to Matisse? He was a savant;
He achieved immortality. Is *that* what you want?

GREGORY

What artist doesn't?

NICHOLAS

Artist? An artist makes art. You hardly do that
anymore.
And the few paintings you manage to squeeze out nobody
will give us any money for.

GREGORY

(stung)

Rub it in, why don't you? Their indifference isn't my
fault. I can't influence public opinion.
I just make the paintings. You're the salesman.

NICHOLAS

And I can't give them away. Your work doesn't sell. And
after I walked through nine circles of Hell To convince
Charles to let you have a show.
He was so angry he canceled this exhibit and let me go.

GREGORY

He fired you? I suppose that's also my fault.

NICHOLAS

Isn't it? If you'd put yourself to use,
Instead of letting me do all the work while you play
the brooding recluse.

GREGORY

Please. Your schmoozing and sharking got you fired.

NICHOLAS

I schmooze and shark because I'm tired of being poor.
I'm tired of breakfasting on beans while my adoptive
brother sleeps on the floor.

GREGORY

Well, now we've got nothing.

NICHOLAS

(with a dark tone)

We always have each other.

GREGORY

(softening)

I wonder why you stuck with me all these years. When
Father died, why appoint yourself my guardian? I mean,
Father left me everything and didn't leave you a penny.
Is that why you stuck around? Was it the money?

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Well, someone needed to see to it you spent it wisely.

GREGORY

Callous son of a bitch. You've always hated me.

NICHOLAS

Oh, cry me a river. When my father took you in, you were a penniless orphan. So the old hypocrite keeled over before his time. What was I to do then? Leave you to fend for yourself in the world alone? Money or no money, you'd have shriveled up and died on your own.

GREGORY

Well, so now what are you going to do?

NICHOLAS

Hang on. What am I going to do? What gives, Gregory? Why are you here? Come to make a withdrawal? Beg for a loan? The money's all gone. I can't throw you a bone. And why so rude? Are you trying to get rid of me?

GREGORY

(approaching the paintings)

Just leave me alone. I want one last look before I go.

NICHOLAS

Gregory, what's that heavy thing in your pocket?

GREGORY

What? Nothing.

NICHOLAS

Gregory Quite. Going to teach the world a lesson? Have a hot date with Mr. Smith and Mr. Wesson?

GREGORY

Just get out, Nicholas. Let me get it over with.

NICHOLAS

(amused)

Good idea. As much as I enjoy our little bull sessions, I'm going to the club to drown this depression.

(putting on his coat and driving gloves)

Well, I guess this is goodbye, Gregory, blah blah blah. Get some blood and brain matter on a canvas. Now *that* might sell! Ta, ta!

NICHOLAS exits. Music starts: The Ballad Of Gregory Quite. GREGORY takes out the gun. He

(CONTINUED)

begins to sob as he considers the gun for a moment, weighing it in his hands, visibly repulsed and frightened by it. He places it on the counter, then paces the room, inspecting his paintings. He picks up the one from the floor and appraises it lovingly. He hangs it again, steps back, and pretends to interview himself.

GREGORY

FOR TWENTY ODD YEARS THE ART WORLD SUFFERED A DROUGHT
THEN ALONG CAME MY GUEST ON THE PROGRAM TONIGHT
A MAN WHOSE LIFE STORY WE ALL KNOW BY ROTE,
PLEASE WELCOME GREGORY, GREGORY QUITE.

MR. QUITE, TAKE US BACK TO THAT TERRIBLE TIME
BEFORE YOU WERE FAMOUS, A HOUSEHOLD NAME
WHEN CRITICS WERE CALLING YOUR WORK THIRD RATE.
BEFORE YOU WERE GREGORY, GREGORY QUITE.

WELL, NOT LONG AFTER OUR FATHER DIED
MY BROTHER MANAGED TO GET MY WORK DISPLAYED
OF COURSE, NO ONE CAME AND I FELT MY HEART DEFLATE.
IT WAS THE END OF GREGORY, GREGORY QUITE.

SO I CUT OFF ALL TIES AND I WANDERED IN SHAME
THROUGH THE WET, EMPTY STREETS: NO FRIEND, NO HOME.
FOR THREE WEEKS I DRIFTED LIKE A GHOST, PROSTRATE.
THE SHADOW OF GREGORY, GREGORY QUITE.

THEN ONE NIGHT I MANAGED TO GET HOLD OF A GUN.
A VOICE INSIDE ME SAID, "GO, AS FAST AS YOU CAN!"
STICK IT IN YOUR MOUTH AND ELIMINATE
THIS PATHETIC GREGORY, GREGORY QUITE.

BUT THEN SOMETHING ABOUT SEEING MY WORK ON THE WALL
LIFTED ME OUT OF THAT SPIRALING HELL.
AND I HEARD AN ENCOURAGING WORD FROM ABOVE
TELLING ME TO LIVE, AND I WANTED TO LIVE, I WANTED
TO...

Scene 2

[Same.] NICHOLAS rushes into the room, interrupting the music. Panting, he pockets his driving gloves.

NICHOLAS

Ah, Gregory! Still alive.

GREGORY

What happened? Did the bouncer refuse your bribe?

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

He didn't have a chance. I didn't get that far.
I was gliding up to the curb in my expensive silver car
When I thought of you, so passionate, so resilient.
At first I thought you were pathetic. But now I think
you're brilliant.

Music starts: Your End Will Be Your Beginning.

GREGORY

What do you mean?

NICHOLAS

Just what I said.
GENIUSES LIKE YOU
SELDOM EVER DO
GARNER FAME AND FORTUNE WHILE ALIVE.
YOUR PEERS THINK YOU A PAIN
'CAUSE YOU GO AGAINST THE GRAIN.
IT'S A WONDER THAT YOU EVEN CAN SURVIVE.

YES, A GIFTED TYPE LIKE YOU
WILL NEVER BE WELL-TO-DO.
YOU'LL STAY OBSCURE UNTIL YOUR FINAL BREATH.
BUT WHEN YOU BITE THE DUST, GIVE THANKS,
FOR YOU'LL JOIN THE SWOLLEN RANKS
OF THE PAINTERS WHO GET FAMOUS AFTER DEATH.

GREGORY

What are you talking about?

NICHOLAS

I know it sounds cliché,
But allow me to furnish you with exhibit A:
OLD VAN GOGH
SHOT HIMSELF, YOU KNOW,
CUTTING SHORT A PITIFUL CAREER.
HE SOLD ONE WORK,
BRIBED A POSTAL CLERK,
AND SENT SOME LUCKY TART PART OF HIS EAR.
RAVING MAD,
THE MASOCHIST WAS GLAD
TO GIVE UP ART AND GO OFF LOONY BINNING
NOW THE MOMA IS HIS HOME AWAY FROM HEAVEN.
YES, HIS END WAS HIS BEGINNING.

GREGORY

That's a tired stereotype.

NICHOLAS

Stereotypes are grounded in reality.
To wit, exhibit B:
PAUL GAUGUIN

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

WHAT A SELFISH MAN
HE LEFT HIS WIFE AND KID FOR PARADISE.
DOWN AND OUT,
HE SOON FOUND OUT
THE SOUTH PACIFIC WASN'T VERY NICE.
HAD HE TAKEN A CLASS
INSTEAD OF CHASING NATIVE ASS,
HE MIGHT HAVE STOPPED HIS MEAGER FAN BASE THINNING.
NOW HIS YELLOW CHRIST IS TWICE THE PRICE, THANK HEAVEN.
FOR HIS END WAS HIS BEGINNING.

The Music continues under the following.

NICHOLAS

It all reminds me of that exhibit we saw that December
We were backpacking through Europe. Remember?

GREGORY

A bunch of paintings by an orphaned Jewish girl. So?

NICHOLAS

So? A heartbreaking story. Poor girl went through hell.
After the Nazis killed her family, she was smuggled
To safety by a pastor, one Fritz Friedrich, who
struggled
To keep her alive, Well,
FRITZ AND HIS WIFE
FRIGHTENED FOR HER LIFE,
HID HER WHERE THE NAZIS WOULDN'T LOOK.
BY WEAK CANDLELIGHT
SHE LABORED DAY AND NIGHT
MAKING LITTLE PAINTINGS IN A BOOK.
THEY CAUGHT FRITZ;
SHIPPED THEM ALL TO AUSCHWITZ,
BUT THE BOOK WAS HIDDEN IN AN UNDERPINNING,
NOW THE PAINTINGS SELL FOR MORE THAN THE COST OF THE
WAR,
YES, HER END WAS HER BEGINNING.

Music continues under the following.

GREGORY

Get to the point, Nicholas. What does this have to do
with me?

NICHOLAS

Both down-and-out, both artists, both martyrs.

GREGORY

I survived.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(darkly)

True. Now let me tell you how you're going to die.

Music stops abruptly on tense chord.

GREGORY

Nicholas, I already told you...

NICHOLAS

I'm not finished!

YOU'RE GOING TO TAKE THESE PICTURES DOWN
AND PILE THEM ON THE GROUND.

MAKE A LITTLE PYRE HERE ON THE FLOOR.

TURN THE OVEN ON AND WAIT

AS THE GAS FUMES PERMEATE

THEN THROW AWAY YOUR KEY AND BAR THE DOOR.

ONCE YOU'VE SET THE SCENE

DOUSE YOURSELF WITH GASOLINE

AND, LITTLE BROTHER, HERE'S THE CRUX OF IT:

JUST LIE DOWN ON THE PILE, CATCH

YOUR BREATH AND LIGHT A MATCH,

AND BLOW YOURSELF AND EVERYTHING ELSE IN HERE TO BITS.

Of course, your suicide won't be real.

You'll be hiding at our place until after the funeral.

GREGORY

You want to stage a funeral?

NICHOLAS

Stage a funeral, yes. How clever you are.

Soon after, you'll purchase a beat up old used car.

GREGORY

What for?

NICHOLAS

So you can relocate: to Portland, Oregon.

GREGORY

You want me to fake my death and drive to Oregon?

NICHOLAS

That's right.

GREGORY

You're crazy. Why?

NICHOLAS

So you can disappear: while I make your name!

ONCE THEY LEARN

OF HOW THE GALLERY BURNED,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

AND OF YOUR MALAPROPOS DEMISE,
HOW YOU LIVED ADRIPT
DESPITE ENORMOUS GIFTS,
DOLLAR SIGNS WILL FLASH IN THEIR EYES.
ONCE THEY FIND
THE WORKS YOU LEFT BEHIND
WATCH THEIR WILD WEeping TURN TO GRINNING.
WITH YOUR HEAD IN THE SAND, YOU'LL BE IN DEMAND
AND YOUR END WILL BE YOUR BEGINNING.

GREGORY

But how will I live if I'm dead?

NICHOLAS

LIKE A KING!
DON'T WORRY ABOUT A THING.
LEAVE YOUR PAST BEHIND YOU AND FORGET IT.
I'LL ADMINISTRATE
THE SALE OF YOUR ESTATE
AND SEND YOUR CUT THE MOMENT THAT I GET IT.

GREGORY

But what about Amanda? I was thinking of...

NICHOLAS

Focus, Gregory!
FORGET THAT TART!
THE HARPY BROKE YOUR HEART.
SHE'LL KICK HERSELF THE MOMENT THAT YOU'RE WINNING,
AS SHE READS ABOUT YOUR WEALTH IN EVERY JOURNAL ON THE
SHELF.
YES, YOUR END WILL BE YOUR BEGINNING!
Come on!
YOU WANT FAME?
LIGHTS AROUND YOUR NAME?
DROP THE CURTAIN, BOY, AND TAKE A BOW.
YOU'LL RISE WHEN YOU FALL
TAKE YOUR CURTAIN CALL,
BRING OUT THE FAT LADY NOW.
SING A SWAN SONG
YOU'VE RUN THE BASES FOR TOO LONG.
THE GAME IS OVER. IT'S THE FINAL INNING.
LEAVE THIS CRUEL, CRUEL WORLD,
LIKE THAT LITTLE JEWISH GIRL.
LIKE HOGARTH, TURNER, THOMSON
Cut your losses and move on, son!
LIKE EAKINS AND EL GRECO,
LET YOUR VOICE FOR EONS ECHO.
TAKE THE "F" AND "A" FROM "FAMOUS"
AND PUT "P-O-S-T-U"- Whew!
STOP ACTING LIKE A SCHLEP.
TAKE THAT FINAL STEP.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

YOUR END WILL BE
HAPPY AND FREE.
YOUR END WILL BE
BETWEEN YOU AND ME.
YOUR END WILL BE YOUR BEGINNING!

*The music reaches a big finish. NICHOLAS looks
intently at GREGORY.*

GREGORY

Fake my death. It feels drastic, but it's tempting.

NICHOLAS

Little brother, this is it. This is your future.

GREGORY

(after a pause)
My future.

NICHOLAS

You can't go on like this: poverty-stricken, suicidal,
Obscure. Blaming the world for your failures...

GREGORY

No. I can't do that.

NICHOLAS

(crossing to the bar, grabbing a piece
of paper and pen, and starting to write)
I'm writing to Charles, telling him where to go.
I'm writing you to say Charles canceled the show.
Now I'm reprimanding you for not showing,
Saying everything is your fault and that I'm going
To the pub to drown my sorrows.
(finishing the letter)
They're on the bar.
They'll back up our story, if they aren't charred.

GREGORY

What story?

NICHOLAS

You came in after I closed up, read about the show
And about me getting fired, and decided to blow
Yourself and everything else in this place
Into outer space.

GREGORY

Nicholas. Do you think it will work? Is it possible?

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Haven't I always told you? Anything is possible.

GREGORY

But where would we get, you know, a body?

NICHOLAS

Gregory, don't be grim. Everything will be taken care of. Now, I'll need that necklace you always wear.

GREGORY

My mother's necklace? What for?

NICHOLAS

What for? Think! When the police come poking around And find that old necklace that's always hanging around Your neck, they won't think twice about what happened here.

Now hand it over. Gregory. You've nothing to fear.

GREGORY slowly removes from around his neck a long silver chain with a porcelain pendant of powder blue roses. He kisses the necklace and hands it to NICHOLAS.

GREGORY

Take care of it, Nicholas. It's all I have left of her.

NICHOLAS

Easy, little brother. It's me. Now give me the gun.

GREGORY

The gun? I thought I was going to burn myself alive.

NICHOLAS

You are. But it's less painful to burn yourself dead. After you lit the fire, you shot yourself in the head.

GREGORY

That makes sense.

NICHOLAS

Now give me your clothes. Quickly.

GREGORY disrobes as NICHOLAS heads up to the loft area and reemerges carrying a change of clothes.

NICHOLAS

(handing the clothes to GREGORY, who promptly changes into them)

Remember, only we two can know you're still alive. No one else must know you survived.

All of my friends, plus your one or two,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

Will attend your funeral to bid you "adieu".
Don't spook them out by turning up again someday
For a drink and a chat or a roll in the hay.
Don't call, write, or set foot in this city. Moreover,
Your painting days are over.

GREGORY

I can't paint? Why?

NICHOLAS

A dead artist's work is more valuable if it's rare.
Promise you won't paint. Promise you wouldn't dare.

GREGORY

I won't. I won't paint. I promise. Wait!
Nicholas! My suicide note.

NICHOLAS

(He hands GREGORY a pen and a piece of
paper)

Gregory, I'm impressed. Yes, tell them the whole story.
Tell them everything. Include all the gory
Details. Make it passionate. Make it ardent.
Then stick it in the mail slot. The box is flame
retardant.

GREGORY

Okay. Finished.

GREGORY slips his note into the mail slot.

NICHOLAS

Good. Now go! Leave the rest to me.
You're doing the right thing, Gregory.

GREGORY

You're right. I know. A chance to start fresh.

NICHOLAS

A clean slate. I can't help but envy you.

GREGORY

Nicholas, I...Thank you.

NICHOLAS

See you back at the apartment.

*GREGORY exits through the back door. NICHOLAS
slips on his driving gloves, goes out into the
garage, and reenters carrying a can of gasoline.
He places the gas can next to the bar, pockets the
gun, and, composing himself, moves cautiously over*

(CONTINUED)

to the glass doors. He stands in the doorway, searching for something. His face brightens as he finds it.

NICHOLAS

You there! Excuse me.

A STREET KID, matching GREGORY in appearance, enters through the doors. NICHOLAS, though repulsed by him, flashes him a warm smile.

STREET KID

What you want?

NICHOLAS

(sizing him up, still smiling)

I see you hanging around this corner quite a lot.

STREET KID

Yeah? Well, quiet, industrial part of town.
Nobody comes down here much.
Would be the perfect place to hang out
If you people weren't gentrifying it.

NICHOLAS

Let me make it up to you. This show is closed, you see.
I need someone to take these paintings down. Won't you help me?

STREET KID

What's in it for me?

NICHOLAS

(indicating the spread)

How long has it been since you've had a meal?

STREET KID

You're on.

STREET KID begins taking down the paintings as NICHOLAS backs slowly toward the bar. Something occurs to him.

NICHOLAS

Wait! The oil from your fingers will tarnish the paint.
Use these.

He hands a pair of rubber gloves to STREET KID, who puts them on and resumes his work.

NICHOLAS

Just pile them up around the divan.
That's it. Good man.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS picks up a bottle of wine as STREET KID, not paying attention, continues working.

NICHOLAS

You know, I can't help but admire a guy
Like you. Out there on your own. Living free.
Listen, I don't mean to pry,
But don't you have any friends, any family?

STREET KID

I ain't got nobody that gives a shit about me.

NICHOLAS

Yes, yes, I see. It's a pity.
So you mean you've got nobody?

STREET KID

What are you, my parole officer?

NICHOLAS

(with a soothing laugh)
No, no, of course not. Forgive me.

NICHOLAS practices swinging the bottle, then picks up the gun, weighs it in his hand, and aims it at STREET KID. After a short couple of beats, the paintings are all down.

STREET KID

There. All done.

NICHOLAS swiftly places the gun in his pocket and the bottle back on the counter as STREET KID removes the rubber gloves and hands them to him.

NICHOLAS

Good, good! Now sit. Sit! You've done great.
Take a load off, my friend. I'll make you a plate.

NICHOLAS sits STREET KID down on the divan with his back to the bar. He crosses back to the counter and picks up the bottle, sliding one hand into his pocket.

NICHOLAS

Krug Brut? It's champagne.

STREET KID

Sounds fancy.

NICHOLAS

(coming closer)
How about some filet mignon?

(CONTINUED)

STREET KID
Oh, yeah.

NICHOLAS
(right behind him, carefully drawing the gun)
You'll love it. It's flame broiled.

NICHOLAS quickly places the gun to the STREET KID'S temple. Black out. In the darkness a shot rings out followed by the sound of NICHOLAS's sobbing.

Scene 3

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. AMANDA WOLANSKI'S apartment.] The stage is dark. A spotlight comes up on the front door at the top of the stage left staircase. We hear laughter as a key jiggles in the lock. The front door opens. AMANDA WOLANSKI and TIMOTHY O'KEEFE enter together. They are both dressed for a funeral. They pause at the top of the stairs.

AMANDA
Well, I don't see it. I don't think it's true
What people are saying about you.

TIMOTHY
What? What are they saying?

AMANDA
That being the town taste maker has gone to your head.

TIMOTHY
I like to think it hasn't. Will you be all right?

AMANDA
I think so. I've just never had an ex- commit suicide.
It's a strange feeling. Anyway, thanks for the ride.

TIMOTHY
What are friends for? You shouldn't be alone.
Do you need someone to talk to? I could stay.

AMANDA
All right. I guess you can stay
For a quick drink. Quick, okay?

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA flicks on a light. Stage lights come up to reveal her simple, orderly, modern loft apartment. Music starts for We Should Be Friends as the two descend the stairs, AMANDA heading for the bar to pour drinks and TIMOTHY sitting on the sofa.

AMANDA

HE'S KIND OF CHARMING.
HUNKY AND TALL.
COOL AND DISARMING.
BUT AREN'T THEY ALL?
HE'S A MAN.
LIKE OTHERS I'VE
KNOWN:
HE CAN BE TRUSTED
ONLY AS FAR
AS HE CAN BE THROWN.
I'LL GO FILL HIS
GLASS,
HE'LL KISS MY ASS,
OR MAKE A PASS,
ONLY TO SNUB ME.
AND THINK THAT LATER
WITH A WORD,
I'LL BE SOME ABSURD
LITTLE BIRD
IN HIS MENAGERIE.
I MEAN HE'S NICE
ENOUGH.
SEXY SINCERE.
HIS KISSES WOULD FEEL
ROUGH.
AND HAVING HIM NEAR...
BUT HE'S A MAN
LIKE ALL OTHER MEN.
THE GAMES THEY PLAY:
"I SHOULD GO. I SHOULD
STAY."
WE SHOULD BE FRIENDS.

TIMOTHY

YOU'VE GOT TO BE
TACTFUL.
YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE
SLOW.
YOUR TIMING IS
EVERYTHING.
DON'T GO ALL GUNG HO.
SHE'S THE ONE, SHE'S
THE ONE,
SHE'S THE ONE!
BUT HER EX- IS DEAD.
WAIT. BE PATIENT AND
WAIT.
DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD.
YOUR MOMENT WILL COME.
BUT FOR NOW,
SHE NEEDS SOMEONE
TO TALK TO.
SOON, IF YOUR PATIENT,
SHE'LL COME 'ROUND,
YOU'LL BE THERE.
YOU'LL HELP HER
THROUGH.
BUT FOR NOW
YOU'VE GOT TO JUST
LISTEN.
JUST SHOW HER YOU'RE
HERE.
JUST OFFER A SHOULDER,
JUST LEND HER AN EAR.
SHE'S THE ONE, SHE'S
THE ONE,
SHE'S THE ONE!
SHE'LL BE YOURS IN THE
END.
BUT FOR NOW, CALM
YOURSELF DOWN.
JUST BE HER FRIEND.

TIMOTHY

Listen, Amanda, I was thinking-

The door buzzer interrupts. AMANDA, as if suddenly remembering something, looks at her watch, hands TIMOTHY his drink, and rushes to the front door and presses a button on the intercom.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

Come on up!

AMANDA leaves the front door ajar, descends the stairs again and crosses back to the bar.

TIMOTHY

Are you expecting someone? So late?

AMANDA

No one special. Just Nicholas Quite.

Right on cue NICHOLAS appears at the door. He is also dressed for a funeral. He appears downcast. He gives AMANDA a warm smile as he descends the stairs. They embrace.

NICHOLAS

Amanda. Imagine. Having to chase you all over the place
At my own brother's funeral.

AMANDA

That look on your face:
So sweet and desperate.

NICHOLAS

Why are you closing your eyes?

AMANDA

(playfully)
You said you had to give me something. A surprise.

NICHOLAS

I see. All in good time. You'll like it I think.

AMANDA

(resigned)
Oh, fine. I suppose you'd like a drink?

NICHOLAS

Please. A martini. After today I'll need a double.
But you needn't go through the trouble.

AMANDA

I won't. Make it yourself.

NICHOLAS

Fresh glass?

AMANDA

Top shelf.

(CONTINUED)

*AMANDA sits on the sofa next to TIMOTHY as
NICHOLAS crosses to the kitchen and begins to mix
a drink.*

NICHOLAS

And if it isn't the prince of the social butterflies,
Timothy O'Keefe!
What brings you to alight on Amanda's little leaf?

TIMOTHY

I gave her a lift from the funeral home.
I'm very sorry about your brother, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

Yes. It was quite an ordeal. Thank you.

AMANDA

Nicholas. Your brother. It must be awful for you.

NICHOLAS

Awful's a word you could use. Dreadful, grave,
terrible. Any of those would do.

TIMOTHY

It must have been terrible, the night he died.

NICHOLAS

(looking down)

Even terrible doesn't describe it. I was horrified.
The corpse was lying all burned up in a pile of debris.
Some lazy, jaded old detective made me I.D.
The body before he'd give us a moment alone.
It was Gregory all right. You know his silver chain?
The one with the little blue roses made of porcelain?
It was still clinging to his singed collar bones.
His gloves had melted around his charred fingers.
The stench of burned flesh and gasoline- it lingers.
At least he felt no pain. They found a gun next to his
head.
Evidently after he lit the fire, he shot himself dead.
When I read his suicide note my head started to swim.
I stayed with him every moment until they cremated him.
Poor Gregory. So many things I could have said.
I imagine he could hear my speech from the dead.

TIMOTHY

(after a beat)

He would have liked it. You have a way with words.

NICHOLAS

(composing himself)

Well, that's quite a compliment coming from you,
This town's most influential art critic.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

(becoming choked up)

Nicholas, do
You think our breakup had anything to do with...

TIMOTHY

Amanda, don't blame yourself.

AMANDA begins to cry.

NICHOLAS

Yes, Amanda. Gregory harbored no ill will.
He was devoted to you. He probably is even still.

AMANDA

I didn't mean to hurt him. It's just that...

NICHOLAS

Yes, we know. No one blames you. Dry your eyes.
It's time for your little surprise.

AMANDA

Keep it. I'm not in the mood.

NICHOLAS

Oh, come on. The funeral's over. Why sit and brood?
We can't have the dark clouds over us all day.

TIMOTHY

(comforting AMANDA)

That's right. Let's see it, Nicholas. Bring it in.

NICHOLAS

Right away!

*TIMOTHY puts AMANDA'S glass down and sits up
straight on the sofa, playfully covering her eyes
as NICHOLAS exits and re-enters carrying a large,
flat, rectangular brown paper package. He leans it
against the stack of paintings stage left and
unwraps it.*

Viola!

AMANDA

(opening her eyes and seeing the
painting)

Oo, la la!

NICHOLAS

"Reclining Girl with Ginger Hair"

TIMOTHY

(inspecting the painting)
Is that Gregory's signature?

NICHOLAS

The one and only. It's a portrait. Of Amanda.

AMANDA

Of me?

AMANDA examines the painting.

NICHOLAS

(to AMANDA)
Do you like it?

AMANDA

It's amazing, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

He left behind others.

AMANDA

Others like this?

NICHOLAS

Well, they aren't all of you.

AMANDA

(laughing through tears)
That's not what I mean.
How many?

NICHOLAS

Around eighteen.
Some are less beautiful. Some are more.
It pains me to look at them. I wish I could just store
Them somewhere. Lock them away, but...

TIMOTHY

But what?

NICHOLAS

But I have to sell them.

AMANDA

You have to? I don't see...

NICHOLAS

(gravely)
It was his dying wish. To honor my brother's memory
I gave my word that I'd be the steward of his legacy.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

I see.

NICHOLAS

And a show at your gallery ought to...

AMANDA

I don't think so, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

But yours is the most sought
after gallery around.

What better place to get Gregory's work off the ground?

TIMOTHY

Nicholas, it's difficult to sell a dead artist's work.
Gregory would have to have had a name, a buzz.

NICHOLAS

He's already getting a buzz! After the service tonight,
As I was leaving to come here, a collector came right
Up and offered me four hundred for "Reclining Girl".
When I turned down his offer, saying it was worth five,
He offered me six! Would that have happened when
Gregory was alive?
There's nothing like death to endear an artist to the
world.

AMANDA

Nicholas! That's wonderful! So you sold this one?

NICHOLAS

(composing himself)

Well, no. I refused the vulture. I mean, the body's
still warm.

And yet, after word gets around, can you imagine how
the collectors will swarm?

AMANDA

I'll get my calendar.

AMANDA exits to the bedroom.

NICHOLAS

And Timothy, guess how happy I was walking
In here to speak to Amanda and running into you
As well. You could whip us up a little review.
Something tasteful, not overdone, just to get people
talking.

TIMOTHY

Hang on. I write art criticism, not ad copy.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Oh, I'm not suggesting that you write an ad.
But you, my friend, are our fashion leader.
Once you report to your distinguished readers
The tragic story of how Gregory died,
We won't be able to keep collectors away if we tried.
Your word alone would bring in buyers, is that so bad?

TIMOTHY

Of course not, but-

NICHOLAS

Besides, we all know that from Donatello to Lam,
There's only one thing that makes these smudges and
scribbles worth a damn.

TIMOTHY

And what's that?

NICHOLAS

You said it yourself: the artist's reputation.

TIMOTHY

Nicholas, as I said; I'm an art critic,
I'm not some mechanism in service to the art market.
I write important criticism of important work.

NICHOLAS

Of course, you do. Please, don't misunderstand.
As I told you, this wouldn't be just propaganda.
After all, they show important work at Amanda's
Gallery, don't they? Why not lend her a hand?

I KNOW SHE'D BE GRATEFUL,
Nay, INDEBTED TO YOU,
IF YOU WROTE THAT FATEFUL,
DECISIVE REVIEW.
JUST IMAGINE
WHAT SHE'D DO FOR HER SAVIOR:
TAKE YOU DOWN TOWN,
SHOW YOU AROUND,
OH, SHE'D RETURN THE FAVOR.

The music continues under the following.

TIMOTHY

I see where you're going with this.

NICHOLAS

It's settled, then?

AMANDA enters.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

What's settled?

NICHOLAS

Timothy is in!

AMANDA

Oh, fantastic.

AMANDA joins TIMOTHY on the couch and kisses his cheek.

TIMOTHY

(getting flustered)

I'd better get started if I want to make our deadline.
Goodnight, Amanda.

AMANDA

(tenderly)

Goodnight, Timothy.

NICHOLAS

(kissing AMANDA'S hand in a grand
gesture)

Yes, I'm off as well. We'll meet up another night
To discuss the details.

AMANDA

(tenderly)

Goodnight.

NICHOLAS

Sleep tight!

*NICHOLAS and TIMOTHY head toward the door and
AMANDA crosses to GREGORY'S painting.*

NICHOLAS

ARE YOU LISTENING, BROTHER?
MEET MY NEW FRIENDS.
ALTHOUGH WE CAN'T STAND EACH OTHER,
NONETHELESS WE PRETEND.
THAT'S THE BUSINESS.
IT'S CRUEL BUT IT'S TRUE.
YOU CAN'T CONDEMN
ME; I'M USING THEM,
BUT THEY'RE USING ME, TOO.

I COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT ALONE.
NOW I'VE KILLED TWO WITH ONE STONE.
YOU'D SAY I'M LUCKY.
BUT LUCK IS A FOUR-LETTER WORD
NEVER UTTERED

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

BY LUCKY MEN:
MEN WHO CONTEND
THAT FRIENDS
ARE A MEANS TO AN END.

AMANDA

ISN'T HE CHARMING?
STYLISH AND TALL.
WITTY DISARMING.
SO ON THE BALL.
HE'S A MAN
UNLIKE OTHER MEN.
HE HAS REAL PASSION
HE FOLLOWS FASHION
WE SHOULD BE FRIENDS.
HE WANTS NOTHING LESS
THAT HIS LATE
BROTHER'S SUCCESS.
I THINK THAT'S LOVELY.
A MAN THAT KIND,
SO SELFLESS, SO
REFINED,
IS SO HARD TO FIND
AND SO I INTEND
TO BE HIS FRIEND.
YES, WE SHOULD BE
FRIENDS.

TIMOTHY

I THINK SHE LIKES ME.
I SAW THAT SMILE.
SHE'S THE ONE,
SHE'S THE ONE
SHE'S THE ONE AND SHE
KNOWS IT.
BUT WAIT, BE PATIENT A
WHILE.
YOU DON'T WANT TO BLOW
IT.
YOUR MOMENT WILL COME;
FOR NOW SHE KISSED
YOU. FOR NOW I'LL BE
GOING,
BUT I THINK WE'RE
GROWING
INTO MORE THAN
JUST FRIENDS.
WON'T IT BE BLISS?
BUT BE PATIENT, AND
WHEN
YOU SEE HER AGAIN
YOU WON'T BE JUST
FRIENDS!

As the music comes to a close, TIMOTHY and NICHOLAS exit. AMANDA yawns, takes one more look at the painting, begins removing her dress, and exits into the bedroom, turning off the light. Black out.

Scene 4

[Portland, Oregon. Night. GREGORY'S loft.] The stage is dark. MUSIC UP for Friends Playoff. Spotlight on GREGORY as he enters. He has disguised himself by shaving his head and growing a beard. Shivering, carrying a stack of art journals, he sits downstage and, reading by flashlight, greedily rifles through journal after journal. Behind him in the darkness the set changes. As the music comes to a close, we hear a loud noise from behind the stage left wall. GREGORY, visibly angry, walks up to the wall and

(CONTINUED)

slams his fist into it a few times. He takes out some matches and lights a series of candles, which are sitting downstage right on a white wooden box together with a non-functioning desk lamp and a dirty white mug. Also standing upstage left, at the foot of a tattered mattress, is a small fan. Piled on top of the mattress are white blankets and a white pillow without a pillowcase. On one side of the mattress is a white crate with some books inside it. On the other side, a pile of clothing spills out of a duffel bag.

After a moment we hear a knock at the door. GREGORY looks up, startled. He walks quietly toward the door and waits a moment.

GAZLAY

(from behind the door)

Newman?

GREGORY, looking annoyed, opens the door. GAZLAY stands in the doorway, his Hawaiian shirt covered in dust, utility belt stuffed full, a pencil in his ear, a drill under on arm, and his hands full of stacks of papers and some plumbing parts.

GREGORY

Gazlay. Wow. Full plate?

GAZLAY

(stepping inside)

You know it, buddy.

(with an oily smile)

So, FYI: I'm taking the owners
Of the building to court for shutting off our power.
Soon things'll be back to normal: heat, lights, hot
Water, just like the good old days, Eh?

GREGORY

(skeptical)

Will it? How do you know we'll win?

GAZLAY

Oh, We'll win. I got a hunch about these things.

GREGORY

Your flat has heat and light, right?

GAZLAY

Look, just expect to pay full rent
At the first of the month. Like normal.

Another noise sounds from behind the wall.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

We'll see.

GAZLAY

You can just slip the cash under my door.

Suddenly, MIKEY shows up at GREGORY'S door.

MIKEY

Yo, Newman. Step off, Gazlay.

GAZLAY

What's up, Mikey?

MIKEY

I'm out of goddamn candles again.
What's going on in this shit hole?

GAZLAY

(exasperated)

I told you,
I'm taking care of it, Mikey.

MIKEY

Yeah, right. You know what, Gazlay? This whole thing's
Probably all on you. It's written all over your face.

GAZLAY

What? I'm letting you use the candles, aren't I?
The Fire Marshall sees those and he'll have my ass.

MIKEY

Candles! How generous. What is this, like 1872?
I oughta go stick it to the freakin' owners myself.

GAZLAY

I'll handle the owners.

MIKEY

Oh? From where I'm standing it
Looks like they're your handlers.

GAZLAY

Just focus on your rent.

GAZLAY exits.

MIKEY

Fuckin' middleman. I ain't paying rent.
I ain't paying for shit. I sweat all day and
Then freeze my ass off at night. That's what I get
For renting a place just because it's cheap. I can't
Get any goddamn painting done in the goddamn dark.

(CONTINUED)

We hear another noise from next door.

MIKEY

(shouting)
Gallagher! What the fuck? A man can't hear himself think.

NORA enters the flat. She speaks with a Scottish accent. Her clothes are stained with paint.

NORA

What's all this shouting? Eh, Mikey? Haven't the police come for you yet?

MIKEY

Police? What are you talking about, police?

NORA

The police!
They woke me up at 3AM. Practically stormed the place
And dragged whatever-his-name-was out of here. There's
Nothing left in his flat. You mean you didn't hear?

MIKEY

I was out. What, the owners're sending in the cops now?

NORA

Could be the owners. Could be Gazlay for all we know.
Either way it's not good. Ask Julie, she saw it too.

JULIE enters.

JULIE

My ears were burning. What are you saying about me?

MIKEY

Hey, Slave-to-the-man, you saw somebody get ejected?

JULIE

Totally!

MIKEY

What, you couldn't pull some strings for him,
Miss Set-for-life? Don't you desk job types have
connections in government?

JULIE

I work at a bank, Mikey.
You think I have connections? You think I want to work
There all my life? God, if I stay there one more day
I'm going to become a burn out. The bosses keep piling
on the work. Nope, I'm going into business for myself
Someday. If you weren't such a
Bum you'd know how that works.

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

Hey, I paint for a living.

JULIE

Oh? You earn a living?

MIKEY

I, uh, get by.

JULIE

How's your rent coming?

MIKEY

I told you: I sell one painting, I'm set for the month.

JULIE

Sell a painting, huh? When's that likely to happen?

MIKEY

Soon.

JULIE

Mm-hm. Let's just focus on getting our power back.
I have a bunch of extension cords.
We could plug a big thick one into one of their power
Outlets, slip it through a hole in our floor
And use a power strip so each of us can feed off of it.

MIKEY

Oo, "plug a thick one in", "slip it through the hole."
It's a shitty plan, but I like how you're selling it.

JULIE

(mocking him)
I bet you do.

MIKEY

Hey, Gallagher, why don't you ask your friends
In the gallery downstairs if they'll let us use one of
their outlets.

NORA

Yeah, okay. They'll help us out. I'll ask them later.

MIKEY

It's dark. It's cold. How about you ask them now?

NORA

Not now. I only have a short break. I'm on the clock.

MIKEY

Fuck it. We'll talk to 'em. Come on, Corporate Cadaver.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE

Eat me, Mikey.

MIKEY and JULIE exit.

NORA

So, you're new here. Are you an artist?

GREGORY

No. I mean, I did some painting, in the past.
I tried to make a living at it, but it lost its allure.

NORA

In other words, you gave up.

GREGORY

I was tired of being ignored.

NORA

Sounds to me like you didn't work hard enough.
Get so good they can't ignore you, that's the trick.

GREGORY

I worked hard. But success is 10% hard work, 90% luck.

NORA

Bullshit.

GREGORY

It is. It's like a bunch of artists on a cliff
During a storm. Each one's wearing a lightning rod
On his helmet. They all struggled to get up there,
They all earned it. But only one gets struck.

NORA

How sad.
I assume the lightning represents acclaim, money, fame?
You're one of those artists I can't stand: big dreams.

GREGORY

What, you don't have dreams?

NORA

Me? Yeah, sure.
I came to The States to "make it". Just like you.
My parents wanted me to finish art school in Glasgow,
But I thought here I would be more likely "get lucky."
At first I couldn't leave my house, I was so scared.
God, I was suicidal every time nobody came to a show.
Every unsold painting felt like a rejection, a setback.
Of course, once I started getting into my work,
I stopped caring so much about leaving my mark
On the world. I mean, some days it was hard enough just

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NORA (cont'd)

To leave a mark on the canvas. Eventually the last
Thing I thought about was getting famous and rich.

GREGORY

Sell one painting, you're set for the month.

NORA

Pretty much.
But it's more than that. I love to paint: the smell
Of paint, the feel of paint, the colors all
Gooped together. I geek out in art supply stores.
I get lost in my work. Everything else is a waste of
time. I don't care
About the "busy work" of life: eating, shitting,
drinking, even sex.
(reconsidering that last)
Well...

GREGORY

What's your stuff like?

NORA

I try not to label it. It's a sort of post-Dadaist take
On immigration and consumerism in the United States.
I make these giant prints of different rancid meats,
Mount them to canvasses, and then paint American cereal
Box cartoon characters shagging them.

GREGORY

(laughing)

Sounds surreal.

NORA

Laugh it up. At least I do my work. Every day, same
Thing: wake up, coffee, paint. When's the last time
You picked up a brush?

GREGORY

Why bother? No one cares.

NORA

You care. And, more importantly, so does your muse.

GREGORY

My muse abandoned me.

NORA

Sounds like you abandoned her.
Luckily she's forgiving. You show up, she'll be there.
Just get yourself in front of that canvas: same place,
Same time. That way she always knows where to find
you.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

I wish I believed that.

NORA

What's to believe? Just do it.
You're a painter: paint. All you need is a plan.

GREGORY

Oh, I have a plan.

NORA

Do you? What's your plan then?
You plan to be a successful painter by sitting around
Not painting? Not a good plan. I'll tell you what,
I have an idea: You need discipline. Because I'm a nice
Girl, I'm going to be help you find it. I'm going to be
Your art Yoda. Vis-a-vis art, you'll do everything I
say.
Got it?

GREGORY

Alright.

NORA

Good. Begin your training now we shall.
First things first: you're going to need some supplies.
I have some extra paints and brushes back in my flat.
You can have them. As far as a canvas goes,
You can just paint over one of my mess-ups.

Music starts: It's Good To See You Muse

GREGORY

You'd do all
That?

NORA

Sure. By the way, your name's Newman? Newman what?

GREGORY

Jair Newman.

NORA

Jair Newman? What kind of name is that?

GREGORY

My mother was a Turkish Muslim. My father was Jewish.

NORA

That's quite a combination. I'm Indian slash Scottish.
(offering her hand)
Nora Gallagher. Okay, hang on for just a sec,
I'll go get you the stuff. I'll be right back.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

Thanks.

NORA exits.

GREGORY

I'VE SPENT SIX MONTHS LYING BALLED UP ON THE FLOOR
SINCE I GAVE YOU UP, NOW HERE YOU ARE.
TELL ME I'M FORGIVEN.
AFTER SIX MONTHS SHAKING OFF EVERY PANG OF INSPIRATION
YOU'RE BESIDE ME AGAIN.
AND I'M ALMOST HUMAN.
AND IT'S GOOD.
OH, IT'S GOOD.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.
I CAN SEE YOU WHEN I CLOSE MY EYES.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.
IT'S TRUE, THEN, WHAT EVERYONE SAYS:

WE FIND YOU RIGHT WHEN WE STOP LOOKING,
SPEAK TO YOU WHEN WE STOP SPEAKING,
RACE TOWARD YOU WHEN WE'RE STUCK IN GEAR.
SUCH A SWEET SURPRISE.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.

Music continues as NORA comes in, carrying a large canvas, a paint-splattered satchel filled with art supplies, and a bucket of white paint.

NORA

Here it is, Newman. It's huge, right?

GREGORY

Wow. Yeah. Here, let me help you with that.

The two of them get the canvas over to the upstage wall.

NORA

And, as a service to the art world, I hereby deliver
You this bucket of white paint. Do us all a favor
And paint over this monstrosity.

GREGORY

I will.

NORA

And That's not all.

She pulls out a pink Hello Kitty alarm clock.
You'll need this.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

An alarm clock?

NORA

This is my special alarm clock: Hello Kitty. It woke Me up every morning when I first got to The States. It holds loads of good memories. Set it to whatever time, but when it goes off, You get out of bed, walk over to that canvas, and get Started. No matter what.

GREGORY

What if I'm not inspired?

NORA

Tough.
Just show up. I'm going to come by every morning, so Make sure you're in front of that canvas.

GREGORY

Why are you
Helping me?

NORA

Good question. Why would I take away time From my work to help some slacker? I suppose it sounds lame,
But, for one, you remind me of myself. For two: you're Kind of cute. For three: the art world doesn't need another layabout. Know what I mean?

GREGORY

(shy)
So I can just paint over this?

NORA

Yeah, sure.

GREGORY

Thanks.

NORA

Ok, back to work. See you, Newman.

NORA exits. GREGORY turns and looks at the canvas. He begins to cover the canvas with white paint as he sings.

GREGORY

AFTER SIX MONTHS CIRCLING BLOCKS ON ENDLESS WALKS
TALKING TO NO ONE, I SEE TWO SETS OF TRACKS
ON THE BEACH BEHIND ME.
AFTER SIX MONTHS SCOURING JOURNALS FOR MY NAME
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY (cont'd)

IN VAIN AND GIVING UP, HERE YOU COME.
PUT YOUR ARMS AROUND ME.
IT FEELS GOOD.
SO GOOD.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.
WITHOUT YOU MY LIFE HAS BEEN DRY.
I WONDER WHAT WE'LL DO.
I TRUST YOU TO SHOW ME THE WAY.
SO FAR I'VE BEEN JUST SURVIVING,
SCRAPING BY AND BARELY LIVING.
NOW I FEEL MYSELF EVOLVING.
CHANGE WILL COME SLOW, GOD KNOWS,
BUT IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.
I'M OPEN TO WHAT YOU HAVE IN STORE.
CAN YOU GIVE ME JUST A CLUE?
WHAT COLORS WILL WE PULL OUT OF THIN AIR?
ORANGE SKIES OVER FIELDS OF YELLOW?
PURPLE WATER, REDDISH DEW?
GRAYISH LANDSCAPES, GREEN IN WINTER'S THAW?
THE TENDER BLUE OF ROSE.
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, MUSE.

GREGORY finishes whitewashing the canvas. He steps back, looks at the giant blank white canvas, sets his brush down and sits, rocking back and forth, trying to get an image to form in his mind.

Black out.

Scene 5

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. AWE Gallery.] The music for Muse Playoff plays as a spotlight comes up on TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE, who are downstage center. Behind them in the dark the set changes. TIMOTHY is seated, typing on a laptop, his ENTOURAGE, wearing cowboy shirts and thick rimmed glasses, are standing behind him, looking over his shoulder, taking in every word. As the music finishes, TIMOTHY sings:

TIMOTHY

GREGORY QUITE'S AMAZING SHOW "SUCCESS"
IS REOPENING THIS WEEKEND DOWN AT "AWE GALLERY."
HIS FLAME BURNED BRIEF AND BRIGHT, BUT IT WILL
SHINE AMONG THE BEST OF THEM.
FOR DETAILS SEE MY FEATURE IN THE A&E.

(CONTINUED)

TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE exit as the the music starts for Something Special (Reprise). The lights come up to reveal the gallery run by AMANDA WOLANSKI. Hung on the light gray walls are paintings lit by elegant track lighting. Most of the paintings have red stickers next to them indicating they have been sold. A large, red cushioned sofa shaped like a peanut dominates the center space. Potted plants are everywhere. At stage left, large glass doors have burnished slightly off center the words "Amanda Wolanski Enterprises, Gallery, Inc." Next to the front doors, a HOSTESS stands takes coats and welcomes people. The staircase stage left leads up to a set of French doors. Large white letters on the back wall read "Gregory Quite: Success". The gallery is crowded with wealthy and fashionable patrons with drinks in their hands talking or gazing at the pictures. WAITERS float from guest to guest, carrying trays of fancy snacks and glasses of champagne. NICHOLAS and AMANDA appear, flinging open the French doors. Everyone applauds.

BOTH

WELCOME, TONIGHT WE'RE SHOWING SOMETHING SPECIAL
THE ATMOSPHERE IS FRAUGHT WITH ELECTRICITY.
YOU LUCKY SOULS ARE IN FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL.
SPECIAL, AS WE'RE SURE YOU'LL AGREE.

NICHOLAS

WE'VE GOT CHILLED OYSTER COCKTAIL.
BRUSCHETTA WITH A WHITE PURÉE.

AMANDA

WE KNOW YOU'LL LOVE WHAT GREGORY HAS DONE.

NICHOLAS

DO ENJOY THE CRAB CAKES.

AMANDA

ANY QUESTIONS? ASK AWAY.

NICHOLAS

I'LL BE DAMNED IF THESE LOX
DON'T KNOCK OFF YOUR SOCKS.

AMANDA

ENJOY THE ART, HAVE FUN!

BOTH

SO GLAD YOU CAME, MY FRIENDS, IT'S SOMETHING SPECIAL
TO SEE THE PARAGONS OF OUR COMMUNITY
GATHERED HERE TOGETHER IN THE FLESH,
I'LL BET YOU REALLY LOVE WHAT YOU SEE!

(CONTINUED)

Music continues as NICHOLAS hands AMANDA off to some eager customers. A PATRON appears on NICHOLAS'S left and engages him in conversation.

PATRON

Nicholas. That painting on the left. It grows on me.

NICHOLAS

(playful)

Ah, "Solitude". It will be worth a fortune someday.

PATRON

How can you be sure? This Gregory Kite--

NICHOLAS

Quite. Gregory Quite. You've heard about him?

PATRON

(never having heard of him)

Well, naturally.

NICHOLAS

Then you know all about how in a suicidal rampage he
Set fire to himself and burned down an entire gallery.

PATRONS

Of course. Who doesn't know about that? So, he's dead?

NICHOLAS

Irrevocably. He even shot himself in the head before
The flames could get to him. I assure you he's no more.

PATRONS

I'll take it!

NICHOLAS

It's yours. My compeer Amanda is the one to talk to.
She's around here somewhere. I'll get her for you.
No, no, stay here. I'll go flag her down. Sit, sit!
Try the stuffed mushrooms, they're exquisite.

En route to AMANDA, NICHOLAS buzzes around the party, in his element, addressing various guests.

NICHOLAS

MY FRIENDS, YOU'VE MADE THIS EVENING SOMETHING SPECIAL.
I KNOW MY DEAR DEPARTED BROTHER GREGORY
WOULD SEE YOUR SMILING FACES AND FEEL VERY SPECIAL.
IF ONLY HE COULD BE HERE TO SEE.

DO DEVOUR A DEVEILED EGG,
OR A CRAB MEAT CANAPÉ.
THAT BROACH YOU HAVE ON, DARLING, IS FIRST CLASS.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

THAT DRESS ON YOU IS FLATTERING.
HEY, DOC, HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
THAT TIE IS BLARING!
TRY THE HERRING.
IT'LL KNOCK YOU ON YOUR ASS.

BOTH

YES, FRIENDS, TONIGHT WE'RE SHOWING SOMETHING VERY
SPECIAL.
WE'RE SO GLAD YOU MADE IT TO THE GALLERY.

NICHOLAS

DRINK UP, MY FRIENDS! TONIGHT IS

BOTH

SOMETHING SPECIAL.
SPECIAL AS I'M SURE YOU'LL AGREE.

*As the song ends, NICHOLAS approaches AMANDA, who
is standing stage right, talking to a patron.*

NICHOLAS

(in her ear)
I must speak to you alone.

AMANDA

I thought you'd never ask.

NICHOLAS

(Waving away the patron, moving AMANDA
downstage)
Now, now, darling, keep your mind on the task
At hand. That fellow with the plate of seafood,
He has his eye on "Solitude."
Take care of him, will you?

AMANDA

Will do.

*AMANDA crosses to the PATRON and engages him in
conversation. TIMOTHY, with his ENTOURAGE behind
him, appears on NICHOLAS'S right.*

TIMOTHY

(conspiratorially)
Congratulations on the show, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

Why Timothy O'Keefe! we're so glad you could come.
Did you try the pound cake? It's soaked with rum.

(CONTINUED)

TIMOTHY

Is it? You certainly know how to throw a party.

NICHOLAS

I try. Oh! I must thank you for the glowing review.
Four pages? I think that's going a bit far, don't you?

TIMOTHY

Anything to help out Amanda. And speaking of Amanda,
You two certainly seem to be getting along.

NICHOLAS

Oh, yes. Amanda and I go together like cigarettes after
sex.

TIMOTHY

(taken aback)

Is that right. So you're...together?

NICHOLAS

Together? Inseparable. We make the perfect team.

TIMOTHY

You and Amanda.

NICHOLAS

Who else? Is something wrong?

TIMOTHY

(in a low voice)

How could you? You know how much I wanted her.
I can't live without Amanda. I love her.
That article was supposed to have been my chance.

NICHOLAS

Relax. Play nice. I only need her for a little while.
You can have her when I'm finished. Now, smile!

TIMOTHY

But that's--

NICHOLAS

Business. Listen, I'd love to sit all day and chat
But if you'll excuse me, I see a greedy gent
Leering at a painting like a dog on the scent.
Mingle. Be our guest. Ugh. This champagne's flat.

*CHARLES enters through the glass doors looking
furious. He scans the scene looking for NICHOLAS,
and spots him standing with TIMOTHY. He approaches
the two of them looking livid.*

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

(holding back)
There you are, Nicholas.

TIMOTHY

(brightening, with effort)
Charles. Sorry to hear about your gallery.

CHARLES

(through gritted teeth)
Yes, thank you, O'Keefe.

NICHOLAS

Yes, Charles, you have all of our deepest sympathies.
Feeling yourself again, I see. Well, join us, please.
We missed you at the funeral a few months ago.
What brings you here to our little show?

CHARLES

Business. Let's go somewhere quiet.

NICHOLAS

(laughing)
Oh, Charles, you talk as if I'm still in your employ.
You can speak to me right here.
They won't overhear.
They're drooling over my late brother's pride and joy.

CHARLES

Fine.
(to TIMOTHY)
Give us a minute.

*TIMOTHY gives a polite nod, casts a dark look at
NICHOLAS, and drifts away to join his ENTOURAGE.*

CHARLES

I'll come right out with it.

NICHOLAS

Do.

CHARLES

Your brother burned my gallery down.

NICHOLAS

Yesterday's headlines, Charles. Old news.

CHARLES

I'm holding you responsible.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Oh, take a whiff Charles, before you shovel any deeper.
I am not my brother's keeper.

CHARLES

You're going to compensate me, Nicholas.
You still owe me from before.
I want a portion of the profits
From this show to cover my losses.

NICHOLAS

(loudly)
Are you completely heartless? Don't you have a care?
You lost a building. I lost a brother. It doesn't
compare.

*The party quiets down as people begin to stair at
the two of them.*

CHARLES

Keep your voice down.

NICHOLAS

(still louder, for the benefit of all)
Everyone has gathered here to pay their respects,
To soak up Gregory's work, to solemnly reflect,
And you come steamrolling in here demanding recompense.
Charles, you do me the highest offense.

CHARLES

(blustering)
I'll do worse than that!
I'll sue you for everything you're worth!

NICHOLAS

Charles! I must ask you to leave. You're forgetting
All decorum. I find your threats extremely upsetting.

CHARLES

(seething)
I'll go, Nicholas. But believe me,
You'll hear from my lawyer.

NICHOLAS

Do your worst, Charles, old friend.
I'll remember the good times until the very end.

*Charles's Exit music plays as CHARLES storms out
of the gallery. TIMOTHY follows him, with his
ENTOURAGE close behind. The patrons stare in the
wake of the scene as AMANDA comes to NICHOLAS'S
side. When she reaches him, the music stops.*

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(triumphantly, to the crowd)
He's gone. He's' gone. The spectacle's done.
Sorry for the disturbance, everyone.

AMANDA approaches NICHOLAS, a wry smile on her face. Music starts: We Did It.

AMANDA

NICHOLAS.

NICHOLAS

YES?

AMANDA

WAIT 'TIL YOU HEAR.

NICHOLAS

WHAT IS IT AMANDA, MY DEAR?

AMANDA

ALL OF THE PAINTINGS
ARE SPOKEN FOR.

NICHOLAS

YOU'RE KIDDING.

AMANDA

THEY PRACTICALLY WALKED THEMSELVES OUT THE DOOR.

NICHOLAS

YOU'RE AMAZING. I KNEW YOU COULD...

AMANDA

I HAD A LITTLE HELP.

BOTH

WE DID GOOD!

NICHOLAS

NOW, I SAY WE CLOSE THE PLACE.

AMANDA

WHY SO SOON? WHAT ELSE HAVE YOU GOT UP YOUR SLEEVE?

NICHOLAS

I'LL SHOW YOU THE MOMENT I GET YOU UNLACED
THAT IS, AS SOON AS THESE PEOPLE LEAVE.

AMANDA quickly begins herding people out. Seeing her getting excited, NICHOLAS helps. Together they get everyone out the door during the following:

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

EVERYONE! WE'RE CALLING IT AN EARLY NIGHT!

NICHOLAS

THANK YOU FOR HONORING THE MEMORY OF GREGORY QUITE.

Finally the patrons are gone. NICHOLAS and AMANDA embrace.

NICHOLAS

WE DID IT.
WE DID IT.
I KNEW WE
COULD DO IT.

BOTH

WE DID IT.
WE DID IT.
WE SOLD OUT.
THERE'S NO DOUBT.
LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME
NOW GREGORY'S A HOUSEHOLD NAME.

NICHOLAS

WE CARRIED
THE DAY, LOVE.

AMANDA

WE BLEW THEM
AWAY, LOVE.

NICHOLAS

WE KICKED ASS,

BOTH

AND THEN WE TOOK NAMES.
WE HOLD ALL THE MARBLES.

NICHOLAS

YOU'RE PARKER.

AMANDA

YOU'RE BARROW.

BOTH

WE'RE SIMPLY THE CRÉME DE LA CRÉME.
LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE SAME
NOW GREGORY'S A HOUSEHOLD NAME.

NICHOLAS

I MADE IT.
I'M A-LIST.
I'M IN NOW,
THE IN CROWD.
THEY BOUGHT IT.
I SURE KNOCKED THEM
DEAD.
AND WITH MY
ACCOMPLICE
IT'S "MISSION
ACCOMPLISHED."
THOUGH SHE FOUGHT IT.
IT'S FULL STEAM AHEAD.
LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE
SAME
NOW GREGORY'S A
HOUSEHOLD NAME.
WE DID IT.
WE DID IT.
THIS CALLS FOR
CELEBRATIONS
OF A PARTICULAR KIND.
OUR LIVES WILL NEVER
BE THE SAME.
WE DID IT!

AMANDA

ISN'T HE CHARMING?
WALKING SO TALL?
SELFLESS.
DISARMING.
SO ON THE BALL.
HE'S A MAN.
HE'S A MAN LIKE NO
OTHER.
YOU DID IT!
ALL FOR YOUR BROTHER.
CONGRATULATIONS.
THIS CALLS FOR
CELEBRATIONS.
WHAT DID YOU HAVE IN
MIND?
LIFE WILL NEVER BE THE
SAME.
WE DID IT!

NICHOLAS and AMANDA end their song kissing at the top of the stairs upstage left, framed by the French doors. Blackout.

Scene 6

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. Outside AMANDA'S gallery.] A dim light, mimicking the light of a street lamp, fades in upstage center. CHARLES walks angrily into it as TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE catch up with him. The set changes behind TIMOTHY and CHARLES during the following.

TIMOTHY

(waving to his ENTOURAGE to step aside)
Charles? Charles! Wait!

CHARLES

(stopping to face him)
O'Keefe? What do you want?

TIMOTHY

Charles, I couldn't help but overhear.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Oh, you heard it all did you?
Come to heap on more humiliation?
Come to laugh at Charles Leandres, the has-been?

TIMOTHY

Of course not. I'm on your side, Charles.
You were in the right back there.
He pulled the suicide card.

CHARLES

Well, he did lose his brother.

TIMOTHY

But you lost everything in that fire.

CHARLES

God. Don't remind me.

TIMOTHY

And the rest of us also suffered a loss.
When your gallery burned down, Charles,
It was a dark day for the art community.

CHARLES

Well, right now it's all about Nicholas Quite.
SHHH gallery is now figuratively *and* literally no more.
AWE Gallery is the place to be now. No thanks to you,
O'Keefe.
You wrote Nicholas's dead brother a four-page spread.

TIMOTHY

(hesitant)

What can I say? The guy had talent. It's too bad.
But Nicholas is just a conniving social climber.
He's a wanna be scenester with no talent of his own.
I know how we can take the wind out of his sails.

CHARLES

What do you mean?

TIMOTHY

If you were to open a new gallery, Charles,
One that didn't capitalize on dead artists,
But simply showed quality work by live artists,
That would be the end of Nicholas.

CHARLES

It would. Yes, it would.

TIMOTHY

And with my influence in the press
We could steer people away from the Quites
And into your gallery.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

I like where you're going with this.

TIMOTHY

So you'll think about it?

CHARLES

Think about it? Let's do it.

Meet me at my motel tomorrow

And we'll discuss the details. Alright?

TIMOTHY

That sounds great, Charles.

CHARLES

See you tomorrow, then?

TIMOTHY

Tomorrow. Looking forward to it.

The two shake hands and exit.

Scene 7

[Portland, Oregon. Night. Gregory's loft.] Many large blank white canvasses lean against the walls of GREGORY'S flat. Against the wall at stage left rests a particularly large canvas, in front of which are scattered used paints and art supplies. GREGORY has covered the canvas with a white sheet. He's sound asleep in his underwear on the mattress. The candles are gone and the desk lamp and the fan now have long extension cords snaking out under the door crack. The desk lamp is the only source of light in the room. The Hello Kitty alarm clock goes off. GREGORY wakes, turns it off, sits up and looks toward the canvas. He flops back onto his pillow. We hear a knock at the door. GREGORY pretends to be sleeping.

NORA

Newman, it's Nora. Open up. Are you working? Newman?

GREGORY pulls the pillow over his head as NORA bursts into the room. She strides over to him and tries to pull him up.

NORA

No, no, not again. Get up. Work time. It's after seven!

GREGORY

Leave me alone. I'll do it later.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

I've heard that before. Come on, stand up.

She gets him up.

NORA

That's better.

NORA leads GREGORY over to the canvas. She stands him in front of the canvas and holds his waist.

NORA

Now come on. Paint something.

GREGORY

What? Paint What? I can't
Just paint anything. I don't know what to paint.

NORA

It doesn't matter. Just get something on there.

NORA dips a brush in some red paint, sticks it in GREGORY'S hand, and, using GREGORY'S hand, splashes some paint randomly on the canvas.

NORA

There, you see? Now look at it. Nothing? Fine. Here:

NORA slowly guides GREGORY'S hand in smearing the paint around on the canvas. GREGORY follows their hands with his eyes. They dip the brush in again, smearing more paint on the canvas.

NORA

See? Smear it around a bit. Like that.
(a long beat as NORA slows down, looking at GREGORY)
Something will come. What do you see?

GREGORY

(after a moment)
Hey, that's nice. That reminds me of...stop, wait.

NORA

(encouraged)
What?

GREGORY

Well, the white canvas together with the dark red
Create negative space behind the lighter red. It gives
That splotch there a sense of depth. See it?

(CONTINUED)

NORA

(looking closer, smiling, seeing it)

Not bad.

See? You're not completely beyond hope.

GREGORY smiles and turns around to face NORA so that her arms are around his waist. She holds her position and the two stand close, facing each other for a long moment.

Suddenly we hear a buzz and a pop as somewhere a breaker blows. GREGORY'S desk lamp goes out. The stage goes dark. MIKEY and JULIE enter the room. MIKEY has a six pack of beer, JULIE has a flashlight. They huddle around the little wooden box at center. NORA and GREGORY join them. MIKEY pulls out some rolling papers and a little baggie and begins to fiddle with them.

MIKEY

Whoah. Are we interrupting something?

NORA

(parting from GREGORY, flustered)

What do you want, Mikey?

MIKEY

We got good news and bad news. Good news first: the Cops ejected the sculptor in the flat next to me.

GREGORY

How can that possibly be good news?

MIKEY

All I gotta do is knock out the wall and I have twice the studio space.

JULIE

Nice! Space for you and your big head.

MIKEY

Very funny, Drone. Laugh it up.

NORA

What's the bad news?

GAZLAY appears in the doorway with a flashlight.

GAZLAY

Hey, guys. I've been looking all over for you.

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

Behold: the bad news. Yo, Gazlay. Have a beer.
Gallagher, which one of those beers did you piss in?

NORA

Cool it, Mikey.

GAZLAY

Look, I don't mean to interrupt the party-

MIKEY

Then why are you?
Shouldn't you be elsewhere, getting ready for the big
court case against the criminals who just shut off our
power?

GAZLAY

That's at the end of the month.

JULIE

That's likely.

GAZLAY

Besides, Mikey. The power outage is on you.

MIKEY

Shit. How do you figure that, professor?

GAZLAY

I got a feeling you're the jerkoff responsible for
That mess of extension cords cluttering up the hallway.

MIKEY

Guess again. That shit lies with the owners
For forcing us to take such desperate measures.

GAZLAY

Clean them up. Fire Marshall says so.

MIKEY

Have you no soul?

GAZLAY

Don't blame me. I'm just following orders.
I live here too, pal. Me and you are in the same boat.

MIKEY

Except you have power and heat.

GAZLAY

Not anymore I don't.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE

What do you mean? They cut you off, too?

GAZLAY

No. Those cords blew out the power. All the power.

NORA

Even downstairs?

GAZLAY

Even downstairs.

MIKEY

It's just as well. I mean, some
Of those paintings look better with the lights off.

NORA

There are some good paintings down there.

MIKEY

Whoah, are we
Talking about the same gallery? What good paintings?

NORA

Well, like that Gregory Quite guy.

GREGORY

Gregory Quite? His paintings are down there?

NORA

Oh, yes. They're amazing. Dark, sad.

JULIE

Poor guy shut himself in a gallery and set it on fire.

GREGORY

How do you know about that?

JULIE

Who doesn't?

NORA

He's sold out his posthumous shows.

MIKEY

He's so hip, not a single person will admit they
haven't heard of him.

NORA

I can't believe you didn't know about it, Newman.
Come to think of it: come on, we're going to that show.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

That show downstairs? You want to go now?
I thought you said I had to work. It's getting late.

NORA

This is part of your work. An artist doesn't just shut
Himself up in his studio. You've got to get out there,
see what other people are doing. Maybe it'll inspire
You.

GREGORY

I'd rather stay here.

NORA

Too bad. Let's go. Come on.

She playfully pushes GREGORY toward the door.

MIKEY

What about us?

NORA

What about you, Mikey?

MIKEY

Oh, I see. We know when we're not wanted.

JULIE

Come on, Mikey. We have to figure out what to do now.

GAZLAY

First, you have a crap load of cords to clean up.

MIKEY

And we gotta get you ready for your big court date.

JULIE

(indicating GAZLAY's dusty Hawaiian
shirt)

Do you even own a different shirt?

GAZLAY

Nice.

*They exit. GREGORY hesitates at the doorway, but
NORA makes a grand gesture, urging him on. They
exit.*

Black out.

Scene 8

[Portland, Oregon. Night. Inside the Destroy gallery.] In the darkness, the music starts for The Otter And The Caterpillar as the set changes. Lights come up to reveal the Destroy gallery, lit by an array of desk lamps, floor lamps, and strings of Christmas lights, all powered by a portable generator. A crowd of chattering PATRONS are standing around talking and milling about. In and out of the doors, one stage left and one stage right, stream crowds of people holding drinks and wildly conversing. A large sign on the back wall of the gallery reads "Sunrise in the West: Emerging West Coast Artists". Flanking the sign are two enormous banners on which are printed the names of the artists featured in the show. Lots of art hangs on the walls. GREGORY and NORA enter from stage left, moving through the crowd of people. GREGORY stares at them in bewilderment. No one notices as they cross to GREGORY'S work on the wall at stage left. They gaze at the work.

NORA

Okay, you stay here. Don't go anywhere. I have to check in with my friends. Smooth things over. I'll be back.

NORA exits. GREGORY examines his work.

GREGORY

IS THIS ALL?
MY LEGACY?
IS THIS WHAT THEY'LL
REMEMBER?
LETTERS HERE SPELL
"GREGORY".
IT'S SO SURREAL
IS THAT ME?

NO. I GAVE
THAT LIFE AWAY
NOW I HAVE
TO MOVE ON.
LEARN TO LIVE
LEARN TO BE.
LEARN TO RISE ABOVE
THE OLD ME

BE SOMEONE NEW
BUT HOW? WHO AM I NOW?

NORA returns and walks up beside GREGORY.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

AREN'T YOU FLOORED?

GREGORY

WHAT? HEY YOU SCARED...

NORA

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

GREGORY

HONESTLY?

NORA

YES, OF COURSE.

GREGORY

I THINK THEY'RE JUNK.

NORA

JUNK? PLEASE GO ON, I'M INTRIGUED.

GREGORY

THEY'RE SELF INDULGENT.
THEY'RE OVERWROUGHT.
THE PAINT IS HEAVY,
BUT THERE'S NO WEIGHT.
THE COLOR'S MUDDY.
THE FORMS ARE FLAT.
HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO VOICE
FEELINGS HE NEEDS TO EXPRESS.

NORA

PEOPLE HERE ALL
DISAGREE.
LOOK HOW WELL
THEY'RE SELLING.
HE'S ON A ROLL.

GREGORY

BUT HE'S A SHAM.
HIS ONLY APPEAL
IS HE'S DEAD.

NORA

(playful)
WE'RE ALL DYING
EVERY DAY.
I THINK I'M GOING
TO BUY ONE.

GREGORY

AM I BEING...?

(CONTINUED)

NORA

IT'S A JOKE.

GREGORY

SINCE WE'RE REVIEWING
HIM, TELL ME WHAT YOU THINK.

NORA

I SEE LONGING
AND I SEE PAIN
IN THE VIOLENT COLOR
AND SENSUOUS LINE.
THE FORMS JUST FLOAT
LIKE BALLOONS IN THE SUN.
TOO BAD HE HAD TO DIE YOUNG.
THESE PAINTINGS PROMISE GREAT THINGS.

GREGORY

PROMISE? WELL,
THAT'S ALL HE HAD
A STEAMING PILE
OF UNFULFILLED
POTENTIAL.
YOU CAN'T SPEND YOUR
WHOLE LIFE
INSIDE A SHELL
GOT TO BREAK FREE,
TO SAIL
THROUGH THE AIR
AND LET FALL
THE COCCOON YOU
DESTROYED.
WHEN YOU CAN MAKE YOUR
OWN WAY
YOU'LL BECOME A
BUTTERFLY.

NORA

SUCH POTENTIAL,
IT'S REALLY SAD.
I'D LOVE TO KNOW
WHAT WENT ON IN HIS
HEAD.
HE GAVE THIS GIFT TO
THE
WORLD AND DIED.
NOT KNOWING WHAT HE
DESTROYED:
A LARVA WHO'S KILLED
ON THE WAY
TO BECOMING A
BUTTERFLY.

NORA

(after a beat)

You could take a page out of this guy's book.

GREGORY

Could I? I might have been interested in this Abstract
Expressionist kind of stuff a long time ago, but
Not anymore. I want to do something more direct,
Something raw, something personal. I'm surprised it
Appeals to you, with your rancid meat cartoon porn.

NORA

I prefer rancid meat cartoon *erotica*, thank you
Very much. And I'm glad it's made an impression on
You.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

You could say that.

NORA

Listen, this doesn't have to blow
You away, but you were complaining that you don't
Have any idea what to paint. Well, look and learn.
There has to be something you can take away
From this stuff, like it or not. Look again.

GREGORY

(after a beat)
My mind's blank.

NORA

Okay, how about this: you must have had
A shitty childhood. Everybody had a shitty Childhood.
Paint about that.

GREGORY

Isn't that a little cliché?

NORA

Yeah, but you have to start somewhere, Rembrandt.
Anyway, you won't make it cliché. I won't let
You. It helps to visualize it. Close your eyes.
Come on, close your eyes. What do you see?

GREGORY

(closing his eyes, after a beat)
I see a little boy.
He's falling.

NORA

A falling boy? Who is it?

GREGORY

It's me. I'm falling through the air.
And I see our house on fire.

NORA

What the fuck?

GREGORY

I see my mother.

NORA

We could think of something else if you'd rather...

GREGORY

No, it's okay. One day we were up cleaning in the attic
When my father came home drunk, shouting. He locked us
In and turned on the oven to let out the gas.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY (cont'd)

I heard him crying when the house went up in flames.
My mother saved me by dropping me out the open window.
I wanted to save her, too, so I reached out my arms
To grab her, but all I caught was the silver chain
Around her neck. It had a little blue porcelain
Rose pendant. The necklace broke
In my hand. As I fell I saw
Her screaming while the fire devoured her.
I fell for what felt like a year,
Until one of her rose bushes broke my fall.
I was bruised and scratched up, but I was whole.

NORA and GREGORY stand in silence for a beat.

NORA

And then?

GREGORY

And then I was adopted by a kind man.
Wow. I haven't thought about that in a while. In
fact...

NORA

(stepping closer to him)
It's perfect!

GREGORY

What?

NORA

Oh, my God.
It's dark. It's violent. It would be fantastic.

GREGORY

Isn't it a bit self-referential? I mean, who would want
to see something so depressing?

NORA

I would.
It's not so tragic. It's part of you. Get it out.
Maybe it would help you work through some of that shit.

GREGORY

Maybe. Why are we still talking about this? Have
You talked to the neighbors? Can we leave?

NORA

Yep. I issued them a formal apology on behalf
Of all of us.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

Think an apology will be enough?

NORA

Of course. They're nice. Plus, they owe me. I'm the one
Responsible for getting them these.

GREGORY

What do you mean?

NORA

You see that guy in the skinny suit? That's Nicholas.

*NORA points out NICHOLAS, who's chatting with a
PATRON. GREGORY conceals his shock.*

NORA

Want to meet him?

GREGORY

(adamant, but watching NICHOLAS)
No.

NORA

He doesn't bite. He's an old friend.

GREGORY

He's busy, anyway.

NORA

That's him. Working the room. He comes off pretentious
But he's a good guy.

GREGORY

He's working the show?

NORA

He's here
To sell his brother's paintings. I helped him secure
The slot. Of course, now I feel like a jerk.

GREGORY

Why's that?

NORA

Look around you. The gallery's in the dark.

GREGORY

That's not your fault.

NORA

Partly.
(gathering her nerve)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NORA (cont'd)

By the way, there's a band
Playing upstairs on the roof in a bit...

GREGORY

(looking back at the paintings)
What? You go ahead, thanks. I need some time alone.

NORA

(backpedaling, still nervous)
I thought you wanted to leave.

GREGORY

(looking at Nicholas)
I changed my mind.

NORA

Well, Don't be too long. You've got work to get done.

*NORA exits. GREGORY slowly makes his way toward
NICHOLAS, who is standing chatting with a PATRON.*

NICHOLAS

I trifled with painting in college, but I found the
business side of art to be a bit more amenable to a
man's survival...

GREGORY

Nicholas Quite?

*Everyone freezes but NICHOLAS as GREGORY, lit by
an eerie light, appears at the PATRON'S side.
NICHOLAS steps back, visibly frightened for a
moment, momentarily mistaking GREGORY for the
STREET KID.*

NICHOLAS

(stunned)
Yes?

The lights go back to normal.

GREGORY

I'd like to talk with you about one of your late
brother's works.

NICHOLAS

(shaken, but flashing an oily smile)
You and everyone else in this city.
(smoothly to PATRON)
Will you please excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

The PATRON drifts off toward some paintings as NICHOLAS motions toward the stage left exit for GREGORY to go first. On the way to the door, NICHOLAS grabs GREGORY'S arm and forcefully leads him along.

Scene 9

[Portland, Oregon. Night on the roof of the building.] Lights come up on the upstage loft area, where a low wall surrounds the perimeter. Upstage right, some band equipment is set up. Upstage center sits a buffet table, loaded with glasses, wine bottles, and empty catering pans and platters for food. The roof entrance juts out from the wings at stage left. Downstage right a fire escape ladder pokes up from behind the low wall.

NICHOLAS and GREGORY burst through the stage left door onto the roof. GREGORY frees himself from NICHOLAS'S grip and turns. They face off.

NICHOLAS

Has your brain gone completely to seed?

GREGORY

Where have you been, Nicholas? Six months! Why so long?
I've been waiting to hear from you. Nothing.

NICHOLAS

(glancing stage left, toward the
stairwell)

Quiet. You were supposed to wait for me to contact you
and you know it.
We've fooled everyone with our little deception,
Now you want to go and blow it?
What do you want? Quickly. They're coming up for the
reception.

GREGORY

Why didn't you tell me about this show?

NICHOLAS

We agreed not to write.

GREGORY

So what? I sent you dozens of letters. How come
You never answered? It was safe. I used the pseudonym.

NICHOLAS

I've been busy. Making you famous hasn't been easy.
And as usual everything falls to me.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

Faking my own suicide had nothing to do with it?

NICHOLAS

I'll allow you did your part,
But suicide alone does not sell art.
Now get out of here before someone sees you.
Or do you mean to louse it all up like you always do?

GREGORY

I'm going, but first: did we make any money?

NICHOLAS

You could say that.

GREGORY

So where's my cut?

NICHOLAS

(something dawns on him)
I have it.

GREGORY

Well? Give it to me, Nicholas. I'm running on empty.

NICHOLAS

Even so. Why cash in your chips now? We sold everything
you painted before.
You want your money? Paint me more.

GREGORY

More pictures?

NICHOLAS

That's right.

GREGORY

(after a beat)
I can't.

NICHOLAS

You can't what?

GREGORY

I can't. I'm not that person anymore. I don't
Paint like that. For profit. I paint...to paint.

NICHOLAS

You don't paint for profit? Not six months ago
You were dying to make a profit from your painting,
isn't that so?

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

That's different.

NICHOLAS

How is it different?

GREGORY

I was different.

NICHOLAS

Yes, you were nothing. Now you're a smash hit.
Isn't that what you wanted? Success? Isn't it?

GREGORY

Yes. But it didn't come. Because I wanted it so badly.

NICHOLAS

What are you talking about?

GREGORY

Success isn't a goal. It's not something you aim
For. It's attracted by the person you become.

NICHOLAS

Spoken like a true failure. Success was my goal and I
achieved it.

GREGORY

You wouldn't have achieved it without my pictures.

NICHOLAS

Your pictures? Even before your death you painted many
Pictures. Did they earn you a single penny?
Your pictures might have sold had there been a cold day
in hell.
It's the story *I* concocted, that's what made them sell.

GREGORY

So why even concoct a story? Why didn't you just let me
kill myself?

Music starts: Before You

NICHOLAS

Why, indeed? Honestly. What good are you?
WITHOUT YOU IN MY LIFE IT'S BEEN PARADISE. PARADISE.
EVERYTHING I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE.
NO ONE TO FEED OR TO GIVE ADVICE;
PEACEFUL AND GREGORY FREE.

Music stops.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

So? Why didn't you?

NICHOLAS

I tried. I left you alone. I listened to you whine
And then I went to the club. But you have no spine.
Just like MY FATHER...

GREGORY

Don't drag Dad into this.

NICHOLAS

You worshiped him and you didn't even know him.
BEFORE YOU SAINT QUITE
HIT THE BOTTLE EVERY NIGHT,
HIT MY MOTHER AND I BY DAY.
HE HAD HIS OWN PERVERSE
LITTLE WAY WITH EVERY NURSE.
HE TOOK THE LADIES' TEMPERATURES IN MOST PECULIAR WAYS.

IF YOU THINK HE WAS A GOOD SAMARITAN,
LIVING LIFE ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN,
IF YOU THINK HE HAD A HEART MADE OF SOLID GOLD,
WELL YOU REALLY DIDN'T KNOW THE MAN.

BEFORE YOU, DOCTOR QUITE
WAS OFTEN OUT ALL NIGHT
MAKING HOUSE CALLS OF A DUBIOUS BRAND.
IF YOU THINK FATHER THERESA
IS RESTING IN PEACE
WELL, YOU REALLY DIDN'T KNOW THE MAN.

Music continues under the following.

NICHOLAS

Of course, everything changed one morning when,
After a bout of heavy drinking nearly licked him,
He spied an article about a poor orphaned boy:
A lowly domestic violence victim.

GREGORY

You mean me. Say it. Me!

NICHOLAS

NOW WHAT LITTLE HEART HE HAS STARTS BEATING.
AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT NOW IT'S BLEEDING.
AND TO MAKE UP FOR EVERYTHING HE PUT US THROUGH
THE CRAZY OLD MAN ADOPTS YOU. YOU! YOU!

ALL AT ONCE OLD QUITE
CHANGES SPOTS OVERNIGHT,
GIVING YOU THE BOYHOOD I NEVER HAD.
HE READS SOME STORIES, TUCKS YOU IN

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

PLAYS SOME GAMES, LETS YOU WIN,
AND SUDDENLY HE'S SUPER DAD!

GREGORY

NO! HE WAS SO MUCH MORE.
YOUR RESENTMENT ISN'T FAIR.
I KNOW YOU WERE THE NEGLECTED SON.
I'VE ALWAYS FELT SO BAD
FOR THE THINGS HE DID
BUT THE PAST IS THE PAST; FORGIVE HIM AND MOVE ON.

BUT INSTEAD YOU WASTE YOUR EFFORT BLAMING HIM
FOR THE WAY YOUR LIFE TURNED OUT.
YOU SPEND ALL YOUR ENERGY SLAMMING HIM,
WHEN THERE'S REALLY MORE TO HIM THAN THAT.

THOUGH IT MAKES YOU CRINGE
PEOPLE CHANGE,
THEY CAN OVERCOME THEIR PREVIOUS SINS.
HE STARTED DOWN THE PATH TO GOOD,
WHEN HE TOOK IN AN ORPHANED KID
I, FOR ONE, OWE MY LIFE TO THE MAN.

Music continues under the following:

NICHOLAS

Yes, he treated you as if you grew on his own family
tree,
Waited on you hand and foot. Spoiled you like a baby.
"STOP THAT RACKET! GREGORY IS TRYING TO SLEEP!"
"WATCH YOUR MOUTH! GREGORY IS STARTING TO WEEP!"

GREGORY

YOU WERE SO CRUEL TO ME.

NICHOLAS

BECAUSE YOU TOOK ADVANTAGE.

GREGORY

WE DO WHAT WE CAN TO SURVIVE.

NICHOLAS

YOU DID NOTHING WHILE MY FATHER, MY FAMILY KEPT YOU
ALIVE.

GREGORY

WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE, GIVEN MY CIRCUMSTANCES?

NICHOLAS

CIRCUMSTANCES? EVERYONE HAS CIRCUMSTANCES!
SOME ARE MUCH WORSE OFF AND YET WE OVERCOME. LOOK AT
ME! LOOK AT ME!

(CONTINUED)

A LONELY BOY, FATHERED BY DEBAUCHERY AND DRINK.
YET I TURNED OUT THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU MIGHT THINK.
I BECAME RESOURCEFUL, CHARMING, INDEPENDENT,
A SELF-SUFFICIENT MAN, REFINED AND RESPLENDENT.

Music continues under the following:

GREGORY

Independent? Don't make me laugh. You hated the guy,
But you had no problem when he left me his money.

NICHOLAS

WELL, LISTEN TO YOU:
PURE AS MORNING DEW,
THE VOICE OF REASON, OF GOODNESS, OF RIGHT.
HAD I NOT ACQUIESCED
AND TOOK CHARGE OF HIS BEQUEST,
SOME NURSE WOULD BE DRINKING HIS MONEY TONIGHT.

YOU SHOULD THANK ME, JESUS QUITE,
I SPENT MOST OF IT SUPPORTING YOU!
BUT WHEN I'D HAD IT WITH HOSTING A PARASITE
I KNEW WHAT I NEEDED TO DO.

GREGORY

What? Murder some poor homeless kid?

Music stops on a tense chord.

NICHOLAS

How do you know about that?

GREGORY

You think I'm stupid? Where else would you get a body?

NICHOLAS

Clever. So turn me in. Go on. Tell everyone our story.
Have me arrested. Of course, you'd be an accessory.
But prison isn't so bad. You could make a new start.
You could go back to not making money off your art.

GREGORY

I can't.

NICHOLAS

(sneering)

Of course you can't. You and I aren't so different
after all.

GREGORY

If I'm anything like you, you should have killed me.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(after a beat)

Killing's too good for you. I wanted to hurt you.

Music resumes.

NICHOLAS

THE ONLY JUSTICE DUE
TO A MAN LIKE YOU
WHO FLOATS THROUGH LIFE LIKE A BAG ON A BREEZE.
IS TO FORCE YOU TO FEND
FOR YOURSELF, FOR IN THE END
IF THAT DOESN'T KILL YOU, IT'LL BRING YOU TO YOUR
KNEES.

IT'S BEEN SIX MONTHS SINCE YOU FLEW
FROM YOUR FORMER LIFE AND WHERE DO I FIND YOU?
NEARLY WASTED AWAY, WAITING FOR ME TO COME
AND SAVE YOU FROM THIS WRETCHED SLUM!

NICHOLAS

I KNEW ALL ALONE
OUT HERE ON YOUR OWN
YOU WOULDN'T LAST A
SINGLE DAY.
WHY GO THROUGH THE
STRESS
WHEN IT'S FAR LESS OF
A MESS
JUST TO LET YOU DIE
SLOWLY
TRYING TO MAKE YOUR
OWN WAY.

GREGORY

NO, YOU'RE WRONG. I'VE
MADE IT THIS FAR ON MY
OWN.
I'M STILL HERE,
DESPITE HOW MUCH YOU
WANTED ME GONE.
I DON'T NEED YOU.
I DON'T NEED YOU.
I DON'T NEED YOU.

NICHOLAS

WELL, THEN. GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GREGORY.

GREGORY

DON'T YOU WALK AWAY.
DON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON ME.
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

NICHOLAS

BACK TO MY NEW LIFE.

WHERE AFFABLE AMANDA
WAITS ON A VERANDA
FOR ME TO PLAY POOL BOY TO HER NEGLECTED WIFE.
THERE ATOP THE SOCIALITE LADDER,
I HAVE EVERYTHING THAT REALLY MATTERS:
SEX, MONEY, ART, POPULARITY...

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

YOU USED ME! YOU USED ME!

NICHOLAS

JUST LIKE YOU USED MY FAMILY!

The music stops as GREGORY throws himself at NICHOLAS, smashing him up against the low wall. NICHOLAS clumsily throws GREGORY off and hurls him down to the ground. He makes to kick GREGORY, but GREGORY springs up and lunges at him again. NICHOLAS dodges him and speeds toward the banquet table. GREGORY faces him, seeing red, poised to attack again NICHOLAS pants, visibly rattled, holding one hand out to fend GREGORY off, while behind his back his fingers slowly wrap around a wine bottle.

NICHOLAS

Take it easy, Gregory, steady, now, steady.
That's it. Don't step any closer to me.
We've reached an impasse. Best we part ways. Forever.
You will not contact me again. Ever.
We are no longer brothers. At long last...

The sound of chattering becomes audible offstage as the patrons from the gallery begin to come up to the roof for the party.

NICHOLAS

The party! Get out of here. Fast!

GREGORY

(shouting)

No! You shut your mouth.
I think I will tell them the truth.

NICHOLAS

You will not!

The music is frantic as NICHOLAS picks up the bottle and swings it at GREGORY'S head. GREGORY dodges as NICHOLAS continues to swing at him while singing the following:

NICHOLAS

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT
YOU DON'T EXIST
YOU BLEW YOURSELF AND A GALLERY SKY HIGH.
YOU'RE DECEASED, SLAIN, INERT,
PUSHING DAISIES THROUGH THE DIRT.
HOW DARE YOU SHOW YOUR FACE AGAIN!
FACE, MEET MY LITTLE FRIEND!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

HOLD STILL, NOW!

I SAID HOLD STILL, NOW!

GOODBYE!

Music reaches a crescendo as NICHOLAS swings the bottle at GREGORY, who manages to push him to the ground. NICHOLAS gets up and makes to swing at him again, but GREGORY, having leaped onto the low wall for safety, spies something over the ledge, perhaps a dumpster to land in. Fearing for his life, he jumps. NICHOLAS stares after him, then, composing himself, uncorks the wine bottle, walks to the table, pours himself a glass, and turns to face the party goers, who by now are merrily crowding onto the roof. NORA can be seen among them. NICHOLAS turns to face them and, as if nothing had happened, suddenly smiles brightly and opens his arms, striking a pose.

NICHOLAS

The party's up here, people!

Black out.

Scene 10

[Portland, Oregon. Night. A dark alley outside the building.] Spotlight comes up downstage. GREGORY, out of breath and bruised from his fall, runs in looking furious. He runs toward the ladder with the intent to climb back up after NICHOLAS. The sound of the party up on the roof, however, causes him to hesitate. He leans against the dirty wall. Music starts: Never Again.

GREGORY

BROTHERS AND FATHERS.

FATHERS AND MOTHERS.

WHAT DO THEY MEAN TO A MAN IN THE END?

THEY'RE ONLY PEOPLE,
PEOPLE WHO GRAPPLE,
STRUGGLE TO BREAK THROUGH THEIR TENUOUS BONDS.
LIKE ALL HUMAN KIND.

FATHER, I LET YOU ENSLAVE ME.
I KNEW YOU NEEDED SOMEONE TO ADORE.
I HOPED, BY LETTING YOU LOVE ME,
I COULD RECOVER,
MAYBE DELIVER
YOU FROM YOUR OLD LIFE OF PAIN.
NEVER AGAIN.

(CONTINUED)

SUCH PAIN AND DISCORD.
IN ONE LITTLE F-WORD.
LET IT ALL FLOAT UP AND OUT OF MY SOUL.
THEY'RE ONLY HUMAN.
I USED TO BE ONE.
SOON I'LL HAVE WINGS AND I SWEAR I'M GONNA SAIL.
NEVER TO FALL.

BROTHER I LET YOU ABUSE ME.
I KNOW YOU NEEDED SOMEONE TO ABUSE.
I THOUGHT, BY LETTING YOU DEBASE ME,
THAT YOU'D FEEL BETTER
ABOUT YOUR FATHER
SO I LET YOU WIN.
NEVER AGAIN.
NEVER AGAIN!

I HAVE NO PAST, I HAVE NO FAMILY.
IT'S MY BLOOD ALONE IN THESE VEINS.
I'M A GENEALOGICAL ANOMALY.
I HAVE NO BROTHER.
I HAVE NO FATHER.
FORGIVE ME MOTHER,
BUT NEVER AGAIN.
NEVER AGAIN!

Curtain. End of Act I.

ACT 2Scene 1

[Portland, Oregon. Night. GREGORY'S loft.] Lights come up. The space is practically empty now. Leaning against the walls, covered with large, billowy sheets of white cloth, are his huge canvasses. The crate full of books and CDs is gone, the lamp is gone, all that's left is a mattress. GREGORY is intently working on one of his paintings. A loud knock startles him.

NORA

(from behind the door)

Newman! What the Hell? Open up! Come on. Open up!

GREGORY looks up, startled, but ignores the knocking and goes back to his work. The door jerks and rattles. GREGORY ignores it. JULIE'S voice mingles with NORA'S from outside.

JULIE

What's up with him? Is he even in there? Maybe he left town.

MIKEY and GAZLAY join them from behind the door.

MIKEY

Hey, you two! Where's Newman? House meeting. Now.

NORA

He isn't answering his door.

GAZLAY

What, is he dead or something?

NORA

He's not dead.

JULIE

He's awful quiet. He could be rotting away in there.

MIKEY

I don't smell anything. Gazlay, you got a key?

GAZLAY

Yeah, somewhere. Hang on, let me...

GREGORY

I'm alive.

(CONTINUED)

NORA
Jair!

MIKEY
Come on, Newman. We gotta talk. Open it.

GREGORY covers the painting, moves toward the door, and opens it. MIKEY, NORA, GAZLAY and JULIE pour inside, looking around.

JULIE
Your place is almost empty.

NORA
(with a wink)
Been working, you have.

GREGORY
Yeah, I've been working.

NORA looks pleased. She gives GREGORY a significant look.

MIKEY
All right. He's alive. Now listen to this. Gazlay, Tell them what I overheard you and the owners saying.

GAZLAY
Come on, Mikey.

MIKEY
So help me, Gazlay...

GAZLAY
Okay. About the power...

MIKEY
Ain't no court case. Dude was never suing the owners.

JULIE
I figured as much. The first of the month is a rather Convenient date for a court case.

MIKEY
Hang on. There's more.

MIKEY bumps GAZLAY.
Tell 'em who's been calling the cops on people.

GAZLAY
Mikey...

MIKEY

Tell 'em. Go on.

GAZLAY

It's me, okay? But I had no choice! You think I want to be homeless and miserable? They would've kicked me out if I didn't cooperate.

MIKEY

And after all your Hard work
Kissing their ass.

NORA

Give him a break, Mikey. Why are they evicting people?

GAZLAY

They want us out. To make room for dot-coms and shit.

JULIE

Even you? No way. Can they do that? Is that legal?

GAZLAY

Yep. Even though this building is zoned for mixed use
Most of the other floors run some kind of business...

MIKEY

Or so they say.

GAZLAY

Right. So they say.
Anyway, the owners found a loophole in the lease...

MIKEY

They don't have to pay for the freakin' power.

GAZLAY

Right.
Because we're not a commercial establishment.

MIKEY

That's fucked up, right?

JULIE

So who pays for the power?

GAZLAY

We do.

JULIE

The electricity for an entire floor of a warehouse?

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

Even you can't afford that.

JULIE

Eat me, Mikey.

NORA

So we all end up out on the street?

MIKEY

Yep. That's the point. They're squeezing us out.

GAZLAY

All of us. Talk about getting stabbed in the back.

GREGORY

(pulling a sagging board off the window)
We don't have to go anywhere.

Music starts: The Blue Rose Gallery, Inc.

MIKEY

No? Why the hell not, Newman?

GREGORY

This place would make a nice gallery.

MIKEY

This godforsaken dump? A gallery? What, a cockroach gallery?

GREGORY

REPAINT THE WALLS.
TEAR UP THE FLOOR.

MIKEY

Say what?

GREGORY

SPACKLE THE HOLES.
PUT WINDOWS THERE,
SO TALL THAT YOU CAN SEE FOREVER.

NORA

I THINK HE'S ON TO SOMETHING.

GREGORY

HARDWOOD, CEMENT,
OR STEEL AND GLASS.

GAZLAY

What the?...

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

TRACK LIGHTS AND PLANTS;
UPDATE THE PLACE.
WE'LL GIVE EACH FLAT A WHOLE MAKEOVER.

MIKEY

HE'S CRAZY!

GREGORY

ARTISTS CREATE THEIR OWN OPPORTUNITIES.
ARTISTS, THEY SAY, ARE DREAMERS.

MIKEY

US? OPEN UP OUR OWN FREAKIN' GALLERY?
YOU REALLY ARE A DREAMER.

NORA

COME ON, MIKEY.

JULIE

CAN'T YOU SEE IT?
CAN'T YOU SEE IT?

NORA

CAN'T YOU SEE IT?
CAN'T YOU SEE IT?

They dance around MIKEY as they sing.

JULIE

KNOCK OUT A WALL.
REPLACE THE LIGHTS.

NORA

KNOCK OUT A WALL.
REPLACE THE LIGHTS.

GREGORY

That's it!

JULIE

PUT IN A BAR
WITH DEE JAYS SPINNING
RECORDS...

NORA

PUT IN A BAR
WITH DEE JAYS SPINNING
RECORDS...

MIKEY

OH, ALL RIGHT ALREADY.

GREGORY

HE LIKES IT!

JULIE

HEY, MIKEY!

NORA

HEY, MIKEY!

ALL

YOU'VE GOT TO MAKE YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES.
WE'LL OPEN UP OUR OWN LITTLE GALLERY NOW!

(CONTINUED)

Music continues under the following:

JULIE

But wait a moment. Whose work will we show?

GREGORY

We're artists. We'll show our work.

MIKEY

We're artists? Whose we? Me and Gallagher?

GREGORY

And (a beat) me.

MIKEY

Hang on, Newman. We haven't even seen your stuff yet. What makes you think we want to exhibit your so-called art?

GREGORY walks over to one of the huge canvasses and removes the blanket. They all gasp.

NORA

Jesus, Newman.

MIKEY

What, gives? Did you sell your soul or something?

JULIE

Where on earth did you learn to paint like that?

GREGORY

(looking at NORA)

I guess I just like to paint.

GAZLAY

Look. It's good work, but it doesn't matter, right? This gallery's just a front to fool the owners.

MIKEY

What do you care? You think we want you in on this?

GAZLAY

I'm sorry, alright? A guy's gotta make a living.

NORA

He could have evicted us all a long time ago, Mikey.

JULIE

Yeah. Chill. He was just doing his job.

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

You got any skills besides modeling Hawaiian shirts
And brown-nosing?

GAZLAY

(assumes a dominant posture)
I can kick your ass.

MIKEY

Fat chance.

NORA

Come on, guys. We can make it work!
WHEN I WAS JUST A LITTLE GIRL,

OTHERS

Do tell!

NORA

I DREAMED OF PAINTING IN THE STATES,
BUT THIS IS LIKE MY WILDEST DREAM.

MIKEY

SOMEBODY PINCH HER!

NORA

HEY, DON'T!

MIKEY

AFTER THEY KICKED ME OUT OF PRATT.
I VOWED TO SHOW 'EM ALL!

GAZLAY

HANG ON, GUYS. ALL OF THIS WILL BE EXPENSIVE.

JULIE

I'LL COVER IT.
I ALWAYS DREAMED OF BEING AN ARTIST, BUT
I NEVER HAD THE TALENT.
I FOUND INSTEAD I HAD BUSINESS ACUMEN.
WE'LL MAKE THE PERFECT TEAM:
MY MONEY, YOUR TALENT.

GREGORY

LET'S HEAR IT FOR JULIE!

ALL

JULIE!

GAZLAY

I KNOW SOME GUYS WHO'LL DO THE JOB.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

All right!

GAZLAY

I'M PRETTY GOOD WITH TOOLS MYSELF.

MIKEY

A TOOL WHO'S GOOD WITH TOOLS? HOW FITTING.

OTHERS

LAY OFF, MIKEY!

ALL

ARTISTS CREATE THEIR OWN OPPORTUNITIES.
WE'LL OPEN UP OUR OWN LITTLE GALLERY NOW.

GREGORY

NOW ALL WE NEED'S A CATCHY NAME.

OTHERS

Like What?

MIKEY

I GOT IT: "TANK!"

JULIE

NO WAY. TOO PUNCHY.

NORA

HOW 'BOUT "THE ELECTRIC COMPANY?"

OTHERS

NO, SCREW THEM!

JULIE

HOW 'BOUT "THE BLACKBIRD?"

MIKEY

BIRDS ARE OUT!

JULIE

How come?

MIKEY

NO WOODLAND CREATURES. NO CUTE BIRDIES
PERCHED ON FLAT AND LEAFLESS BRANCHES.
TOO PRECIOUS!

NORA

"EYEFUL."

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY

TOO CHIC.
"THE LIFE."

JULIE

TOO PRETENTIOUS.

GAZLAY

"THE RAW OYSTER."

MIKEY

WAY TOO CRYPTIC.

NORA

"TRACTOR."

GAZLAY

TOO HIP.

JULIE

"THE PONY CLUB."

MIKEY

CHILDISH.

JULIE

"THE SHOW AND TELL?"

OTHERS

TOO TRENDY.

GREGORY

"THE BLUE ROSE."

OTHERS

THE BLUE ROSE?
BLUE ROSE!

During the following, workers enter. They clean up the space, slide in a wall of windows, add some plants, etc. By the end of the song the set has been transformed into the Blue Rose Gallery.

ALL

REPAINT THE WALLS.
TEAR UP THE FLOOR.
PATCH UP THE HOLES.
PUT WINDOWS THERE
SO TALL THAT YOU CAN SEE FOREVER.
FOREVER!
ARTISTS CREATE THEIR OWN OPPORTUNITIES.
WE'VE GOT A CHANCE LET'S TAKE IT.

(CONTINUED)

JULIE AND GREGORY

SO SAY HELLO TO OUR LITTLE COMPANY:
BLUE ROSE, INCORPORATED!

ALL

COMING SOON:
IT'S THE BLUE ROSE GALLERY!
BLUE ROSE GALLERY!
BLUE ROSE GALLERY, INC.

Black out.

Scene 2

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. AMANDA'S apartment.]
Music for Blue Rose Playoff starts as in the dark the set changes. When the music stops, the lights come up. The stack of paintings at stage right is gone. GREGORY'S portrait of AMANDA hangs in its place, lit by low hanging track lighting. AMANDA sits at the piano, wearing a robe, an empty glass of wine stands on the piano near her. She plays snippets of piano pieces. The front door opens and NICHOLAS, just back from his New York trip, sneaks in, quietly shutting the door behind him. Along with his luggage he's carrying shopping bags and a huge bouquet of beautiful flowers. He puts down his travel things and, carrying the flowers, he sneaks up behind AMANDA and interrupts her playing.

NICHOLAS

(playful, kissing her neck)
Are you ever going to finish that piece?

AMANDA

(leaning into him)
I only like this part.

NICHOLAS

Well, get to the repeat bar at
least.

AMANDA

And have to play it through twice?

NICHOLAS

(running his hands along her arms)
Hm. That might be nice.

AMANDA

I make it a rule never to finish anything I start.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(kisses her head)
That's my little pop tart.

AMANDA

(playful)
What's all this?

NICHOLAS

(with an air of irony)
Gifts from the Beaver State.

AMANDA

Oo, give me...

NICHOLAS

Uh, uh. Not until we celebrate.

*He takes a bottle of champagne from one of his
many bags and places it on the piano.*

AMANDA

(excited)
So I assume the show was...

NICHOLAS

(popping the cork)
...a success!
Now, let's get you out of this dress.

AMANDA

Hey, slow down. Tell me about it. Give me the whole
story.

NICHOLAS

(seductive, guiding her up off the bench
while kissing her)
Pazienza, la mia amore.

AMANDA

Come on, Nicholas. What was it like? How many people
came to the show?

NICHOLAS

(leading her toward the couch)
Only all of Brooklyn. It was wall to wall hipstresses
with their slouchy beaus.

AMANDA

And how many paintings did we sell?

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(sitting her on the couch)
Only every single one.

AMANDA

Nicholas! Success!

NICHOLAS

Mm. We've only just begun.

AMANDA

There's so much to do. We have to get the jump on next month's show.

NICHOLAS

(kissing her neck and shoulders)
What's your hurry, love? Relax. Let yourself go.

AMANDA

We can't just sit here. We have to get everything together...

NICHOLAS

(parting the lapels of her robe)
You don't need to worry about any of that, lover.
I shall have everything for next month covered.

AMANDA

What do you mean?

NICHOLAS

(kissing her collarbones and chest)
I'm whipping up another surprise.

AMANDA

(intrigued, stopping him)
You and your surprises. Look me in the eyes.
What's your plan?

NICHOLAS

(rubs his hand on her thigh)
You ought to have more faith in your man.

AMANDA

(getting up)
Come on, Nicholas. Let me in on it. I have to know.

NICHOLAS

(laughs, takes her hand and kisses it)
Well, as of now we're out of Gregory's old works. So,
I'll simply paint more.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

You can paint? That's news to me.

NICHOLAS

I trifled with it in college. How hard can it be?

Music starts: How Hard Can It Be?

A BIT OF COLOR HERE.

A BIT OF COLOR THERE.

MIX IT ALL TOGETHER

ALL DEVIL-MAY-CARE,

I MEAN, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

NO, REALLY! HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

A THICK STRIPE HERE.

A SKINNY SQUIGGLE THERE.

A LITTLE GOLD LEAF

ON A BIG RED SQUARE.

I MEAN HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

I ASK YOU, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

(scrutinizing GREGORY'S portrait)

ALL I HAVE TO DO, MY LOVE, IS PAINT IN A ROUGH

APPROXIMATION OF GREGORY'S STYLE.

OVER THE YEARS I'VE SEEN MORE THAN ENOUGH

OF HIS STUFF TO KNOW HE PAINTS LIKE A CHILD.

Music continues under the following:

AMANDA

Watch what you say about it. I love it. It's mine.

NICHOLAS

(catching himself, backpedaling)

Yes, of course. Fine.

I only meant that his work has a certain innocence.

It shouldn't be difficult for me to capture that essence.

DRIP A LITTLE HERE.

DROP A LITTLE THERE:

SHADOWY SHAPES

COLLIDING IN AIR.

I MEAN HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

LOOK, TRUST ME, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

A LITTLE DIBBLE HERE.

A LITTLE DABBLE THERE.

NAME IT "UNTITLED"

OR "STILL LIFE WITH PEAR"

I MEAN, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

COME ON, NOW, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

BELIEVE ME, MY DEAR, I'VE SPENT A LIFETIME ACQUAINTING MYSELF WITH MY BROTHER'S TECHNIQUE.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

PASSING MY TRIFLES OFF AS GREGORY'S EARLY PAINTINGS
WILL BE EASY. THEY'LL DIE FOR THEM. THEY'LL FREAK!
THEY'LL FREAK!

A DASH OF COLOR HERE.
A SPLASH OF COLOR THERE.
PUKE ON A CANVAS,
WE'RE MILLIONAIRES,
I MEAN, HOW HARD CAN IT BE?
ADMIT IT! HOW HARD CAN IT BE?
HOW HARD CAN IT BE?

AMANDA

You're impossible. Do what you want. Try it.

NICHOLAS

(slipping his hands up to her breasts)
Next month: Gregory's early works. They'll buy it.
Trust me.

AMANDA

(removing his hands)
I want to.

NICHOLAS

(motioning toward the bedroom)
You can. So do.
Now, let's get you in bed, my sexy little sprite.

AMANDA

(downcast)
No. It's just me tonight.

NICHOLAS

(kissing her deeply)
Suit yourself. Is that the time? How it flies.
This is your last chance for a trip to paradise.

AMANDA

Lock the deadbolt on your way out.

NICHOLAS

(kissing her again)
A kiss to warm you
through the cold, dark night.

AMANDA

(cold)
All right, all right.

*NICHOLAS exits through the front door. AMANDA
straightens GREGORY'S painting, then heads to the
bedroom. Black out.*

Scene 3

[Portland, Oregon. Night. The floor of the warehouse where GREGORY, JULIE, NORA, MIKEY, and GAZLAY live, newly converted into the Blue Rose Gallery, Inc.] The set changes to the music of Opening Night Medley: Introductory Promenade. In the darkness, JULIE stands in front of a GROUP of PATRONS. The windows are no longer boarded up and all of Brooklyn sparkles through the tall floor to ceiling windows. Other than the weak light from the city outside. As the music ends, the lights suddenly come up with a clanking noise like a breaker flipping. Everyone gasps and applauds. On the stage right wall are painted the words "The Blue Rose Gallery: Grand Opening". JULIE begins to sing.

JULIE

THANK YOU FOR COMING OUT TONIGHT.
 MY NAME IS JULIE. I'M YOUR HOST.
 GET READY FOR A LOVELY EVENING.
 TAKE OFF YOUR COAT. ENJOY THE VIEW.
 KNOW THAT THERE'S PLENTY MORE TO SEE.
 COME JOIN ME FOR A LITTLE TOUR.
 THAT'S RIGHT, FOLKS, RIGHT THIS WAY.
 RIGHT THIS WAY. FOLLOW ME.

Music starts for Promenade I, during which JULIE and the GROUP head downstage and begin walking in place as a big white wall slides into place behind them. By the end of Promenade I, the large white wall representing MIKEY'S studio has slid into place behind the GROUP, who are standing way downstage. On the wall hangs an enormous painting of a black man's head behind bars. MIKEY is leaning proudly against the wall stage left. GAZLAY stands next to him holding a roll of red stickers. Music starts for The White Man's Zoo.

MIKEY

I GOT A STORY TO TELL YOU
 ABOUT GROWING UP WHITE IN NORTHEAST.
 ONCE ON THE PLAYGROUND, I PICKED A FIGHT WITH
 THREE BLACK BOYS TWICE MY SIZE.
 WE WERE WAILING AWAY, IT WAS BLOODY.
 'TIL THE COPS CAME AND BROKE IT UP.
 THEY HAULED THE BLACK BOYS OFF IN A SQUAD CAR,
 LEAVING ME ON THE CORNER WITH A WARNING.
 IT WAS MY FIRST TASTE OF WHITE PRIVILEGE,
 IN THE LAND OF THE FREE, YET GUILTY.
 WHERE THE HOME OF THE BRAVE
 IS A NICE LITTLE CAGE

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MIKEY (cont'd)

IN THE ZOO.

IN THE ZOO.

IN THE WHITE MAN'S ZOO.

When MIKEY finishes his song, music starts for Promenade II, during which the GROUP starts mildly applauding. GAZLAY flits around talking to them, carrying a roll of little red stickers. He sticks one or two to the wall. JULIE and the GROUP start walking again. A couple of them stay behind to talk with MIKEY. By the end of Promenade II, NORA's wall, which is painted bright pink, slides into place. On her wall are hung large paintings of familiar cartoon characters in lewd poses with various bits of raw meat. Music starts for America, Thank You For Nothing.

NORA

ONCE WHEN I WAS WALKING DOWN IN OLD TOWN
I CAME ACROSS A PUERTO-RICAN FRIEND.
I ASKED HER HOW WAS BUSINESS,
SHE SAID, "NORA! OH, NORA! IT'S DEAD!
MY TAQUERIA, SHE IS CLOSING.
THE LANDLORD WENT AND KICKED US OUT
SO SOME LILY WHITE RICH LITTLE FASHION SLAVE BITCH
COULD OPEN AN EXPENSIVE BOUTIQUE."
SHE SAID, "AMERICA, THANK YOU FOR NOTHING!
SEE WHAT'S BECOME OF YOUR AMERICAN DREAM:
IT'S A NIGHTMARE WHERE AMERICANS TAKE EVERYTHING
AND THE REST OF THE WORLD GETS REAMED."

When NORA finishes her song, music starts for Promenade III, during which the GROUP bursts into slightly more enthusiastic applause. GAZLAY flits around talking to them, again carrying his roll of little red stickers, and again he sticks one or two to the wall. The GROUP start walking again. This time, a greater number of PATRONS stay behind to chat with NORA. As Promenade III ends, the set settles into place to reveal GREGORY'S wall, on which hang huge canvases painted with abstract images of a tall house on fire, a blue rosebush, a boy flying through the air, and a screaming woman. GREGORY is standing at the wall, stage left. GAZLAY comes in, but GREGORY waves him away. Music segues into Falling Boy, Yellow Sky.

GREGORY

A FALLING BOY IN A YELLOW SKY
OVER FIELDS OF ORANGE,
HIS SCREAMING WHITE-MOUTHED
MOTHER CRUMBLING,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY (cont'd)

RAVAGED BY GREEN FLAMES.
THAT'S THE WAY MY DREAM GOES,
BURNING IN MY EYELIDS
EVERY TIME I CLOSE MY EYES.
BUT I FEEL NO LONGING,
I FEEL NO PAIN.
JUST VIOLENT COLOR
AND SENSUOUS LINE.
FORMS THAT FLOAT
LIKE BALLOONS IN THE SUN.
HERE IS MY PAST. HERE'S MY VOICE.
HERE'S WHAT I NEED TO EXPRESS.

When GREGORY finishes his song, music starts for Closing Promenade as the GROUP applauds wildly. Each member of the GROUP goes to a painting, and GAZLAY and JULIE walk around talking to each of them. They each place red stickers on the walls. The patrons shake hands and noisily chat with GREGORY. As the Closing Promenade ends, the PATRONS and JULIE exit. NORA remains behind, gazing at GREGORY'S paintings. GREGORY comes to her. She gives him a big hug.

NORA

Success! Now I can eat this month. How did you do?

MIKEY, JULIE, and GAZLAY enter again.

GAZLAY

He sold every picture.

JULIE

Yep. According to the ledger.

NORA

(embracing him again)

That's incredible, Jair. Nice going!

GREGORY

You too, Nora. Thanks, guys.

MIKEY

(approaching GREGORY)

Newman, I have to admit. I wrote you off at first, but Seeing as how you sold everything and I sold one or two,
I get it now. I hereby humble myself before you.

GREGORY

It's not a competition Mikey.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

You'll get 'em next time, Mikey.

MIKEY

Thanks, Gallagher. Well, at least I won't wrap up this Month bitter and homeless.

JULIE

You won't be homeless anyway.

GAZLAY

It's good to be part of something bigger than yourself, eh, Mikey?

Come on. Let's get shitfaced. I'm buying.

MIKEY

You're buying? That's our money!

GAZLAY

True, it's your money.

And this is my cut. I'm your Boss now. Got it?

MIKEY

Oh, shit.

I guess success does comes at a price.

GAZLAY

Don't push it.

JULIE

Come on. I second that pub motion. Let's close the place.

MIKEY

Hey, don't you cubicle rats get up early?

JULIE

You don't get it do you, Mikey? Those corporate jerks Didn't fully appreciate my business savvy. I quit that shitty job. I only took it because it was good money. But screw that. I'll take the cut in pay. Say hello to your other boss.

They all "Oo" and "Ah." Everyone ad-libs as they exit the gallery. GREGORY moves to go with them, but sees NORA standing before his paintings. He walks up beside her.

NORA

Aren't they a bit self-indulgent?

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

Totally. Overwrought.

NORA

The paint is heavy, but there's no weight.

GREGORY

Hm. That's what I get for listening to you.

NORA

Listening to me gave you a taste of the "big time".

GREGORY

(looking around, with a slight scoff)
Big time.

NORA

(pantomimes speaking into a microphone,
as if to interview him)
So, Mr. Newman, how does it feel to have fame,
Money, everything you've always dreamed of?

GREGORY

Feels good.
But I couldn't have done it alone, you know. I had
Help.

NORA

Oh? Do tell.

GREGORY

My flatmate Nora. She taught
Me everything she knows.

NORA

She sounds amazing.

GREGORY

Every great
man has a great woman behind him, eh?

NORA

(blushing, hitting him, breaking
character)
Beside Him. And
don't get a swelled head.

GREGORY

(laughing)
Ok, ok. Look, I need
To ask you something.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

(looking at him, hopeful)
Me, too.

GREGORY

(hesitating)

You first.

NORA

Go ahead.

GREGORY

I made more.

NORA

(confused)
More what?

GREGORY

More paintings.

NORA

(bubble burst)

Oh. You did?

More like these?

GREGORY

Mm hm. I want to show them in New York.

NORA

Look at you. You really are reaching for the moon.

GREGORY

You have some contacts there.

NORA

One or two.

GREGORY

You've done
So much for me already, but, will you help me spark
Some interest? Generate a buzz? Maybe get a show?

NORA

What,

Like, be your rep?

GREGORY

Or pretend to be. Just until I get that
First show.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

I don't know. I'm pretty busy with my own stuff. I'll have to charge you commission.

GREGORY

(laughing)

Fine.

NORA

Fine.

THEY shake hands.

GREGORY

Now what did you want to ask me?

NORA

(hesitating, then pantomiming the mic)

What do you plan
To do with all that money now that you're an *artiste*?

GREGORY

(laughs)

Artiste.

NORA

(breaking character again)

One who will last.

GREGORY

Not without your help.

NORA

You won't need help. They'll sell
Themselves. But I'll do what I can.

GREGORY

You will?

NORA

I will.

They stand facing each other for a long beat.

GREGORY steps closer to her, they become fairly close.

GREGORY

(nervous)

Are you, uh, coming out with us? Me and the others?

NORA

(breaking away, blushing)

Naw,

You go on and celebrate. I have work to do.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

Now?

NORA

A painter paints.

GREGORY

(disappointed)

We'll talk more later?

NORA

Yes. Now go.

GREGORY exits. NORA watches him go and then exits. The lights come down, leaving four spotlights shining on the paintings. Black out.

Scene 4

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. Charles's new gallery.] CHARLES LEANDRES is setting up his new gallery. As the set changes in the darkness, we hear the sounds of a sledgehammer striking plaster and rubble hitting the floor. The lights come up to reveal CHARLES in full renovation gear, covered in dust, wearing boots, knee pads, ratty jeans, a tool belt, a t-shirt, and protective goggles. He's wielding a sledge hammer. His gallery is unfinished, but is showing signs of coming together, with plaster and wood scattered about, flakes of paint and dust, and 2x4s lying around in haphazard piles. As CHARLES heaves his hammer into the stage right wall, his cell phone rings.

CHARLES

(flipping open his phone)

Charles Leandres. Nora! Hello!

Funny, I've been meaning to call you.

Ripping apart a wall. Yes,

That's right. I'm building a new gallery now;

Starting fresh. You're in town? No way.

What a coincidence. What brings you to our little city?

Really? Sure, I'll take a look at it.

We're on Bedford, across from AWE Gallery.

Oh, you know it? Great.

We'll talk more when you get here, all right?

See you soon.

He flips his phone closed. TIMOTHY enters with his ENTOURAGE. They are wearing full beards, tan suits, and headbands with matching wrist bands.

(CONTINUED)

TIMOTHY

Charles! Charles!
Guess who was just over at my office,
Looking a little haggard, I have to say,
Trying to sweet-talk me into doing an article
For his little show next month.
Nicholas Quite!

CHARLES

You're not going to do it...

TIMOTHY

God, no. I told him to get stuffed.
You should have seen the look on his face.
Guess what? Their opening is the same night as ours.
Convenient, eh?

CHARLES

Convenient.

TIMOTHY

So, Charles. Who do we have lined up?
I need to know so I can get the article going.

CHARLES

I have some ideas, but I don't want just anyone.
I bet if we put our heads together and call our
connections...

TIMOTHY

No way, Charles. I can't do any legwork.
How would it look if I were to do the booking
For this gallery and then turn around
And write a huge, glowing review?
No, Charles. No one can know
That I'm involved with this gallery.
As far as they're concerned this place is all yours.

CHARLES

All right. Just let me make some calls, then.

*NORA enters, tentatively looking around the place.
She holds a large, black artist portfolio under
her arm. TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE look her up and
down. CHARLES sees her and greets her
enthusiastically.*

CHARLES

(shaking her hand)
Nora! It's good to see you.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

Good to see you, Charles.

TIMOTHY

(smarmy)

Charles, who's your friend?

CHARLES

Oh, yes. Timothy O'Keefe, this is Nora Gallagher.

TIMOTHY

(taking her hand, looking into her eyes)

Nice to meet you.

NORA

Likewise.

TIMOTHY

How do you two know each other?

CHARLES

Nora works at a gallery in Portland.

I went there last winter to meet her.

NORA

Charles was going to exhibit my friend's work at his old place.

CHARLES

(waving the painful memory away)

Yes. I needed a replacement for Gregory Quite, Nicholas gave me her number.

TIMOTHY

(meaningfully, to NORA)

Oh? How do you know Nicholas?

NORA

We've known each other for years. We met in Europe A long time ago when he was on a backpacking trip.

TIMOTHY

Small world. So what brings you to our little city?

NORA

I came to get the word out.

CHARLES

Oh, yes. About this new artist you're representing.

TIMOTHY

New artist?

(CONTINUED)

NORA

(laying the portfolio on the table)
Well, not so new. He's been building momentum
On the West Coast since last fall.
There's no one like him.
He's a true original.

CHARLES

Really? Well Let's see what you've got.

*NORA opens the portfolio and the three flip
through it.*

CHARLES

Timothy, we've found our opener.

TIMOTHY

I'll say, Charles. Wow.

NORA

Oh, I'm thrilled.

TIMOTHY

Hang on, though, Nora. Forgive me for asking,
But, if you and Nicholas are friends,
Why didn't you ask him to show this work?
He's working with AWE Gallery now.

NORA

(to CHARLES)
Well, no offense, but I already did.

CHARLES

And he said no? To this?

NORA

Not in so many words. He gave me a scoff.
He didn't even look at it. I nearly dropped my fork
When he announced to the cafe customers and staff
That he'll be showing Gregory Quite's early work.

TIMOTHY

(darkly)
He's milking it for all it's worth.

NORA

What's that?

TIMOTHY

(smiling)
Nothing. Forget it. No one's going to that show.
They'll be in here. Forget about Gregory Quite.
Once I write about Jair Newman, "the next big thing",
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TIMOTHY (cont'd)

He, and your new gallery, Charles,
Will get the attention they so richly deserve.

CHARLES

Let's get a drink to celebrate.
Timothy, you like to drink.

TIMOTHY

Almost as much as you, Charles.

CHARLES

Great. How about you, Nora?

NORA

Thank you, no. Do you mind if I stay here and make a
few phone calls?

CHARLES

No problem. Just close the door on your way out.
It'll lock by itself. They put in new locks today!

*TIMOTHY and CHARLES exit. NORA flips through the
portfolio. After a moment, GREGORY slips in
wearing a hoody with the hood drawn up and
sunglasses.*

GREGORY

What happened?

NORA

You're in.

GREGORY

You did it!

NORA

Me? This was all your plan.

GREGORY

(moving closer to her)
But you made it happen. You turned on the charm.

NORA

(laughing)
Oh, yes. My geekiness took them by storm.

Music starts: My New York Is You.
No. It was your talent showing through.

A beat.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

Newman?

GREGORY

Nora?

NORA

Are you going to abandon me once you
Become a celebrity?

GREGORY

(stepping closer to her)

You can turn off the charm now.

NEW YORK, NEW YORK HAS EVERYTHING.
FOR ROMANCE, YOU CAN'T BEAT IT.
BUT NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU...
WELL, I CAN DO WITHOUT IT.
I MIGHT HAVE BEEN ENCHANTED ONCE
BY THE LIGHT SHOW ON TIMES SQUARE,
BUT NEXT TO YOU THOSE FLASHY LIGHTS
SEEM DIMMER THAN BEFORE.

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE.
IT'S JUST A HUNK OF STEEL AND TAR.
I WOULDN'T CARE ABOUT THAT EMPIRE STATE BUILDING.
EVEN IF IT SCRAPED THE SKIES OF JUPITER.
COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT THE COPACABANA.
DOES ANYONE STILL LISTEN TO MANILOW?
FOR SOME IT'S THE RAINBOW ROOM,
FOR SOME IT'S THE PARK,
BUT MY NEW YORK IS YOU.

NORA

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE GUGGENHEIM.
AND MOMA? I DON'T GIVE A FRICK!

GREGORY

AND GREENWICH VILLAGE WITH ITS SINGLES SCENE:
SAME OLD MEAT MARKET EVERY WEEK.

NORA

I'D RATHER ZOOM UP ON THE "A" TRAIN TO THE HEIGHTS,
OR SAIL TO STATEN ISLAND NICE AND SLOW.

GREGORY

AND AS OUR LIPS MEET LADY LIBERTY DRIFTS BY.
MY TORCH BURNS BRIGHT FOR NOBODY BUT YOU.

HONEY, YOU'RE HANGING IN MY GALLERY.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

I'LL TAKE YOU WITH ONIONS AND KRAUT.

GREGORY

OR EVEN STROLLING DOWN THE BOWERY.

NORA

NIGHT AND DAY, DAY, DAY, DAY AND NIGHT.

GREGORY

LET THE POSERS PRESS THEIR NOSES TO 5TH AVENUE WINDOWS.
MY NEW YORK IS YOU.

NORA

HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE ANYONE HAS MADE MY HEAD
SPIN SO.

BOTH

MY NEW YORK IS YOU.
MY NEW YORK IS YOU.*NORA and GREGORY exit. Black out.*Scene 5

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. AWE Gallery.] Lights come up. The gallery is empty, but it is set up for an opening. Large black letters on the back wall read "Gregory Quite: Early Works" NICHOLAS sits downstage left on a stool. Underneath him lies a paint splattered sheet, tubes of paint, piles of stained newspaper, and brushes littered about. Paintings are hung on the walls. In front of each painting, obscuring each from view, hangs a thin silk handkerchief. NICHOLAS, wearing an apron, is bent in front of a painting, focused on a particular section, frantically blotching color onto the canvas. The vague sound of a crowd drifts in from stage right. The lock on the front door jiggles, and AMANDA enters, carrying a heavy grocery bag overflowing with red and orange flowers.

AMANDA

Nicholas, for God's sake! Can't you hurry?

NICHOLAS

(flustered in spite of himself)
Patience, my love. Don't worry.

AMANDA

(crossing to the bar and setting down
the grocery bag)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA (cont'd)

But we're almost open. Tell me this is your last one.

NICHOLAS

(making a last dab on the canvas and
appraising his work)

Ask and you shall receive. All done.

AMANDA

You're finished? Great. Let me see.

NICHOLAS

(whisking the painting away)

Patience, patience, my love. Not until we
Unveil it. Shoo, shoo!

*He hurriedly leans the picture face down against
the easel and crosses toward her. He pushes her
toward the window, impatiently turns her around
and lowers the lids of her eyes in a dramatic
gesture. He drapes a handkerchief over the picture
and hangs it.*

AMANDA

(opening her eyes and turning around)

Hey! You've covered up the rest of them, too.

NICHOLAS

Patience! We will unveil them, my little pop tart,
When Gregory's public arrive, starving for his art.

AMANDA

What makes you think they'll come?
We didn't get any preview from
Timothy.

NICHOLAS

(cleaning up the gallery)

Shh. Here, help me. Timothy is nowhere.

We're on top. We don't need his articles to stay there.

AMANDA

Tell that to the place across the street.

NICHOLAS

(stowing the trash)

Pshaw! Enough! Just help me with this sheet.
Okay. All clean! It's time. Open the doors.

AMANDA

(sighing, unlocking and opening the
doors. A beat.)

See? Everyone's over there. Like I was saying before.

(CONTINUED)

*NICHOLAS flits over to the bar, washes his hands,
and uncorks a bottle of wine.*

NICHOLAS

They're just making an appearance before coming here.
Relax. I've uncorked the Chateau Margaux. Cheers.

AMANDA

(standing in the doorway)
I'm not in the mood. God it's packed.
Lucky Charles.

NICHOLAS

(hardly listening)
Charles? He won't get in our way.
(a beat. He rushes to the door.)
Hang on. He opened a gallery behind my back?

AMANDA

(crossing to the bar)
Hardly behind your back. He's been renovating for days.
Haven't you noticed?

NICHOLAS

I've been in my own head.

AMANDA

Obviously. Well Timothy put out a whole spread
About Charles's new place. That's why I'm concerned.

*She moves closer to the portrait and begins
removing its handkerchief.*

NICHOLAS

But his entire livelihood burned.

AMANDA

Now he's returned.

NICHOLAS

(still goggling out the open doors)
This is impossible, he can't...

AMANDA

(having removed a handkerchief from a
painting, revealing that Nicholas has
painted a shoddy batch of portraits of
the STREET KID)
Nicholas! Who is this?

NICHOLAS

(spinning around)
I told you not to look...

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

Who is that supposed to be? Is it Gregory?

NICHOLAS

(flustered)

Er...yes. He was young, self-absorbed, you see...

AMANDA

You expect Gregory's fans to swallow this? This is wrong.

NICHOLAS

They're early works, remember? He hadn't been painting long.

AMANDA

Even if someone believed these were Gregory's,
No one in their right mind would buy one of these.

Music starts: They'll Eat Up Anything He Does.

NICHOLAS

They would and will! You think people buy art because it's good?

AMANDA

Yes.

NICHOLAS

You would.

YET EVERYONE ON PLANET EARTH
ASCERTAINS A PAINTING'S WORTH
BY LOOKING IN THE CORNER FOR A NAME.
THERE'S NO CAP TO WHAT THEY'LL PAY
FOR A PAINTING, DRAWING, SKETCH, EVEN ASH TRAY
BY AN ARTIST OF CELEBRITY AND FAME.
AND IN CASE YOU DIDN'T KNOW,
GREGORY HAS BOTH, ERGO:

THEY'LL EAT UP ANYTHING HE DOES
I PROMISE YOU THEY'LL LOVE HIS EARLY WORK.
SHOULD IT FAIL TO GENERATE A BUZZ,
WE'LL UNEARTH HIS SKETCHBOOK, FOR WHICH THEY'LL GO
BERSERK.

THEY'LL EAT UP ANYTHING HE DOES.
SHOULD THEY SNUB HIS LITTLE SKETCHBOOK, GOD FORBID,
HIS NAPKIN DOODLES OUGHT TO GIVE THEM PAUSE.
WELCOME BOYS, TO SOUTHEY'S, LET'S START WITH A
HANDSOME BID.

GOING ONCE! GOING TWICE!
SOLD! AT AN ASTRONOMICAL PRICE
TO THE STUNNER IN THE BACK: MY SALOMÉ!

(CONTINUED)

The piano plays a solo as NICHOLAS engages a reluctant AMANDA in a sexy dance.

NICHOLAS

THEY'LL EAT UP ANYTHING HE DOES.
SHOULD THE NAPKIN DOODLES FAIL TO MAKE A SPLASH,
HIS CHILDHOOD DRAWINGS WILL, BECAUSE
AN ORPHAN'S ART IS SURE TO PART A FOOL FROM HIS CASH.

IF THAT DOESN'T SELL, WE'VE GOT OTHER THINGS AS WELL:
HAIRCUT SNIPPINGS, TOENAIL CLIPPINGS, THE BEAUTY OF IT
IS,
THEY'LL EAT IT UP BECAUSE IT'S HIS.

WHAT A MAN WANTS MORE THAN QUALITY
IS THE FAINTEST TASTE OF CELEBRITY,
AND FOR THAT, MY LOVE, YOU'RE ABOUT TO SEE
HOW MUCH A MAN WILL PAY.

AMANDA

(looking out through the open doors)
I've made a mistake.

NICHOLAS

(crossing to AMANDA and embracing her)
What mistake, darling? For God's sake.
There now. Talk to me.

AMANDA

I thought you were looking out for Gregory.

NICHOLAS

(impatient)
And so I was. Amanda.

AMANDA

(pushing him away)
The show's off. I'll be across the street.

NICHOLAS

(grabbing her arm)

No!

AMANDA

Let me go.

NICHOLAS

(in a low, threatening voice)
You're not going to ruin this for me.

They stand fiercely staring at each other for a few moments. NICHOLAS grips her arm. AMANDA looks toward the open doors, finally, she shakes him off and quickly exits.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(calling after her)

They're coming, I tell you. You'll see!

NICHOLAS walks to the center of the stage and looks at his covered paintings. He picks up a handkerchief, wipes dust off the portrait, and then smashes the portrait to the ground, stepping on it. The sound of cheering drifts in through the open doors. He stops, stashes the broken painting behind the bar, puts the flowers in the vase, and sits on a stool sipping his wine. He stares at the doors with a sullen expression. Black out.

Scene 6

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. CHARLES'S new gallery.] The stage is dark except for a spotlight on TIMOTHY, who once again sits upstage at a laptop. His ENTOURAGE, now wearing Castro hats and skinny pants, eagerly look over his shoulder as he types and sings:

TIMOTHY

GREGORY QUITE, WAS YESTERDAY'S SUCCESS STORY,
BUT OPENING THIS WEEKEND DOWN AT "SHHH" GALLERY
INTRODUCING JAIR NEWMAN, HE DEFIES ALL CATEGORIES!
CHECK OUT MY FEATURE IN THE A&E.

Music starts for Success as TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE exit. The spotlight grows larger, revealing CHARLES'S new gallery ready to open. On the back wall, big black letters declare "SHHH Grand Re-opening 'Jair Newman: Falling Boy, Yellow Sky". GREGORY'S new paintings hang on the walls. CHARLES and an ASSISTANT are happily buzzing around making last minute preparations as NORA eagerly looks out at the crowd through the glass doors at stage left.

NORA

Stop fussing, Charles! They're dying to come in.
I think everyone in town is out there. Everyone!

CHARLES

(to his ASSISTANT)

All set? Alright, this is it. Everything's ready.
(inhaling deeply)
Take a deep breath, Nora. All set?

NORA

(smiling, holding the door handle)

Yeah. all set, Charles.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

(looking at his watch)

Five, four, three...

NORA doesn't wait for one, she throws open the doors. A flood of PATRONS, including GREGORY in a disguise, come parading into the gallery. They cheer and chatter as they crowd inside, tossing their coats, hats, and handbags into the ASSISTANT'S arms. Some of them head straight to the paintings, others head to the bar, still others spark up enthusiastic conversations. Leading the parade is TIMOTHY in a Castro hat, beard, aviator sunglasses, neck scarf, T-shirt, blazer, tight, cuffed jeans, wallet chain, and Vans. His ENTOURAGE follows closely behind him, as always dressed the same. Everyone begins to dance as TIMOTHY sings.

TIMOTHY

AREN'T JAIR NEWMAN'S PAINTINGS SOMETHING, THOUGH?

COMPANY

OH YES! OH YES! OH, YES!

TIMOTHY

AND ISN'T CHARLES'S GALLERY THE NEW PLACE TO GO?

COMPANY

THE BEST! THE BEST! THE BEST!

TIMOTHY

IF YOU EVER DOUBTED CHARLES'S REBOUNDED

COMPANY

CONFESS! CONFESS! CONFESS!

TIMOTHY

'CAUSE ALL IN ALL YOU MUST ADMIT THIS OPENING'S

COMPANY

A SUCCESS! A SUCCESS! A SUCCESS!

Music continues under the following:

CHARLES

Timothy! Good of you to come.

TIMOTHY

(shaking his hand, as if meeting him for
the first time)

I wouldn't miss it, Charles.

Congratulations. This Jair Newman is amazing.

And your new gallery is the center of the world.

(CONTINUED)

CHARLES

Thanks to you.

TIMOTHY

I call them like I see them, Charles.

He winks as CHARLES, laughing, joins the dancing. TIMOTHY and his ENTOURAGE also join the dancing. While this is happening, NORA is sitting at the bar chatting with the disguised GREGORY.

NORA

DOESN'T JAIR NEWMAN HAVE A GENTLE TOUCH?

COMPANY

A CARESS! A CARESS! A CARESS!

NORA

HIS LINES ARE THICK AND SENSUOUS, HIS COLORS RICH.

COMPANY

NOTHING LESS! NOTHING LESS! NOTHING LESS!

NORA

HE'S SIMPLY ON THE CUTTING EDGE OF ART TODAY.

COMPANY

ON THE PREC-, THE PREC-, -I- PICE!

NORA

AND LUCKY ME I WOUND UP WITH THIS MARVELOUS BOY!

COMPANY

HE'S A SUCCESS! A SUCCESS! A SUCCESS!

Music continues as AMANDA rushes in. She pauses and gives her coat to the obviously overburdened ASSISTANT, scanning the scene. TIMOTHY sees her.

TIMOTHY

(with warmth)

Amanda? I didn't expect to see you again.

AMANDA

(looking around, astonished)

Timothy! Wow. What's going on here?

I've never heard of this, Jair...

TIMOTHY

Newman. His mother was Turkish, his father was a Jew. No one's ever heard of him. As soon as I found him, I talked Charles into taking a risk. Can you believe it?

This opening is his first show in New York.

(CONTINUED)

AMANDA

Impressive. What a warm reception.

TIMOTHY

(winking)

I guess word travels fast.

AMANDA

Anything I can do to help?

TIMOTHY

I believe we can find something. Have a crab cake?

AMANDA

(smiling, standing next to him)

I'd love one.

Everyone dances as they sing.

BOTH

RAISE YOUR GLASSES,
THE FUTURE IS BRIGHT.

COMPANY

RAISE YOUR GLASSES,
THE FUTURE'S TONIGHT. TONIGHT!

CHARLES

DOESN'T JAIR NEWMAN HAVE A SPECIAL GIFT?

COMPANY

HE'S BLESSED! HE'S BLESSED! HE'S BLESSED!

CHARLES

HE'S AN UNDISPUTED MASTER OF HIS CRAFT.

COMPANY

WE'RE IMPRESSED! WE'RE IMPRESSED! WE'RE IMPRESSED!

CHARLES

AFTER THAT ORDEAL WITH MY LAST GALLERY,

COMPANY

WHAT A MESS! WHAT A MESS! WHAT A MESS!

CHARLES

I THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH FOR HELPING THIS TO BE...

COMPANY

SUCCESS! SUCCESS! SUCC...

*The music stops along with all movement as
NICHOLAS throws the doors open with a bang. All*

(CONTINUED)

eyes immediately turn to him. He lingers in the doorway for a moment, holding an empty wine bottle in his hand and scanning the scene with malice in his eyes. Visibly drunk, he sways for a moment, then stumbles into the gallery, his eyes fixed on CHARLES. All eyes follow him, except GREGORY, who shrinks in his bar seat. NICHOLAS pauses in the middle of the stage and surveys the party for a moment before speaking.

NICHOLAS

(in a low drawl)

Well, Charles. This is quite a soirée.

CHARLES

(on his guard)

Hello, Nicholas. Can I help you?

NICHOLAS

You've really packed them in, Charles. Quite a feat.

(to the crowd)

You've made an appearance. Time to head across the street.

TIMOTHY

They aren't going across the street, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

(he notices AMANDA next to TIMOTHY)

No? My, but we are fickle.

(to the crowd)

Not long ago, you were drooling over Gregory Quite.

Now, your fount of enthusiasm is hardly a trickle.

So who's the flavor-of-the-month tonight?

He turns to the paintings behind him, sees the name Jair Newman and stumbles back. He turns to CHARLES, furious.

NICHOLAS

Where is he? Where is he?

CHARLES

Where is who, Nicholas? Jair Newman?

NICHOLAS

(losing his cool, furiously searching the crowd)

Yes! Him! Where is he? Where is he?

NORA

(stepping forward, shielding GREGORY)

He's back in Portland, Nicholas. It's okay.

He didn't come. He's wary of the limelight. He's shy.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

Nora! What on Earth are you doing here?

He breaks free of the guests restraining him and approaches her. GREGORY shrinks in his seat again.

NICHOLAS

Nora. My old friend. My dear...

NORA

I'm here to promote the artist, Nicholas. *Jair*.
I told you the other day, but you didn't care.

NICHOLAS

That wasn't a social call? And now you're in bed with these...

(turning to AMANDA)

I'd expect that from this little tease.

TIMOTHY

(coming forward)

I think it's time you left, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

(backing up)

Timothy, Timothy. I don't take orders from you.
Unlike them.

(to the crowd)

You'd worship a velvet Elvis if he told
you to.

NICHOLAS laughs at his own joke as everyone else stands silent. TIMOTHY bristles.

NORA

Come on, Nicholas. That's enough. Let's all just relax.

NICHOLAS

(to the crowd)

You lemmings! You sheep! You cattle!
Has the scent of celebrity clouded your brains?
"Oh, what lovely paintings!", "What a talented chap!"
Well, those of you in the front here, go ahead, clap.
As for the rest, just rattle
Your wallet chains.

CHARLES

Get out, Nicholas. Get out or I'll throw you out.

NICHOLAS breaks the bottle on the wall and brandishes it at CHARLES, who stands back, livid. AMANDA restrains him.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

(deadly serious)

Charles. Don't you threaten me.
What are you going to do? Use Karate?
Beat me into a pile of bulging welts?
Everyone knows hipsters never make it past white belt.
(laughing at his own joke)
Alright! That's an old one, I admit it.
I withdraw. I'm done. I know when to quit.

NICHOLAS, still pointing the bottle, slowly makes his way to the doors, pulls out his car keys and rattles them loudly.

NICHOLAS

(to all)

Goodnight, Goodnight, little bleating sheep.
Goodnight dear adoptive brother, wherever you are.
I shall never forget my moment on top of the heap.
I'm off; I'm off for a ride in my expensive silver car.

NORA

(rushing toward the doors)

Nicholas!

GREGORY sits bolt upright. CHARLES, NORA, AMANDA, and TIMOTHY call after NICHOLAS as he hastily exits. Blackout. In the darkness the engine of an expensive sports car revs up and screeches away from a curb. Then we hear the gut wrenching crunch of two cars colliding into each other. Tires squeal, metal slams into metal, a hubcap rattles onto concrete, sirens wail, and all goes silent.

Scene 7

[Brooklyn, New York. Early morning. A hospital room.] The stage is dark. A square of dim sunlight through a tall window fades up to reveal the hospital room where NICHOLAS is laid up in a bed. His head lolls on the massive pillow. Next to the bed, a life support machine buzzes, a wavy green flashing line blinking on it's front panel. A cluster of cables and tubes extends from the machine into NICHOLAS'S body. He appears to be asleep. A thin curtain separates the bed from the rest of the room. GREGORY enters through a door at the back, accompanied by NORA. They stop on the outside of the curtain.

NORA

Baby, I hate to rush you. Take your time in there,
But we have a lunch meeting with a collector before
We catch that flight to your show in Chicago.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

I know.

NORA

(catching herself)

Listen to me. I'm sorry. A lunch date and a flight
Couldn't be further from your mind.

GREGORY

The nurse'll be amazed
If he comes out of it. Of course, he'll be paralyzed.
It's hard to imagine Nicholas an invalid.

NORA

If he could see you now, he would be proud.

GREGORY

It's funny. This happened just as I was thinking how
Much I like the way the world has changed.

NORA

You've
Come a long way.

GREGORY

At a price.
(beat)

NORA

So? What's the plan?
Am I going in with you?

GREGORY

I'd rather go in alone.

NORA

I figured. You're brave.

GREGORY

I'm going to be alright.

*They kiss. GREGORY looks toward the curtain,
holding NORA'S hand, he hesitates for a moment and
steps behind the curtain as NORA exits.*

GREGORY

Nicholas? Nicholas, can you hear my voice?
Can you open your eyes? See my face...?
Good news, Nicholas. The show sold out.
People are excited. I'm getting commissions.
New York is right up your alley: the art, the fashions.
We opened a gallery. It's off the beaten path,
But it's good. It's back in Portland, in our flat.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY (cont'd)

Nora knows everything, Nicholas. About my death.
We have no secrets. I told her and I'm not sorry.
She's not going to tell anyone, so don't worry.
She likes this me, Nicholas. She loves me, in fact.
We're in love and so far it's going perfect.
Do you know something? Before she and I met
Nora was a virgin. How about that?
I believed you when you said you'd got off with her,
You know, in Europe. Not that I would have cared.
It was a long time ago. It wouldn't matter if you had.
She told me nothing happened. Although, of course, you
tried.

Music starts: I Have Forgiven You.

(he laughs to himself)

Nicholas, I'VE BEEN PAINTING
SO MUCH. IT'S NICE.
IT'S NOT A CHORE, LIKE BEFORE.
IT'S NOT A RACE.
AND WHEN I PAINT.
I'M GONE. I'M LOST.
THERE'S NOTHING ON EARTH
I COULD POSSIBLY WANT.
IN THOSE ENDLESS MOMENTS.
I'M NOT TRYING TO GAIN TRACTION.
EACH PAINTING IS A PAINTING,
NOT A STEP IN A DIRECTION.
IT USED TO BE LABOR, BUT NOW
IMAGES COME.
THEY JUST FLOW.
WHO KNOWS HOW LONG IT WILL LAST?

*NICHOLAS, who has been listening the entire time,
turns his head to look at GREGORY. The lights grow
eerie as NICHOLAS, seeing GREGORY standing there,
mistakes him for the STREET KID, and becomes
visibly frightened. He balks for a moment before
the lights return to normal.*

NICHOLAS

(recovering, in a weak voice)

Well, well. Listen to you.

GREGORY

Nicholas! You're awake! Nurse!

NICHOLAS

Shh! I don't want her to come.
So you're the only one who came to see me?
No matter what I do, it's always Gregory.
Well, let me look at you. You're not a mess.
You almost look handsome,
Happy. You're a success.

(CONTINUED)

GREGORY

I'm not doing too bad.
Nicholas, YOU TOLD ME YOUR REASONS
FOR DOING WHAT YOU DID
AND I'VE GOT A DOZEN
FOR WANTING YOU DEAD,
BUT I HAVE FORGIVEN YOU.
I HAVE FORGIVEN YOU.

I SHOULD STAND UP AND LEAVE,
SPIT INSULTS AT YOU,
BUT I KNOW I COULDN'T HAVE
DONE IT WITHOUT YOU,
I HAVE FORGIVEN YOU.
I HAVE FORGIVEN...

NICHOLAS

YOU KNOW WHEN YOU RHAPSODIZE, GREGORY,
WHEN YOU GET ALL SENTIMENTAL, MY MEMORY
FLASHES TO THE NIGHT YOU CAME TO LIVE WITH US.
DR. ZHIVAGO MADE SUCH A FUSS.

Music continues under the following:

NICHOLAS

He wanted to make your first night special.
Where was mother again...?

GREGORY

She left. She left us.

NICHOLAS

Oh, yes. She left. Where did she go?
Somewhere far away. But never mind.
You slept upstairs in my bedroom.
I slept in the unfinished guest room below.
On a hard floor that hadn't seen a broom
Since the dawn of mankind.

GREGORY

God. What you must have gone through, Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

You sobbed and whimpered the whole night through.
There you were, the luckiest child anywhere,
And you couldn't stop crying. Father was up there.
I could hear his voice, consoling you so intently.
I'd never heard him speak so lovingly, so gently.
Oh, Gregory. How I hate you.

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS

HOW I WISH IT WAS YOU
WHO WAS BREATHING HIS
LAST.
I'D PULL THE PLUG ON
YOU
SO FAST.
I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN
YOU.
I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN
YOU.
GREGORY!
EVERYTHING I COULD
HAVE HAD
WAS GIVEN TO YOU.
AND YOU TOOK IT.
YOU TOOK IT WILLINGLY.
ALL I ASK IN RETURN
IS THAT YOU HATE ME
TOO.
I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN
YOU.
I'VE NEVER FORGIVEN
YOU.

GREGORY

YOU DON'T MEAN THAT.
LET'S FORGET IT.
WHAT'S DONE IS DONE.
NICHOLAS, LISTEN,
LISTEN.
I NEVER ASKED FOR
THAT.
I NEVER WANTED IT.
I DON'T HATE YOU.
YOU'RE MY BROTHER.
I FORGIVE YOU.
I STILL LOVE YOU.

NICHOLAS

(scoffing)

Of course you do. I just don't get it.
Why did father love you more than me? Forget it.

*Music for Hospital Scene starts and continues
under the following:*

For years I've waited for you to grow a spine,
But you won't. I suppose you want me to give you mine.

GREGORY

Nicholas...

NICHOLAS

Shh. Go home. Paint your little pictures.
Go enjoy your life in the spotlight,
Except for one little stricture:
May you always regret,
May you never forget,
The fact that you reached the top
By standing on *my* shoulders,
And breaking my back.
Do you know what I see in your future? It's night.
You and your Nora are standing on some rooftop
Gazing out into the New York air.
The entire city is burning. The winding black
Columns of smoke way out on the horizon there,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

They fill the sky forever, glooming.
And flames devour twisting corpses, who,
With rolled back, blackened eyes, turn to you,
Their rattling voices, like death knells booming
Cry out. Do you know what they're saying to you?

GREGORY

Nicholas...

NICHOLAS

They're saying, "Confess, Gregory Quite, confess.
Admit to yourself, if you can,
That although you ended up a success, Nicholas Quite
was the better man."

NICHOLAS moves his hand up and grabs hold of the lever controlling the respirator. He puts all his weight on it and slams it downward, stopping the machine. GREGORY fights to restrain him and tries to pull the lever back upward, but he can't. The beeping grows more persistent as NICHOLAS yanks all is tubes out. In a short time the glowing line on the monitor flattens out. NICHOLAS'S body twitches, his head jerks backward involuntarily, and then he lays still as the beeping becomes a loud, steady, eerie tone.

GREGORY

Nicholas? Nicholas? Nicholas!

GREGORY lays his head across NICHOLAS'S chest for a moment as the eerie tone continues.

Epilogue

[Brooklyn, New York. Night. A cemetery.] GREGORY stands. In the darkness a dim spotlight follows him as he walks downstage center. The hospital room recedes into the background as GREGORY reaches the downstage area and stops before a gravestone. The eerie tone of the life support machine fades into the music for Once.

GREGORY

ONCE YOU PUT YOUR ARM AROUND
ME WHEN I GOT STUNG ONE SUMMER.

NORA comes into the spotlight and slips her hand into GREGORY'S.

(CONTINUED)

NORA

ONCE YOU HELPED ME FIND
MY WAY WHEN I GOT LOST IN PARIS.

*CHARLES appears in a gallery under a spotlight
upstage right.*

CHARLES

YOU KEPT THE PATRONS GUESSING.

*TIMOTHY and AMANDA appear together at the top of
the stairs to her apartment upstage left.*

AMANDA

YOU HAD A WAY WITH WORDS.

TIMOTHY

YOU WERE THE LIFE
OF THE PARTY EVERY TIME.

GREGORY

I FEEL NO LONGING,
I FEEL NO PAIN.
ONLY FORGIVENESS,
NEW LIFE, NORA'S HAND.
I'LL NEVER FORGET
WHAT YOU HELPED ME TO LEARN:
LET GO AND MAKE YOUR OWN WAY...

AMANDA

ONCE YOU CAN LEARN HOW TO TRUST...

CHARLES

PICK YOURSELF UP WHEN YOU FALL...

NORA

ONCE YOU STOP SEARCHING, YOU'LL FIND...

TIMOTHY

WHEN YOU'RE THE ONE WHO MAKES THE RULES...

ALL

YOU'LL BECOME A BUTTERFLY.

*While singing the words "You'll become a
butterfly," the characters leave the stage, first
AMANDA and TIMOTHY, then CHARLES, then NORA, then
GREGORY. As the music comes to a close the
spotlight holds on the gravestone at center.*

Black out. Curtain.