

Keep a Good Thought

By

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ACT I

1

Scene I

1

Illuminated by a single spotlight, Dick sits at his desk, which is to his left and perpendicular to the audience with a computer on it. There is a single waste basket near his feet but no other paraphernalia to indicate what kind of work he does. He stares vacantly yet intently at the audience, as if he were some kind of automaton being fed his daily instruction from some remote and unknown source. Various people walk back and forth in front of his door and turn imaginary corners on their way to other parts of the building. Some ignore him and others say hello. Dick barely acknowledges either but does return a subdued greeting.

After a moment, stage lights all go up as Dick stands and turns downstage and lights a cigarette. Behind him, a patio bench is setup to indicate he has gone outside the front door to a porch. Suddenly, he brightens up and addresses an offstage character.

DICK

Ace! How ya' doing'? (pauses, but not long enough for anyone to have actually answered him before launching into his rant)

Oh, I know, I know! They're idiots, I'm telling ya! Last week - you won't believe this - last week, one of my jobs was shipped to the wrong state. Last week, those idiots in Shipping listened to some truck drivers about where Pontiac, Illinois was and decided, "No, there is no Pontiac, Illinois! It must be going to Pontiac, Michigan," and that's where they sent it! And they did it without checking with me, first! Meantime... (takes a drag)...in the meantime, my customer is screaming at me for news and we can't reach the drivers because they've shut off their phones and can't be found! Probably had a lovers' quarrel or something. (takes a long drag)...And Larry.....Larry, you know, Larry, my customer, ...Larry is beside himself and calling every 15 minutes trying to figure out where the truck is. All because those idiots in Shipping listened to some truck drivers who'd never heard of Pontiac, Illinois. I'm tellin' ya, there's

more confusion back there than kissin' cousins at a hillbilly wedding! It's all because Hector tells these guys not to listen to us but he doesn't train them, either! It's almost as if Hector has it in for us. On
(MORE)

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3.

DICK (cont'd)

the one hand, he doesn't want us talking to any of his people but when something goes wrong, who do you think gets blamed? That's right, Ace, we do! (muttering)
Reminds me of my father, that old....

(lowering his voice)

I told Hector...Yeah, that's right, I told Hector he'd better get those guys in shape or we'd lose the account and.....

Hector, minority owner of the company, enters. He is blind and extends his right arm along the imaginary building wall to find his way to the patio bench. Dick puts out his cigarette and lights the man's cigar. He ignores 'Ace' and speaks to Hector.

DICK

Senor Cortes, did I light up the cigar, properly? I don't know how you smoke those things, Hector! They're too strong for me!

HECTOR

What's on your mind, Dick?

DICK

My mind? Oh nothing! Well, not nothing, of course. I'm always thinking about how to bring work here, boss.

Dick glances quickly back at 'Ace' and motions to move along - he's busy talking to the boss, now.

HECTOR

I appreciate that, Dick. Whatever you need to bring in the work, you let me know.

DICK

Oh thanks, Hector, but I don't need any help. Everything's running smoothly

HECTOR

Smoothly? What about that screwed-up delivery last week? Was that straightened out? I talked to Senora Siempre Escochina in Shipping about that....

DICK

Oh Hector! That wasn't necessary - it was just a mistake on their part. No need to blame anyone.

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HECTOR

Yes, it was a mistake but I wasn't blaming them, Dick. She explained what happened. (Hector takes a puff from his cigar before continuing) It would help to double check your instructions before things go out, Dick. I don't know how this happened, *otra vez*, but everyone has to check their instructions before things go out.

DICK

Of course, Hector, of course. And I know they did - but it's all water under the bridge now. The job arrived and no harm done.

HECTOR

Water under the bridge, yes. **Very good. Esta bien.** Well, I won't let them give you too hard a time, Dick. It wasn't all your fault.

DICK

Yeah....anyway, Senor Cortes, I wonder if you know what might be happening with Jim's memorial service? Are there any plans?

HECTOR

We're planning a sort of remembrance here in a couple of weeks. I know you were very close to Jim and we'd - that is, Senor Frank Cortes and I - we'd like you to speak at Jim's memorial here. After all, you helped with his accounts, while he was ill, and managed to keep everything running smoothly.

DICK

Oh, uh...Si, Senor...you know me, anything to help out. Jim was a good guy and I was happy to help him out. His family, too; they certainly could use the commissions those jobs brought, they certainly could. Those jobs were hard work. I wonder how Jim managed them before going into the hospital, sick as he was. I hope whoever takes them over can handle them because they were hard work, that's for sure.

HECTOR

We know what to do about that (puffs). Jim insisted he could handle them but you were right to insist on helping. I wish we could have given you a bigger split, Dick, but Jim had a lot of debt, you know, and we wanted to make sure Debbie and the girls were taken care of before the end. I know you understand.

Hector extinguishes his cigar.

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5.

HECTOR

Of course, Jim wasn't too happy with sharing those accounts but that's what Frank, I mean, we decided.

Hector exits

DICK

(calling after Hector)

Well, I'm glad to do it, Senor Cortes! You know me.

Dick looks furtively about the audience and exits through the double doors as the scene ends.

2

Scene II

2

FOLLOWING DAY

Another sales office seen in profile. Dick is sitting in the guest chair opposite Carlo, who sits behind a poly glass table desk. Boxes and large rolled paper are stacked neatly on the floor around and behind them.

CARLO

What is that shirt you're wearing? And those pants -

who dresses you, anyway?

DICK

Listen, don't give me a hard time, alright? I had a horrible weekend.

CARLO

Alright, what happened? Who's the girl?

DICK

There's no girl! It had nothing to do with a girl!

CARLO

Don't kid me, who was it? Was it Rachel? Is she still angry about what happened with Jennifer? Why did you do that? Whoever told you that was a good idea?

DICK

No, it wasn't about Jennifer...and why are you bringing that up, anyway? That's old history! You don't know what really happened with Jennifer...it was very complicated.

CARLO

Complicated? You bet your ass it was complicated. The only thing that was simple about it is that you managed to complicate it even more.

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DICK

I guarantee you, you would have done the same thing if you were in my place.

CARLO

Are you nuts? Nobody would have done that! You don't ask your dying wife if you can move your new girlfriend into the house as she's lying there suffering from AIDS. Who does that?

DICK

It wasn't like that! And if Jennifer had still loved me, she wouldn't have minded. She didn't get AIDS from me, you know. It wasn't my fault.

CARLO

What difference does that make? You were married to

her! What were you expecting her to say? Where do get these ideas, anyway?

DICK

Fine, I made a mistake...

CARLO

A big mistake, my friend! Jesus, Dick, you could have waited ~~til~~ 'til she'd had died, at least.

DICK

Fine, a *big* mistake, okay? But you don't know what I went through, watching her waste away like that. It was horrible and to know that she had the virus even before we were married. What if I had been infected?

CARLO

Always thinking of the other person, aren't you? Jennifer didn't know she had the virus when you two were married because there was no blood test for it then. Besides, you claim you always use protection. You were probably never in danger.

But when she did discover she had it - after you were married - and told you so, you decide to go out and bring your new girlfriend into the house, even before Jennifer knows you're having an affair or Rachel even realizes you've lied to her about being married, in the first place!

DICK

What do you want from me?

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7.

CARLO

Ah, take it easy, I'm sorry. But when I ~~hear~~ think of this story I just can't believe what you tried to do. Let's forget it, and just say you panicked; I guess I might have, too, if I were in your place. How is Rachel, anyway?

DICK

We broke up over the weekend.

CARLO

You broke up over the weekend. Of course, you did. You are a real piece of work, my friend.

An intercom system interrupts; Hector Cortes is broadcasting throughout the plant.

HECTOR

(over the loudspeaker)

Senora Siempre Escochina, please call extension 459! Senora Escochina, extensión 459, por favor!

CARLO

There's Hector, again, calling for his little tryst.

DICK

She ain't so little, anymore, bro.
(another page over the phone interrupts again)

CARLO

(sweetly but viciously)

Well, love is blind and so is he.

FEMALE PAGER

Dick Downs, please pick up line 499! Dick Downs - 499, please!

Dick reaches into his pocket and produces a portable phone, which he answers

DICK

Yes? Joey! Yes, you saw it? Was I right? Yeah, yeah, Randi-Pantz...Randi-Pantz, yeah! She is? Really?

CARLO

What's that about? *(Dick hangs up)* Who's Randi-Pantz?

Enter Joe, the Sales Manager. He's been talking to Dick on his portable phone while walking the hallways and now pokes his head through Carlo's office door.

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8.

JOE

She's a porn star.

CARLO

A porn star? (pauses as he eyes Dick) Don't tell me....you broke up with Rachel because you're seeing a porn star?

Joe laughs out loud and quickly exits

DICK

(quickly to Carlo)
She's a nice girl!

CARLO

Oh, well, that makes all the difference, doesn't it?

DICK

She's an ex-porn star. Currently...she's a tattoo artist.

(Lifting his sleeve)
She gave me this tattoo here, see?

CARLO

Uh, huh. Does she have tattoos?

DICK

Oh sure. The artists all do each other.

CARLO

Really? They all use the same equipment?

DICK

Yeah, all the same.

CARLO

In other words, they share the needles.

DICK

Yeah...
(suddenly aware of Carlo's implication)
Oh no! They clean those needles daily!

CARLO

I just find it interesting that you aren't alarmed at the possibility of contracting AIDS, anymore.

DICK

Look, she's a nice girl; she isn't into that stuff, anymore, and she's clean. I ain't worried.

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9.

CARLO

Not about that, but you are about something.

DICK

Well, yes. I met her at the shop two weeks ago and we went out and...and Rachel found out and broke up with me.

CARLO

But you'll apologize to Rachel, right?

DICK

I can't. She's on a shoot out of state. She'll be gone for two months. She just left this morning and told me to be out of the house when she gets back.

CARLO

(quickly)

Well, there's no room in my place!

DICK

I wasn't asking! I wouldn't ask for that, even if you are supposed to be my best friend around here. How can you say that, anyway? Since when do I ever ask you for any favors?

CARLO

Since when? When haven't you?

DICK

You know what? You know what...

CARLO

(clearly enjoying Dick's outrage)

Yes?

DICK

(calming himself)

I'm going to have to move somewhere and I'm not sure I've got enough....money....

Carlo grimaces but the prospect of avoiding Dick as a roommate is clearly more appealing than having to lend him money. He unpeels a bunch of bills from a fat wad and hands it to Dick.

Thanks, buddy, I appreciate it. I'm getting a big commission check next month. Lots of orders came in on

Jim's old accounts and I'm still handling those.

CARLO

You sure? How do you know Frank and Hector will let you keep those accounts? After all, they're all repeat orders and could easily be turned into House Accounts, leaving you no commission, at all.

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10.

DICK

(angrily)

Of course, I'm sure! Hector as much as promised me I'd keep them, just now, out on the patio.

CARLO

He promised you? Are you sure? I'm hearing that Hector wants to fire some of us, so he can grab those accounts for the House. Who better to start with than someone who is on his deathbed and can't fight back? This company is in trouble, my friend. You've seen the sales figures - everyone is down by a third since last year. I'm telling you, Dick, Hector is gunning for some of us; he wants those old accounts for the House and I'm not sure Frank wants to stop him, either.

DICK

I said he promised me!

CARLO

Calm down. All I'm saying is business is bad, as bad as it's ever been and it has those two brothers baffled. Keep in mind that they're used to *growing* this company, not shrinking it. Remember, it was Hector who saw how they could benefit from those government contracts, not Frank. He was the one that went after them and it's made them both rich. Now, the economy is turned upside down, everyone is competing for those contracts and getting them, and they don't know what to do. They're cannibalizing this place, like tigers eating their young.

DICK

(realizing his outburst was uncalled for, he reels it back in)

Yeah, I know, but he asked me to emcee Jim's memorial

service here in a couple of weeks. He wouldn't ask me to do that if he didn't appreciate how I helped out Jim, would he? Maybe, if you weren't so cynical, you'd see that loyalty counts for something around here. It's not all about money, you know.

(As he speaks, Dick counts the bills out slowly)

CARLO

Sure, sure.....Why are you wearing that shirt?

BLACK - END SCENE

11.

3

Scene III

3

A coffee house. Joe, the sales manager, Hector and Frank, the minority and majority owners, are seated at breakfast. Hector is holding court.

HECTOR

We can't afford some of these draws...

FRANK

...or the commissions...they're too high....

HECTOR

You've got to decide who's going to go, Joe. Somebody has to go. *Nadie es más inteligente que un mono.* We're losing all sorts of money!

Joe and Frank exchange a glance. Clearly, Joe is not convinced of Hector's claim but will not challenge him. Frank gestures to Joe to be calm.

FRANK

(quietly to Hector)
It's not all their fault, Hector.

HECTOR

(shouting)
It is!
(quickly gaining his composure)
It is. Nobody communicates to my guys what they

want. It is their fault. You've got to decide, Joe, or Mr. Frank Cortes and I will decide for you.

Joe doesn't answer right away. Seeking to negotiate, he offers up an alternative

JOE

What if we cut everyone's draw by a certain amount - would that work?

FRANK

And the commissions, too? We should cut those, too.

HECTOR

Of course the commissions, too. Who are you going to fire, Joe?

JOE

I don't want to fire anyone. I think we can save money by cutting back on the draws against the commissions...

(CONTINUED)

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12.

FRANK

...because those commissions are going to be less, anyway. See, Hector? Try to keep a good thought; Joseph has everything under control.

HECTOR

Do you want me to fire someone? I'll do it. What about Dick? That fiasco to Michigan was all his fault - he didn't communicate what he wanted! It's all a matter of common sense, isn't it? Just communicate what you want and things will happen the way they should. You see it's common sense, don't you? You all see that?

FRANK

Sí, Héctor, sentido común; but let's try Joseph's way, first. That way, we don't lose any sales staff. After all, they still do a lot of the work your customer service people would normally have to do. And that leaves time to train the kids.

JOE

The kids?

Frank does not answer but attends to his food. Hector tilts his head in Joe's direction. After a pause, he realizes Frank will not answer and takes charge.

HECTOR

Sí, los jóvenes, everyone. They're all going to need jobs one day. We'll start them off in Sales.

JOE

You'll start them in Sales? With no experience?

HECTOR

They'll start in Sales. That's the Conquistador Way. My guys can support them all. At least, everyone will be communicating again - not like things are now. Now, there's no common sense and no communication.

FRANK

Hector, maybe we should get back to work.

HECTOR

Work? What work?

Frank helps Hector stand and leads him off stage, Hector placing his hand on Frank's shoulder for guidance. Joe follows shaking his head.

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13.

JOE

(fishing out money for a tip)
No common sense. Not now.

END SCENE

4

Scene IV

4

Louis's office. Louis, an older, muscular salesman sits behind a cluttered wooden desk, facing the audience. The background wall is bedecked with Old West paraphernalia. Dick enters and sits in the guest chair to one side. His back is to the audience about 3/4 in profile. He waits

patiently for Louis to look up from his work and speak.

LOUIS

What do you want, you piece-of-shit?

DICK

What? I come in here, looking to have a nice conversation with my bro and he calls me a piece of shit? That's cold, bro, that's cold.

(looking around the walls)

How are the horses doing?

LOUIS

What do you care? I'm not letting you ride again; you almost broke your neck last time. What do you want?

DICK

(continuing to avoid eye contact with Louis)

Nothing, Louis, nothing. I just wanted to talk about the horses. I'm thinking of buying a couple, myself, since you ask.

LOUIS

You want to buy my horses? What for? You can't ride and they can't plow, so what do you want 'em for?

DICK

I thought I might go into the breeding business, as sort of a sideline from this. Everyone's got something on the side around here. It's sometimes the only way to keep cash going, with something on the side, you know?

LOUIS

I'm not selling you one of my horses. You'll probably neglect them so much I'll have to buy them back in a year and put 'em down. What do you know about breeding

(MORE)

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14.

LOUIS (cont'd)

horses, anyway? All you do is breed trouble for me! Who told you to come in here, anyway? Get out of my office before I use that silly hat of yours for a spittoon!

Clearly defeated, Dick exits hurriedly and bumps into Joe in the outer hallway. Joe grabs him by the arm takes a turn around the corner from Louis's office. He produces a stack of photos and gives it to Dick, who eyeballs them quickly and begins to laugh.

JOE

So, what do you think, Dicky D.?

DICK

Oh Joey, this is great! Look how many films she's done! Jesus, she was hot. I love how she ties that black hair up into a knotted pony tail. Look at that knot - it's really tight! You know, I've only been out with her three times and I've already had more sex with her than I've had all year with Rachel. Shit, Rachel...she's never home - always traveling to some location shoot or another. I mean, how many times does she have to make new wardrobe for the same characters? I wished she'd stay home more often. And she's always talking about who she met on this shoot, and did you know who spoke to her in between scenes on that movie and, ah shit. What do I care? Say, Joe do you think she's seeing someone on the side?

Joe shakes his head in disbelief at Dick's behavior and Dick takes it as a No, Rachel is not unfaithful.

Ah, who needs her? (sifting through the photos) Where did you find these photos, Joey? You're the King, bro, the King when it comes to finding this stuff out.

JOE

It's not a big deal, Dick. She's been around for years. What are you going to do now that Rachel's kicked you out?

DICK

I'm fine. I've got commissions coming and some investments I can draw on. Got some vintage toys to sell.

JOE

Toys? Who the hell buys vintage toys?

(CONTINUED)

DICK

Oh bro, you wouldn't believe it. The little cars like Barry owns, those go for buckets of money. It's a big business out in the Valley. You don't live out that way like I do, so I wouldn't expect you to know, but it's big business. I'm going to buy some of Barry's collection and resell them for a nice chunk.

(lowering his voice)

You know, just between you, me...

JOE

(looking up at the ceiling)

...and the surveillance cameras...

DICK

...I owe Louis some money, too. Not much, you know, but I thought I'd better take care of it now, before I forget. A clean slate, you know?

JOE

So, where'd you get the extra cash to buy the toys?

DICK

Hey, I'm a salesman, baby!

JOE

Why not pay Louis off, first, and move after that?

DICK

Well, Rachel won't give me any extra time. Besides, I'm handling Jim's stuff right now - thanks to Hector and his faith in me - and I should get some commissions soon. Plus, Larry's got me quoting a lot of stuff. I'll be alright.

(in a confidential manner)

Say, what's going on with Jim's service? Is there a date? I'd like to have all his old jobs closed up by then, you know, for Debbie and the kids - their last commission check, you know? I hope whoever gets those accounts doesn't suffer like I did with them. They're hard work. Not too hard - I didn't have too much trouble, you know, but some other people might. I don't think Carlo or Louis could handle them, you know, Louis is so busy with the horses and Carlo with his photography. And Barry has been having trouble, I hear. I mean, he's half retired, anyway. I doubt if any of them want any new accounts. Those accounts are hard work.

JOE

(wishing to avoid any mention of Jim's

old accounts, Joe redirects the
conversation)
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 16.

JOE (cont'd)

Yeah, right, hard work. Listen, what about those
vintage toy cars: how much can you get for them?

DICK

Oh, double their cost. Actually, I already bought them
from Barry - \$5,000 for the whole lot! Can you believe
it? I robbed him, bro, I robbed him.

JOE

(Now Joe wishes to escape)

Good luck then. Listen, I gotta get back to my
desk. Bring Randi-Pantz in one of these days. We all
want to meet her.

DICK

What do you mean, All? You didn't tell Louis, did you?

END SCENE

5

Scene V

5

*Dick is outside smoking again, holding court with
Ace, the offstage character.*

DICK

Ace! What's doing? Yeah, yeah, got a new
place. It's great, too. Got a roof balcony where I
can relax and do some of my art....oh sure, I sketch
and draw all the time. I also had enough money saved
up to lease a studio in the valley to do some more
sculpting....you didn't know? Of course I sculpt! I
have for years. I started with clay models when I was
working at the studios in New York, just around the
corner from the Factory....oh sure, I saw him.....Of
course, I saw him....and yes, I owned horses,
too. Yes, I did, and let me tell you those Arabians
were beautiful! They were beautiful! I wish I was
still a wrangler for the movies - that was so much
fun! I finally sold the Arabians to Louis years ago
because Louis started breeding horses and he saw those
Arabians and he just had to have them. (takes a
drag) Made a lot of money on that deal.....Well, you

know, things are busy: did some quotes - big quotes - for Larry this morning. I'll get 'em. Frank did the quotes, so I'll get 'em....You've been having trouble, lately? I heard. I know, things get screwy around here and confused. I hear there's a lot of confusion on your accounts, yes?

Dick turns as he takes another drag. He looks up briefly and nods as if Ace is leaving.
See ya, Ace!

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CONTINUED: 17.

(pauses)
Idiot.

Carlo and Joe join Dick out on the porch. Dick is still looking off into the distance and then jumps sky high in alarm when Joe gently touches his shoulder and surprises him.

DICK
Oh shit! (places his hand over his heart) You scared the shit out of me! What did you do that for?

JOE
Jesus, what is the matter with you? I barely touched you.

Carlo ignores the exchange and practices a phantom golf swing.

CARLO
Have you moved yet?

DICK
No, but I got my eye on a place in the East Village. It reminds me of New York.

Carlo stops practicing and looks directly at Dick to emphasize his next remark

CARLO
Well, you'd better put a deposit down and get a move on. I know you - you'll wait till the last minute. And, by the way, you're not from New York. You're from Long Island - that is *not* New York City.

DICK

What are you talking about? I'm from New York!

Louis enters and gives Dick a sharp elbow to the ribs. Dick is startled again and puts his hand to his heart again.

Jeez, bro! You scared the shit out of me!

CARLO

You see this? This is what I mean - nobody from New York gets scared like that.

Turning to Carlo, Louis speaks ominously, ala "The Godfather"

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18.

LOUIS

Hello, Carlo

Carlo, slightly rattled, returns to his phantom golfing.

DICK

(to Carlo)

Don't you have something to do - like retire?

LOUIS

If Carlo says you ain't from New York, then you ain't from New York. He's from Brooklyn and alcoholic, so he ought to know.

CARLO

(interrupting)

The Bronx. I'm from the Bronx.

LOUIS

I don't care if you're from Barcelona; you're still an alcoholic.

CARLO

(laughing)

I was an alcoholic. I don't drink, anymore.

DICK

And I never drink.

LOUIS

Then you can't be from New York, can you?

JOE

Come on, who's going to lunch?

*Carlo and Louis both shake their heads no.
I'll bet you've both eaten.*

CARLO

Some of us have to work, my friend; some of us work.

*Dick and Joe leave for lunch and exit. Louis
watches them leave then quickly turns to Carlo.*

LOUIS

Did Dick borrow money from you again? He came to my office last week looking to buy my horses. Now, I know he doesn't make enough money to buy any of my horses - much less two Arabians - he must have borrowed money from you, else he wouldn't have asked. Did you lend him any money?

(CONTINUED)

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19.

CARLO

(embarrassed)
I lent him some, yes.

LOUIS

You know your boy hasn't paid the money he borrowed last year? You know that?

CARLO

No? Ah, shit. Do you want me to cover him?

LOUIS

No, I don't want you to cover him! He's a grown man, let him cover his own self. You just tell your boy to pay me back, first.

CARLO

I will, I will.

LOUIS

You damn right, you will. (pauses)
He didn't try to sell you any toy cars, did he?

END SCENE

6

Scene VI

6

The coffee house. Dick and Joe are seated at a table in profile. They have just finished eating; a waitress picks up their dishes and leaves the bill, which Joe picks up to pay.

JOE

It's all there.

He lays some bills down on the counter, which the waitress picks up, smiles, and walks off with.

DICK

Say, Joe, let me ask you something about Jim's service this weekend. Nobody is going to mention his time in prison, are they?

JOE

Are you kidding? You think Hector and Frank want to relive all that? And don't you mention it, either, if you know what's good for you.

DICK

What does that mean? Is Frank mad at me? It's **Hector, isn't** it? He's mad about that shipment three weeks ago, isn't he? Is he still mad? But it wasn't my fault, Joe. I tried to tell that to Frank, too...

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20.

JOE

You don't say shit to Frank. I do. Besides, it doesn't matter what anyone says to anyone - if Hector doesn't want to hear it, he doesn't hear it.

DICK

I hear you, bro.

JOE

(frowning at Dick's poor joke then says, partly to himself)

Hector is as deaf as he is blind.
(then back to Dick)
Just don't mention that job again. It won't help.

DICK

Well, that's no skin off my nose. They like me. (pauses in doubt) They do like me, don't they?
(Joe grimaces)
What? They don't like me? But why? What did I do? Joe...you gotta believe me, I never complained to Hector or Frank about that shipment that went bad.

So, who are they gonna fire? I'll bet it's Barry, huh? He's been having trouble, you know. That's why he sold me those toy cars - because he needed money so bad. Barry - pshaw! Shouldn't he retire?

JOE

Maybe, but don't you worry about Barry; he's none of your concern. I gotta go to the restroom.

Joe exits. Dick finishes his drink and then starts sipping Joe's, looking furtively around while he drinks. He pulls out a cigarette and begins to put it in his mouth but the waitress walks quickly up and snatches it from him.

DICK

Hey! It's one of those smokeless electronic ones. It's all water vapor, see? (she examines it and hands it back)
(sarcastically) Yeah thanks, Little Miss Smoke Alarm.

As Dick smokes he pulls out his wallet and examines the cash, counting it in his hands slowly and holding them close to his chest. Joe re-enters and touches Dick on the shoulder. Dick leaps up in fright, scattering his money, which he quickly picks up again. Joe makes no effort to help him. He simply watches as Dick gathers up everything he's spilled.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

21.

JOE

And there's your life.... Can we go now?

DICK

You shouldn't scare me like that, bro. I could react unconsciously and take a swing at you. You wouldn't want that.

JOE

Yeah, yeah, you're ferocious. Let's go.

END SCENE

ACT II

7

Scene I

7

Hector's office. The office is shabby and dimly lit. The furniture is old, stained and the sofa is worn out. Hector stands in one corner opposite the door, one hand's fingertips constantly touching the wall and furniture, in order to orient himself. Frank and Joe are seated in two wooden chairs.

Dick knocks then enters in trepidation. Frank motions him to sit on the sofa, which he literally sinks into as if trapped. Frank gives a nonverbal signal to Joe.

JOE

Dick, we called you in here to discuss the sales...

DICK

Joe, and, uh, Mr. Cortes and Mr. Cortes, I think I know what you're getting at. I just want you to know that I think I can keep managing Jim's old accounts and I appreciate all the support you've given me. I won't let you down.

Joe and Frank exchange an uneasy glance.

FRANK

(gently) Dick, that's not exactly what we wanted to talk to you about.

JOE

Listen, Dick, all the sales team has been performing below par. We realize a lot of this has to do with the economy but it's getting to the point where we have to make some moves.

FRANK

We may have to let some people go and we will be cutting back on the draws.

HECTOR

We *will* let people go. **Will.**

JOE

Yes, we will be letting some people go. (pointedly) But not *everyone*.

HECTOR

Necesitamos sangre nueva.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

23.

JOE

Right, new blood. (turning back to Dick) Listen, Dick, we know things have been hard for everyone but we can't continue to carry everyone under these circumstances.

Dick is getting the picture and is becoming agitated. He can't really get out of the sofa, however - he's in too deep but his expression and nervousness reveals he knows where this conversation is headed.

I think you know that your sales have been less than stellar.

DICK

What do you mean - less than stellar? I've had a lot of work to do with Jim's old accounts!

JOE

But those are Jim's old accounts, not yours. Most of Jim's jobs are repeat orders - they're very easy.

FRANK

They really should be House Accounts, Dick. We thought you could use the extra money while you re-built your own book of business. You haven't.

HECTOR

Pendejo

FRANK

Héctor, por favor.

HECTOR

Muy **bein bien**, me voy a fumar.

Hector walks slowly to the door, passing his hand along the wall and almost tripping over Dick as he exits.

Exits and gives Dick a parting shot in Spanish.

Baboso!

JOE

Joe is noticeably relieved that Hector has left
Listen, Dick, we're going to have to cut your draw and
turn Jim's accounts over to the House.

*Now Dick is completely alarmed and manages to
stand up.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

24.

DICK

What? After all I've done for this place? I looked
after Jim's accounts! What about Debbie and the kids?
They got half my commissions, remember? What about
that?

FRANK

Actually, Dick, if we'd kept Jim's accounts as House
Accounts, Debbie would have all the commissions.

*Dick is desperate. He paces around the office
trying to find some words then quickly wheels.*

DICK

Why did you take Jim back, after he spent 12 years in
prison for bank robbery? What about that? You gave
him a second chance, didn't you?

JOE

Dick, everybody knows why that was done. Don't bring
that up again.

DICK

Why? Because he threatened to kill himself before he
went to jail, claiming he'd been cheated out of part
ownership here? That's why he went on that robbery
spree! He just wanted to live the life you promised
him. Who wouldn't?

FRANK

Standing and in no mood
¡Silencio, eso es pasado!

Frank passes both hands over his forehead and hair. This is clearly an old wound he bears for Jim and feels guilty about it.

Whatever Jim thought he was promised was no excuse to become a criminal. That was his fault. I can't control what Hector says to people. He just says things that people take too much to heart. Jim knew and you know that whatever Hector pretended to promise, I never promised him any share in ownership. Hector should never have said something like that, even as a joke.

JOE

Besides, Dick, Jim was already robbing banks before he came in here waving that gun around, which, *by the way*, was empty. It was all an act but after 12 years, even Hector felt sorry for him and let him come back. Jim did very well...for awhile, anyway, ~~til~~ 'til he got sick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

25.

DICK

But what about me? I was counting on those accounts! You can't just take them! I earned them! I was just trying to help out!

JOE

Pointedly
Help out who?

FRANK

Es todo, mentiroso. Joe, work something out with this guy.

Frank exits. Dick is in full blown panic mode.

DICK

Joey, you gotta do something for me. I've got to have something. You can't let them cut me loose after everything. I really thought I was helping them. It's not my fault my sales have been down. After those two fiascoes with Larry's jobs, I haven't gotten anything from him or anyone else. Those weren't my fault! It's those idiots in Shipping! None of it was my fault!

Dick is literally screaming now until Joe finally cuts him off.

JOE

You're right....it wasn't your fault. I know that and so does Frank. But you can't even hint that Hector's guys were at fault. He'll always think it reflects badly on him and it does reflect badly on him. You know how proud he is; he won't tolerate it.

DICK

But why should I have to suffer because I tried to help out Jim and Debbie and - through no fault of mine - my accounts get screwed up? Now I've got to suffer? Where's the justice?

JOE

Justice? What do you think - that this place is fair and other people's faults and pride don't matter? This place has been losing money for months. There have been any number of screw-ups all along the production line. But those are all Hector's departments, Dick.

DICK

But Hector just won't listen to us. He has it in for us and won't give us a break!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

26.

JOE

Yeah, that's right! Hector does have it in for you! He has it in for all you guys. He's jealous because you seem to make money without working hard at it. He doesn't know what goes into selling; he never has. And he doesn't think you guys deserve what you're paid.

DICK

But these guys are rich! We made them rich!

JOE

Dicky....

DICK

'Dicky,' nothing! It's not right! Hector only listens to the last person he talks to. He only hears what he wants to hear and they all lie to him, you know, they

all lie.

JOE

He's blind, Dick! He's blind. Can't you see what that means? And he's proud. He never learned to use a cane, he never tried to learn Braille and he never wanted to admit he was even going blind. He tries to perform the same way he did 30 years and everyone knows he can't. That's why his staff lie to him - because they can. After all these years, he's not only blind, he's also deaf to anything he doesn't want to hear. And if you or anyone has to suffer, so what? As far as he's concerned, you're overpaid, anyway.

DICK

But I've been loyal, too. Doesn't that count for anything?

JOE

Loyalty isn't enough. What matters here is Blood, and you ain't got that. Blood and obedience. What they want from you, and anybody else that isn't blood, is obedience.

DICK

Okay, okay. I get it.

JOE

Not yet, you don't. This place is as big as it is because Frank grew it to make room for Hector's ego. That's how these old Mexican families take care of each other: they let themselves believe their own lies to save their pride. *"Nobody else helped them: not salesmen, not bankers, not tax breaks, not vendors and not customers. Nothing and Nobody. They did it all on their own."* That's how they keep going,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

27.

JOE (cont'd)

Dick. They don't believe this place can last without them. In the beginning, that might have been true but not now, not now.

(more to himself)

Now, we're all just waiting.

(Joe takes a deep sigh and continues)

It wasn't always this way, you know. Hector had a

better handle on things when he could see. That's the thing, Dick, he *could* see something in the old days. He *could* see the potential in this place. Frank never did. And Frank knows he owes Hector for that.

So, the place grew and we all have a chance to make money. Isn't that enough for you? It better be because the only guy who can't enjoy it, is the guy who saw it could be done. How's that for Justice?

DICK

But I got bills to pay!

JOE

Yeah, I heard.

DICK

What have you heard? I have legitimate bills. Rachel took practically everything, - of course, most of it was hers - but she didn't leave me anything to help me start over. And Randi-Pantz is, well, Randi is used to a lot of things. And Larry won't return any of my calls. I haven't quoted anything for him in weeks! Now I'm stuck with all these toy cars and no buyers.

JOE

Well, it looks like Barry still knows how to sell.

DICK

OK, you know what? I don't need...

JOE

(cutting him off)

You just give up Jim's accounts and come to me with your quote requests from now on. I'll sort you out with Larry and things will be back to normal.

One thing at a time. You still have to emcee Jim's service. Try to make a good impression. Maybe, that will help you some.

END SCENE

28.

Carlo, Louis and Dick are at lunch, eating in a booth. Dick sits in the center, directly facing the audience. Dick has been holding court as the lights go up.

DICK

...so anyway, I have been doing a lot of drawing and some clay modeling. I think I'll be trying my hand at sculpting again. The marble holds the figure inside, you know. That's what Michelangelo said, "the only thing a sculptor has to do is carve away the extra marble, in order to reveal the figure hiding inside." You know, Warhol used to say....

CARLO

You hung out with Andy Warhol? Not with *that* hat, I hope.

LOUIS

Bullshit.

DICK

I didn't say I hung out with him or even went to the Factory. I said, Warhol used to say...

CARLO

So you talked to him?

DICK

Oh sure, we ran into each other from time to time.

LOUIS

Bullshit.

CARLO

Did he speak to you?

DICK

I spoke to him. That's the same thing.

LOUIS

Bullshit.

The waitress brings their plates, serving Dick last and reluctantly.

CARLO

What's with her? (turns to Dick) Alright, what did you do to her?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

29.

DICK

(insulted) Me? Nothing! I didn't do anything. Why are you always badgering me about women?

LOUIS

Because they don't like you, you piece-of-shit.

DICK

You know what...

CARLO

When are you going on vacation?

LOUIS

Vacation? How can you afford a vacation? You haven't moved, you haven't paid me back...

CARLO

or me...

LOUIS

...or him. You ain't going on no damn vacation, brother, not yet.

DICK

It's a working vacation. I'm not spending any money; I'll be at home working. I'm going to try and unload those stupid cars I bought from Barry.

CARLO

How will you sell them?

DICK

Well, Randi told me she could help out.

LOUIS

Somebody better help your ass out because I want my money.

DICK

Yeah, yeah, I know.

LOUIS

Yeah, you'd better.

DICK

Say Louis, Frank does your quotes, yeah?

LOUIS

(suspiciously)
Yeah, that's right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

30.

DICK

And you get most of what he quotes, yeah?

LOUIS

Yeah, and...?

DICK

And that means a lot of work, yeah?

LOUIS

Yeah, a lot of work.

DICK

Yeah, well maybe, we could share them and help each other out.

CARLO

Oh, that's thin ice, Dick, watch out.

LOUIS

You listen to me, you piece-of-shit: Frank does my quotes because I was with him in the beginning, even before Hector came on board. I was with Frank when it was him and his garage and you were just discovering the joys of your first wet dream. I watched as he and Hector grew this company from a two machine flat to a four building complex, and then stood by him when Hector began to wrestle more and more control of this company to make up for his growing blindness. And when every salesman, *including you*, began to abandon Frank and turn to Hector as their real boss, I was the only friend he still had from the old days.

*Louis stands and places his fists upon the table
and glares at Dick*

So no, I don't need your damn help, do I?

END SCENE

EVENING

Randi-Pantz's apartment. It is furnished with vintage furniture that doesn't match. There is a coffee table, sofa, and lounge chairs with garish lamps in the corners. Various personal belongings like cell phones, a purse, hat, etc. are on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

31.

Randi-Pantz is a small, well built brunette; her hair is tied in a tight ponytail. She is in her middle 40's or older but still plays the kitten. She smokes a cigarette and has a cocktail

Dick is lounging on the sofa, a beer in hand and smoking his electronic cigarette. Randi-Pantz pulls the fake cigarette out of his hand and lights him a real one. Dick takes a thankful drag, following it with his beer.

DICK

So, you can help me sell these toys cars, yeah?

RANDI-PANTZ

Sure, Dicky D. One of my 'Directorial' friends - that means he's a director - he can use them in some of his films. You know they can enlarge them on their computers and make them look real, as background? 'Course, they can't drive them, not unless they shrink some actors real tiny and put 'em inside and, whoosh, away they go! 'Course, they'd have to shrink the engine and the gasoline, too.

She takes a drink of her cocktail

DICK

These are collector's items. You can't take them out the packages and drive them with tiny actors. How much would he pay for them?

RANDI-PANTZ

Maybe, a lot. I don't know.

Dick picks up Randi-Pantz's cell phone from the coffee table and hands it to her

DICK

Well, maybe, you could call him and find out.

Randi-Pantz takes the phone and calls. She gives Dick a flirtatious look.

RANDI-PANTZ

Hi baby, yeah, it's me. Whatcha doing? Uh-huh. Uh-huh. OK, see ya....what? Oh, that's right, I called you. You're so smart! You know who you're smart like? Yeah, you, you're so smart. Yeah. No. Not him.

Suddenly, she screams into the phone
I don't want to talk about it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

32.

Dick jumps in his seat as Randi-Pantz regains her composure

RANDI-PANTZ

Yeah, I called you. Listen, my other smart friend here, Dick...yeah, that's right! You're a Dick, too! You're both Dicks! You're so smart.

Anyways, yeah, he wants to buy a car....No! That's not it! He wants to sell some cars...just a minute...

Turns to Dick

He's so smart. He wants to know what make and model the cars are.

DICK

How do I know? There's 500 of these tiny little fucks.

RANDI-PANTZ

Oh, wait!

Gets back on the phone with her friend.
I'm sorry! They're not real cars! They're just toy

cars, you know, vintage cars that little kids play with. I bet you played with them when you were little, too....Stop that....okay, I'll ask him

To Dick

He wants to know how much you want and how many there are.

DICK

Well, shouldn't he see them? Shouldn't we meet?

RANDI-PANTZ

Nah, he knows what toy cars are. How much?

DICK

I'd like him to see them, first. But, let's say, Ten grand for all 500 of 'em.

RANDI-PANTZ

Into phone

Yeah, baby. Ten grand for the whole lot. He has 500 of them. No? It's too much? What should I tell him? Dicky really needs the money, Dick. Isn't there anything I can do? Oh, really? Well in that case, it'll be Twenty!

Randi-Pantz throws her phone on the floor, indignantly

Yeah, he don't want 'em.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

33.

DICK

You don't say.

RANDI-PANTZ

Come on, who wants to buy some old toys, anyway? Let's go out for a drink, huh?

DICK

But we're already drinking.

RANDI-PANTZ

I mean *let's go out*. You never take me out, anymore.

DICK

We've been out every night this week. I can't afford it; I've gotta sell those cars. There's no other money coming in and I've got no place to live. You told me that guy would buy them!...What would cost \$20,000.00?

Randi-Pantz stands and stretches seductively and winks. Dick watches her hungrily.

DICK

I wish I had Twenty Grand.

RANDI-PANTZ

Why - so you can buy some toy cars?

END SCENE

10

Scene IV

10

DAWN, THE NEXT DAY

Randi-Pantz's apartment. Randi-Pantz mimes opening the drapes and stage lights suddenly flood the bed that Dick is lying asleep in.

He jolts out of bed, rolls off and crashes to the floor.

RANDI-PANTZ

Oh! Honey, are you alright?

DICK

What did you do that for? It's Sunday! What time is it?

RANDI-PANTZ

It's *Monday*, Dick. We drank all day Sunday.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

34.

DICK

Oh yeah. We were drinking. Hey, listen, not that you'll ever meet any of the guys at work, but if you do, you can't let them know I drink. Everybody thinks I'm a teetotaler.

RANDI-PANTZ

Why? What difference does that make?

DICK

My bosses - Hector and Frank - are different sorts of people. Frank likes to drink and Hector frowns on it. And even though Frank is the President, Hector really runs that place.

RANDI-PANTZ

So, you suck up to Hector?

DICK

Yeah, that's right. I suck up to Hector!

RANDI-PANTZ

Well, then, Hector and Frank might be different people but you and I seem to be the same.

DICK

How are we the same? You're an ex porn star. You literally made money for having sex - like a prostitute.

RANDI-PANTZ

Hey, baby, prostitution is more about stroking a man's ego, not anything else. So, we're kind of the same people, see?

DICK

(irritated)

Why don't we just have breakfast, so I can get to work?

RANDI-PANTZ

Already cooked. (briefly exits and returns with a tray) Here you go, baby. Don't be mad. I think you're a very sexy whore, too. (hip shake)

DICK

(finishing his food)

What am I going to do about these toy cars? I've gotta get them sold.

RANDI-PANTZ

Take them back to work and tell the guy you bought them from that they were appraised at twice their value. Maybe, you can talk him into buying them back from you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

35.

DICK

I doubt if Barry is that stupid.

RANDI-PANTZ

Why wouldn't he be? He thinks you're stupid for buying them in the first place, doesn't he? Anybody who takes advantage of people can be taken advantage of themselves.

DICK

You're right. I thought I caught a little smile creep across his fat face when I paid him. Dirty bastard! I've gotta get him to buy them back. But how? What will I say?

RANDI-PANTZ

Obviously, you need someone else to pretend to have appraised them; I can help you with that. But you also need someone to pretend to want to buy them. Who can you trust over there?

DICK

Oh, plenty of people: Carlo - he lent me the money to buy them, in the first place - and Joe, my sales manager - he always protects me - and Louis....

RANDI-PANTZ

Yeah, Louis?

DICK

Uh, no, not Louis. He doesn't exactly trust me.

RANDI-PANTZ

Why?

DICK

Well, he's somebody else I owe money to. I can't ask him for another favor.

RANDI-PANTZ

Then he's just the guy. You give him a signed check, post-dated, for the money you owe him in exchange for his help. It's co-lateral.

DICK

Co-lateral?

RANDI-PANTZ

Yeah, like when two people are parallel together, you know, like in a life-boat. You're both in the same life-boat, see?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: 36.

DICK

Right. Well, it might work. What if he says no?

RANDI-PANTZ

Tell you what: you find out where one of his favorite places is, I'll go there, flirt him up, maybe more - what's he look like? - and we'll collar him into our plan, okay?

DICK

You mean *corral* him?

RANDI-PANTZ

Collar, Corral, whatever it is the horses put in their mouths. He'll be trapped in a compromising position with me, you catch him, and then blackmail him to help you out. How does that sound?

DICK

Actually, that's not bad. Louis has a new girlfriend but no one has ever met her. I think it might be Jim's widow, Debbie. If it is, he wouldn't want any rumor to get out about it. And, even if it isn't, it's still a rumor we could use. He won't let things get out of control before he buckles. I know Louis - he acts like he don't care but he doesn't like anything that might hurt his reputation.

RANDI-PANTZ

See? And you thought I was nothing but a skinful of sweet tattoos.

END SCENE

11

Scene V

11

EXT-DAY

Hector is sitting on the patio chair in front of the company building, smoking a cigar. As he sits and smokes, Louis, Carlo and Joe walk by and off stage. Only Joe says hello, which Hector acknowledges, non-verbally. His mobile phone

rings and he stands to answer it.
(into phone)

HECTOR

Yes sir, what can I do for you? Uh, huh. And what did you tell him? Uh, huh. And no one talked to Frank about this? Very good, no need to bother Frank.

Yes, yes, very good. I knew you could handle it. *Muchas gracias, Senor.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

37.

(hangs up phone and continues to smoke)

Frank enters

FRANK

I hope that wasn't Senora Escochina on the line with you?

Hector flicks away his cigar but doesn't make a move to join Frank.

Well, you shouldn't 'meet' with her so often.

(in Spanish)

Es mala suerte para ti.

HECTOR

(in Spanish)

No me digas.

(English)

You didn't fire Dick like I asked you.

FRANK

There was no need, Hector. We cut his draw. In fact, we cut everyone's draw and that will save us a lot of money. Joe was right about that.

HECTOR

I wanted him fired. He screwed up that shipment to Michigan last month and he's not fired?

FRANK

Hector, we've been through this - it was all a misunderstanding between Sales and Production. He did tell Shipping the correct address. It was your guys that made the change. Just leave it alone.

HECTOR

No me digas eso! My guys told me he lied to them about the destination because he wanted to get them in trouble for the wrong count on the first job before that. That one was his fault. But I let you and Joe talk me out of firing him then, just like when I let you talk me into bringing back Jim. That's twice I've listened to you about salesmen that have backfired. **No mas!** Now Dick has gotten away with two screw-ups and you don't do anything to punish him.

FRANK

And how would punishing him help, Hector? He's already lost the commission on that job because we had to hire another carrier to deliver the job to the right place. None of your guys got their pay or hours cut. Why should Joe's guys take all the blame? *Estás siendo irracional.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

38.

HECTOR

Él mete la pata and I'm unreasonable? He has no common sense on things. **Nada!** You'd better fire that cocksucker, Frank, *o habrá infierno para pagar.*

FRANK

Ahora, no. Can we please talk about it after the service?

HECTOR

Sí, sí, mañana, siempre mañana.

END SCENE

39.

ACT III

12

Scene I

12

EVENING

Dick and Randi-Pantz, who is dolled up, are standing at a street corner. They are obviously waiting for someone.

RANDI-PANTZ

Are you sure this is where he'll be? How do you know? You didn't even ask him.

DICK

Carlo told me he always hangs out at these jazz clubs on the weekend. I'm pretty sure he'll show up.

Dick suddenly freezes.

I think I see him. Can you see anyone coming this way?

RANDI-PANTZ

I see a lot of people coming this way. What does he look like?

DICK

Well, he's built pretty solid and about 6 feet tall...like me.

RANDI-PANTZ

Like you? If you're six feet tall, where's the rest of you?

DICK

Alright! He's about 5'7" and well built. He used to be a football player, you know...like me, except I didn't play football, I played catcher on my college baseball team.

RANDI-PANTZ

Oh yeah? What college was that?

DICK

New Mexico Providence College of St. Peter's of Seville.

RANDI-PANTZ

What? Wait a minute....

Suddenly, Dick pulls Rand-Pantz aside

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

40.

DICK

(in a hushed tone)

Here he comes! But it's not Louis! It's my boss! I think he saw me!

RANDI-PANTZ

Who saw you? Frank?

DICK

No, not Frank! Hector! It's Hector with his new wife!

RANDI-PANTZ

Hector? I thought you said he was blind.

DICK

He is but he can hear everything. Everything. I think he must have heard me talking to you.

RANDI-PANTZ

But he is blind, right?

DICK

But he hears everything! Plus, his new wife can see and I think she saw me. She's whispering to him now.

RANDI-PANTZ

How could he hear you from that far away? It's not like you were on an intercom.

DICK

Oh shit, I don't want him to see me here with you.

RANDI-PANTZ

And just why not?

DICK

Because...because...because you're a....

RANDI-PANTZ

What? A whore? You still think I'm a whore!

(she smacks him with her red handbag)

I'll show you a whore, Buster! You want to see a....wait a minute, did you say his new wife? He's blind, with a new wife and...is he widowed or divorced?

DICK

Neither exactly, his first wife went to prison for trying to run him over with the car...twice. So, he's not divorced yet but, since she's jailed in Mexico, he's claiming she's a missing person.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

41.

RANDI-PANTZ

(to herself)

That son-of-a-bitch

(to Dick)
What's his new wife's name?

DICK
Carolina, why?

Randi-Pantz breaks Dick's grasp just as Hector and Carolina approach and jumps out to greet them

RANDI-PANTZ
(stretching out her arms to give Hector
a big hug)
Poppy!

Carolina and Dick exchange glances and then Carolina suddenly stomps off, leaving Dick to watch Randi-Pantz smother the astonished Hector with kisses.

Dick eventually walks downstage out of earshot, flips open his cellphone and calls a number.

DICK
Hello? Joe? Yeah, it's Dick. You are not going to believe what I just saw.

GO TO BLACK

Dick, Randi, Hector exit while stage is dark.

Spotlight - Downstage on Frank, who is sifting through papers on a worktable.

Enter Joe

JOE
Hi Boss, what are you doing here in Production?

FRANK
Looking through Hector's job tickets for Barry's last job. Barry is in hysterics; one of his jobs got shipped to the wrong place. Where is Hector, anyway? I can't make heads **ef or** tails of this system he has.

Joe begins helping Frank sift through sheets

JOE
You know Hector - everything has to be a big secret.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

42.

FRANK

But where is he? How can I find anything in this?

JOE

Hector took Carolina out to dinner early; it's their first anniversary. Don't worry, Frank; I know Hector's system. I'll find it.

Where did this shipment get lost to?

FRANK

Pontiac, Michigan. Ah! Here it is.

Joe looks up suddenly and starts rummaging through papers on the other end of the table. He finds what he's looking for and reads it while asking Frank another question

JOE

Where was his job supposed to go to?

FRANK

Pontiac, Illinois.

Joe hands the paper he has to Frank

JOE

To that same address?

Frank examines the two sheets and is startled by what he is reading

FRANK

Yes, to that same address. Wait a minute, who made these changes?

Joe points to both sheets

JOE

There's the initials.

Frank and Joe look at each other as scene goes to black. Joe's phone rings.

JOE

Yeah, Dick? What can I do for you?

Put his hand over the phone and turns to Frank
You are not going to believe this.

BLACK - END SCENE

43.

13

Scene II

13

Downstage conversation between Carlo and Louis. Spotlight on them.

LOUIS

I don't believe it. You are absolutely lying.

CARLO

Louis, I don't know if I wish I were or I wish I weren't but that's what Dick said. He ran into Hector with his new wife and Randi threw her arms around Hector and kissed him as if he were Moses parting the Red Sea. Hector must have been one of her customers in the old days.

LOUIS

You are lying.

CARLO

My hand to Heaven, brother. Now, they're all mad at him: Carolina left him; Chata is filing a lawsuit from prison, no less, and even Senora Escochina won't visit him in his office for his afternoon 'snack,' anymore.

LOUIS

Just what did Dick do?

CARLO

He called Joe right then and there and ratted out Hector. And get this: Frank was with Joe when he called. Joe told Frank, Frank explodes but Joe hadn't hung up the phone and Dick heard Frank cursing up a storm

LOUIS

Frank never gets mad at his brother, until Hector does something to threaten the company. Who knows how this will all fall out?

FADE TO BLACK

Upstage to Hector's office. Lights go up. Hector is standing with his back to audience, smoking a cigar. Frank and Joe enter.

FRANK

So, Hector, you had something on your mind?

Frank and Joe sit while Hector begins talking. Hector only turns part way to them and then moves slowly to face them as he proceeds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

44.

HECTOR

I've decided that Dick has to go! I've had enough of him and the more I think about that last job, the angrier I get. Now, I find out another job has been shipped to the same address! Another screw-up with Dick's jobs. *¿Cuándo terminará?*

FRANK

It can end anytime you say it can end, Hector.

HECTOR

Bueno ... muy bueno. Well, when will you fire him?

FRANK

¿Quién?

Hector is now a little confused.

HECTOR

That screwball of a salesman, that's who.

FRANK

(interrupting)

Barry?

HECTOR

Barry? *¿Qué quiere decir, Barry?* Barry is one of your best salesmen...that's because he came straight out of Production. Yo le enseñé, yo mismo.

FRANK

Ya lo creo.

Joe hands Hector two sheets of paper

HECTOR

¿Qué es esto? You know I can't read these! Read them to me! *¿Qué dice?*

FRANK

I think you know what it says. *Lo escribió*. Or, you dictated them.

HECTOR

Stop screwing around! You're always doing this, Frank, ever since we were kids. You've always tried to prove you're smarter than me. Don't take advantage of my blindness! *No te aproveches mi ceguera*.

Frank is visibly hurt by that remark but becoming increasingly stern

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

45.

FRANK

Es suficiente, Héctor, suficiente. I didn't try to set someone up for failure, just because I don't like him. It was Barry who wrote these changes on Dick's old ticket and he claimed they were on instructions from you. Now, those same instructions are on Barry's job ticket and his job has gone to the wrong place. Again!

HECTOR

¿Qué estás diciendo?

FRANK

I'm saying you didn't train Barry as well as you thought. *El arruinó todo*. He was supposed to alter Dick's new job and send it off to the wrong place. *Pero es perezoso*. He called in the changes to the Shipping Department, and they wrote it to *his* job instead of Dick's. Not only did the guys you're *supposed* to be supervising screw up but they screwed up because of the guy you're *not* supposed to be supervising. Now here we are, trying to head off a wrong delivery to Pontiac, Michigan, *again*.

HECTOR

Entonces Barry es idiota! I've said so, myself! We ought to fire him, too!

FRANK

(and now Frank lays down the law)
Maldición, Héctor! You're my brother and I love you, but damn it! You're the one that's been costing this company money! Not only do things get screwed up in your departments, but now you've deliberately sabotaged two jobs.

¿Y sabes qué? I don't like Dick, either. He's a sniveling, whiny, and greedy little bastard, but that's how some salesmen have to be to survive. *Sobre todo aquí.* You put Barry up to this because he knows, as I do now, that you're not above sabotaging this company to satisfy your own pettiness and cruelty.

Hector is enraged but cornered

HECTOR

¡No me importa! Your sales people are pussies! You can't control them. *Hace lo que quieras* - fire Barry, who cares? You can't do anything to me. I'm your brother and minority owner and I won't sell my interest to you, *por Dios, no lo haré.*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

46.

FRANK

Maybe so, but you won't get away with this today.

JOE

You know anybody named Randi-Pantz, Hector?

Hector blanches white and drops his cigar

FRANK

Eso pensé, ¿y sabes qué? Carolina knows, too, and Chata; even Senora Escochina knows. And you know what they know can lead to other things only I know, if this thing ever goes to court. Do we really need to go through that again?

HECTOR

(stammering)

Yes, um, well we just have to pay them off....we just have to shut them up...like we've always done before.

FRANK

Like we've always done before. Yes, I'll pay them off, Hector, for my little brother, again. But this is the last time. Next time, I will let the whole thing blow up but not before I cash in all my holdings and get out, leaving you to bear the responsibility. By God, I will.

HECTOR

Just make it go away, Frank, please. Do you think it will cost much?

FRANK

It will cost you plenty, Hector, but this time you will do exactly as I say.

HECTOR

Yes, Frank, you're right. Just make this go away.

FADE TO BLACK END SCENE

14

Scene III

14

A memorial service in the company's courtyard. A podium and microphone face the audience. Frank and Joe are seated at the dais to one side. Other cast members sit in folding chairs facing the podium. Carlo and Louis sit side-by-side in such a way that they can be seen by the audience. Hector makes his way up to the podium with Frank's assistance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

47.

HECTOR

I...I mean, Mr. Frank Cortes and I, would like to welcome everyone to Jim's memorial service. Just so you know how this is all going to work: You all know Mr. Dick Downs...Dick, please come up here.

As Dick makes his way to the podium he affects a pained a mournful appearance. Hector continues while Dick stands at his side, looking grieved.

We want to pay tribute to one of our own - Mr. Jim Harris. I know you all knew him and were friends with him. But I'd like Dick to open today's service with his thoughts because they were best of friends and loyal to each other. Dick...

Dick makes a show of thanking Hector, glancing over at Joe for his approval.

DICK

Jim was my closest friend here.

He quickly removes his Fedora, feigning respect.

I can often remember our long conversations about Life: what our hopes were, our dreams for our children, our ambitions for ourselves. But Jim was more than hopes and dreams. He was about Loyalty, too, and about being part of this family of ours, as well as his other family; I mean his own family. He cherished his time at Conquistador and always welcomed a visit from friends whenever they could find the time. As long as they called ahead. He was a real stickler for calling ahead (grins).

Because Jim was a joker. A lot of people know Jim used to sneak up behind me and try to scare me, mostly in my office but sometimes in the bathroom, too. And, I have to admit, it always worked. In fact, now anybody can scare me because he had done such a good job of sneaking up on - not just me but everybody - and scaring them....and me. So, if you don't want me to make a mess of everything, stay out of the bathroom while I'm in there!

Carlo and Louis exchange looks and gestures as if to say, 'what's wrong with him?' Joe and Frank both look down at the floor in embarrassment but Hector claps, appearing to enjoy Dick's remarks. Reinforced by Hector's response, Dick continues more confidently.

Yes, he was quite the joker. I remember one time he hid behind the door of my office and when I walked in he stepped out, put his finger to my back and yelled, "your money or your life!"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

48.

And if you think that's not scary, then you've never been frightened by Jim during the late shift when there

aren't many people around and you see things, or you think you see things. You know, like when Jim dressed up in Saul Pesto's old white Quality Control robe and sat at Saul's desk - even though Saul had died of alcohol poisoning at that very desk three years ago last month - and called out to me that my job instructions weren't clear and my job could have been screwed up if he hadn't scared me.

Boy, that really scared me.

HECTOR

It's a good thing he didn't have a gun!

END SCENE

15

Scene IV

15

Dick's office. He is sitting in his chair facing the a man whose back is to the audience. His desk and computer are to his right.

DICK

Ace! Oh, thanks man. Yeah, I wanted everything said about Jim to be about his best times, you know. Talking about Jim is a little like sculpting - yeah, I do a little - it's about revealing the inner man. You know, it's like Michelangelo said, "the figure is inside, it's up to the artist to carve away the excess stone and expose it." And that's what I was trying to do: expose Jim for what he really was....

Oh that. Well you know me, always willing to help. I knew Joe was going to tell me that we were all getting a cut in our draw. It has to be done; it has to be done. I'm willing to sacrifice some to help out the company. We all have to sacrifice.

Hey now, don't get too upset. We all have to do it. I know things have been screwed up with some of your jobs. It even happens to me - once in a great while, you understand, not very often....your luck will change. Don't worry.

Yeah, well listen, good luck to you. Yeah, I'm fine. How about you? You alright? Yeah, you sure?

Dick's phone rings and he answers it, waving goodbye to Ace

Senor Cortes! Oh, thank you, sir. I did my very best. Well, I know you loved Jim; we all did. Yes sir, oh yes sir! Thank you, sir!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

49.

hangs up and does a little tapping on his desk to indicate his delight. He looks up.

Ace! You're still here! Well, that was Hector, of course. He wanted me to know how very grateful he was for my speech about Jim. Said he was most impressed...

Dick is interrupted by a scratching noise and thumping on the intercom. Hector Cortes makes a broadcast announcement.

HECTOR

Lights come up over the offices of Louis, Carlo and Joe's offices, where they all listen as Hector makes his announcement over the loudspeaker.

Your attention, everyone! I want you all to know how very pleased I was (and Frank, too) for the turnout at Jim's service last Saturday. You all showed your true colors and loyalty to Jim and to our family here at Conquistador.

I want to thank Mr. Dick Downs, *en especial*, for his fine work as Master of Ceremonies. We all know how close Dick was to Jim, how he sacrificed and worked so hard to keep the jobs flowing into Conquistador and sharing them with Jim's widow, Debbie. I know we're all proud and pleased.

I know I'm proud of Dick because I know he's the only one of you sons-of-*chingadas* who would have worked as hard as he did for his friend! While all the rest of you cocksuckers are out there - looking out only for yourselves - Dick *estaba en tierra*, working not only to keep a roof over Debbie's head but also neglecting his own work to do it! And Senor Frank Cortes and I know exactly who the slackers were and will deal with them in our own time!

(lowering his voice to something saner)

Now, I want you all to know that Dick will be getting Jim's old accounts, and the rest of you are shit out of luck!

That's all!

(pauses)

Now, I would like Mr. Barry Roosevelt to come to my office, immediately!

DICK

Oh, shit, Ace, that's you. See you around.

Ace exits; Dick looks out his office after him
Sorry, Sucker

END SCENE

50.

16

Scene V

16

Dick, Carlo and Louis at the coffee shop

DICK

So, after all was said and done, I got Jim's old accounts, Conquistador turned Barry's old accounts into House Accounts and Debbie gets the commissions, as a sort of pension. She's lucky, Barry had even more accounts than Jim did.

LOUIS

You know, Hector doing all that for you and Debbie - that was a stand-up thing, you know. He's not as bad as everyone makes him out to be.

Dick covers his response by taking a big gulp of water.

DICK

Yeah, yeah, stand-up guy. Right. So Louis, how is Debbie?

LOUIS

How would I know? I haven't seen her in months.

DICK

Months? No, I mean, Debbie, your *girlfriend*.

LOUIS

My girlfriend? My girlfriend's name is Sadie. Where did you get 'Debbie' from?

DICK

Ah, nowhere, no one. I thought Barry told me that.

LOUIS

Barry told you that? Barry don't know Sadie. For that matter, he don't know Debbie, either. What are you

talking 'bout, anyway?

CARLO

Poor Barry; too bad about him, letting him go like that. Of course, he was ready to retire but something tells me that's not the whole story.

DICK

Yeah, too bad.

CARLO

And he didn't even get a chance to sell those old vintage toy cars of his because he sold them to you - to help *you* out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

51.

DICK

Yeah, too bad. Turned out Barry was my Ace-in-the-Hole, after all. Hey, I paid you two back with that money, didn't I?

LOUIS

Yeah, you did, but who ended up buying them?

DICK

Now, see, that's the luckiest thing, Dude. Hector bought them for his new wife, Carolina. He had them appraised and they're worth a mint, after all.

LOUIS

Don't call me, "Dude," you piece-of-shit.

DICK

Si, Senor.

BLACK - END SCENE

17

Scene VI

17

The stage is set with a single stool and a large block of stone in the foreground. Sculpting tools lay around the base of the stone. In the background are racks of clothes and wardrobe of all kinds.

Randi-Pantz, dressed in torn jeans and a muscle

shirt, her black hair tied into a tight pony tail walks to the stage and sits in the stool. She practices some poses, knowing she is the artist model in waiting.

Dick enters the room. He looks a long time at Randi-Pantz as she goes through a variety of poses as he rejects each in turn. Finally, he stops her suddenly and gestures for her to hold the pose.

DICK

Honey, just relax. Michelangelo once said sculpting is about *seeing* the figure inside the marble. Once I get you and the stone in my line of sight, it's just a matter of peeling away the part that covers the statue inside.

RANDI-PANTZ

OK

DICK

Good, you just relax, be my muse and this will be a masterpiece. I guarantee it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

52.

*He returns quickly to the stone, picks up a chisel and looks repeatedly at it and Randi-Pantz, sizing up his first strike at the stone. He puts chisel to stone, then hammers at the stone with a mighty stroke and...
.....the stone cracks in two.*

END PLAY

