

## Begin

BEV She said she's on her way.

ALBERT I can wait outside.

BEV (calling off) *Francine?*

FRANCINE (from off) *I'm coming.*

BEV There she is.

Albert  
Bev  
Francine  
Jim  
Karl

(FRANCINE enters in street clothes, with a two large bags of hand-me-downs, She stops to put on her earrings.)

FRANCINE I'm sorry. I guess I'm moving a little slower than usual.

BEV And here's Albert waiting so patiently, if only I had *door-to-door service like Francine!*

FRANCINE So, I'll see you Monday, then.

BEV Albert, isn't this place just a *catastrophe?*

ALBERT Oh, yes it is.

BEV (to ALBERT) I tell you, I don't know *what* I would do without a friend like Francine here, and on a *Saturday*, I mean she is just a treasure. What on earth are we going to do up there without her?

ALBERT Well, I trust ya'll can sort things out.

BEV (to FRANCINE) Oh, and maybe Monday we can see about that big trunk, why don't we?

FRANCINE We'll make sure and do that.

BEV I'd do it myself but I'm not a big strapping man like Albert here.

JIM Afraid I've gotta exempt myself -

BEV Oh no no no no no. Francine and I can manage.

ALBERT What's it, a trunk, you said?

FRANCINE (with a shake of the head to dissuade ALBERT) A footlocker.

ALBERT Where's it at?

BEV No no no no no we just need to bring it down the stairs.

ALBERT I don't mind.

BEV Oh, thank you, but no.

FRANCINE (to BEV) But definitely Monday.

ALBERT            These stairs, here?

BEV                Oh no no no - I mean, it wouldn't take but two minutes.

FRANCINE        (to BEV, re: her bags) It's just I got these things here to take care of.

ALBERT            I can put them in the car.

JIM                Oh, got yourself a car?

ALBERT            Yes sir.

JIM                (looking out) Whatzat, a Pontiac?

ALBERT            Yes, sir.

FRANCINE        (significantly, to ALBERT) It's just that I'm afraid we're going to be late.

ALBERT            (not getting it) Late for what?

FRANCINE        The place we gotta be?

ALBERT            The *place*?

FRANCINE        Remember?

ALBERT            (to FRANCINE) The - What're you -?

FRANCINE        (to BEV) I'm sorry.

ALBERT            (to FRANCINE) Said two minutes is all.

FRANCINE        (quiet, pointedly) Well, I've got my *hands* full.

ALBERT            I just said I can put them in the -

FRANCINE        (testily, as they start to go) / can put them in the car. / can do that.

BEV                Did you get the chafing dish?

FRANCINE        No ma'am, thank you, though.

ALBERT            (to BEV and JIM) Be right back.

(ALBERT opens the door to reveal KARL LINDNER, about to ring the bell)

KARL              (an oddly formal and uncomfortable-seeming man) Ah. Unexpected. Uhhh...?

BEV                Hello, Karl.

KARL              (relieved) Ah, Bev. Voila.

ALBERT (to KARL, squeezing past) Excuse us, if you don't mind?

KARL (to ALBERT, formally) Not at all. After *you*, sir.

(KARL makes way for ALBERT and FRANCINE to pass.)

ALBERT (to FRANCINE, as they exit, barely audible) What is the *matter* with you?

KARL (from the door, seeing him). Ah. Jim, too. Hello, lad.

JIM Karl.

BEV (unenthusiastically) Come on in, Karl.

KARL Uhhh... (as if working out a puzzle) Yes. *Could* do that. However, You'll recall, Bev, that Betsy currently happens to be, uh, how shall we say - ?

BEV Ohhh, is it almost that time?

KARL Uh, point *being*, that she did accompany me.

BEV What do you - you mean she's in the *car*?

KARL She is.

BEV Well, for heaven's *sake*, Karl! Don't leave her out in a hot *car*.

KARL Well, that was my thinking.

BEV Bring her *in* with you.

KARL Will do.

BEV Of all *things*.

KARL (as he goes) Back in a flash.

**END**

(As KARL exits again, RUSS descends the stairs in a clean shirt and shoes. BEV and JIM allow him to silently pass by them. He walks to the chair and collects the ice cream carton.)

BEV You changed your shirt.

(RUSS continues into the kitchen without responding. As soon as he is gone:)

JIM (quietly) Bev.

BEV (whispering) I know I'm being silly. I know I am, but - (cont'd.)

JIM (overlapping) Not at all. Not in the least.

BEV (continuous whisper) - it's just that after two and a half *years* you'd think that with *time*, because that's supposed to be the thing that helps, isn't it? A little bit of time - (cont'd.)

JIM (overlapping) A great healer.

BEV (continuous whisper) - and I thought with the new job and the move I thought somehow he would start to let go of -

(RUSS returns from the kitchen. BEV goes silent. He goes to a door beneath the stairs, opens it, pulls a string to turn on a light, and exits.)

BEV (calling after him) Where are you going, the basement?

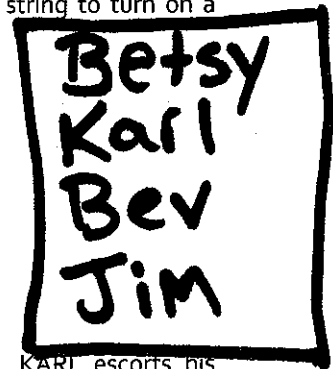
RUSS (from off) Yup.

BEV Are you looking for something?

RUSS (farther) Yup.

**Begin**

(The front door opens. KARL escorts his wife BETSY, who is eight months pregnant, and who also happens to be totally deaf.)



KARL Here we are, then.

BEV Oh, *there she is!*

BETSY Hehhyoooh, Behhhh. (tr. Hello, Bev.)

BEV (over-enunciating for BETSY's benefit) Well just *look* at you! My *goodness*. You are just the biggest *thing*.

BETSY Ah nohhh! Eee toooor. Ah so beee!!! (I know! It's true. I'm so big)

KARL Took the liberty of not ringing the bell.

BEV Betsy, you know Jim.

JIM Indeed she does.

BETSY Hah Jeee. (Hi Jim)

(JIM shows off his sign language skills to BETSY, finger-spelling the last word.)

BEV Oh, well, now look at *that*. Look at them go. What is that about? Somebody translate!

BETSY (laughing to KARL) Huhuhuh!! *Kaaaaa!!*

JIM (chuckling along) Uh-oh! What did I do? Did I mis-spell?

(BETSY signs to KARL.)

KARL (chuckles) Uh, it seems, Jim, that you, uh, told Betsy that she was expecting a *storm!!*

BEV *No!* He meant stork! You meant *stork*, didn't you?

BETSY (pantomimes umbrella) Ahneemah-umbrayah! (I need my umbrella!)

(All laugh)

BEV Her *umbrella!* (to BETSY) I understood that!

KARL Have to check the weather report!

BEV A *storm*, I'm going to tell that to Russ.

JIM (conceding his mistake) Must have rusty fingers!!

(All chuckle.)

BETSY (to KARL, asking for translation) *Kaaaah?*

KARL (speaks as he signs) Uh, Jim says *his fingers are rusty.*

(BETSY laughs and covers her mouth)

BEV See? She understands.

BETSY (to JIM, imitating washing hands) *Jeee, mehbbe yew neeee soooohh!!* (Jim, maybe you need soap!)

(More polite laughing.)

BEV	JIM
(explaining to JIM) <i>Soap. For the rust on your -</i>	(to BEV) No, I understood.

(RUSS emerges from the basement, carrying a large shovel.)

KARL And there's the man himself! Thought he'd absconded!

BEV (to RUSS) The Lindners are here.

BETSY Hehhyoooo, Ruuuuhhh. (Hello, Russ.)

RUSS Betsy. (to BEV) Ya seen my gloves anywhere?

KARL (re: the shovel) Tunneling to China, are we?

RUSS (to BEV) Pair of work gloves?

BEV (to KARL) Do you know I just got through saying how Russ and I never entertain and here it is a regular neighborhood social!

KARL Well, we shan't be long.

BEV Karl, do you suppose Betsy would like a glass of iced tea?

KARL (she does not see him) Bets- ? (to BEV) Point to me.

BEV (to BETSY, over-enunciated) *Betsy, look at Karl.*

(BETSY looks at KARL)

KARL (to BETSY, signing simultaneously) *Bev wants to know if you want some iced tea to drink?*

BETSY Ohhh, yehhhpeee. Dahhnyoo, Behhh. (yes please, thank you, Bev)

RUSS (to BEV) Know the gloves I'm talking about?

BEV Well, Karl's here. I thought you were going to talk to Karl.

(FRANCINE and ALBERT have entered and started up the stairs).

RUSS (seeing ALBERT and FRANCINE) 'The heck's going on?

BEV Nothing. Now, we two girls are going to the refreshment stand, so you boys'll have to manage on your own.

KARL Have no fear.

BEV (while exiting, as before) *So how are you feeling, Betsy? Are you tired?*

BETSY Noooo, ahhhh fiiiee, Behhhh, reeeee. (No, I'm fine, Bev, really)

(BETSY and BEV exit to the kitchen)

**END**

KARL Now, Russ, Bev tells me you're indisposed, and normally I'd - (realizes) Ah. Not *contagious*, is it?

RUSS Is what?

KARL Hate for Betsy to, uh, come into contact with any -

RUSS Not contagious.

KARL Can't be too careful. Or possibly one can. Anyway, hate to commandeer your Saturday afternoon here, *a man's home*, as they say, but, as we haven't seen your face at Rotary of late I thought I might - (cont'd.)

BEV (continuous) - please don't do that, they're just trying to help

RUSS (continuous) I *told* you I'd do it. You heard me plain as day.

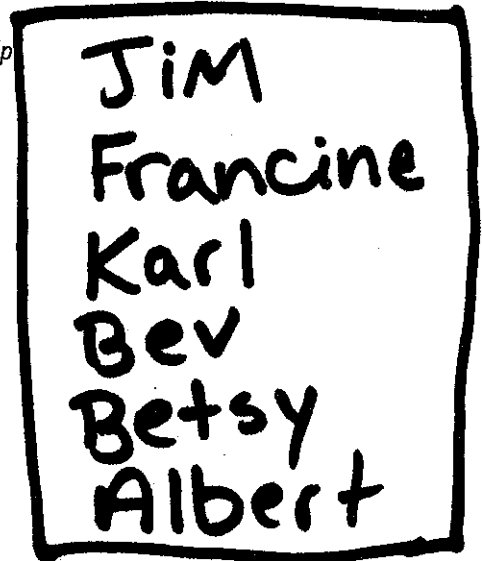
BETSY Eeeen *ahhhh* hurrhhhh daaaaaa! (Even I heard that!)

KARL (to RUSS and BEV) Little *mishap*, is it?

ALBERT Little trouble making the corner, is all.

FRANCINE (now downstairs) I'm sorry. It's heavy and I lost my gr-

RUSS (to ALBERT) Just leave the darn thing where it is.



BEV	KARL	JIM	ALBERT
We can't leave it there.	May one be of assistance?	Lend you a hand, if I could, but -	What should we -? would you prefer it if I -?

RUSS (to ALBERT) Just, just, just, just *leave* it.

BEV But it's blocking the way.

FRANCINE No ma'am, I can step over

ALBERT It's all right. I got her.

(ALBERT helps FRANCINE climb over the box that now blocks the stairs.)

KARL Anyway, let's not drag this out *ad infinitum*.

(RUSS, fed up, rises and exits to the basement, slamming the door behind him.)

BEV (overlapping) Russ, *don't*.

# Begin

JIM (to KARL) One second, if I might? (to FRANCINE) Sorry. Uh, *Francine*, is it?

FRANCINE Yes sir?

JIM Francine, we've just been having a little conversation here, and I was wondering if maybe we could spare us a couple of minutes of your time?

KARL What good does that do? Go next door. Talk to the Olsens. Talk to those who stand to lose.

JIM (ingoring him, to FRANCINE) I want to pose a little hypothetical to you. What if we said this: Let's imagine you and your husband here, let's say that the two of you had the

opportunity to move from your current home into a different neighborhood, and let's say that neighborhood happened to be this one.

FRANCINE Well, I don't think that we would, financially -

JIM But for the sake of argument. Say you had the wherewithal. Would this be the sort of neighborhood you'd find an attractive place in which to live?

(FRANCINE hesitates)

BEV Oh, this is so sil-

FRANCINE It's a very nice neighborhood.

JIM (to FRANCINE) No, I'm asking, would the two of you - Would your fam- I assume you have children?

FRANCINE Three children.

JIM Oh, super. So, with your children, might this be the sort of place, bearing in mind that they, too, would stand to be affected-?

BEV This is confusing things! It's confusing the issue!

FRANCINE (to JIM) It's a *very lovely* neighborh-

JIM No, be honest. We want you to say.

BEV (to FRANCINE) I think what Jim is asking, in his way -

ALBERT He means living next to white folks.

BEV I - I - I - I - well, yes.

(Pause.)

FRANCINE Well -

BEV Francine and I have, over the years, the *two of us* have shared so many wonderful - (to FRANCINE) - Remember that time the *squirrel* came through the window?

FRANCINE (smiling, indulging BEV) Yes I do.

BEV That was just the silliest - the two of us were just *hysterical* weren't we?

KARL (pressing ahead, to FRANCINE) Think of it this way.

BEV (to the others) We still laugh about that.

KARL I think that you'd agree, I'm assuming, that in the world, there exist certain *differences*. Agreed?

FRANCINE        What sort of differences?

KARL             That people *live* differently.

FRANCINE        (unsure) ...Yes?

KARL             From one another.

FRANCINE        I agree with that.

KARL             Different customs, different... well, different *foods*, even. And those diff- here's a funny - my wife Betsy, now, Betsy's family happens to be Scandinavian, and on holidays they eat a thing known as *lutefisk*. And this is a dish, which I can tell you... (he chuckles) ...is *not* to my liking *at all*. It's... *oh* my goodness, let's just say it's *gelatinous*.

BEV                (indicating for him to stop) Karl?

BETSY             (to BEV) Whaaaaa sehhehh? (what did he say?)

BEV                (over-pronouncing for BETSY) *Lutefisk*.

BETSY             Whaaaaaa ?

BEV                *Lutefi*- Karl, can you tell her?

KARL             (holds up a finger to BETSY) In a moment.

BEV                (taking up her pad) I'll write it down.

KARL             (to FRANCINE) So, certain groups, they tend to *eat* certain things, am I right?

FRANCINE        I've never had that dish.

KARL             But, for example, if Mrs. Stoller here were to send you to shop at Gelman's. Do you find, when you're standing in the aisles *at* Gelman's, does it generally strike you as the kind of market where you could find the particular foods *your* family enjoys?

FRANCINE        It's a *very* nice store.

JIM                (interposing) What if we were to say *this*:

FRANCINE        Mr. Gelman's a nice man.

(BEV hands BETSY the pad of paper)

KARL             But, I mean, your *preferred* food items, would such things even be *available* at Gelman's?

ALBERT            Do they *carry* collards and pig feet?

(FRANCINE shoots a look at ALBERT)

ALBERT            'Cuz I sho couldn't shop nowhere didn' sell no pig feet.

(Pause. All stare at ALBERT.)

JIM Well, I think Albert's being *humorous* here, but-

BETSY (having deciphered BEV's handwriting) Ohhhh, *loo-fee!* (Lutefisk). (to BEV) Ah *lye loofee!* (I *like* Lutefisk.)

JIM But I will say this -

FRANCINE (to KARL) I like spaghetti and meatballs.

(KARL quiets BETSY.)

JIM - You do find differences in modes of *worship*. If you take First Presbyterian. Now, that's a church down in Hamilton Park and I've taken fellowship there and I can tell you, the differences are notable.

BEV Jim?

JIM Not a *value* judgment. Apples and oranges. Just as how we have our organ here at Saint Thomas, for accompaniment, whereas at First Presbyterian, they prefer a piano and, occasionally... (chuckles)...well, *tambourines*.

BEV What's wrong with tambourines?

JIM Nothing *wrong*.

BEV I *like* tambourines.

JIM I like tambourines as much as the next person.

**END**

(RUSS returns from the basement. He is calmer.)

KARL Well, let me ask this. (to BEV) Excuse me. (to FRANCINE) Francine, was it?

FRANCINE Yessir.

KARL Francine, may I ask? Do you *ski*?

FRANCINE Do I - ?

KARL Or your husband? Either of you?

FRANCINE Ski?

KARL Downhill skiing?

FRANCINE We don't ski, no.

KARL And this is my point. The children who attend St. Stanislaus. Once a year we take the middle schoolers up to Indianhead Mountain, and I can tell you, in all the time I've been

RUSS (continuous) Where, Bev stops at Gelman's for a quart of milk and they look at her like she's got the goddamn plague? That the community I'm supposed to be looking out for?

KARL A community with *soon-to-be children*.

JIM The Apostle Matthew -

RUSS (to JIM) Oh no no no. *I'm talking now*.

BEV (to FRANCINE and ALBERT) I am ashamed of every one of us.

BETSY (tugging at KARL's sleeve) Kaaaaaah?

KARL Betsy, Wait in the car.

RUSS Well, you go right ahead and you tell those folks whatever you want, Karl. And while you're at it why don't you tell 'em about everything *the community* did for my son. I mean *Jesus Christ*, Murray Gelman even goes and hires a goddamn *retarded* kid, but my boy? Sorry. No work for *you*, bub.

JIM People were frightened, Russ.

RUSS (contemptuous) Ahh, of *what?* He was gonna *snap?* Gonna go and kill another bunch of people? Send him off to defend the goddamn country, he does like he's *told* only to find out the kinda sons-of-bitches he's defending?

BEV (forthright) He did not do the things they claimed he did. He would never -

RUSS *Ah, Jesus, of course he did, Bev! He confessed to what he did!* Sit around all day with your head in the sand, it doesn't change the facts of what he *did*.

BEV Not to innocent people in that country. And not to women or children. I mean, maybe he lost his temper in a -

RUSS *Ah, for Christ's sake. What do you think happens in a goddamn war?* They told him to *secure the territory*, not go knocking on doors asking *permission*. And if he was man enough to admit what he did, maybe you oughta have the decency to do the same damn thing.

BEV (turning to FRANCINE for support) You remember. Francine remembers what he was like.

(RUSS makes a sound of disgust and goes to the footlocker. Under the following, he unlocks and opens the lid.)

BEV How he loved to read and think. That's just the kind of boy he was, wasn't it?

FRANCINE Yes ma'am.

BEV (to FRANCINE) And the drawings? The most realistic drawings. I think a lot of people didn't realize -

RUSS  
JIM  
BEV  
Francine  
Karl  
Albert

**BEGIN**



RUSS            So here's what I'll do for you, Karl: Make ya ten copies of this you can hand 'em out at Rotary. Or better yet. Put it in the newsletter. Rotary news: Kid comes back from Korea, goes upstairs and wraps an extension cord around his neck. Talk *that* over at the lunch buffet next week.

BETSY            (barely audible ) Kaahhh?

RUSS            And Francine walking in at nine in the morning to find him there. You be my guest, Karl. You go ahead and tell those people what kind of house they're moving into and see if *that* stops 'em, because I'll tell you what, I don't care if a hundred Ubangi tribesman with a bone through the nose overrun this goddamn place, 'cause I'm *through with all of you*, ya motherfucking sons of bitches. *Every one* of you.

(All stand in silence. We can hear BEV crying from behind the bathroom door. RUSS slowly folds the letter. Finally:)

JIM                Maybe we should bow our heads for a second.

RUSS            (advancing on him) Well, maybe I should punch you in the face.

(RUSS moves toward JIM, who, in backing away, inadvertently tumbles backwards over a box, toppling a floor lamp as he goes.)

ALBERT  
Whoa whoa whoa  
whoa *whoa!!*

KARL  
Easy now. Easy  
does it...careful-  
Betsy, go! Betsy?

BETSY  
Kaahh!! Waaahhhh  
happneee!?

FRANCINE  
What in god's name  
is *wrong* with alla  
you people? (to AL-  
BERT) Stay out of  
out of it. Don't. Just  
stay out -

(BETSY runs out the front door. ALBERT puts his hand on RUSS's shoulder)

ALBERT            (puts his hand on RUSS's shoulder) Hang on. Let's be civilized, now.

RUSS            (whirling on ALBERT) Ohoho, don't you touch *me*.

ALBERT            Whoa whoa whoa.

RUSS            Putting your hands on *me*? No *sir*. Not in *my* house you don't.

JIM                (gritting his teeth as he copes with his hernia) I'm all right.

FRANCINE        (to ALBERT) What the hell d'you think *you're* doing?

ALBERT            Who're you talking to?

FRANCINE        Who do you *think*?

KARL (to RUSS, as he helps JIM to his feet.) Very manly, Russ Threatening a *minister*.

ALBERT (to FRANCINE) Why're you talking to me like th- ?

KARL (to RUSS) Very *masculine*.

(KARL and JIM exit out the front door.)

FRANCINE (to ALBERT) I think they're *all* a buncha idiots. And who's the biggest idiot of all to let yourself get dragged into the middle of it? Whatcha gonna be now, the big *peacemaker* come to save the day?

(KARL sticks his head back in.)

KARL (through the open door) You're mentally unstable, Russ!

FRANCINE (to ALBERT) Let 'em knock each other's *brains* out, for all *I* care. I'm done working for these people two days from now, and you never worked for 'em at *all*, so what the hell do you care *what* they do? And now I am going to the goddamn *car*.

**END**

(FRANCINE exits. During the marital squabble, RUSS has returned the letter to the footlocker and dragged it out through the kitchen. ALBERT is now left alone in the middle of the room. He stands idly for a moment, then moves to right the overturned floor lamp. As he does, BEV enters from the bathroom, blowing her nose.)

**Albert  
Bev**

**BEGIN**

ALBERT (seeing BEV) It's all right. Nothing broken.

BEV (trying to be composed) Oh oh oh don't mind that. But thank you so much.

ALBERT No trouble.

BEV And do let me offer you some money for your help.

ALBERT Oh no ma'am, that's all right.

BEV Ohhh, are you sure?

ALBERT Yes, ma'am.

BEV (finding her purse) Well, here, then. Let me at least give you fifty cents.

ALBERT No, now you keep your money.

BEV Or, how about dollar? Take a dollar. I don't care.

ALBERT Ma'am?

BEV Or take two. It's just money.

ALBERT Happy to help.

BEV Or take something. You have to take something.

ALBERT No ma'am. But -

BEV What about this chafing dish? Did you see this dish?

ALBERT Well, we got plenty of dish -

BEV Not one of these. Francine told me. (cont'd.)

ALBERT Well, that's very kind of you, but -

BEV She said you didn't have one and somebody should take it and - (cont'd.)

ALBERT (overlapping) But we don't *need* it, ma'am.

BEV (continuous) - make use of it, so if you let me just wrap it for you.

ALBERT (finally raising his voice) Ma'am, we don't *want* your things. *Please*. We got our *own* things.

(Pause. BEV is shocked.)

BEV *Well*.

ALBERT (gently) Trying to *explain* to you.

BEV Well, if *that's* the attitude, then I just don't know what to say anymore. I really don't. If that's what we're coming to.

ALBERT Ma'am, everybody's sorry for your loss.

BEV (holding back tears, nobly righteous) You know, I would be.... *So proud*. *So honored* to have you and Francine as our neighbors. *And* the two children.

ALBERT Three children.

BEV Three chil- We would.... Maybe we should *learn* what the other person eats. Maybe that would be the solution to some of the - If someday we could all sit down together, at one big table and, and, and, and.... (trails into a whisper, shakes her head)

ALBERT Evening, ma'am.

**END**

(ALBERT goes. BEV is left alone. After a moment, RUSS enters to fetch the shovel. He carries a pair of work gloves. Seeing BEV, he stops, unsure of what to say.)

BEV Where'd you find the gloves?

# ACT II

## Begin

63

DAN Hey.

STEVE How's it goin'?

DAN S'there a Steve anywhere?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN You Steve?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN Hector said if there's a problem talk to Steve.

STEVE That's me.

DAN (to the others) How ya doing?

TOM  
Hey. Good.

KEVIN  
Doing all right.

LENA  
Fine, thank you.

DAN Uhh... (lowers voice, crouches next to STEVE) Quick question?

STEVE (a quiet sidebar) Yeah?

DAN (privately) So okay. So, we're, uh, digging that trench back there, ya know?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN Out in back?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN For the conduit line?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN Know what I'm talking about?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN 'Cuz before you hookup that line you gotta bury that conduit?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN And so in order to dig that trench we gotta take out that tree, right?

STEVE Right?

DAN Dead tree back there?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN  
STEVE  
Lindsey  
Kathy  
TOM  
LENA  
KEVIN

DAN 'Cause those roots, they go down like maybe eight feet?

STEVE Yeah?

DAN Which is why we're taking out that tree?

STEVE Right?

DAN Didja know that thing is *dead*?

STEVE (risng) Hey. Maybe we should - (to the others) Sorry. You guys go ahead and -

DAN Whoops.

STEVE (to DAN) No no. It's just - two things at once.

KEVIN We can wait.

STEVE No no no. You guys keep - (to DAN) You wanna show me?

DAN Lemme show ya.

STEVE Lemme take a look.

DAN Show ya what we're dealing with.

(DAN & STEVE exit out the back door.)

DAN (overheard to STEVE, as they exit.) Tell ya one thing though, it is *hot* out here.

(LENA fans herself. A little pause, then:)

LINDSEY Now I don't remember what we were - ?

TOM Page three.

LINDSEY *Right.*

KATHY Middle of three.

TOM So. Knowing as we do that the height continues to be the sticking point - and by the way, the reason the petition was drawn up this way in the first place - I mean, nobody wants to be inflexible, but the idea was to set some basic guidelines whereby *if*, say, the height is the problem, like it is here, then one option would be to reduce the total exterior volume, like your husband was saying. And that's the rationale behind the table at the bottom of the page. So what those figures mean, essentially, is that, with each additional foot of elevation beyond the maximum limit, there'd be a corresponding reduction in volume. And the numbers are based on the scale of the *original* structures, which is relatively consistent over the twelve-block radius, and of which this house is a fairly typical example. Now:

KATHY Except we know they're *not*.

TOM Not what?

KATHY Not consistent.

TOM Saying *relatively*.

KATHY A lotta variables.

TOM We know that.

KATHY (beginning a list) The size of the lots, for starters?

TOM Right, but -

KATHY The year of construction?

TOM Right, so the hope was that, by establishing a couple of regulations up front, hopefully we avoid this kinda situation in the future, 'cause, obviously, it's a pain in the ass for everybody. Now, assuming the Landmarks Committee passes this part of the petition next week -

KATHY *Assuming*.

TOM Safe assumption.

KATHY And if the Landmarks Committee really wants to pick that fight with the Zoning Department that is *their* business, but that's a matter of *if and when*.

TOM (to LINDSEY) Why is this confrontational?

KATHY Because somebody might've raised these issues when the plans went to the Zoning Department five months ago.

LINDSEY Kathy.

KATHY I mean, no one had any objection back *then*.

LINDSEY Can I say? We *talked* about renovation. We discussed it. Because these houses are so charming and I know it's a shame - but when you figure in the crack in the sub-floor and the cost of the lead abatement - and in a market like this one? It just made more sense to start from scratch.

(TOM's cell rings. He tries to ignore it.)

TOM Right. *But*: the Owners Association has a vested interest - Kevin and Lena call me up last month, they say Tom, we've got this problem, these people are planning to build a house that's a full fifteen feet taller than all the adjacent structures - (cont'd)

LINDSEY  
Nooo... *fifteen*? Is that right?

KATHY  
It's exactly what the block is zoned for, Tom.

TOM (continuous) - and I think we'd *all* agree that there's a mutual benefit to maintaining the integrity- (glances at his phone.) - the *architectural* integrity -

LINDSEY Wanna get that?

TOM - of a historically significant - god damn it - neighborhood. (answering) Yeah?

(STEVE returns, as TOM talks on the phone, leaving the kitchen door open.)

TOM (into phone) Yeah, okay, but don't call *me* with that in the middle of a Satur- ? Well, then give it to Marla. Because it's Marla's *account*. Well, where the fuck is Mar- ? (to the others) Sorry.

(TOM crosses the room to take the call.)

STEVE What's happening?

LINDSEY I don't know.

LENA You know, it might be a good idea if we all turned off our phones.

LINDSEY Excellent idea.

KEVIN (to STEVE) Get your problem solved?

STEVE Did what?

KEVIN Out back.

STEVE Yeah, I dunno. They hit something.

LINDSEY What something?

STEVE I dunno.

LINDSEY Something dangerous?

STEVE I dunno.

LINDSEY Is it going to *explode*?

STEVE It's not - (to KEVIN) - We're putting in a koi pond, and there's a filtration system that has to hook into to the municipal - anyway, they ran into some kind of - whatever. So whatzit, page three?

KEVIN But maybe wait for Tom?

STEVE (with a laugh and a shrug) ....standing right *there*.

KEVIN If we're getting into the legal stuff?

LINDSEY I agree.

KEVIN 'Cuz, I'm not a lawyer.

STEVE I'm not a lawyer.

LINDSEY But, Kathy's a lawyer.

STEVE (re: TOM) And he's the one with the time issue.

KEVIN Long as we're out by four.

STEVE (okay, but) It's three-thirty.

KATHY We'll be done by four.

LINDSEY (to KEVIN & LENA) Sorry about all this.

STEVE Crazy.

(All turn vaguely to TOM, who gestures apologetically and mouths "Sorry". LENA sighs, fans herself.)

KEVIN (small talk) When's the baby due?

LINDSEY Oh. Um, November.

KEVIN In time for turkey.

LINDSEY I know.

KEVIN Boy or girl?

(STEVE is about to answer.)

LINDSEY No no no. I don't want to know. Ask Steve. Steve saw the ultrasound. (fingers in ears, eyes closed) La la la la la la la la la....

(STEVE mouths the word "boy", then touches LINDSEY's knee.)

LINDSEY (fingers out of ears, eyes open) ...la la la - either way as long as it's healthy.

KEVIN Knock wood.

LINDSEY But something tells me it's a girl.

(Pause. Feet tap. KATHY takes out her phone, dials a number, listens.)

LINDSEY (to LENA) You guys have kids?

LENA Three.

LINDSEY Wow.  
 LENA Mmm.  
 LINDSEY How great for you.  
 LENA Yes.  
 LINDSEY Congratulations.  
 LENA Thank you.

**END**

(KATHY starts to check messages.)

STEVE (beat, then to KEVIN) So Kyle Hendrickson?  
 KEVIN (remembering) Kyle Hendrickson.  
 STEVE Kyle Hendrickson - *who*, may I add, kicked my ass in the tenth grade?  
 LINDSEY *Who* is this?  
 KEVIN (laughing) Wait wait wait. *Little* Kyle Hendrickson - ?  
 STEVE Like the *one* solitary black dude in my entire high school.  
 KEVIN Kicked *your* ass?  
 STEVE *Publicly* kicked.  
 KEVIN Kyle Hendrickson's like, what? Like five-*two*?  
 LINDSEY Wait. *When*?  
 STEVE (to KEVIN) Five-five. J.V. Wrestling team. Tenth grade.  
 KEVIN I think that might officially make you -?  
 STEVE A pussy?  
 KEVIN Think it might.  
 LINDSEY (to STEVE) *Who* are you talking about?  
 STEVE Okay. Remember I ran into a guy?  
 LINDSEY No.  
 STEVE Remember last week? I said a guy from middle school?  
 LINDSEY No.

KEVIN  
TOM  
Lindsey  
Kathy  
Steve  
Lena

STEVE N- Yes!!! In the context of the *joke*.

KATHY My sister was raped.

STEVE I quit.

KATHY So it's offensive to *me*.

LINDSEY *And me!*

STEVE (re: TOM) *And him. And them. That's the point of the joke.* To permit the expression of  
And what does it even *mean*, "Offended"? I don't even know what it *means*.

**BEGIN**

KEVIN How many white men does it take to change a light bulb?

TOM  
Okay, I'm about two  
minutes from leaving?  
So, *heads up*.

LINDSEY  
No. Can we  
please *not*? I'm  
asking you as a  
favor.

KATHY  
Aha. See? Shoe's  
on the other foot now.

STEVE  
*Fine!* Tell me the  
joke. I want to hear  
it. I do. (cont'd.)

STEVE (continuous) How many white men *does* it take to change a light bulb?

KEVIN All of 'em.

STEVE And why is that?

KEVIN One to hold the light bulb while the rest of 'em screw the entire world.

STEVE *So?!!* You think I'm "*offended*"? I can do this all day. What's long and hard on a black man?

LINDSEY *How is this happening?!!*

KEVIN I don't know, Steve. What *is* long and hard on a black man?

STEVE First grade. Are you "*offended*"?

KEVIN Nope.

STEVE Neither am I.

LINDSEY You *can't* be offended, you *moron* - (cont'd.)

STEVE (astonished laugh) ....I *can't*?

LINDSEY (continuous) - because you've *never* been politically marginalized, unlike *the majority* of people in the world - (cont'd.)

STEVE (overlapping) How can a *majority* be *marginal*?

LINDSEY (continuous) - and, by the way, *all women, everywhere*, and it's your classic white male myopia that you're blind to that basic fact.

LENA Why is a white woman like a tampon?

(All turn to LENA. Pause.)

LINDSEY Why is what?

LENA It's a joke.

KEVIN (to LENA) No no no no no no -

LENA *You* told a joke, now *I'm* telling one: Why is a white woman - (cont'd.)

KEVIN (overlapping) Baby, don't.

LENA (calmly, continuous to KEVIN) - and please don't *baby* me. You've got three babies at *home* -(cont'd.)

KEVIN (publicly, overlapping) Good night. I wash my hands.

LENA (continuous, privately) - if you need to *pacify* someone. (to the others) So:

STEVE (raising a finger) Uhh.... can you repeat the set-up?

LENA Why...

STEVE ...is a white woman, right... ?

LENA ...like a tampon?

(STEVE looks around. No one else answers, so:)

STEVE Um, I don't know, why?

LENA Because they're both stuck up cunts.

(Pause. Again, no one laughs or smiles. KEVIN shakes his head.)

LINDSEY (even) Wow.

LENA But I hope you're not *offended*.

STEVE (academically, *not* laughing) See, *I* find that funny.

LINDSEY Do you.

KATHY Well, *I'm* offended.

STEVE *Oh, you are not.*

LINDSEY And how does it always comes back around to *the women*?

LENA (innocently) It was just a joke.

STEVE *Exactly!!*

KATHY An extremely *hostile* joke.

LINDSEY Directed at me.

KATHY And in what way am I *stuck up*, exactly? You mean, because I worked my ass off putting myself through law school, that makes me *stuck up*?

STEVE It's a joke about a *tampon!!*

KATHY And maybe there's a difference between being *stuck up* and being *intelligent*.

STEVE (to KATHY) *You don't even know the fucking capital of Morocco!!!*

KATHY (insulted) Ohhhhhhh....kay.

STEVE And you know something? If there's anyone here who's being *marginalized* by the tide of history - You don't exactly see *me* sitting in the White House, do you?

LINDSEY *Thank the Lord.*

STEVE But you don't see *me* wetting my pants and acting all "offended".

KATHY (to LINDSEY, as she packs her things.) You know, I think maybe I'm *done*.

STEVE No. You want to know what offends *me*? How about the neighborhood the two of us are living in right now? Bunch of white suburban assholes still driving around with the yellow ribbon magnets on their SUVs in support of some bullshit war. *That's* the kinda shit that offends *me*.

KEVIN Why does *that* make them assholes?

(Pause.)

STEVE Why does what?

KEVIN Said assholes have yellow ribbons on their SU -

STEVE I didn't say that.

KEVIN Yeah, you did, you said -

STEVE I said "*with*" the magnet, not, you know, "*by virtue of*".

KEVIN So, it's not the *magnet* makes you the asshole?

LINDSEY (to KEVIN) You have one on your car?

KEVIN I have three of 'em.

STEVE Three.

KEVIN Three.

LINDSEY Three?

LENA Three.

STEVE Three.

KEVIN One for each member of my family serving overseas.

STEVE Great.

(Beat.)

KATHY (to STEVE) I have the pink one for breast cancer.

KEVIN So maybe I'm a *triple* asshole, but –

LINDSEY (fake-whisper to KEVIN) *I think we know who the asshole is.*

STEVE Wow.

LINDSEY (finishing off STEVE) Well you're being an *idiot*. And in case you hadn't noticed, the rest of the world has begun a more sophisticated conversation about this topic than you apparently are qualified to participate in at this incredible moment in history. I mean, I used to *date* a black guy. *So what?* I mean, *seriously*. *Steve. Wake up.*

**END**

(The same church bell that we heard in Act one begins to ring. Pause. TOM looks at his watch.)

TOM (claps hands together) And it is now four o'clock.

STEVE (privately, to LINDSEY) When did you date a black guy?

TOM So: Final thoughts? Lena?

LENA No.

TOM Kev?

KEVIN I'm good.

TOM Anybody?

KEVIN Very informative.

LINDSEY Well, I want to say this: I want to say I feel angry. And I'm basically kind of hurt by the implication that's been made that, just because we want to live as your neighbors and