

THE CASUALTY OF CUPID'S ARROW

A Romantic Fantasy/Comedy in Two Acts

Written by
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"The Casualty of Cupid's Arrow" - Dramatis Personae

- HENRY Doherty - Mid-60's. Though outwardly appearing to be somewhat frail and "not-all-there," he is still as sharp as a tack. Although it appears he has always lived in a house full of women, he is very much the "man's man."
- EILEEN Doherty - Mid-60's. Kind-hearted almost to a fault. The kind of woman who takes in strays without much regard for what the consequences might be. Quite often, this gets her into trouble.
- DAPHNE Doherty - Mid/Late 40's. Stern, somewhat imposing and not very trusting of anyone outside of her family (at least outwardly). In what should have been the prime of her life, she was forced to move back home with her parents and has never left.
- MITZI Doherty - Late 20's/Early 30's. Idealistic, clever, quick-witted and about to marry the man of her dreams.
- DARAN Walters - Late 20's/Early 30's. Ordinary guy. Although he appears to have a lot going for him, he has always been a bit of a loser with women. Despite his best efforts, they never stay around him long. Still he remains ever-optimistic and perseveres.
- VAL - Age Indeterminate (appears to be Late 20's/Early 30's). 3,000 year-old Love God with a joy-de-vivre and sense of humor that has no equal or rival. Instructor in the ways of the Love Gods.
- GEOFFREY Wariner - Mid/Late 40's. An affable fellow who would be a welcome guest at most any occasion.

SYNOPSIS:

Following "one of those nights," Daran Walters, perennial loser in the game of love, inexplicably finds himself back in the home of Mitzi Doherty, the "one that got away." Mitzi's family—her hardhearted mother, in particular—is none-too-pleased by the sudden reappearance of her ex-boyfriend after more than a year, as it curiously coincides with Mitzi's imminent nuptials.

And, as if the situation wasn't awkward enough, Daran also begins seeing a mysterious and strangely alluring—not to mention mischievous—woman about the house named Val who may (or may not) be the fabled Goddess of Love! Is Daran dreaming? Hallucinating? Or could it be that he has actually been called to serve some higher purpose?

The answers are surprising and the laughs are plentiful in this delightful romantic fantasy comedy of love, loss and letting go.

PRODUCTION HISTORY:

10/28/2001 - Seated Reading at Sunday Night Live in Pittsburgh, PA (under the title "The Perfectly Ordinary Tale of Eros' Apprentice" - feature article enclosed)

Article: <http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/20011026sunday1026fnp6.asp>

8/15/2003 - Seated Reading at South Park Theatre main stage (under the title "The Celestial Social Service")

5/21/2004 - Full Production at South Park Theatre main stage (under the title "The Celestial Social Service" - photos/program/review enclosed)

Review: <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/04149/322848.stm>

RUN TIME

~1 Hour 40 minutes.

SET/TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

Apart from standard theatrical conventions (lights up/down), the play's technical requirements are fairly simple, making it producible in a variety of venues:

- x Standard living/drawing room set (see full description on the first page of the script).
- x Working ringing modern telephone that can be controlled from off-stage.

ACT I, SCENE 1

SETTING

A typical living room/foyer in a typical suburban house. Up stage right is a door that leads "outside," (that is, off stage). Up stage left is a set of stairs that lead up to an off stage set of rooms. At stage left center is another, swinging-type door which leads into a kitchen and dining area (all off stage). The remaining portion of stage right is taken up by an antique bookcase stuffed to the gills with books that have been collected throughout the years and an antique writing desk and chair set beneath a bay window looking out into the "front yard."

The living room itself is very cozy and frilly - just as one would expect to find in the home of a couple living out their autumn years. A large sofa sits in the right center of the room with a matching recliner off to its left. Off the sofa's right is an end table with a lovely antique lamp and curiously modern telephone set atop it.

AT RISE

It is mid-afternoon. HENRY is sitting in the recliner. The familiar opening chords of *The Young and the Restless* theme song can be heard. Henry is staring directly ahead, (that is, at the audience) transfixed by a "TV set" which we cannot see, noisily snacking on a bag of Goldfish crackers.

EILEEN

(Off)

Henry?

Henry does not move, except to crunch more crackers.

EILEEN

(Off)

Henry? Where are you?

Henry continues to crunch away.

EILEEN enters from the kitchen. Though she appears calm and in control, she is a whirlwind of activity. She crosses to the stairs.

EILEEN

(Calling)

Henry? You're not up there taking a nap, are you?

No response. Finally, she turns and spots Henry sitting on his recliner, crunching away at the crackers.

EILEEN

Oh, there you are! And just what in the world do you think you're doing?

Eileen crosses down to him. Henry still appears oblivious to her presence.

EILEEN

Here I am trying to get ready for the most important day of our granddaughter's life and you're sitting out here in your recliner, eating crackers and watching soap operas!

Henry sits transfixed. Eileen grows more annoyed.

EILEEN

(Beat. Then evenly)

You've got your hearing aid turned off again, haven't you? Honestly Henry, there are times I just don't understand you.

Henry continues to sit there, eating his crackers. Finally, Eileen violently takes the bag from his hand. Henry notices this.

HENRY

Hey! What'd you do that for?

EILEEN

You're getting crumbs all over the upholstery.

HENRY

Huh?

EILEEN

I said...

(In his face)

...TURN YOUR HEARING AID BACK ON!!!

Henry reaches behind one of his ears and "turns" his hearing aid back on.

HENRY

All right, all right! You don't have to shriek. I'm not that deaf, you know.

Eileen busily straightens out the room - even though it is immaculate.

EILEEN

I don't know how you can stand to watch that drivel. Let alone without any sound.

HENRY

They have closed captions. You're always telling me to do more reading, anyway.

EILEEN

Do you even know what tomorrow is?

HENRY

I most certainly do. Saturday.

EILEEN

That's not what I mean and you know it!

HENRY

Eileen, why don't you take a break, huh? You've been running on overdrive for the past three days. Anyone would think this was your first one.

EILEEN

It doesn't matter if it's the first or the four-hundredth. Every girl is entitled to her "most special day."

HENRY

That's not what you said when Liz Taylor walked down the aisle - for the eighth time.

EILEEN

Well... if she'd been our first granddaughter, I would have felt differently!

Henry shakes his head and returns his attention to the "TV."

The outside door opens. DAPHNE enters carrying an unusually voluminous amount of mail. On top of the various bills, letters and mailers are a significant amount of small, white envelopes the size of greeting cards bound together by a rubber band.

DAPHNE

Hi, Dad; Mom. We're back!

Eileen excitedly rushes up to Daphne.

EILEEN

Ooh! How'd it go, Daphne?

DAPHNE

Just fine, Mom. It fits her like a glove.

EILEEN

I could have worked that out myself, dear. What I meant was how does it look?

DAPHNE

Well... remember how you once described the perfect wedding dress, Mom? Hand-stitched lace top with a collar cut just underneath the chin...

EILEEN

Uh huh...

DAPHNE

... Pearl-buttoned cuffs that go up to just an inch below the elbow...

EILEEN

Right, right...

DAPHNE

... Six-foot satin train that grandly brushes the floor as the bride walks down the aisle...

EILEEN

(Even more excited)

Yes, yes, yes! You mean...?

DAPHNE

(Nods)

It bears absolutely no resemblance to it, whatsoever.

MITZI enters, carrying a garment bag stuffed with what we presume to be her "wedding dress" on a hanger.

MITZI

(Exasperated)

Mom, I thought we agreed that no one was supposed to know anything about this dress until I walk down the aisle tomorrow.

DAPHNE

That's not fair, Mitzi. What's-her-name... Dana knows what it looks like.

MITZI

Donna, Mom.

DAPHNE

Whatever. And she's not even a member of the family!

MITZI

She's my maid of honor, Mom.

DAPHNE

Who also happens to be going out with Garrett's best man.

MITZI

So?

DAPHNE

So, how can you be so sure she won't spill the beans?

MITZI

Because, if she did, she wouldn't be my maid of honor. On top of which, I promised Garrett I'd keep it simple. Given our respective financial situations, we really don't see the need to be overly extravagant.

DAPHNE

"Simple" is for people who lack imagination, sweetheart.

HENRY

(Still gazing at "TV")

Oh, now it really doesn't matter what the dress looks like. As long as Mitzi's happy with it.

MITZI

Thank you, Grandpa.

(To Eileen & Daphne)

Besides, it's not like the royal family is coming.

DAPHNE

(Indicates white envelopes)

Oh, I wouldn't be too sure about that.

Daphne tosses the stack of envelopes down on the writing desk. Mitzi crosses to Eileen.

MITZI

Grandma, you didn't send out more invitations, did you?

Eileen looks away bashfully.

MITZI

You know the chapel only holds 45 people. And that's counting the minister, the musicians, the best man, the maid of honor, the ushers, and the ring-bearer and flower girl - which you insisted on having!

EILEEN

Because if I hadn't, your little cousins would be running around the sanctuary causing all sorts of mischief.

MITZI

They still might. But, Grandma. The ceremony's tomorrow afternoon. Even if we could fit everyone we wanted in the church, there's no way those invitations would have made it to them in time.

EILEEN

I know, sweetheart. I already tried calling FedEx.

MITZI

Grandma. Garrett and I appreciate what you're trying to do. And we love you for it. We really do. But, can we please stop trying to turn this into a big production? Huh? Let's just have us a nice, small, intimate, family affair.

EILEEN

(Sheepishly)

So, I should cancel the sky writer, then?

MITZI

Grandma!

EILEEN

I'm only kidding! I just want tomorrow to be... special for you. That's all.

MITZI

Garrett will be there. You'll all be there. Dad will be there. How could it be any more special?

Mitzi kisses Eileen on the cheek.

MITZI

(Indicates garment bag)

I'd better go hang this up. Don't want it getting all wrinkled before tomorrow.

Mitzi crosses to the stairs and exits up them carrying the garment bag.

DAPHNE

(Slightly contentious)

Humph! She promised Garrett she'd keep things simple.

EILEEN

It's all your fault, you know. You're the one who's always told her to "be practical."

DAPHNE

Now she listens to me.

HENRY

(To Eileen)

You gonna call that sky writer or should I?

EILEEN

Henry!

HENRY

(Hands raised)

OK, OK. Just checking.

Daphne notices what her father is watching. She quickly grabs the cracker

bag out of Eileen's hands, rushes down to the sofa and takes a seat.

DAPHNE

(Indicates "TV")

Ooh! They didn't say who the father of Reva's baby was yet, did they?

HENRY

I don't think so. It only just started.

EILEEN

(To Henry)

Do I have to remind you - yet again - that Mitzi, our first granddaughter...

(To Daphne)

...and your only daughter, is getting married in exactly nineteen hours, fifty-five minutes, forty-two seconds?

DAPHNE

How does she do that with such precision?

HENRY

She found a new use for that "Millennium Countdown" clock you gave her.

EILEEN

Ugh! I don't believe either one of you! Am I really the only one in this house who's the least bit interested in Mitzi's wedding?

DAPHNE

No. Dad and I are the least bit interested. You're bordering on obsession.

EILEEN

Honestly, I don't know where you got such a smart mouth.

HENRY

Probably from listening to you with those telemarketers.

EILEEN

They deserve it. They should never call after we've sat down to dinner.

(Beat)

Anyway, can I help it if I want my first granddaughter to have her very own big, fat...

HENRY

(Warning her)

Eileen, if you say what I know you're thinking, I'm going to the VFW!

EILEEN

...Beautiful wedding... with all the trimmings. Large flower arrangements, flickering candelabras, a full symphony orchestra...

DAPHNE

Symphony orchestra? Mom, Garrett's not the Crowned Prince of Monaco!

EILEEN

Well... all right, maybe no orchestra. But there's no law against this wedding going down as the most memorable event in the history of this family!

Daphne rises, shaking her head with bemusement.

DAPHNE

Whatever you say, Mom. I could use a cup of tea. Dad, can I get you one?

HENRY

(Shakes head)

No thank you, sweetheart.

EILEEN

I wouldn't say "no" to some Chamomile, dear. With two teaspoons of sugar...

EILEEN & DAPHNE

...Real sugar, not Sweet-n-Low. And just a squirt of lemon juice.

DAPHNE

I know, Mom.

Daphne crosses to the kitchen, passing the crackers off to Henry before she exits.

Eileen looks to Henry, who begins crunching away again, with a satisfied smirk. Eileen begins to straighten the

room again. Though she continues with her cleaning ritual for a few moments, her eyes slowly become drawn to the "TV."

EILEEN

(Conspiratorially)

They... didn't say who the father of Reva's baby was, yet. Did they?

HENRY

I have no idea! Why not have a seat and find out for yourself?

Eileen crosses down to the sofa and takes a seat. For a moment, she seems enraptured by the "TV." Ultimately, however, her nervous energy just gets the better of her.

EILEEN

Oh, it's no use, Henry.

Eileen rises and begins her furious cleaning again.

EILEEN

I CAN'T RELAX. I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD BE DOING something.

HENRY

Well, Daphne's alone, now. You could always go in there and talk to her, you know.

EILEEN

Oh, I don't know, Henry. Now might not be the best time.

HENRY

Why not? It's not like we're making her pull up stakes tomorrow and immediately start producing more grandchildren...

EILEEN

Oh, Henry...

HENRY

... To be perfectly honest, I'd be happy if she got a puppy or a kitten or something...

EILEEN

Henry!

(Beat)

I just don't see the need to put any more stress on her, right now. That's all.

HENRY

It can't be any more stressful than finding out your own mother has been mailing wedding invitations to everyone in the phone book.

EILEEN

(Busted!)

What? Oh, no. Henry, you didn't tell her, did you?

HENRY

I didn't need to. She found the bookmark.

EILEEN

What... bookmark?

HENRY

And you worry I've got Alzheimer's! The antique silver-plated one she gave us on our 25th anniversary?

EILEEN

She found it?

Henry nods.

EILEEN

In the phone book?

HENRY

(Nodding)

Yep. Right where you left it; stuck under "H."

EILEEN

But what makes her think that I was the one who stuck it in there?

Henry rises and crosses up to the writing desk. He begins rifling through the white envelopes.

HENRY

Not only are you the only person in this house who regularly refers to the white pages - even to call people we've known for forty years - but you also are the only one with a habit of marking the last name you checked, over and over, with a pink Hi-Liter.

Henry finds the one he's looking for. He holds it up like a detective revealing a vital piece of evidence.

HENRY

Yep! Just as I thought. "J.L. Henderson - 531 Chartiers Avenue."

(Beat)

You wouldn't have made a very good criminal, Eileen.

EILEEN

I still think we should just put it off. At least, until after the wedding.

HENRY

Eileen. We've been putting it off for fourteen years.

EILEEN

Why don't you talk to her, then? She's always listened to you, anyway.

HENRY

She didn't listen to me about Hiram. And that's what got us into this situation in the first place.

EILEEN

I know, I know. But, don't worry. If all goes according to plan, we may not have to worry too much longer.

HENRY

Plan? What plan?

EILEEN

Oops!

(Joyfully devious)

Oh, nothing. Nothing at all.

HENRY

Eileen...

EILEEN

Oh, all right. If you must know, I've been cooking up something that just might do the trick.

Henry crosses back to Eileen.

HENRY

(Puzzled)

How long has this been going on?

EILEEN

The past six months.

HENRY

And, why haven't you ever mentioned this to me before now?

EILEEN

(Wryly)

Because. No one in this house is very good at keeping secrets.

HENRY

Eileen, you'd better not be thinking what I think you're thinking.

EILEEN

And just what is it you think I might be thinking?

HENRY

Let's count our blessings that Hiram's being good enough to help cover most of the expenses. Don't get any bright ideas about trying to get him and Daphne back together.

EILEEN

Oh, please, Henry. You think I want to go through that mess all over again? Besides, that's not exactly what I had in mind.

HENRY

Well then, what exactly did you have in mind?

EILEEN

Just wait till after dinner tonight. You'll see.

Daphne enters from the kitchen carrying two cups of tea. She hands one to Eileen.

DAPHNE

Here you go, Mom. I hope it's all right.

EILEEN

(Sipping tea)

Very good, sweetheart. Just the way I like it.

DAPHNE

That's good. I had to use the microwave.

HENRY

Why?

DAPHNE

The stove top was already overrun with boiling pots. Plus, there was something inside the oven I couldn't quite make out.

HENRY

Ahh. That must be what your mother's been cooking up for six months.

DAPHNE

Excuse me?

EILEEN

(Through a gritted smile)

No. That's dinner.

(Elbowing Henry)

One more remark like that and those crackers will be the only meal you get tonight!

DAPHNE

You really shouldn't have gone to all the trouble of making it yourself, Mom. These days, most families choose to hold their rehearsal dinners in a restaurant.

EILEEN

It's the least we can do, since Garrett's folks are no longer with us. Besides, when your father and I got married, the two families always sat together for a decent, home-cooked meal.

(Realizing)

Which reminds me, I'd better get back in there and check on it.

Eileen turns to exit into the kitchen.

HENRY

So, what's on the menu for the big feast, anyway?

EILEEN

(Excitedly)

Ooh, I'm trying something a little different. Baked Orange Roughy, with boiled sweet potatoes, Brussel sprouts and broccoli slaw!

Eileen exits into the kitchen. Henry and Daphne momentarily regard each other, then simultaneously stick their fingers in their mouths and feign "gagging."

EILEEN

(Off)

And you can both take your fingers out of your mouths! You're going to love it!

Henry and Daphne return to watching the "TV".

HENRY

(After a moment)

So. Looks like it's really going to happen this time.

DAPHNE

(With a nod)

Looks that way.

HENRY

(Beat)

Are you OK? You've been uncharacteristically quiet about it these past few days.

DAPHNE

What do you want me to say, Dad? Garrett seems to be a fine young man.

HENRY

Well, if that's the best testimony you can offer, remind me never to use you as a character witness.

DAPHNE

(Suspiciously)

Why? What have you found out?

HENRY

Oh, nothing. Nothing. Except that all this time, he's secretly been the mastermind behind an insidious plot to overthrow the government by replacing all of our high-ranking leaders with duplicates scientifically grown in a solution of amniotic fluid and Lime Jello!

DAPHNE

(Beat)

You had me up till the Jello.

Daphne rises and crosses to the writing desk, shaking her head. She stares out the window.

HENRY

Sweetheart. Do yourself a favor: come down from the sentry post, huh? You know how much Mitzi wants this wedding.

DAPHNE

I seem to recall that not so long ago she wanted the very same thing when she was with... that... other boy.

HENRY

You mean... Derek?

DAPHNE

It was Daryl, Dad.

HENRY

I don't think so, Daphne. I'm pretty sure it sounded like Derek.

DAPHNE

(Calling upstairs)

Mitzi?

MITZI

(Off)

What?

DAPHNE

Would you come down here a minute, please?

Mitzi enters at the top of the stairs.

MITZI

Yeah, Mom? What's up?

DAPHNE

Do you remember the name of that boy you almost married about a year ago?

Mitzi comes down the stairs and into the room.

MITZI

(Wryly)

And you don't?

DAPHNE

No, of course I do. I just need you to help settle a little bet between us. You know your grandfather's memory isn't what it used to be.

HENRY

(Protesting)

Wait a minute! You were the one who...

Like her mother, Daphne elbows Henry pointedly.

MITZI

Daran, Mom.

DAPHNE

See, Dad? I told you it was Daran.

Henry gives Daphne a bit of a dirty look and crosses back to sit in his recliner. He picks up the crackers and begins crunching away again.

MITZI

Talk about a blast from the past. What do you suppose he's up to right now?

DAPHNE

I really don't care. Just as long as he's not doing it anywhere near here.

MITZI

And here I thought you actually liked him.

HENRY

(Reassuringly)

We did, sweetheart.

DAPHNE

Yes. For a time. But haven't I always tried to warn you that you don't get to really know what someone is like until after the honeymoon is over?

MITZI

(Sighs)

Yes, Mom.

DAPHNE

You should count your blessings that you found out about him before the wedding even happened.

MITZI

You always make everything sound so heinous, Mom. It wasn't like that at all. I guess when it came to him, the... Goddess of Love had other ideas.

HENRY

"Goddess of Love?" That's not some of that "new age" mumbo jumbo, is it?

DAPHNE

No, Dad. She's only teasing.

(Beat)

Aren't you?

Mitzi lets Daphne sweat a moment.

MITZI

(Nods acquiescently)

Although, wouldn't it be kind of nice if there was something higher than ourselves; helping to guide our hearts along the course of true love?

HENRY

(To Daphne, conspiratorially)

Are you sure she's your daughter? That sounds curiously like something your mother would say.

MITZI

Actually, Garrett said it; when we were first dating. It's pretty much what made me fall in love with him in the end.

DAPHNE

Figures.

Mitzi reacts.

DAPHNE

(Beat)

Well. If there was some higher being responsible for... what you said; in this day and age, she'd need a lot of help!

MITZI

(Giggling)

Well, maybe Daran should get in touch with her, then.

DAPHNE

(Giggling back)

Maybe. God knows he needed a job.

The phone rings.

MITZI

Ooh, that's probably Garrett. I'll get it upstairs.

Mitzi excitedly back up the stairs.

The phone stops ringing as Daphne crosses down to Henry, shaking her head.

DAPHNE

Just when I think she's finally gotten her head out of the clouds, she comes along and says something like that.

HENRY

Well, at least it proves she has some imagination.

(Beat)

You know, it wouldn't hurt if you allowed yourself to have a little harmless fantasy, either.

DAPHNE

No, thanks! Clinging to childish fantasies into your adulthood only gets you into trouble.

EILEEN

(Off)

Oh, no! Daphne! The sweet potatoes are burning!

Daphne looks to the kitchen, rolls her eyes, then glances back to Henry.

DAPHNE

Case in point: a sixty-some-year-old woman with delusions of being Julia Child.

Daphne exits into the kitchen.

Henry shakes his head with a smirk, sits down and begins crunching away again, watching the "TV".

The doorbell rings. Henry does not move.

DAPHNE

(Off)

If that's the fire department, Dad, tell them to come around the back.

EILEEN

(Off)

Oh, Daphne! Now, it's not that bad!

(Beat)

Is it? Just see who it is, would you, Henry?

Exasperated, Henry rises from his chair and crosses to the front door.

HENRY

(Aside)

Can't a man watch his stories in peace?

Henry opens the door.

DARAN steps through the doorway. His otherwise smart attire is strangely rumpled and he appears to be having trouble focusing. He props himself up against the door frame, his back to Henry. A moment of silence passes between them.

HENRY

(Calling out to the kitchen)

Eileen, get some coffee! I think the bachelor party just let out!

Daran turns to face Henry.

DARAN

(Focusing)

Henry? Er... Mr. Doherty? Is that you?

HENRY

(Puzzled)

Derek?

DARAN

(Correcting)

Daran.

HENRY

Right. Daran.

(Realizing)

Daran! Oh, my God!

DARAN

What are the both of you doing here?

HENRY

We live here. Er, I live here! What on Earth are you doing here?

Daran looks up and points to the ceiling.

DARAN

(Woozy)

Trying to remember how far down that first step is...

Daran takes a huge step, loses his balance, and collapses into Henry's arms. Henry tries to help him up.

HENRY

What's the matter with you?

DARAN

Where would you like me to start?

HENRY

Come on, Daran. Stand up.

Henry helps Daran unsteadily to his feet. He does what he can to straighten up Daran's appearance.

HENRY

Look... it's, uh... nice to see you, again. Really. But... you couldn't have picked a worse time to drop in.

EILEEN

(Off)

Who is it, Henry?

DARAN

Now I'm hearing things. That sounded like Eileen's voice.

HENRY

That's right. And you know what'll happen if she sees you.

Henry tries to quickly shove Daran back out the door. Daran doesn't seem to budge.

HENRY

(Desperate)

Come on, Daran. Don't put me in this position! Quick! Before she comes out of...

Eileen enters from the kitchen.

EILEEN

You didn't turn your hearing aid back off, did...

Eileen stops, seeing Daran in the doorway

EILEEN

...you?

Daran spots Eileen.

DARAN

Hi... Eileen!

EILEEN

Oh, my God. Henry, is that who I think it is?

Eileen crosses to the door.

HENRY

Yeah, it is.

EILEEN

What on Earth is he doing here?

HENRY

God only knows. But, he was just leaving...

EILEEN

Leaving?

(Tense beat, then the gracious
hostess)

Why, whatever for? He's only just arrived!

Eileen leads Daran by the arm into the
living room.

HENRY

(Astonished)

Eileen...?

EILEEN

How have you been, darling? It's so good to see you again.

Eileen sits Daran on the sofa.

HENRY

Eileen...

Henry crosses down to stand behind the sofa.

EILEEN
Oh, hush Henry! You're being rude to our guest.

HENRY
Eileen, so help me, if this is...

EILEEN
(Whispering)
Henry! Knock it off!

HENRY
(Whispering)
Well, what do you think you're doing?

EILEEN
(Whispering)
Trying to help. Look at him!

HENRY
(Whispering)
Eileen, now is really not the time to be playing Mother Theresa!

DARAN
I think you must have a leak somewhere in the house. I keep hearing this hissing sound.

Henry and Eileen react. Off their curious expressions, Daran stands, albeit uncertain of his footing.

DARAN
Whoa. You might want to have your foundation checked, too. The house seems to be moving a lot more than I remember.

Eileen gently nudges him back down onto the sofa.

EILEEN
Now, now. Sit down, dear. Everything's all right. Now, tell me. What happened to you?

DARAN
I'm not really sure. Everything's sort of fuzzy...

EILEEN
Well, what's the last thing you remember?

DARAN

Sitting in night club in Valparaiso... and then ringing the doorbell here.

HENRY

Valparaiso?

EILEEN

Oh, I knew it. Somebody knocked him on the head.

(To Daran)

Can I get you anything, dear? Something to drink? Or a snack or something?

HENRY

Eileen...

DARAN

(On Henry)

No. I'm fine. Really. Thank you.

EILEEN

Well... we're just tickled pink to see you again.

HENRY

(Through gritted teeth)

We... are?

EILEEN

(Also through gritted teeth)

Yes. We are.

Daran rises again. Still woozy.

DARAN

I'm really sorry. I should not be here. It's just that I...

HENRY

You... what?

EILEEN

Henry! I think you should come into the kitchen with me.

HENRY

What for?

EILEEN

(Hinting)

Because I'm thinking of re-painting and want your opinion on a color.

HENRY

What, now?

EILEEN

Excuse us a moment would you, Daran?

Eileen takes Henry by the arm and forcibly pulls him into the kitchen. After a second, she pokes her head back out.

EILEEN

Don't you go anywhere!

Eileen ducks back inside.

Daran stands dumbstruck a moment. He then paces the living room momentarily, taking in the overall décor.

DARAN

(To himself)

This can't be real.

(Beat)

I'm dreaming; that's it! This is all just one huge, fantastic, bright, frilly, pink delusion.

Finally, he notices the "TV" still on.

DARAN

TV's on. Why not? It's my subconscious!

Daran crosses back to the sofa and sits there, "watching."

VAL enters, peculiarly, at the top of the stairs. She is dressed in an elegant red evening gown that accentuates her figure in all the right places. She spots Daran sitting on the sofa. She regally descends the staircase to the living room floor, her entrance not unlike that of the glamorous star of a classic Hollywood motion picture. She silently and purposefully crosses down to the sofa and stands behind Daran. She seems puzzled that Daran has taken no notice. She silently motions to the stairwell, indicating the regal entrance that Daran

has missed. He is still oblivious. Val quickly re-traces her steps, mentally. After a moment she slaps her forehead with realization. Finally, she raises her hands - palms flattened toward the audience - and parts them, as if opening a large patio window. Val steps forward "through" the now-open "archway."

VAL

(In a sultry voice)

What's happenin', hot stuff?

DARAN

(With a start)

AGH!

Val lets out a girlish giggle, pushes the "windows" behind her closed with both hands, and crosses left around the recliner to lounge on the arm of the sofa beside Daran.

Daran takes a moment to collect himself and get a good look at the woman now lounging beside him.

DARAN

That settles it. I am definitely dreaming.

Val picks up the bag of crackers and starts crunching away.

VAL

Under ordinary circumstances, I'd be inclined to agree with you. However, these are not ordinary circumstances. And you are most definitely not... dreaming.

Val notices the TV and leaps off the arm to sit beside Daran, excitedly staring at the "TV."

VAL

Ooh! They didn't say who the father of Reva's baby was yet, did they?

DARAN

I beg your pardon?

VAL

Weren't you watching? Damn! Hope I remembered to set my DVR!

DARAN

Who... are you?

VAL

(Slightly disappointed)

You don't remember? That's odd. Usually, I leave a greater impression.

DARAN

Wait a minute.

(Studying her)

You know, now that you mention it, you do look... sorta familiar...

VAL

Maybe this'll help.

Val rises, clears her throat, and begins to smack her lips, as if chewing a wad of gum. She pulls her hair up with one hand and mimes holding a drinks tray with the other. She speaks in a nasally, "dumb dame" voice, a la Gracie Allen.

VAL

What can I get ya to drink, hon'?

DARAN

(Realizing)

Oh my God! That was you?

VAL

Yep! Clean up pretty good, don't I?

Daran rises and crosses away from the sofa, laughing with a giddiness bordering on insanity.

VAL

OK, OK. It wasn't that funny.

DARAN

(To the sky)

OK. That's enough. I'd like to wake up now.

VAL

I told you, you're not dreaming.

DARAN

Oh, yes I am. And, for a while there, I was more than willing to just go with the flow and let it all happen. But then, you showed up. Suddenly, all the credibility's just gone right out the window.

VAL

(More insistent)

You're not dreaming.

Daran crosses back to Val and stands nearly nose-to-nose with her.

DARAN

Fine. Then I'm hallucinating. Either way, you're not here.

(Indicates living room)

You're up here...

(Indicates head)

And I'm not listening to you anymore.

Daran turns away from Val. Val taps Daran's shoulder. Daran turns back to Val and she slaps him. Hard! Daran flies back and lands on the couch. After a moment, he looks up at Val, rubbing his cheek.

DARAN

OWWW! What did you do that for?

VAL

Dramatic effect.

(Pause. Suddenly concerned)

Are you all right?

DARAN

No, I am not all right! You just clocked me!

VAL

Oh, come on! It was only a little "love tap." Besides, you needed convincing.

DARAN

Guess that's the price I pay for drinking too much.

VAL

I'll say. You really know how to put `em away, don't you?

DARAN

(Giddy pride)

You should have seen me at my college graduation party. I was an animal!

VAL

Yeah, I'll just bet you were. It's a special kind of man who gets plastered on "Coke on the Rocks."

DARAN

(Beat. Dumbstruck)

That's all that was?

VAL

That's all you ordered. Never saw anyone drown their sorrows in an excess of caffeine before.

DARAN

Wait a second. If that's all I had last night, then how did I end up over three hundred miles away? And why does my head feel like it's been turned inside out and back again?

VAL

Ordinarily, I'd say a sugar rush. But in your case, you're just suffering from a little "astral lag." Your head should clear up in a few minutes.

DARAN

Oh. Well, that's good to know...

(Realizing)

Oh, no!

VAL

What's wrong?

DARAN

I just realized... I didn't pay the tab!

VAL

You didn't leave a tip, either.

DARAN

Great. Like I don't have enough problems!

(Realizing)

Wait a minute. What did you just say?

VAL

You didn't leave a tip.

DARAN

No, no. Before that. Astral... something...?

VAL

Lag. Astral lag. Don't worry. Everybody gets it the first time they transcend space and time.

DARAN

Oh, that's a relief...

(Realizing)

Transcend what?!?

VAL

(With a sigh)

Swell. This is going to take even longer than I thought.

DARAN

You... you're no cocktail waitress!

VAL

Brilliant deduction, Captain Obvious! And for your information, the preferred term is...

(Nasally)

"Hospitality Specialist."

DARAN

Who the hell are you, Lady!?

VAL

Oh, I've gone by a great many names over the millennia. Alalaha, Anath, Aphrodite - one of my personal favorites - Astarte, Astrild...

DARAN

(In shock)

Ah oh...

VAL

No, I don't think that was one of them, but let me get through the "A's." Let's see, then there was Branwen, Banagan, Benten, Erzulie, Freya, Hathor, Ishtar - great name, awful movie - Conchenn, Kanikanihia, Nambi, Venus - even though it unfortunately rhymes with a certain component of the male anatomy - but, these days, I prefer to keep things simple and go by just... Val.

DARAN
(Beat. Deadpan)

I see.

Daran quickly rises and bolts for the door.

DARAN
You're psycho!

VAL
Where are you going?

DARAN
Home. I've had enough insanity for one day.

VAL
And just how do you propose to get there?

Daran stops in the doorway momentarily. He quickly makes a decision before grabbing the doorknob.

DARAN
I'll... I'll take a bus!

VAL
(Snaps fingers)
You've got no cash.

Realizing, Daran fumbles for his wallet. He finds it, opens it and looks inside. After a moment's realization, he devises an alternative.

DARAN
(With some relief)
Aha! Credit cards!

VAL
(Snaps fingers)
They've been cancelled.

Daran stares back at Val in disbelief.

VAL
Go on. Call them if you don't believe me.

Daran crosses down to the end table and picks up the phone. He punches in a long series of numbers.

VAL

While you're at it, I think it's only fair to let you know that your bank won't wire you anything, either. Because, according to their records, you don't actually exist, now.

Daran hangs up the phone. His expression conveys his realization that everything Val has said is true.

MITZI

(Off)

Did I hear the doorbell? Grandma?

DARAN

Oh, my God. She's here!

VAL

Who's here?

MITZI

(Off)

Hello? Anybody down there?

DARAN

What do you mean, "Who's here?" Don't you know?

VAL

I'm many things, Daran. But a clairvoyant ain't one of `em.

DARAN

Mitzi!

VAL

Ahh. Who's Mitzi?

Mitzi enters at the top of the stairs and begins to descend.

MITZI

Come on, quit playing around, guys! Who came...

(Spots Daran)

...in?

DARAN
(Swallows)
...Hello...

MITZI
(Unsure)
...Hi...

They stand staring at each other a moment. Then, Mitzi comes down the stairs to Daran. Mitzi reaches out her hand to touch Daran's face. Daran fearfully backs away. It is a very awkward moment. Somehow, through all of this, Mitzi does not even seem to notice Val's presence.

MITZI
Well... and here I was wondering what you were up to.

DARAN
(Brightening)
Really?

MITZI
Wasn't expecting you to just show up and tell me, though. So... how've you been?

DARAN
To be honest, I've had better days.
(Beat)
Guess you're... probably wondering what I'm doing here, huh?

Daphne enters from the kitchen. She spies Daran and Mitzi standing together.

MITZI
(With a nod)
The thought had crossed my mind, yes.

DARAN
Well... it's kind of hard to explain. You see...

DAPHNE
(Sternly)
Mitzi. Your grandmother needs you in the kitchen.

MITZI
Mom. Look who's...

DAPHNE

Yes, I know. Go into the kitchen.

MITZI

But... Mom...

DAPHNE

Mitzi, now!

Mitzi glances back to Daran momentarily then, defeated, exits into the kitchen.

DAPHNE

Come here, Daran.

Daran stands still, nervously glancing between Daphne and Val.

DAPHNE

What are you looking at? I said come over here.

DARAN

You're not gonna hurt me. Are you?

DAPHNE

Depends on the mood I'm in when you get over here.

(Beat)

I just want to take a look at you. Mom says you might have a concussion.

Daran cautiously crosses to Daphne. Daphne begins to examine him with clinical precision. Val stands back and observes.

DARAN

So, you finally got that nursing certificate, huh? That's great, Daphne.

DAPHNE

Save it, Daran. And I'd prefer it if you called me Ms. Doherty.

(Beat)

What on Earth are you doing here, anyway?

DARAN

That seems to be the question of the hour.

DAPHNE

What the hell were you thinking?

DARAN

Well... I wasn't thinking, really...

DAPHNE

I'll bet!

DARAN

...It just sort of... happened.

With one hand, Daphne grabs Daran underneath his jaw, her thumb and forefingers forcing his cheeks uncomfortably close together.

DAPHNE

You're not on something, are you?

DARAN

(Defensively)

NO!

(Aside)

Although it certainly might explain a few things...

Daphne lets go of Daran's face. Daran stumbles momentarily, regaining his composure.

DAPHNE

Well. Your pupils don't appear to be dilated or anything.

(Beat)

All right. In honor of the occasion, I'll cut you a break.

Daphne turns to exit back through the kitchen.

DARAN

What occasion?

DAPHNE

Never you mind. Just get whatever it is you came here for and then go.

DARAN

Is anything wrong?

DAPHNE

Nothing you need to concern yourself over.

DARAN

I'd like to help, if I can.

DAPHNE

Don't worry. Everything's totally under control.

DARAN

But, Daphne...

Daphne stops at the kitchen door and abruptly turns back to face Daran.

DAPHNE

Daran. If you really want to help: turn around, walk back out that door and, this time, do us all a favor: don't come back.

(Beat)

Ever!

Daphne exits into the kitchen.

Daran turns back to Val.

VAL

You've really got a way with women, haven't you?

BLACK OUT.

END OF ACT I, SCENE 1

Perusal
Only FOR
NOT FOR
PRODUCTION