

The Prentice Hall Anthology of Latino Literature

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For Alexis

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Miguel Piñero

MIGUEL PIÑERO was born in Puerto Rico in the small town of Gurabo in 1946 and came to the United States as a young boy. The violence and drug culture of the streets became a part of his life at an early age and he served sentences for drug possession and burglary. While in prison at the infamous Sing Sing facility, Piñero began to turn his life around. He had written some poetry in his cell, and then joined a prison repertory group known as "the Family." During the course of these experiences, Piñero wrote *Short Eyes*, which eventually won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best American play of 1974. The play takes place in the dayroom of a detention center, where a group of mostly black and Hispanic prisoners waits out the pretrial period.

Piñero's other plays include *The Sun Always Shines for the Cool*, *Eulogy for a Small-Time Thief*, and *A Midnight Moon at the Greasy Spoon*, published together in 1983. Like all of his plays, *A Midnight Moon* centers on members of the underclass. It is set in a small twenty-four-hour luncheonette located in Times Square. It is owned and operated by Joseph Scott, a man in his late sixties whose acting career never took off the way he would have wanted. Throughout the course of the play we get glimpses into the lives of some of the diner's customers: a young Greek immigrant who marries a hooker so he may stay in the country, an aging actress whose life is a series of blown auditions, and a street hustler who owns a less than reputable massage parlor, among others. They all weave in and out of the play just as they weave in and out of American society. Similar in some ways to Miller's portrayal of a heroic yet tragic salesman, Piñero's play comments on the invisible lives of the people who most of us choose not to see.

A Midnight Moon at the Greasy Spoon

CHARACTERS

Joseph Scott, <i>Late sixties, active, strong.</i>	Lockhart, <i>Bureau of Immigration.</i>
Gerald Fisher, <i>Late sixties, active, strong.</i>	Man One, <i>Insurance Salesman.</i>
Dominick Skorpios, <i>Late thirties, Greek immigrant.</i>	Man Two, <i>Record Company Executive.</i>
Fred Pulley, <i>Early seventies.</i>	Hooker One, <i>On a string.</i>
Night-Life, <i>Mid twenties.</i>	Hooker Two, <i>Freelancer.</i>
Joe the Cop, <i>Late fifties.</i>	Shopping Bag Lady, <i>Mumbles.</i>
Zulma Samson, <i>Late forties.</i>	Junkie Girl, <i>Far gone.</i>
Jake the Nigger, <i>Late forties.</i>	Lost Man, <i>From out of town.</i>
Reynolds, <i>FBI Man.</i>	Boy, <i>Songwriter, musician.</i>
	Girl, <i>Singer.</i>

Plus as many miscellaneous customers as can be creatively accommodated.

A Midnight Moon at the Greasy Spoon

ACT I

A small luncheonette in the Times Square area servicing the workers of the New York Times and whatever hungry people come in to eat. The place is open all night. In half light frozen like the figures in Edward Hopper's "Night Hawk," GERRY is at the coffee urn, DOMINICK prepares to cut the pie, JOE is poised at the cash register preparing to make change for a departing CUSTOMER, HOOKER ONE is on the pay phone, A BIKER sits at the counter waiting for his coffee, a STUDENT sits at a side counter reading a textbook. After a moment the lights go to full and the action begins. General ad lib as GERRY serves the BIKER, the CUSTOMER pays JOE, DOMINICK serves a piece of pie to the STUDENT. Then . . .

DOMINICK: There's not enough pies to last the night, Joe.

JOE: So what.

GERRY: So what? So what, he says, like if he don't like making money.

JOE: Listen, you were supposed to order the pies, right?

DOMINICK: I told you yesterday that I couldn't order the pies 'cause I was coming in late today . . .

JOE: You came in on time.

DOMINICK: Well the marriage was faster than I thought it was going to be like.

GERRY: Welcome to America, Dominick.

JOE: How was the wedding, Dominick?

DOMINICK: Very fast . . . very fast . . . I go into the place in the morning, we sign some papers, we go into a room . . . One, two, three, that's it. I bring my cousin Aristotle with us as a best man. She had some junkie girl with her as best woman.

JOE: Maid of honor.

DOMINICK: What honor, Joe . . . she had no honor, bring a girl like that to her wedding. She's crazy without honor, thank God I'm not going to live with her.

JOE: What do you mean you're not gonna live with her?

DOMINICK: You know why I married her.

JOE: Sure I know, but you got to get between them legs of hers at least once.

GERRY: Yeah, Dominick, after all the money you put out for her to marry you, you got to get laid at least once to make it legal, if you know what I mean Dominick?

DOMINICK: Sure I know what you mean, but this is strictly business.

It may be strictly business, Dom, but anytime you can get a piece of leg that looks like a piece of leg you ought to get that piece of leg before she gets away . . . you know what I mean, Dominick.

DOMINICK: I don't know.

JOE: What do you mean, you don't know?

GERRY: She's your wife, you got a right to get a piece of leg.

DOMINICK: But this is strictly business . . .

JOE: Anytime, anywhere in America a man is the boss of his home. Your wife is bought and paid for, she's yours, Dominick.

DOMINICK: I don't know . . .

GERRY: What's there to know, all you got to do when she comes home . . .

DOMINICK: She ain't coming home.

JOE: You mean she isn't coming home . . . ? She's got to come home.

GERRY: Where else is a wife supposed to go but home?

DOMINICK: I mean there is no home to come home to.

GERRY: No home to come home to. That doesn't even sound right.

JOE: That's a great title for a song. (*Singing.*) There's no home to come home to, like no home that I know. What's a home without a piece of leg.

DOMINICK: Look, after the wedding she went her way, I came here.

GERRY: Ain't you gonna see her again?

DOMINICK: When the divorce papers come through.

JOE: But that's not gonna be for a long time.

GERRY: Yeah, that's right, and besides, you have to become a citizen first before you divorce her. Don't forget that.

JOE: Don't be stupid, Gerry, that's why he married her.

GERRY: I know why he married her . . .

DOMINICK: Joe, what if she doesn't . . .

JOE: She has no choice.

DOMINICK: . . . she can say, go fuck your own leg instead.

JOE: Don't be stupid, Dominick, she can't say that.

GERRY: Why not?

DOMINICK: Yeah, why not?

JOE: Because she can't say that.

GERRY: That doesn't make any sense to me.

DOMINICK: To me either, it makes no sense to me.

JOE: Why does everything have to make sense?

GERRY: Joe, if things don't make any sense, then you can't execute them.

JOE: Hey, Gerry, give me that cloth there.

GERRY: Catch.

JOE: No . . . oh shit, look at this. You got the thing inside the chocolate syrup, dummy.

GERRY: Here . . .

DOMINICK: What happened with what you were saying, Joe?

JOE: I'm thinking Dominick, let me think.

GERRY: You want maybe we should go outside in case you blow a fuse?

JOE: Oh, oh, oh . . . Dominick, how much you laid out to marry that broad?

DOMINICK: Close to three thousand dollars.

GERRY: That's a lot of money to become a citizen of the USA.

JOE: Yeah, with so many people trying to get out of the USA.

GERRY: As far as I'm concerned, I still go with the good old saying . . . love it or leave it. If you don't like it, get your ass out.

JOE: Boy, if people knew that people like Dominick work for years to save up enough money so that they can marry some broad and become a citizen . . .

GERRY: What are you doing, Joe? Campaigning for mayor?

JOE: I bet if I did campaign for mayor I'd win by a landslide, 'cause I know what this town needs, somebody strong that's not afraid to kick some ass in that mansion, who's not afraid of the mafia or the union bosses or doesn't have his hand out for kickbacks all the time. You know that's what this town needs. If I was mayor, the schools wouldn't be full of drugs and police and revolutionaries. I'd put them all up against the wall and shoot 'em, no trials. I'd arrest them and shoot them on the spot like Castro did in Cuba.

GERRY: How do you know what Castro did in Cuba?

JOE: Because that's what all them Communists do when they take over. They have a blood bath to clean out all the people that gave them a bad time.

GERRY: You sound like a communist.

JOE: I don't sound like a communist. Don't say things like that. You know the walls have ears. This place may be tapped.

DOMINICK: Hey Joe, have you thought about? . . .

JOE: What?

DOMINICK: What we were talking about.

JOE: I haven't thought of nothing as yet but I will. Just let the old noggin get to work and we'll have a brain storm.

GERRY: Yeah, maybe we should get an umbrella, hey.

JOE: Maybe we should get an umbrella. That's funny, real funny. You know the communists don't have a bad idea when they start out, you know. I mean it. I mean like they have a good idea when they start to throw out the rotten apple before it contaminates the whole barrel. That's their motto and like it or not, it's a good one. If we had in this country stopped all them spicks and niggers from going crazy protesting this and that, we would have been in a better more orderly country. We let all the foreigners come in and tell us what to do with our country. Ridiculous. That's why this country is falling apart now, you know that. Why I read in the *Daily News* yesterday that one of the top men in the Mayor's administration was arrested for being a crook. And look what happened to Kennedy and his brother. The poor kid didn't have a chance to get anywhere.

GERRY: You think he had a chance at being the President?

JOE: Are you kidding! With all the money his family has!

GERRY: Them Kennedys sure have had a bad time with their kids. All of them killed and running around, never being at home. Sure is hell of a family life they have, huh?

JOE: Now Joe Kennedy was one hell of a man. Let me tell you he was a real old timer. He was one of them old time pioneers.

DOMINICK: You mean he was with Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid?

JOE: Naw, well, I bet he might have known them. I mean he had the guts to know them.

GERRY: He didn't know them.

JOE: What do you know! You know anything of the Kennedy family.

GERRY: No.

JOE: Well, I'm an expert on the Kennedy family. I know everything about them. I didn't vote for John because he was too young and wouldn't know how to handle a country the size of this one. If he had been running for Governor or Senator or maybe Mayor of the City, I might have voted for him. But for president, naw. I mean he was killed just in time.

GERRY: What a crazy thing to say, that the president was killed just in time.

JOE: What I mean is if he had lived, everybody would have seen how lousy a president this man was and he would have never gotten the chance to run for any office again.

DOMINICK: But Joe, he must have been a great president. I mean when I came here, I landed in Kennedy Airport. I read of a place that they call Cape Kennedy where they shot those rockets to the moon. I mean, that to me means that he was a great man.

JOE: Who's saying he wasn't a great man? He got killed didn't he?

GERRY: So what does that prove?

JOE: It proves that he was a great man. All great men get assassinated, right? What was the name of the colored guy that got killed in the south, you know, the guy who walked all over the place?

GERRY: King.

JOE: What?

GERRY: That was his name, King. They got some kind of center down here named after him, he said that . . .

JOE: Said what?

GERRY: That little black boys and little white boys would be holding hands.

JOE: If I caught my son skipping down the streets holding hands with some nigger boy, I'd break his arm.

GERRY: I don't care if he's black or white or yellow or red, if I caught my son holding another boy's hand, I'd do the same thing too. No son of mine is gonna hold any man's hand and skip down the street like some freakin' fairy.

DOMINICK: "I have a dream."

JOE: You have a dream?

DOMINICK: That was the thing he said.

JOE: Who said?

DOMINICK: Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr.

JOE: Who's that?

GERRY: That's the name of the guy who made the speech we were just talking about.

JOE: How do you know his name, Gerry? How'd you know his name, Dominick. 175

DOMINICK: I read about him in school. He was really a beautiful human being. 180

JOE: What do you know? Look, you're a foreigner here. . . . What do you know about the niggers in this country? Them spades can really turn on you. They have no manners. I had a spook working here a couple of years ago and he was really a nasty-mouth nigger. I mean he would cough in front of people who sat down to eat. He'd pick his nose in public, farted all the time and then would stink like a dead cat stinks. I think his stomach was rotten or something, you know. Every-time he went downstairs to the basement to shit, the smell would just fill this whole place. 185

GERRY: Joe please, I'm eating.

JOE: So go ahead and eat, who's stopping you?

GERRY: Never mind.

JOE: I had to let him go. After that I had a spick working in here and I had to keep my eye on him all the time. You know you can't trust a spick. They steal everything that's not nailed to the floor. I mean, he was a good worker, but like, I had to keep my eye on him all the time, you know. 190

DOMINICK: Did he steal?

GERRY: Who knows? But Joe's right; them spicks steal like if, you know what it is being a thief comes to them natural, like making money comes to us. It's a second nature to them. 195

DOMINICK: Did you see him steal anything?

JOE: That's what Gerry is saying. They are just like the Arab. They can steal the nails off Jesus Christ and still leave him hanging on the cross. I had a spick friend of mine who once told me that at an early age their parents teach them how to steal and lie and everything. It's like going to school I mean. 200

DOMINICK: Did you believe him?

JOE: Of course I believed him. He wouldn't lie to me.

DOMINICK: I don't know, Joe. Like this country is full of all different kinds of people, you know.

JOE: I know, I know, ain't that a fact, but that's because we're kind. We let all kinds of people in this country of ours. We're not selfish with our wealth. With the opportunities that are here for all people, what the hell. 210

GERRY: Yeah, you know the old saying, you can't keep it unless you give it away.

JOE: What'd you say, Gerry?

GERRY: You know, it's better to give than receive . . . or like them holy rollers tell you . . . can't get into heaven with all that money so give it to me? Like Holly Nel said, a camel can't pass anything if you put a needle in his eye. (*GERRY exits to back.*) 215

FRED: (*Entering.*) Hey, where's the bum?
 JOE: Hey bum, how are ya?
 FRED: Okay, how ya doing, bum? Where's the other bum?
 JOE: He's in the back. Hey, Gerry.
 GERRY: Yeah?
 JOE: Fred's out here . . .
 GERRY: Hey, bum.
 FRED: That's right, you bum, stay back there and rot, you bum.
 GERRY: Ah, you don't wanna see me 'cause you owe me some money!
 FRED: Where do I owe money to a bum from? Oh yeah, that's right. You were begging on the subways and I told you I'd have to owe you . . . for a cup of coffee.
 JOE: That's a great one.
 FRED: Hey, Dominick, how are ya doing?
 DOMINICK: Okay, Fred.
 FRED: The name is Mister Pulley.
 DOMINICK: Okay, Mr. Pulley.
 JOE: Ain't you got no manners for senior citizens?
 DOMINICK: I do, I'm sorry sir.
 FRED: That's quite all right. Just don't let it happen again.
 DOMINICK: No sir, I won't.
 FRED: (*To JOE.*) Did you get tickets for the roller derby this Saturday?
 JOE: I'm gonna watch it on TV.
 FRED: Watch it on TV? You must be getting old, you bum. To watch it out there in person is the way to see roller derby. Let me tell you there is nothing like it. When Mike Gannon goes around that turn knocking everything and everybody out of his way . . . Let me tell you something, you bum, that's a sight to see. There's nothing like it and you can't tell me you really get the whole thing on TV because I know, I've watched the roller derby on TV and it is not the same thing as watching it out there with that crowd yelling for blood. And you don't get to see what really goes on when them Amazons get it on in a fisticuff action. Them torn clothes reveals a lot more than they show on TV. Can you know what I mean? Some of them girls are really built like brick shithouses. Some of them broads remind me of the battleship I was stationed on during the big one.
 JOE: Yeah, I know, but I gotta lotta work to do around the house, you know.
 FRED: Let me get a cup of coffee and a toasted muffin.
 JOE: Hey, Gerry, get the bum his regular.
 GERRY: Okay, a toasted English coming up. (*DOMINICK hands JOE a cup of coffee for FRED.*)
 FRED: Hey, Dominick, you feel like making a couple' a bucks this weekend?
 DOMINICK: I don't know if I have time this weekend.
 JOE: Dominick just got married today.
 FRED: Hey, congratulations, Dominick.

JOE: (*Handing FRED the coffee.*) He married a Puerto Rican.
 FRED: A what?
 GERRY: (*Entering with the English muffin.*) You heard him.
 FRED: Hey, bum!
 GERRY: Hey, bum! 270
 FRED: So you married a Puerto Rican girl, huh? I hear tell they are some hot little number.
 GERRY: That's what I hear too. I mean I never had me one of those.
 FRED: You probably get a heart attack if one of them little numbers got on you, you bum. 275
 JOE: They would sure do a number on him.
 FRED: They sure would, thanks. Where's the Sweet and Low?
 GERRY: Here ya are, service with a smile.
 FRED: Your smile I don't need, hey.
 JOE: Hey Dominick, you wanna pass a mop on the floor before they start coming in here. 280
 FRED: Yeah, so Dominick got himself hooked up to a little Puerto Rican number, huh? Hey, Dominick, you got more brains than I thought you had. By the way, how old are you?
 GERRY: How old are you, Dominick? 285
 DOMINICK: Thirty-eight years old next month.
 FRED: You gonna stay in this country now, Dominick?
 DOMINICK: Yes.
 JOE: Sure he is, that's why he married that spick!
 FRED: How she look? 290
 JOE: She's a looker, that's for sure.
 GERRY: Yeah, she sure is. Three thousand dollars worth of looks.
 FRED: Three thousand dollars, are you kidding?
 JOE: Nope, that's what he paid to marry her.
 FRED: Hell, for three grand I would have married him. 295
 GERRY: You're not exactly his type, Fred.
 FRED: I could be just like Jack Lemmon in that film with Marilyn Monroe. What was the name of that movie? I saw it three times with Jack Lemmon, a real funny guy. I seen all his movies you know.
 GERRY: "Some Like It Hot!" . . . 300
 FRED: That's it, "Some Like It Hot," a great film.
 JOE: They don't make films like that any more, you know.
 FRED: That's a darn shame, isn't it?
 GERRY: It sure is.
 DOMINICK: Can I still see it in the movies? 305
 FRED: The late, late, late movie.
 JOE: Fred, you're a riot.
 JOE THE COP: (*Entering.*) Hey, Joe, how's tricks?
 JOE: Tricks are for kids, want some corn flakes?
 JOE THE COP: Hello, Dominick. 310
 DOMINICK: Hello, Officer Joe.
 JOE: Dominick, get some glasses.

GERRY: What'll you have?
 JOE THE COP: Give me a pastrami on white, hold the mustard. Coffee with no sugar.
 GERRY: And an apple turnover, all traveling, right?
 JOE THE COP: Right. So how's business?
 JOE: Business is fine. How's business out there in the streets?
 JOE THE COP: Same as always. Saturday night everybody is trying to kill somebody else.
 JOE: Things get bad some times out there, right?
 JOE THE COP: You're damn right. Especially on nights, like this. The weather isn't so bad, it's a good night for muggers. People wanna go out and take walks. I wish people would just go home and lock themselves in until it's time to go to work the next day. That's what I do, well not me, Joe, but my wife and kids I mean. If my kids aren't home by eight o'clock, I go looking for them and when I find them they know what's in store for them. Most parents nowadays don't wanna hit their kids no matter what they do. If it was up to me every kid that came into the station house would receive an ass whipping like my father use to give me.
 JOE: I know what you mean. My kids are all grown up now and all of them with the exception of the oldest are hard working citizens making their daily living. No charity crap for them. The oldest one went to Vietnam and came back a . . . a . . . I don't know what to call him . . . a communist junkie pinko fag creep. I threw the bum out of the house.
 FRED: I fought in the big one and these kids go out to a little brawl like Vietnam and they make a big stink out of it. They really think they been to war. They come back talking life if they, they, they . . .
 JOE: I know what you mean, Fred. I can't even begin to pinpoint the problem of the chicken-livered shithead.
 JOE THE COP: Well, they finally gave me a desk job now.
 JOE: You got yourself a desk job at the station?
 JOE THE COP: Yep, taking it easy.
 JOE: What are you two doing there with Dominick?
 GERRY: Wouldn't you like to know.
 FRED: Just trying to help the young fella along with some marital hints, you know what I mean?
 JOE: Dominick just got married.
 JOE THE COP: He did, huh? Dom old boy, you just made one of America's grave yet traditional human errors.
 DOMINICK: I did? How?
 JOE THE COP: Dropping the wings of bachelor freedom and donning the yoke of marriage slavery, but nevertheless, I wish you health, wealth and love . . .
 JOE: I'll drink to that.
 DOMINICK: Thank you . . . thank you very much . . . *(Enter ZULMA in a rush)*

ZULMA: Hi, everybody . . . hot chocolate to go . . . extra milk . . . no sugar . . . is the phone working, Joe? My, Gerry, the years are taking their toll . . . potbelly, pretty soon. Stop drinking all that beer, right
 Fred? Hey, Dominick . . . hello . . . this is X-87 . . . nothing . . .
 What? No . . . but I will . . . well if that's the way you feel about it then okay. I'll just get me another answering service . . . goodbye . . .
 Chocolate ready? I was going to get me another service anyway . . . I was . . . really . . . oh well, Joe, you know how it is in the business, sometime you're up, sometimes you're down . . . but I guess I know what you're thinking once a person reaches a certain point in the struggle to reach some kind of notoriety and they don't get there then it's time to bid farewell to all that is a part of one's natural habit as is the habit to eat to breath to sleep. The nature of a prayer is to be heard by whoever is listening, I seem to have a bad connection to that certain ear wherever it is.
 JOE: What are you talking about?
 GERRY: Dominick here just got married.
 JOE THE COP: Would you mind repeating what you just said, I didn't get it all.
 ZULMA: What I'm talking about? I'm talking about David Merrick . . . Alex Cohan . . . Gower Champion . . . Joe Luggage and Frankie Suitcase, about all those guys who control the means and the manner of my existence on this planet, about *Show Business* and *Backstage* and *Variety* and all those casting notices that appear in the paper, about the Equity billboard, about the daydreams that rush through our heads as we climb the stairs to an audition, about the tears that flood out after being rejected once . . . twice . . . three times in one afternoon . . . and that's not counting the morning, or the telephone calls, the hundreds of pictures and résumés that hit the mailboxes . . . of course, I can't repeat what I said, I speak from the moment not from a script . . . as for you, Dominick who just got married, break a leg . . . well, time has it that I venture forth toward the unknown fate of a sacred audition. . . this hot chocolate will be cold by the time I reach my destination, but that's not the moment of truth . . . it comes later on in the day with the hot chicken soup that I heat in the naked cold of my lonely room . . . when the night finds me moaning over the uselessness of trying to survive in the path of glamor and beauty, for I have lost both of these elements during the course of the years, yet my talent has no end in sight and yet I am not judged by this but by the fullness of my breast. So long, guys, I will see all of you tomorrow if the lord is on my side . . . if not, send me no flowers . . . for I will venture to exploit all of me in that great casting office in the sky . . . bye . . .
 DOMINICK: Who was she!
 JOE THE COP: I don't know her name, but by the silver tongue that she left behind, she must be the stone ranger . . .
 JOE: That's nice, Joe. See you next time.

JOE THE COP: Good night, Joe, Gerry, Mr. er, er???

FRED: Fred, Fred Pulley. Call me Fred.

JOE THE COP: Good night, Fred . . . and Dominick, don't do nothing I wouldn't do. (*JOE THE COP exits.*)

JOE: So long, Joe. Nice guy. One of the really decent cops on the force.

GERRY: He's all right for a cop.

JOE: All cops are really all right. They have a tremendous job on their hands when they become New York City cops.

GERRY: Don't I know it. Don't forget my oldest one is a cop.

DOMINICK: Why did Officer Joe say that to me?

JOE: Say what?

DOMINICK: That I shouldn't do nothing he wouldn't do. I don't know what he wouldn't do, so how am I going to know if I am doing something that he wouldn't do?

JOE: You know, as crazy as that may sound, it makes sense. But even . . . look, that's just an old American saying, Dom.

DOMINICK: It doesn't make any sense to me.

GERRY: You mean you never heard it said before, Dom?

JOE: If he had, would he be acting like he hadn't?

GERRY: Just surprised, that's all. (*Telephone rings.*)

DOMINICK: I got it.

JOE: I'll get it. City Morgue, you stab 'em, we slab 'em. Oh, hi Ruth. Sorry, can't make no deliveries today. The boy didn't show. Yeah, yeah, I know this is the second day in a row, but what can I tell you? Listen, order from someone else. No, no hard feelings whatsoever, okay, bye . . . the bitch.

GERRY: Who was that?

JOE: Ruth Singerton from up the street. She's really got a whole lot of nerve, hasn't she?

GERRY: She has a whole lot of something else too.

JOE: She sure does. That woman has a future behind her.

FRED: Well, here you are, Joe.

JOE: Leaving already?

FRED: Yeah, got to get back to work. You know some people work while others pretend to work, right, Gerry?

GERRY: I wouldn't know, I'm only here eight hours a day.

FRED: Aaah, you bum. Take it easy you bums.

JOE: You too, you bum.

DOMINICK: Good night, Mr. Pulley.

FRED: Hey, call me Fred.

DOMINICK: Right, Fred . . . bye.

GERRY: Get out of here already you bum.

FRED: Let me get a pack of Camels.

JOE: Here you are, on the house.

GERRY: Yeah, we like giving away coffin nails.

FRED: Ahhh, you bum. So long, see you tomorrow.

JOE: Okay, Fred. (*FRED exits.*)

GERRY: How old you think Fred is?

40 JOE: He's past sixty-five I think.

GERRY: He's a baby compared to you, heh Joe?

JOE: Blow that out your ass.

DOMINICK: What about the delivery boy, Joe?

JOE: What delivery boy? He's fired.

41 DOMINICK: My cousin, Aristotle, is looking for work. He's young and strong.

JOE: Bring him around tomorrow and I'll have a look at him.

GERRY: What are you now, a casting, director . . .

460 DOMINICK: What's a casting director, Joe?

GERRY: What do you wanna eat, Dominick? . . . I'll make it for you.

DOMINICK: Eggs and tomatoes.

GERRY: You want some coffee?

DOMINICK: Yes. No, today, tea with lemon.

465 JOE: A casting director, it's a job in the entertainment business.

GERRY: The entertainment business?

JOE: It's a business!

GERRY: Gee, Joe, I'm only kidding.

JOE: Well I don't take it as a joke.

470 GERRY: Okay, okay, sorry that I try to be human.

DOMINICK: What's wrong? Why are you two fighting?

GERRY: He was an entertainer most of his life.

DOMINICK: A what?

475 JOE: I was in show business. That's why I bought this place. Never played Broadway, so when I got too old to make the rounds regularly I decided, well I may never play Broadway, so let me work on Broadway. So me and three other friends of mine bought this here place and settled down to relax our few years on this earth with the toil of good, honest, hard work. I'm the only one left of the three. Gerry just bought a share of the place, makes him a partner now. But he worked in this place for a long time before he could make enough money to buy a share of the place. Dominick, there's plenty of opportunity in America to make a decent living if you put your mind to it. I mean don't think that it's been easy for anybody. When you get right down to it, Dominick, there are very few people in this country who were born with a silver spoon in their mouth. Most of us got to where we are today by getting up every morning and reporting to work and by saving a pretty penny here, a pretty penny there, until you find that you have enough to make a lot of pretty pennies to work for you. You should work hard for the dollar and then sit back and relax and let the dollar work hard for you. That's the way to live in America. I mean I really don't understand all this bitching that goes on in the newspapers every day. The Negro and the Puerto Ricans and now the Cubans and Vietnamese, we let them in this country to do something for themselves and they expect the country to feed them and clothe them and lead them by the hand until they can

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find some type of education, looking for a handout. They don't want to work.

DOMINICK: Do not ask what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.

JOE: Exactly. Hey that's pretty clever.

DOMINICK: John F. Kennedy said it in a speech.

JOE: He did, huh? . . . smart your man. I still think he was too young to run a country like this one. Not enough experience in high political office. There's a lot of sharpies up there. Dominick, you go to night school right, and you read the papers, what's your opinion?

GERRY: Not that it matters any.

JOE: Come on, be serious. Soon this man is going to be a citizen of this country and he should know that he can express his political, religious and social views, without fear of persecution.

DOMINICK: Well you know, Joe, I lived over there and I lived in many places that you call over there.

GERRY: (*Singing.*) Over there, over there. Tell 'em that the yanks are coming. The yanks are coming over there.

JOE: That's un-American, Gerry. If you make fun of those songs that inspired men to fight for freedom of the world, you might as well spit on the flag and curse the President.

GERRY: Damn, Joe, I was only kidding, you kid around, too.

JOE: Yeah, but when I do, it's different.

GERRY: What's so different about it?

JOE: Because when I do it, I do it as a showman. You're not a showman, a stand-up comic; I was.

GERRY: Like you was not like you are.

JOE: Let me tell you how it was when we got to Paris during the big one.

GERRY: We know how it was, Joe.

DOMINICK: I read about it in school.

JOE: Yeah, but reading about it is not the same as hearing about it. Them French girls, my God were they the horniest broads that I ever met in my life. They rip your pants off if they caught you in the streets or in a hotel room. Man, they were sure the horniest broads in my life. One thing I can say for the French is that their women sure taught me a mess of things about women.

GERRY: I have something to say about the French too. The French is a wonderful race polly boo.

JOE: Ahahaha . . . the French is a wonderful race polly boo.

JOE and GERRY: (*Singing together to DOMINICK.*)
 The French is a wonderful race polly boo . . .
 The French is a wonderful race polly boo . . .
 The French is a wonderful race
 they fight with their feet
 and fuck with their face.
 Hinky, dinky, pollyyy booo.

JOE: I haven't sang that since Paris, my, my, how time has slipped right on by.

GERRY: What was the other Polly Boo song that we used to sing. 545

JOE: Oh, right, let me see, the first marine bought the beans.

GERRY: Polly boo . . . come Dominick, just say polly boo, okay?

JOE: The second marine cooked the beans.

GERRY and DOMINICK: Polly boo.

JOE: The third marine ate the beans and shitted all over the submarine. 550

JOE and GERRY and DOMINICK: Hinky dinky, polly boooo.

JOE: Let's stop it, too much.

GERRY: Joe, you all right?

JOE: Yeah, I'm all right.

GERRY: Joe, why don't you go to Paris? 555

JOE: It would be nice, wouldn't it.

GERRY: It'll be great. You and me, the kids are all grown up and they, well, you know they . . .

JOE: They don't need us anymore.

GERRY: Sometimes I think I'm in their way. They were talking about putting me in an old age home. 560

JOE: So that's why you moved away?

GERRY: Yeah, that's why. (*Telephone rings.*)

JOE: This is the house of the Lord, Moses is speaking. Oh hello,
 Ruth . . . it's that Singerton broad again. Yeah, Dominick, you feel like making a delivery? 565

DOMINICK: Sure, why not. Do I get a tip?

JOE: Yeah, don't bet on the horses . . . ahahahaha.

GERRY: What you want me to cook up, Joe?

JOE: The regular thing. 570

GERRY: Four coffees, two light no sugar, one black, one regular, two danishes, one neopolitan, one eclair, one french cruller and we'll throw in one corn muffin.

DOMINICK: What is the address?

JOE: Here ya are and don't stay there all night googling at her ass. 575

GERRY and JOE: (*Singing.*)
 Barney Google with the goo goo googly eyes
 Barney Google with a wife three times his size
 She sued Barney for divorce
 Then she ran off with his horse
 Barney Google with the goo goo googly eyes. 580

GERRY: Take the umbrella, it's drizzling out there.

JOE: Hey, Dominick, don't get wet.

DOMINICK: Thanks.

JOE: So that's why you moved out, heh?

GERRY: Yeah, I didn't understand their insistence on them putting me in a prison away from all the love and care that I can give them. I know that they mean well, but that kind of well meaning I can do without. 585

I'm not a cripple, Joe, I drive my own car. I supported them until they were old enough to make it out here in the jungle by themselves. Like I did, I paved the road with education, the education that I was not lucky enough to get. Sure they would come and see me once or twice a week, maybe every day for a while and how long do you think that would last? Have you ever seen a home for the aged? It's a death life, all these living beings wrinkled and feeble and mumbling to themselves, holding on to the last postcard from other couples' children, imagining that they are their own grand kids. Decaying photographs of themselves inside handmade frames, that helped for awhile, too many homes, private ones, state owned, some of them real fancy names with chandeliers and candles burning. Others were brutal in themselves, home for the aged and the feeble. What can you do, when you reach the point of fear, of helplessness? A little money keeps you alive inside yourself. And then they want to take it all away from you, for your own good, for their own sense of privacy is more like it, Joe, for their sense of insanity that pushes them into being social workers rather than the children that you brought up and struggled and fought for all your life. If I didn't put them in an institution when they were young, why do they want to do it to me because I'm old? They rate me obsolete, that's what it is, Joe, they rate us obsolete. We hold no more useful function in their lives. I wonder what would happen if someday they come to that realization about all of us . . . When they figure that keeping us in a home is very expensive, would they just feed us into the gas chambers like Hitler did those poor miserable Jews? Would they all leave and give us a piece of earth to toil until we are dead? Maybe they will create dead end jobs that serve the same function that we do, none. You know when Lyndon Johnson retired to his ranch in Texas, I thought that he would be like the rest of the retired presidents of this nation and die along with the headlines in a garbage can. Then I saw a picture of him in the *Daily News* riding a horse and wearing his hair as long as the very people who protested his stay in office and his policies. What do you think he was telling the world, a retired President of the greatest nation on earth wearing his hair like that? It was almost like a sign of arrogance, of protest, against the talk that he was old and ready to die any moment. Joe, I haven't seen my children or my grandchildren since Martha and I moved out of the house to be on our own. They said that I was insane and . . . oh shit, I miss the hell out of them, Joe. I love my children like I never loved anything else in this world, and watching and helping to take care of their children was like reliving the past with them all over again. Me and Martha would take them out and spoil the hell out of them, but it was a good kind of spoiling, the good kind, and they used that to try to commit me. I miss them, Joe, and I know that I'll never see them again, because I, Joe, I have made that decision myself. Joe, sometimes I feel like . . . *(He begins*

to sing.) Sometimes I feel like a motherless child . . . *(NIGHTLIFE, a young man of twenty, enters.)*

59 NIGHTLIFE: Hi, my it's getting cold out there. Hardly no people on the streets . . . *(He pops a quarter in the jukebox.)* It's a good day for a mugging. *(Stevie Wonder's "Living for the City" comes up on the jukebox.)*

JOE: If that's your work I guess it is. What'll it be?

59 MAN: Give me a chocolate malted milk.

GERRY: *(Exiting to the kitchen.)* One chocolate malted, coming up. *(NIGHTLIFE begins to boogie to the music.)*

NIGHTLIFE: Is that chocolate cream pie?

JOE: Yep, fresh chocolate cream pie.

60 NIGHTLIFE: *(Still boogying.)* How much a slice?

JOE: Forty-five cents.

NIGHTLIFE: Let me get those two pieces.

645 JOE: Both of them?

NIGHTLIFE: Yeah, both of them, do you mind?

60 JOE: You're paying for them. You're eating them, so why should I mind? You want them now?

NIGHTLIFE: Yeah, now, thanks. *(NIGHTLIFE begins to stuff the pie into his mouth.)*

650 JOE: You like pie, huh?

NIGHTLIFE: Yeah, I like pies.

61 JOE: Good, huh?

NIGHTLIFE: Good. *(After a beat.)* You happen to know what time it is?

JOE: The clock is on the wall behind you.

655 NIGHTLIFE: Man, I didn't know it was so early. I works late, they call me Nightlife.

61 JOE: It's a name.

NIGHTLIFE: Can I read that paper until the malt is ready?

JOE: Sure, why not, here. *(As JOE folds up the paper, NIGHTLIFE boogies to the kitchen door and peers into the back.)*

62 JOE: You expecting someone else?

NIGHTLIFE: Why?

JOE: Just that you keep looking around to see if anyone is there.

NIGHTLIFE: Maybe I'm trying to make sure that *no one* is there.

JOE: Maybe.

665 NIGHTLIFE: How's this business, you make a good dollar?

62 JOE: We do all right.

GERRY: *(Entering from the kitchen.)* Here's your chocolate malt, sonny.

NIGHTLIFE: Nightlife is my name.

GERRY: *(Putting the malt on the counter in front of NIGHTLIFE.)* I call

670 people by their names if they are my friends or are about to be my friends.

63 NIGHTLIFE: Yeah, that's cool. *(He drinks the malt down in one long gulp.)* You make a nice malted milk.

GERRY: Thanks, I try.
 NIGHTLIFE: Don't we all.
 JOE: (*Slapping a check in front of NIGHTLIFE.*) That'll be a dollar sixty-five.
 NIGHTLIFE: I got eyes, I can see, thank you. (*The three of them stare at each other for a moment, then NIGHTLIFE takes out a cigarette, looks at JOE and GERRY with an exaggerated villainous smile. He gets up with one hand in his pocket and performs a whole silent movie bad guy routine of curling his mustache and giving the Richard Widmark crazy killer laugh. He then remains in total silence for a long moment, then yells out "BOO" slapping the counter with two dollars. JOE pulls out a large revolver and GERRY has a meat cleaver at the ready. NIGHTLIFE begins to laugh at them hysterically. JOE takes the money, gives NIGHTLIFE his change, refuses the tip. NIGHTLIFE leaves, laughing his way out the door. Two men, REYNOLDS and LOCKHART, enter the place along with JOE THE COP.*)
 JOE: Hey, Joe, what brings you around?
 GERRY: Hey Joe, what happened to the desk job?
 JOE THE COP: This is business, Gerry.
 JOE: Police business in our place?
 GERRY: I told you they'd catch up with you sooner or later, Dillinger.
 JOE THE COP: These two men are from the Government.
 REYNOLDS: Reynolds, Federal Bureau of Investigation.
 LOCKHART: Lockhart, Bureau of Immigration.
 REYNOLDS: Joseph Scott, you own the place?
 JOE: Yeah, that's right. We own the place. It's a legal business. There's nothing going on in this place that ain't legal. I'm an honest man.
 GERRY: Gerald Fisher is my name. I'm part owner here. What's the trouble?
 REYNOLDS: There's no trouble with either of you.
 LOCKHART: We're looking for a Mister Dominick Athemus Skorprios.
 JOE: Dominick? What's he done?
 LOCKHART: He's in the country illegally.
 GERRY: That's not true! He's an American citizen . . . by marriage.
 REYNOLDS: We know of his marriage to one Carmen de Jesus—also known as Iris Morales-Milagros Ramirez. She has a list of aliases that can go on for a couple of days and we don't have much time.
 JOE: Well, I don't know how many names she has, nor do I care if she is an American citizen by birth.
 JOE THE COP: Easy, Joe. Will ya hear them out first before you blow a fuse.
 GERRY: She is a Puerto Rican—she's a citizen by birth.
 JOE: Yeah, what ya mean! That Puerto Ricans aren't citizens of this country? They are one of the finest people to ever set foot in this God-given soil.
 REYNOLDS: Puerto Ricans are citizens, sir.
 LOCKHART: But not Mexicans, Mr. Scott.

JOE: Mexican?
 GERRY: Mexican? What ya mean? She's a Mex? . . . She showed us her birth certificate.
 LOCKHART: Phony. Most of her papers are phonies.
 REYNOLDS: Where's Mister Skorprios now? 715
 JOE: He's out making a delivery . . . He'll be back soon.
 REYNOLDS: Good, we'll wait.
 JOE THE COP: See, Joe, it's like this. This dame goes around posing as Puerto Rican so that she can hook fishes like Dominick into paying her to marry her so they can stay in the country through marriage. 720
 LOCKHART: We have her in custody now. Mister Skorprios may have to face other charges of conspiracy. So his chances to have stayed here are less even with the help you may offer in his behalf.
 REYNOLDS: Lockhart, call in.
 LOCKHART: Will do. 725
 GERRY: Oh, poor Dominick. (*Enter DOMINICK.*)
 DOMINICK: Hell, Joe, here's the money. She gave me no tip. She's cheap, ain't she?
 JOE: Isn't she. It's "isn't she." These two men are here to see you, Dom. They're from the government. They wanna talk to you about . . . hell, Gerry, you tell him. 730
 GERRY: They say you are here illegally and they . . . well, they . . .
 DOMINICK: Illegally? No that's not true anymore. I'm married to an American. I got married to an American. I'm not . . .
 JOE: That's just it. She's not an American. She's not a Puerto Rican. She's a wetback Mexican scab who slipped into the country and took all of us in . . . goddamn it, Dominick . . . goddamn her soul. 735
 DOMINICK: She not an American?
 LOCKHART: I'm afraid not, Mr. Skorprios.
 REYNOLDS: Let's go. We can talk about this downtown. 740
 DOMINICK: Wait please! I just want to live here to make a life here, like your fathers did. Like Joe says, I would, if I work hard enough at it. I want to make my life here, to make a decent living here in America. Can't I stay? Can't I stay please! Let me stay here in this place. I work hard, ask Joe . . . ask Gerry . . . I'm never late, never did I miss a day of work, always I work late and hard and very much. Never am I lazy. 745
 REYNOLDS: Let's go.
 DOMINICK: I do not ask for welfare or any kind of help from government . . . just to let me make a life here. I just want to be an American.
 JOE THE COP: I'm sorry, Dominick. 750
 JOE: It's not your fault, Joe. It's all our faults.
 REYNOLDS: Come along, Mr. Skorprios. Good night, gentlemen.
 LOCKHART: Good night, sorry, we're just doing out job . . . you understand.
 JOE: We understand . . . yeah, we understand. (*Exit REYNOLDS, LOCKHART and DOMINICK.*) 755
 GERRY: Poor Dominick. He didn't even get laid . . . (*Lights out.*)

ACT II

Same scene. Three hours later, it is the height of the hour JOE and GERRY are busy serving the customers. ZULMA enters during the scene and sips on a cup of chocolate. The scene as originally produced was improvised around the following set of characters: MAN ONE, MAN TWO, HOOKER ONE, HOOKER TWO, COWBOY. At the end of the scene, the HOOKERS exit with COWBOY. GERRY turns to JOE.

GERRY: (*Pointing to JUNKIE GIRL.*) Hey, Joe.

JOE: She's pulling a Mary Hartman—Mary Hartman.

GIRL: Hey, wow, Mary Hartman. I look like Mary Hartman?

JOE: No.

GERRY: What he's saying is you're pulling a Mary Hartman.

GIRL: How's that?

JOE: Drowning in a bowl of soup.

GIRL: This soup is cold. I don't want it.

JOE: You pay for it just the same.

GIRL: Hey, yeah, wow, like I got bread. (*Throws her money on the counter and stumbles out into the night. The SHOPPING BAG LADY sits on a stool mumbling to herself, hell, damn, fuck you, shit, bastard. Profanity is the only thing she says.*)

LADY: Mumble mumble Damn you mumble mumble. (*Waving her hands all the time, she takes the things from time to time and puts them inside her shopping bag. She exits during the song "Greasy Spoon Blues."*)

GERRY: Goddamn it, wouldn't you know it, Joe, that today would I turn out to be busier than usual? Just our luck to have Dominick picked up at the height of the hour.

JOE: Poor Dominick. He should have called in sick.

GERRY: Aw, they would have turned up tomorrow or the next day. When the Feds are after you, forget it. You can run, but you can't hide. That's the old saying about them. Dillinger found that out. So did Babyface Nelson and Ma Barker and a host of others that fled the F.B.I. You just can't win. It's like playing a game of stud poker and knowing that the deck is stacked against you, but you sit down to play anyway, that's the philosophy of the criminal mind. They go out and play against a stacked deck. It's a means of ending the beginning of yourself.

JOE: Well, you know what they say about destiny.

GERRY: No, I don't. What is it they say about destiny?

JOE: How should I know? I thought you knew. (*Telephone rings.*)

JOE: There's a midnight moon at the greasy spoon tonight. Oh . . . hi, Ruth. What can I do for you? . . . Who? Oh, Dominick . . . naw, he ain't here anymore. They took him away today . . . Who? The F.B.I., that's who . . . they found out he was a wanted killer . . . Yeah, they got wind of him from the C. I. A. They spotted him and turned him

over to the C. I. D., who turned him over to the B. C. I., who called Scotland Yard, who called Interpol, who called the F.B.I. and they came and took him away. . . . That's right. A born killer, they said. . . . Yep, about twenty people with a rusty ax handle . . . no motive. He did it for pleasure . . . what? . . . no . . . throughout the nation, yep, been underground for years. Sure we knew about it. Gerry thought he could rehabilitate him. . . . No, I'm not lying to you. . . . You wanna ask Gerry? . . . Sure, it's the truth. . . . Yep, twenty people . . . mostly late night working women. . . . Yep, late night working women. . . . Naw, no men . . . just women . . . in their late forties. Seems he had a kind of psycho thing about him, always when he delivered coffee to them. You sure are lucky . . . he's not going to be able to keep that date. Yeah, it's really a shame. . . . Take it easy. . . . No, there's no chance of him escaping. But if he does, you will be the first to know. . . . Yeah, he talked about you a lot. Yeah, I think you should go to bed. Yeah, that's not a bad idea. . . . Sure will. Good night. Pleasant dreams. . . . Bye. . . . Chiao . . . hang up already, will you! . . . Damn, that woman sure can be a pain in the lower back. . . . Boy, one of these days. One of these days . . .

GERRY: I'll bet she'll dream of Dominick tonight.

JOE: I bet she will.

GERRY: Twenty people with a rusty ax handle . . . that's a good one.

JOE: Mostly late night working women . . .

ZULMA: (*Stands up slowly.*) You guys had a killer working here . . . trying to rehabilitate a born killer. That guy Dominick was a killer? He sure didn't look like a killer. He didn't look like a killer. He didn't act like a killer. And he didn't talk like a killer. (*Pause.*) But then again, what does a killer look like or what does a killer say to someone when they first meet. Hi, I'm a killer.

JOE: Zelma, he was no killer. Believe me, I was joking with that woman.

ZULMA: The name is Zulma, not Zelma.

JOE: Zulma out here and Zelma at home.

ZULMA: It's Zulma out here and Zulma at home and Zulma on stage and Zulma in here.

JOE: Zulma. Zelma. Zulma. Zelma. Zulma. Zulma. What's in a name?

ZULMA: Plenty.

GERRY: So how's business?

ZULMA: Do you know what? This morning I went to five auditions.

GERRY: Count them. Five. Since this morning I've been pounding the concrete, making the rounds and all I got is the same "don't call us, we'll call you" routine.

ZULMA: Oh, how I know them words so well.

GERRY: Oh, I bet you know the routine.

ZULMA: But with a name like Zulma Samson, well you know, what you can expect?

ZULMA: It has nothing to do with the name, Gerry. It's the age . . . the age. It's the age. *(She begins to weep.)*

JOE: Hey! Hey, look, don't do that. Come on now, pull yourself together. Come on, Zulma, not in here. What if someone comes in? Look, stop crying, will ya? . . . please stop crying.

ZULMA: It's the age. It's the age. I'm a has-been . . . a has-been that never was. I was once so beautiful, to look at me you wouldn't think so, but I was. I was once so beautiful . . . what's happened to me . . . ?

JOE: You're still beautiful. You still got a lot of spunk left in you. Stop crying.

ZULMA: Oh, stop it. I know the truth. I know the truth, that's why I'm crying, 'cause I know the truth . . . I realize the truth. I can't hide from the mirror anymore. My time is over. My time is over and I never even got to look at the clock of success. . . . I'm passed the hour of life. . . . I can face the truth now . . . I can face all the wrinkles without all the make-up. I can face it now . . . I know that I'm all washed up . . . but what am I going to do? . . . What am I going to do . . . ? I know nothing else but show business . . . it's all I know since I was a child. And I am not going to end up in no old actors home to tell stories of glorious events that never took place . . . lay by the window all the time watching the sunrise . . . hoping that each ray of light will bring in a letter from Dino de Laurentis or a script hand-delivered from Joseph Papp saying that he needs me to play the lead in a new production at Lincoln Center . . . no . . . no . . . no actors home for me. . . . I was born on stage . . . well, not exactly on stage it was a traveling show in a tent. I was on stage when the final labor pain struck my mother . . . no, I know nothing else, and I never wanted to know anything else but what I know . . . and it's been grand and I want to remember it as being grand and I always, since the moment I was able to fend for myself . . . I've took care of myself and now I've reached the ebb of my tide . . .

GERRY: "The ebb of my tide" . . . Zulma, you're really a ham.

ZULMA: Of the finest caliber.

JOE: So, now that you say you know what you think is the truth of your final years on the good earth, what do you plan on doing with them?

GERRY: How do you plan to support yourself?

ZULMA: I'll get me a steady job.

JOE: You have any place in mind?

ZULMA: Sure.

JOE: Where?

ZULMA: Here.

GERRY: Where?

ZULMA: Here.

JOE: Here!

ZULMA: Here.

GERRY: Did she say here?

ZULMA: What are you guys . . . a comedy team? 125

GERRY: She did say here.

ZULMA: I thought I was clear about that.

JOE: I know you sounded clear and I know that you think you sounded clear, but I wanted to make sure that you sounded clear about being clear about working here . . . I mean, I don't want to sound as if I and Gerry were a large firm, but we feel somehow that since we are going to have to pay wages to whoever spends hours here . . .

ZULMA: What's the problem? I mean, look, you like me and I like you. . . . You do like me???

JOE: Sure. 135

GERRY: No one said that they didn't like you, at least I didn't.

JOE: I didn't say it either.

ZULMA: Okay, then what's the problem? You like me, I like you, we can have a beautiful working relationship. And it's close to Broadway, you know what I mean. 140

JOE: I know what you mean, more than you think.

GERRY: Well, it's okay with me if it's okay with Joe.

JOE: Well, if it's okay with you, then it's okay with me.

GERRY: When can you start?

ZULMA: Nothing like the present for doing what you have to do, right fellas?! 145

GERRY: Right!

JOE: Go in the back and put on something that'll keep the grease off your clothes.

ZULMA: Oh, by the way. I look ridiculous in a mini-skirt, so I hope you don't require that your female workers wear one. 150

JOE: I wouldn't dream of asking you to wear one.

ZULMA: Look at that. Not even in your dreams can you see me in a mini-skirt. Boy, I must look worse than I thought.

JOE: I didn't mean it that way. 155

ZULMA: No! In what way then?

JOE: Just go get somethin' on, will ya? *(ZULMA exits to the kitchen.)*

GERRY: She's okay, you know . . . a regular guy.

JOE: Yeah, she's all right. I'm glad that she's getting a little more sense into her head nowadays. You know, I think we're going to have a nice night tomorrow. 160

GERRY: Yeah, I think so too . . . though, I still feel sorry for poor old Dominick.

JOE: Yeah, I think I'm going to miss him too.

GERRY: He would have made a great American citizen. 165

JOE: Just like you, huh?

GERRY: Yeah, just like me . . . What?!! You think that I'm not a great American citizen?

JOE: No, I don't think you're a great American citizen.

GERRY: You don't? 170

JOE: No, I don't think you're a great American citizen.
 GERRY: You're kidding.
 JOE: No, I'm serious.
 GERRY: What you think, I'm some kinda pinko fag commie or something?
 JOE: No, I don't think you're some kinda pinko fag commie or something.
 GERRY: Then what do you mean by saying that I'm not a great American citizen?
 JOE: Gerry, I think you're a good American citizen. I think you're a patriotic American citizen. I think you're a loyal American citizen. But I don't think you're a great American citizen. Greatness is reserved for those who do not make their living being a short order cook.
 GERRY: Greatness is not reserved, Joe. Greatness is there for all who wish to claim it. I for one never had the passion to grab it and the responsibilities that go along with it. I am a simple man . . . a humble man . . . a man of wisdom, of worldly knowledge . . . of compassion . . . (Enter a YOUNG MUSICIAN and his GIRLFRIEND.)
 GIRL: You tell 'em.
 BOY: You tell 'em.
 GIRL: Why did you tell me you was going to tell 'em if you ain't going to tell 'em?
 BOY: I said I *might* tell 'em today.
 GIRL: Well, tomorrow is the gig and we promised to tell 'em if we got the job. Right! So tell 'em!
 BOY: Yeah, if . . .
 GIRL: No ifs, ands or buts about it . . . Joe . . .
 JOE: Yeah.
 GIRL: Can we see you for a sec?
 JOE: Hey, Gerry, you wanna handle the old lady. I want to talk with the kids.
 GERRY: No skin off my nose . . .
 JOE: Hey, kids, how's the business treating you?
 BOY: Well, I think we got a gig.
 JOE: No kidding.
 GIRL: Well, it's not much of a gig . . .
 BOY: It's in the West Village.
 GIRL: But it's a start.
 JOE: A start, no matter how big or small, it's a start. What'a ya wanna eat?
 BOY: Boy, I'm too excited to talk or sleep *or eat*.
 GIRL: I never thought we could make it here in the concrete cold, metal monster, but it looks like it might happen.
 JOE: Yeah, no time at all you might be another Sonny and weird.
 GIRL: You mean Cher.
 JOE: That's just what I said, weird.

GIRL: I hope it happens soon. Our phone has been disconnected, the rent is due and we owe you almost twenty dollars.
 BOY: We wanted you to know that we are singing at this place 'cause they're putting up posters announcing our appearance and we didn't want you to think that we are making money and eating for free. 220
 JOE: Yeah, but you're playing for free.
 GIRL: We wrote . . . well, he wrote a song for you and the place.
 BOY: Yeah, we wanna dedicate this song to you and Gerry.
 GERRY: For us?
 BOY: Hunh, yeah. 225
 GIRL: You've been so wonderful, we needed encouragement and you gave it.
 GERRY: Hey, what time is the performance? Maybe we can make it.
 JOE: You know those things happen at night.
 BOY: Yeah, too bad 'cause we would really dig it if you showed up at the joint. 230
 GIRL: Well, we better be going if we are going to be wide awake for the gig.
 JOE: Not until we hear our song.
 GERRY: Right, since you can't pay us the money you owe, ya gotta play Tommy Tucker and sing for your supper. 235
 GIRL: You want me to sing?
 BOY: You got the voice.
 GIRL: Well, I don't know . . .
 JOE: What's there to know? Look at it this way, it's a rehearsal before the performance tomorrow. 240
 GIRL: All right.
 BOY: Are you ready, Cher?
 GIRL: Yes, Sonny.
 LADY: Fuck you, mumble, mumble . . . 245
 GERRY: (To SHOPPING BAG LADY.) Please sweetie.
 JOE: Forget about her, she isn't listening or talking to anyone here but herself. Go ahead, kids. (The song, "Greasy Spoon Blues". Words and music by Charles Coker. During the song the SHOPPING BAG LADY exits, mumbling profanities to whomever is listening.)
 GIRL: Bye, Joe.
 JOE: Bye, kids. Break a leg tomorrow. (JAKE enters.) 250
 GERRY: Yeah, break a leg.
 JAKE: Hey, nigger, what's happening?
 JOE: Jake, why do you always call me a nigger?
 JAKE: Because you are.
 GERRY: Hi, Jake, how's the parlor business coming along? 255
 JAKE: Great, can't do better if I try. I just got me two new girls.
 GERRY: Black?
 JAKE: Two tall Swedish blondes that are looking sweeter than a piece of watermelon on a hot sticky day in the city.

JOE: Two blondes, huh?
 JAKE: Two blondes.
 GERRY: Two tall blondes?
 JAKE: Yep, two tall blondes.
 JOE: Blondes, huh?
 JAKE: Two tall big-tit blondes that are for real. I mean it ain't dye either. That yellow goldness is for real . . . it's natural . . . I know cause they got that yellow hair everywhere else too.
 GERRY: Natural blondes, huh?!
 JAKE: Natural blondes.
 JOE: They got yellow hair everywhere else?
 JAKE: All over!
 GERRY: All over?
 JAKE: Boy, I wish I had a tape recorder with me.
 GERRY: A tape recorder, what in heavens name for?
 JAKE: To get this all down for posterity. You guys sound like a couple of typical out of town businessmen in a cathouse.
 JOE: Well, we are a couple of businessmen, not from out of town, but businessmen nevertheless. You know, Jake, we weren't exactly raised with the same disadvantages that you had to endure.
 JAKE: What disadvantages are you talking about?
 GERRY: Yeah, cause I would also like to know.
 JOE: You know what I mean . . . this whole production number that you had to undergo since the curtain rose on your act . . . not having the same education that I and Gerry were fortunate enough to have, even though I never really finished high school, only because of the fact that I was the oldest of the family, and when my father died in the war I had to go out into the wide rushings of making a daily living for the rest of the kids, not that I'm complaining, you know, I mean, I loved doing what I did . . . show biz is my cup of tea, every penny that I earned from hoofing it up, wherever the show boat stopped, went back home . . . and . . .
 GERRY: I thought you were an orphan, Joe.
 JOE: There you go again, Gerry, everytime that I have this nigger by the balls, hanging onto every word, there you go again breaking up the story.
 JAKE: Joe . . . fifteen years . . .
 JOE: Yeah, it's been fifteen years. Well, what about it?
 JAKE: Do you think that I was really going for that cock 'n' bull yarn you were spinning?
 JOE: I'm sure that if this klondike over here hadn't of interrupted, you would've been standing there with your tongue hanging out, hanging, yeah . . . yeah . . . and what happened next, Joe . . . ?
 JAKE: Joe, come on off it.
 JOE: Jake, I made my living spinning yarns to suckers like you.
 JAKE: What kind of a car you drive, Joe?

JOE: You know what kind of a car I drive.
 GERRY: Yeah, you gave it to him last Christmas.
 JAKE: That's not what I'm saying, Gerry.
 JOE: Well, if you are going to flaunt that present in my face and in front of strangers . . . 310
 GERRY: Strangers? Who's a stranger here?
 JOE: Gerry, why don't you go in the back and do something?
 JAKE: Yeah, Gerry, why don't you go take some meat in the back.
 GERRY: Why don't both of you get yourselves a nice job in a balloon factory blowing . . . ? 315
 JAKE: As you were saying, Joe.
 JOE: If you are going to flaunt that present in my face in front of strangers, then I suggest that you get me a Cadillac instead of that cheap second-hand station wagon that I drive from Honest Harry.
 JAKE: Joe, I drive a Cadillac on Tuesdays and Thursdays. On Fridays and Sundays, while I relax in my country home, I fool around with my Porsche and sometimes I even get a big kick by returning to this God-forsaken city in my Honda. So you see, Joe, all that bull about my disadvantaged childhood is just a lot of hot air blowing out your mouth. Actually, it's a substitute for the bottom part of your body. (GERRY laughs.) 325
 JOE: It ain't that funny, Gerry.
 GERRY: You're big, Joe. The truth isn't always funny, but with you it's a riot.
 JOE: Careful how you use that word around Jake, 'cause you know what they say . . . you can take the nigger out of the country but . . . 330
 JAKE: You can't take the country out of the nigger and you know where that comes from, Joe.
 JOE: Sure, from where all sayings come from . . . wise thinking of a man of wisdom.
 JAKE: No. Not from any great man of wisdom, but from a truth that all niggers know about this country. 335
 GERRY: What truth, Jake?
 JOE: Don't fall for it, Gerry, he's pulling the same routine I pulled on him.
 GERRY: It's not a routine, Joe, it's the real thing. Here we are reaching the heights of our existing on this planet . . . two hundred years old . . . we've just celebrated the birth of a freedom revolution that ceased being a revolution for freedom twenty-four hours after its conception. . . . As the years rolled by and the mentality of this country remained stagnant, the niggers in this country became angrier and angrier as they paid in blood in countless wars that cried out the words of liberty, justice and equality. We found ourselves being booed over and over again, no matter how many times we fought and died and bled in other lands for the sake of free enterprise and yet couldn't share in the profits . . . a free nation, a free people dedicated to the thought that 350

all men are created equal up to the color of their skin, up to the pattern of your speech. Freedom became a whore, just like my ladies are. They're whores, but they're whores that admit they're whores and when the time comes that they know it doesn't benefit them to be whores any longer they change with the times and became respectable, quote unquote, "working women" with a family to raise. . . . Here . . . here we have a whore calling herself liberty-justice-and-equality. Oh, yeah, she's a whore, I can see by the look in your face, Joe, that you don't like what I am saying, but I am a spade who likes calling it as it plays, liberty is a whore, justice is a whore and equality is a faggot. How does that grab you? . . . She is a whore who spreads her legs to the highest bidder. Justice is blind to everyone but to those that spread over her eyelids the greed mercurochrome that heals all wounds. She sees, and liberty is once again that night your sleeping companion . . . the great average typical all-American dollar, that is the miracle worker, that is the real equalizer. If your pockets are hungry, so is your stomach and so is your soul. All that to say what we were saying: "You can take the niggers out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the nigger." All the niggers, white as well as black, the niggers who feel that they have a right to everything that this country has to offer them, the white niggers who built the railroads from the East, the yellow niggers who built the railroad from the West, the black niggers who built this land from all over, the rest of the niggers that died and crippled their lives so that all of us niggers can be a part of this great concept called America, land of the free. Death remembers the songs of false democracy. You understand what I am saying . . . it's like this . . . I remember after that prison rebellion in Attica . . . a politician said when Americans prefer to die than to live one more day in this country, it's time we start examining ourselves. I don't know if those were his exact words, but they had an effect on me. Joe, I did just that. I started to examine what my responsibilities were as a citizen of the greatest nation on the face of the earth. Am I or am I not . . . if I am, then it's time that I behave like one . . . how do you see yourself? . . .

JOE: I hope to see that I fulfill myself here everyday that the sun shines.

GERRY: So do I.

JOE: What brought this all about in you today, Jake?

JAKE: I don't know. Maybe it's reading that an eleven-year-old child O.D.'d in Harlem while an eleven-year-old in Scarsdale won the spelling bee for his district. Maybe it's age . . . maybe it's after knowing you fifteen years . . . you reacted pretty strange to the fact that I hired two white blonde girls to work in the parlor.

JOE: Wait a second . . . you didn't take me seriously, did you?

JAKE: Maybe I did without realizing it, maybe I did.

JOE: Well, you shouldn't, 'cause you know that I don't give a damn about who works for you or what their title of work is, as long as they respect me and what's mine.

GERRY: Yeah, you should know Joe better by now . . . fifteen years, damn if you don't.

JAKE: Yeah, and he even had dinner with me once in his home, his very own home, though he never came to my house to eat. 400

JOE: You know it could be because you never invited me, ever thought of that?

JAKE: Hell, that's right, I never did, did I?

JOE: No, you never did. 405

JAKE: And you know what, I never will.

JOE: The hell with you, you nigger.

GERRY: Things are back to normal.

JAKE: They always were.

JOE: That's great to hear. 410

GERRY: Two big-tit blondes, huh?

JAKE: Yep, two real big-tit blondes.

JOE: Yellow everywhere, huh?

JAKE: Yep, everywhere.

JOE: And they let you see it, huh? 415

JAKE: Well, if they didn't, they wouldn't be working for me, Joe.

JOE: Well, have they got any sense of shame?

JAKE: Why? 'Cause they are working in a massage parlor that's a front for a you-know-what or because they let a big black ugly nigger like me see their private parts, heh? 420

JOE: As for the first part of your question, if they want that kind of work, that's their business, not mine. To each his own, right Gerry?

JAKE: Don't ask Gerry, because he's been up there.

JOE: You have?

GERRY: Yeah, well . . . sure, but just out of curiosity. 425

JAKE: Out of what?

JOE: He said out of curiosity.

JAKE: I heard what he said, it's just that I couldn't believe that I heard what he said.

JOE: Repeat what you said for the gentleman, Gerry. 430

JAKE: He don't have to because you don't believe him and you know that I know you don't believe him.

GERRY: Hey, the *News* is here.

JOE: I'll get it.

JAKE: That's okay, Joe, relax, I'll bring them in for you. 435

JOE: (*Handing JAKE a check.*) Here, Jake, give the driver this check for me.

JAKE: Sure . . . (*JAKE exits.*)

JOE: How come you didn't tell me you were up at Jake's place?

GERRY: Well, Joe, you see, I was passing by one late afternoon, not having anything to do and well, you know, knowing Jake all these years and not ever being up to his place of business, well, I figure . . . 440

JOE: I know . . . I know . . . since he's such a good and steady customer, you wanted . . .

GERRY: Exactly . . .

JOE: One hand washes the other.

GERRY: Just what I was thinking on that very day.

JOE: I bet.

GERRY: Well, you know Joe, there's still a lot of something in this old man.

JOE: How was the merchandise? (*JAKE enters.*)

JAKE: Here you are, Joe . . . let me take out five of these for my girls. They get bored after a while, you know, they need things, to read. I always believe that they should keep abreast of what's going on in the world . . . they need to have more to say to the customers.

GERRY: The merchandise is excellent, not like the rest of the trash out there.

JOE: Maybe I'll take a look-see.

JAKE: You should. That's always advisable at your age . . . see what you can handle before you get involved.

JOE: I don't remember asking for your advice, Mister Jake Andrews.

JAKE: Well, normally, Jake Andrews Esquire requires a small fee for advice, but since we're such bosom buddies, I thought I'd give it to you free of charge, but don't make it a habit.

JOE: That's the mistake of your career, Jake, you think . . . (*ZULMA enters from the kitchen in her waitress outfit. She has removed her wig and cleaned the make-up off her face.*)

ZULMA: How's this, fellas?

JOE: Get back into the kitchen, there's talk going on in here that a woman shouldn't hear . . .

ZULMA: Oh, you got to be kidding. Hey, hi, Jake, how's the girls?

JAKE: Zulu baby . . . what're you doing in that get-up?

JOE: Zulu baby?

GERRY: Zulu baby?

ZULMA: There they go again.

JAKE: There who goes again?

ZULMA: The gold dust twins.

JOE: Zulu baby?

ZULMA: Yeah, Zulu! It's a nickname. Don't you guys have nicknames? . . . You know, like when you're a kid growing up and you get a name tagged on . . . Sinky . . . Tubby . . .

JAKE: These guys were born standing up.

JOE: But Zulu!

JAKE: And what's wrong with Zulu?

ZULMA: Yeah, what is wrong with Zulu? I like it, as a matter of fact.

GERRY: To each his own.

ZULMA: And what do you have?

JAKE: These guys haven't got nothing, but the lard in the frying pan to talk to.

JOE: At least if the lard is hot it tells you.

JAKE: It does, does it? . . . you talk to the lard? . . . little spoonfuls or big globs of it? 490

JOE: Oh, oh, oh very funny . . . very funny!!

GERRY: Five thousand comics out of work and he wants to be a comedian.

JAKE: I didn't think it was funny. I was asking a very serious question.

ZULMA: Yeah, he wasn't the one who said that he talks to the lard in the frying pan. 495

GERRY: You two should appear on stage at the Palace.

JOE: You two are really funny. I'll bet you'll be a regular hit with the drunks.

JAKE: I don't think we're funny. If I did, I would have tried the stage like you did. 500

JOE: Yeah, well I think that I am going . . .

JAKE: I saw you play the Lyric once when I was young.

JOE: You did? . . . you saw me on stage? . . .

JAKE: Sure did. 505

JOE: Really!

GERRY: Joe, he's trying to . . .

JOE: Be quiet, Gerry . . . can't you see the man is saying something important.

GERRY: Joe, he's only trying . . . 510

JAKE: No really, I did see him play on stage.

GERRY: Come on, you really expect me to believe that?

JAKE: He used to do a comic routine and then your partner would come on and do a soft shoe, right?

JOE: The Lyric . . . that was one of my favorite places. 515

JAKE: Am I right? You were billed as Jack and Jill.

JOE: That's right . . . gee, you remember . . . after all these years too.

JAKE: Oh, why wouldn't I remember. You were terrific.

JOE: Well, we was good.

JAKE: Good . . . you were great . . . everyone would just sit there after the movie and wait for you two to come on with the real show. 520

JOE: The real show?

JAKE: Yeah man, the real show.

GERRY: You really saw him play at the Lyric?

JAKE: Sure, just before the war, I think. You know it's been a long time. 525

JOE: You know, when I was a kid I was brought up in an orphanage.

GERRY: No, I didn't know that.

JOE: My parents were killed in an automobile accident at the age of three.

GERRY: Gee, I bet that was tough on you. 530

JOE: No, not really, being so young I really didn't feel the loss that great.

JAKE: I lost my folks too, at an early age . . . didn't go to no orphanage, though, my grandmother raised me . . . and with an iron hand and the cord.

JOE: The cord I remember only too well, the hurt it can inflict on a young child.

JAKE: Especially if it's in the hands of strangers.

JOE: Especially in the hands of strangers.

GERRY: You two got a lot in common. *(Telephone rings.)*

ZULMA: I'll get it . . . Joe's Diner . . . sorry, no deliveries tonight . . . can't be helped . . . sorry . . . tomorrow . . . bye . . . you were saying Joe?

JOE: I was in the place a few years, couldn't get adopted . . . every Sunday in summer they would have an invited performer come to entertain the kids. Once these two black men came in and they were really funny, they made me forget all the heartaches that flowed inside my soul . . . I was never a cute kid, so no one would even take me home for the weekends . . . they came on stage and told some really funny stories and they did a song and dance number . . . I looked around me and saw all those smiling faces and I began to sing out loud with the two men on stage. They called me with them and I joined them in the song . . . not the dancing, though. I never seen anyone dance like those two guys did. Boy, they could really move . . . later that week they came back and visited with me. I was surprised, to say the least, when the administrator let them come in for the month they played in town and teach me their routine . . . that Fourth of July I went on stage with them and let me tell you, I was the happiest kid in the place . . . soon they left and I never saw them again . . . but I kept on practicing how to dance and tried different jokes and stories at night on the other kids. Soon, I never wanted to be anything else but an entertainer . . . but life being what it is, I found myself drifting as a short order cook . . . not that there's anything wrong with being a short order cook, especially being part owner . . . I always dreamt that I would . . . well, so many dreams . . . never growing old . . . ahead of death by two yards . . . yet . . . here I am . . . I can't even remember the routine that I used to do, I . . . I, well . . . life sometimes leaves no room for a celebration . . . your greatest moments become objects of torment . . . but I guess I should thank the Lord for each dream, even if the dream never came true, at least I had the opportunity to have dreams . . . you reach a certain time in life . . . you find yourself wandering about in countless acres of flowers and one day it dawns on you . . . butterflies . . . thousands and thousands of butterflies . . . butterflies . . . and no more flowers are growing . . . *(ZULMA begins to sing "Moonlight Bay." JOE joins in. They do a vaudeville soft-shoe routine. JAKE and GERRY hum along.)*

JAKE: A bit rusty . . .

JOE: Go screw yourself . . .

GERRY: What'll it be, Jake?

ZULMA: I'll make it . . . you'll be my first customer.

JAKE: Great . . . two coffees regular and a bacon and egg sandwich to go.

ZULMA: Two coffees and a B&E to travel, coming right up.

GERRY: Got it? 580

ZULMA: *(Exiting to kitchen.)* Got it.

JAKE: Then get it, already.

JOE: Hold your horses.

JAKE: Hey, what happened to Dominick? . . . that funny Greek guy you had working here? 585

JOE: He got picked up by the Feds.

JAKE: When?

GERRY: Earlier this evening.

JAKE: No shh . . . really, what for?

JOE: Naw, I'm not going to tell you. 590

JAKE: Hey, come on . . . all right, don't tell me . . . come on, tell me, what for?

JOE: Seems Dominick was a top syndicate hit man. He was posing as a jerk to get closer to a certain pseudo-hip black, would-be king of the pimps. 595

GERRY: You know, Jake, you're the only man I know whose head is as pointed as his shoes.

JAKE: Okay. Enough! Hey, baby, don't burn the bacon. *(Goes to jukebox.)*

JOE: Hey, you know my cousin Rufus . . . the one in the hospital?

GERRY: Can't say I do. 600

JAKE: No, seriously speaking.

JOE: Still can't say that I do.

GERRY: Never mentioned him to me either . . . Rufus . . . Rufus . . . with a name like that I would have remembered him if you had said anything about him. 605

JAKE: Sure I did . . . well, anyway, he was in the hospital for an operation . . . I forgot what was wrong with him . . . but, anyway . . . the doctors gave him an operation all right, they cut off both of his legs and there was nothing wrong with his legs. They made a mistake on the chart. Anyway, that's what they are saying . . . they cut both of his legs right above the knees, so he can't even walk. 610

GERRY: He's going to sue, right?

JOE: Of course, he's going to sue, he's got an open-and-shut case.

JAKE: Well, that's what we all thought until last week when we went to court and the jury didn't vote in his favor. 615

JOE: They didn't what?

GERRY: What do you mean, they didn't vote in his favor! They cut off both of the poor slob's legs and they found him . . .

JAKE: Yeah, I know the way you feel, but the court was right.

JOE: The court was right, what kind of crap is that? 620

GERRY: Yeah, what kind of crap is that? He should have sued their asses off.

JAKE: Well, he lost the case because of one thing, only one little fault.

JOE: One little fault! The man doesn't have his legs anymore and you call that a little fault. 625

JAKE: That's why he lost the case.

GERRY: Why?
 JAKE: Well, you see, he didn't have a leg to stand on.
 ZULMA: (*From kitchen window.*) You two fell for the old hokey dokey.
 GERRY: He was pulling our leg all the time.
 JAKE: Just like the doctor's pulled old Rufus' legs off. He didn't have a leg to stand on.
 JOE: (*To Zulma.*) Get back to the stove.
 ZULMA: What's the matter, you can't stand being taken for a ride.
 (*ZULMA exits to the kitchen.*)
 JOE: You know that's one of my old routines.
 JAKE: Sure, it is. I was surprised you didn't catch on sooner.
 JOE: He didn't have a leg to stand on.
 GERRY: You wanna hear a new Polish joke?
 JAKE: Naw.
 JOE: Have you got any nice nigger jokes?
 JAKE: A Jewish joke.
 ZULMA: (*Entering from kitchen.*) Here's your things, Jake.
 JAKE: Thanks baby . . . you know I'm going to come here even more than before. I only come here as a last resort, like when everything else is closed. That's why he's open so late, if it closed any earlier one would come in here to . . .
 JOE: Can it, Jake, can it.
 JAKE: Give me a couple'a them donuts.
 ZULMA: What kind, we got, jelly . . . chocolate and . . .
 JAKE: Two jelly.
 JOE: Jake, for you they're seventy-five cents apiece.
 JAKE: Seventy-five cents apiece, are you for real?
 JOE: Yes and so are the jelly donuts too.
 ZULMA: Can't you see it in his baby-brown eyes that he is?
 JAKE: Seventy-five cents apiece! That's highway robbery!
 JOE: Seventy-five cents, take it or leave it.
 JAKE: You got any matches, Joe?
 JOE: It's a penny a book.
 JAKE: (*Tossing a penny on the counter.*) Here, don't spend it all in one place.
 JOE: Thank you . . . and I won't . . . pennies make dollars.
 JAKE: So I've heard. (*ZULMA exits to pay phone.*)
 GERRY: The phone is customers only, Zulma . . . no out calls except on your break and then we would appreciate it if you'd go out and make it on the corner.
 ZULMA: What! No calls?
 JOE: That's our policy . . . no calls except emergency. (*ZULMA exits to the street.*) You got what you wanted, now what else can we serve you?
 JAKE: That's what I like about this place, the hospitality that one receives. Makes your eyes want to water with tears . . . just like . . . you know what this place makes me remember . . . the night that I was invited

to a great outdoors party by the Ku Klux Klan and I was going to be the guest of honor . . . I always felt guilty that I didn't make that shindig, but you know a man of my importance just can't make every party he's invited to . . .
 JOE: I bet they were put off by your absence. 675
 JAKE: Shit, I know they were.
 GERRY: Why don't you two cut it out for a little while?
 JOE: Cut what out?
 JAKE: Cut what out?
 GERRY: The bullshit. (*ZULMA enters.*) 680
 ZULMA: My sister doesn't answer the phone . . . I get a little worried.
 JOE: You wanna go over and see if she needs anything?
 ZULMA: Naw . . . you know it's cold out there tonight . . . I couldn't believe it, a two-car accident happened as I walked from here to the phone on the corner. What a place this town is . . . someday, I think I'll leave this town for good, never come back. 685
 GERRY: How many times in your life have you said that?
 ZULMA: Since I first got off the train in 1954 . . . I wanted to go right back, but I didn't, I stuck it out to reach the pedestals of failure. I never set out to be a giant in the theatre world or in any world, for that matter, I just wanted to be a part of wherever I was, to be noticed, to be recognized for what I brought to the atmosphere. I never asked anyone to give me anything for my talent or for any type of work that I put out there from my soul. 690
 JOE: Do we have to go through your life history again?
 JAKE: I kinda like listening to life histories. 695
 GERRY: So do I, but once is enough for me.
 JOE: You can say that again.
 GERRY: So do I, but once is enough for me.
 JOE: Really, Gerry, you're getting cornier by the day. 700
 GERRY: It's the sun, Joe . . . the sun ripens me up.
 JOE: It does something to you, all right.
 JOE: The sun did something to me too.
 GERRY: No shit, Sherlock.
 JOE: Hey, Zulma, you wanna fix some fresh coffee? 705
 ZULMA: Okay, Joe.
 JOE: Well, I think it's time that I be leaving or else the girls are going to think that the earth swallowed me up.
 JOE: Okay! Jake, take care of yourself and give the girls a hello for me.
 GERRY: For me, too. 710
 JOE: I knew you'd say that, Gerry.
 ZULMA: Oh! So you guys know Jake's girls.
 JOE: I don't know them personally, at least I mean, I don't know them, but there's someone else here that does!
 ZULMA: Who is that? 715

JOE: (*Imitating various movie villains.*) What you take me for, a squealer . . . a fink . . . a rat . . . a stool pidgeon, I won't talk, that's not my cup of tea . . . I won't talk, but if you took at the person I'll whistle Dixie.

JAKE: Yeah, you'll whistle Dixie all right when you drop in the parlor and see those two blondes.

JOE: Not me!

JAKE: Yep, you and Gerry. Joe, you're no different than any other man who lives alone and needs the companionship that a woman can give. They feel good and you'll feel good and I feel good . . . when people feel good I make money and that makes me feel extra good. You see in a way, it's like a therapy program and I'm Doctor Feelgood . . . I can probably pick up a master's degree on feelgood sometime in some college . . . what do you think, Joe, is there a course in college that trains men and women in my profession, making people feel good, making lonely men who can't seem to find the right kind of talk for a woman feel good, old men who can't make the grade anymore, give them a chance to feel like a man again?

JOE: I know you fifteen years, right?

JAKE: Yeah, fifteen miserable years. Hey, that's a real long time . . .

GERRY: (*Opening the cash register.*) Any more quarters in the box, Joe?

JOE: Naw, you're going to have to go to the bank later on today.

GERRY: Okay, will do.

JOE: Fifteen years, right?

JAKE: Right.

JOE: For fifteen years, just like tonight, you come in here and called me a nigger and you know something, Jake, I don't like it. I don't like it one bit. I don't like being called a nigger by you or any other nigger. Get that straight.

JAKE: I've been called a nigger all my life.

JOE: Well, Jake, I can't help it if you are one. (*GERRY breaks into a roar of laughter. ZULMA joins in on the joke. JOE begins to laugh too. JAKE starts to laugh. JOE begins to shake, to choke. He lets out a stifled yelp. He falls to the floor.*)

JAKE: Hey man, come on, don't joke like that man, come on man, be cool.

GERRY: Joe, Joe, come on Joe. He's right, don't joke like this.

ZULMA: Joe . . . Joe.

JAKE: Zulu, call the police . . . call an ambulance, hurry . . .

ZULMA: (*At phone.*) Right . . . Right . . . hello, operator . . . damn it to hell . . .

JAKE: Quick, go out and get a cop.

ZULMA: I'll go. Hold on, Joe, I'll be right back. (*ZULMA exits.*)

GERRY: Oh, Joe, please don't do this, Joe, don't you go and die on me. Joe . . .

JAKE: Joe, Joe, hang in there baby, hang in there, you can beat it.

JOE: Gerry . . . Gerry . . . Gerry!!

GERRY: I'm right here, Joe. I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere. I'm right by your side. 760

JOE: Oh, Gerry, I thought I would be different.

GERRY: Save your energy, Joe. Don't talk . . .

JOE: Where's that nigger!

JAKE: Joe, baby, be cool man, Gerry's right, save your energy. 765

JOE: Two big-tit natural blondes, hey?

JAKE: Forget about that, Joe, save your energy man, be cool.

JOE: Two big-tit natural blondes, I bet that's something to see.

JAKE: You'll see them, Joe, you'll see them. I'll bring them around for you. 770

JOE: Don't look like that, Gerry . . . leave. Gerry . . . go away.

GERRY: What are you talking about, Joe, I'm staying right here with you.

JOE: No . . . no . . . leave, Gerry 'cause I'm leaving soon . . . go away, take a trip.

JAKE: (*Crossing to the door.*) Where's Zulu with the cop? 775

JOE: Forget about the cop, you can't ever get one when you need one.

GERRY: Please, Joe, take it easy, everything is going to be all right.

JOE: Jake, tell him about Europe.

JAKE: I don't know anything about Europe.

JOE: Damn it, nigger, you could lie. 780

JAKE: Yeah, I could lie, Europe is . . .

JOE: Listen to him, Gerry, listen to him and leave this place before it kills you. Oh, look at this. I'm pissing in my pants. Gerry . . . Jake, don't tell anyone about this.

JOE: Oh, Joe, take it easy, please man. 785

GERRY: Please, Joe, don't die on me, please Joe, don't leave me alone. I have nobody but you, Joe, please don't . . .

JOE: Gerry . . . Gerry . . . I'm tired of hanging in there . . . Jake . . . look at this, I'm farting my life away . . . I feel like a baby . . .

GERRY: Oh, God, please help him, don't let him die on me, don't take him away from me, please God, please. 790

JOE: Gerry . . . Gerry, . . . I can't think of anything famous to say . . . (*Joe to black.*)