

Arguing Alleluia

Short Description

by

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Cast of Characters

The New York Times:

Represented in standard type.

The Post:

Represented in italics.

Scene

Description.

Time

The present.

Act 1Scene 1

SETTING:

A bed stands in the middle of the stage. The foot of the bed is facing the audience.

Stage lights are very dim or nonexistent. A doorframe with a half open door stands off to one side. There are no walls. A simple refrigerator stands on the other side of the door.

AT RISE:

Two men are lying side by side under covers of the bed reading newspapers so the audience does not see their faces. One is reading the New York Times. The other is reading the New York Post. The bed is set back on the stage. There is a lump in the covers near the foot end of the bed. This is the spaniel, SORROW, sleeping under the covers, never seen.

The Post

Alleluia

New York Times

Alleluia. It's cold in here, don't you think?

The Post

It's not cold. I'm getting hot flashes.

New York Times

I'm shivering, I'll build a fire.

The Post

I'm sweating.

New York Times

I don't see any sweat. Where's the sweat?

The Post

Touch me.

New York Times

I don't have to, I smell it. But your skin doesn't look wet.

The Post

You don't have to be wet to sweat.

New York Times

That rhymes.

The Post

Look, there's a sweater in the closet. Go get a sweater if you're cold. We're not making a fire.

New York Times

Why not?

The Post

Because I'm hot, and anyway, we don't have any newspapers to start the fire. You threw them out except for these, and I'm not using these!

New York Times

So.

The Post

So I wasn't finished reading...

New York Times

I don't care. I can't stand all this paper lying around. Why don't you just go online? Actually I may not have thrown them all out. Look in those paper bags over there.

The Post

Over where?

New York Times

The recycling stuff. I think there are still a couple of pages...

The Post

Where?

New York Times

Where we always put them.

The Post

Could you be more specific?

New York Times

You know where they are.

The Post

Could you just point or something. Why are you always so vague?

New York Times

Carrots. Chicken. Butter. Winter. Eggs.

The Post

Winter?

New York Times

Yes, 'winter.' It's a clue.

The Post

It doesn't matter. Even if we have the newspapers, I am not going to make a fire. I'm too hot.

New York Times

Is your vagina too hot?

The Post

Who wants to know?

New York Times

You still have one, don't you?

The Post

What makes you think so?

New York Times

I assumed.

The Post

Assumed what?

New York Times

That you still had one.

The Post

You're being cynical. My vagina is here to stay.

New York Times

I'm not being cynical. I just don't remember. You know I've lost a scrap of my short-term memory. I'm worried about Alois Alzheimer and Lou Gehrig.

The Post

I wore pearls. You remember? They shone in the moonlight.

New York Times

Anyone can wear pearls. You just have to sling them over your neck. There's no commitment. A vaginas is a real commitment.

The Post

You bought them for me. Don't you remember?

New York Times

Where?

The Post

That time in London, at Liberty's.

New York Times

Those weren't pearls. Those were pajamas.

The Post

Really? Why pajamas?

New York Times

Because it was Christmas Eve, and your balls were dangling.

The Post

Balls?

New York Times

Testicles, you were sleeping in your T shirt.

The Post

Testaments... Testaments to what?

New York Times

You were playing with yourself, scratching, etcetera.

The Post

Scratching etcetera?

New York Times

You know what that leads to.

The Post

If you're lucky, it leads to Alleluia.

New York Times

I regard that as a cause for celebration.

The Post

Why?

New York Times

Because officially then, alleluia is no longer my responsibility.

The Post

So what else is new? It hasn't been your responsibility for years. So where's the newspapers?

New York Times

(Long pause)

Where I always put them, next to the fridge.

The Post

Interesting article here.

New York Times

What?

The Post

Page three in the International Section. Want to hear it?

New York Times

I didn't know the Post had an international section. OK,
if you must.

The Post

(Pause)

Just a second. I have to adjust my glasses..

New York Times

Get on with it.

The Post

O.K. Ready?

New York Times

Very.

The Post

(Reciting a poem)

YOU WANNA DO SOME FISHIN
THAT'S JUST BEEN WHAT I'VE BEEN WISHIN,
GOT A FISHIN HOLE THAT'S ACHIN FOR A FRIEND.

New York Times

Wait a minute...

The Post

(Reciting a poem)

LET MY EYES DO THE TALKING
WHILE YOUR FINGERS DO THE WALKIN
WE MIGHT MEET AGAIN, JUST AROUND THE BEND.

New York Times

Bends aren't international. They're local. We don't need
that kind of vulgar...

The Post

We certainly do.

New York Times

Look, we may not be billionaires, but we are members of the
God-fearing American bourgeoisie, and proud...

The Post

(Singing)

THAT PROTEST BIT IS JUST A PILE OF BUNK,
IN UNIFORM YOU'RE EIGHTEEN KINDS OF HUNK.

New York Times

Well, thanks for that, at least.

The Post

(Singing)

SO IF WHAT YOU'RE A'CREEPIN

IS AN ENHANCED..

(Stops singing)

Wait, I think I muddled that. Maybe, it's 'what you're seeking is an enhanced..

New York Times

Spelunk?

The Post

Very good, so you do know the words...

(Singing)

SO, COME ON BABY, TOUCH MY...

New York Times

Junk?

The Post

There's hope.

New York Times

Now that you brought it up, how is your penis?

The Post

My penis? Who said anything about a penis?

New York Times

How's it been?

The Post

O.K. I suppose.

(Silence)

New York Times

Just O.K.?

The Post

Well, I did take it to the theater the other night.

New York Times

Really? What did you see?

The Post

That play-- what do you call it when you revive a play after fifty years?

New York Times

A revival. So was it?

The Post

Was it what?

New York Times

Your penis, was it revived?

The Post

Well I don't really know. It was shut in most of the evening-- in those deep blue boxers you gave me for my birthday. But I did get it out in the men's room during intermission. No irony there. Here's something else. It's on Page Six.

New York Times

Page Six, isn't that the gossip column?

The Post

Yes it's the gossip column, the only thing I like in this rag. Funny thing though, it's called Page Six and its on page twelve. That doesn't make sense, does it? Want to hear it? It's extremely poetic.

New York Times

Wasn't the other one?

The Post

Our friends are all forsaking. The wine and merrymaking. We are call'd – and we must go.

New York Times

I'm certainly no poet, but I sense it has the same meter as the other article. And lest I forget, have you sent in the mortgage payment? It's already a couple days late.

The Post

It's on automatic payment. You don't have to worry.

New York Times

What's on automatic payment?

The Post

The mortgage, nor the wind on the hill.

New York Times

What about the oil company?

The Post

It's pretty high so far this winter.

New York Times

Really?

The Post

(Reciting a poem)

OH! MISERY! HARK!
DEATH IS CALLING,
WHILE I SPEAK TO YE,
THE JAW IS FALLIN.

New York Times

Are the lights still on in the greenhouse? It's enough with the heat. We spend so much on the Dahlias. We can't keep the lights on all night.

The Post

It's worth it just for the black ones.

New York Times

Electricity is more expensive than oil, you know.

The Post

Perhaps we should switch to gas. Please let me finish this.
No more fiscal interruptions.

New York Times

Finish then.

The Post

(Reciting a poem)

YE MERRY SOULS, FAREWELL.
THE OLD EARTH
HAD A BIRTH,
AS ALL MEN KNOW,
LONG AGO.
AND THE OLD EARTH MUST DIE.
SO LET THE WARM WINDS RANGE.
AND THE BLUE WAVE BEAT THE SHORE;
FOR EVEN AND MORN
YE WILL NEVER SEE
THRO' ETERNITY.
ALL THINGS WERE BORN.
YE WILL COME NEVER MORE,
FOR ALL THINGS MUST...

New York Times

Stop! That is the most depressing Page Six I ever heard. It has nothing to do with gossip. What's it doing on Page Six? Or Page twelve for that matter? It didn't even drop one celebrity's name.

The Post

You know, I was once mentioned on page six?

New York Times

You? Yeah right.

The Post

I went with a friend--it was platonic relationship, I might add- We went to see a double feature of old black and white

movies at the Saint Marks Theater in the Village. We sat through the first movie, Camille. The second film was Queen Christina. The only other person in the theater was an old woman wearing a fur shawl sitting in the front row. We were sitting in the back. It was a small theater and the angle of the seats was incredibly steep from back to front. I get vertigo. It was mildly uncomfortable. Anyway, during the break, when I went out to pee...

New York Times

You always pee during intermissions.

The Post

Doesn't everybody? That's what they are for.

New York Times

I will concede that intermissions are meant for peeing, but they are also for cigarettes, white wine, chips, Perrier, etcetera, vices all except perhaps for white wine.

The Post

Didn't James Joyce die from an overdose of Pino Grigio?

New York Times

I thought it was Sauvignon Blanc.

The Post

People rarely shit during intermissions.

New York Times

Fascinating observation. Yes, they manage mostly in the morning.

The Post

Well at least we agree on something.

New York Times

Basic, I suppose.

The Post

Yeah, and actors have to pee too. After all, they are only human.

New York Times

Actually you don't have to be human to pee. Dogs cats, mice, roaches, rats... need I say more? That particular propensity is not proof of one's humanity.

The Post

Anyway when I got back, my friend Peggy is sitting with this mysterious older woman, and they are having a heart to heart talk, a kind of bonding between disparate generations. I don't want to disturb them, so I walk out of the theater and pretend to have a cigarette break although, as you well know, I don't smoke. So I let them have their little talk, and then the three of us go back into the theater for the second show. So afterwards Peggy and I walk out the theater, and the woman gets into a waiting car. As we are walking back to my place Peggy says, ' You know, that lady lives at 450 East 52 Sreet.' So I say to Peggy, why do you think she gave you her exact address?

Does she want you to visit? And Peggy says, 'No, she doesn't want a visit. She wants to be alone.' So I say, 'Did she have an accent?' and Peggy says yes. So I started putting two and two together-- This woman limps...

New York Times

Limps?

The Post

Yes she limps slightly, she has an accent, and she gives her address as 459 east 52 Street. So I call my friend Mel. He is Jewish, liberal and intellectual. He hangs out with Andy, and drinks excellent red wine, and he works for the New York Post. On top of that, he knows the guy who writes Page Six, even though Page Six is no longer on page six. So I call Mel and I leave a message, You know anything about 459 east 52 Street? This was pre-Google, by the way. So I take a bath and while I'm in the tub, he calls me back and leaves a sardonic message saying, 459 East 52 Street is at 459 East 52 street. And I say to Peggy, 'I think she was trying to tell you something. Here is this old woman in the theater watching two of Greta Garbo's greatest films, and no one else is in the theater except you and me. What is she doing there all alone? And Peggy says, ' You know, she gave me lots of advice like, 'A woman these days has many roles, and she starts enumeration on these roles, like maid, prostitute, CEO,' etcetera.' Actually I think Peggy said 'boss,' not CEO and 'ho' instead of 'prostitute.' And then this woman says to Peggy, 'Never admit to a whiteness.'

New York Times

A whiteness? What the hell does that mean? 'Never admit to a whiteness?' And, by the way, who's Andy?

The Post

I am sure she said 'whiteness, 'Never admit to a whiteness.' Those were her exact words. And I'm sure it was Garbo, really and truly it was Greta Garbo in that theater.

New York Times

Sure it wasn't 'weakness'—'Never admit to a weakness?'

The Post

Now why would Greta Garbo want to say that? I mean just saying that is admitting that you are weak because you acknowledge having a weakness that you are not admitting, otherwise how would you know it was a mistake?

New York Times

And who's Andy?

The Post

You seem to be getting very suspicious lately.

New York Times

Who is he?

The Post

Andy?

New York Times

Yes, Andy

The Post

OK, I admit it.

New York Times

Admit what?

The Post

I admit that up on the slopes, a couple of winter's ago, snow...the ski lift. Mad River Glen, established, 1946 etcetera...

New York Times

Mad River Glen?

The Post

Yes, Mad River Glen. Don't you remember? The stream trickles from a spring at the top of the mountain then works itself into frenzy as it splashes downhill. This happens in the summer. In the winter it's mostly ice, frozen and subdued. They have the only single-chair ski lift left in America. It goes up the west face—and at the top, all black diamonds. I was feeling vulnerable. I didn't take it. I took the double seat, where there are a couple of easier runs, up the east face. So this person hops on the seat beside me. They have a helmet on, of course, and a rather large pair of reflective goggles. When I turn to have a look, all I can see is my reflection in the multicolored glass. Quite beautiful, the glass that is.

New York Times

It must have been some sort of plastic. It couldn't have been glass. Glass shatters.

The Post

Please, I am trying to confess.

New York Times

Where was I during this interlude?

The Post

I think you were warming your toes in the lodge. Anyway, so this person jumps on the space to the left of me, and I think it is a bit strange because hardly anyone is there that day--no one before us and no one after-- so why double up unless you are on some sort of mission.

New York Times

Did this person have a ponytail?

The Post

A pony tale? What kind of question is that? But now that you mention it, this person did have a pony tale, a blond one, trailing out the back of the helmet. It swayed with the movement of the chair.

New York Times

How could you?

The Post

How could I what? I haven't even come to the good part yet.

New York Times

Good part?

The Post

I suppose that's relative.

New York Times

Not for me it isn't.

The Post

Look, a pony tail doesn't prove anything. I'll grant you that it's more of a commitment than a string of pearls. But it could have been a pin-on. You know the way kids these days wear all sorts of headdresses on the slopes, like the punks on King's road back in the seventies.

New York Times

What were you doing on King's Road in the seventies?

The Post

Why does that matter? It was way before we met. Do you want to hear this confession or not?

New York Times

Why tonight?

The Post

Because we are on the subjects of Garbo, confessions, and whiteness.

New York Times

You are on the subject. I'm not.

The Post

So she hops on the lift and..

New York Times

So it is a she, is it?

The Post

I am simply using 'she' here because 'she' is the proper pronoun of choice in the year two-thousand whenever. You know, for several centuries, perhaps millennia, it was 'he,' but we have gone far beyond that- adding a consonant. But I really don't know if she was a boy or a girl. The snowsuit she was wearing was noncommittal though tight-- shapely in fact. Anyway, why should it matter? An indiscretion is an indiscretion.

New York Times

And a betrayal is a betrayal.

The Post

I certainly would not go as far as 'betrayal.' It is difficult, but admittedly not impossible, to betray someone on a ski lift late in the afternoon in the middle of dense and chilly fog as fast fluffy snowflakes fall silently. This was not a betrayal. I admit to an indiscretion, nothing more--and for that matter, one that I did not initiate.

New York Times

A hand job? Was it a hand job?

The Post

Hand job?' 'Hand job' is so inelegant.' Why do you presume it was a hand job?

New York Times

OK, so under the rather limited circumstances--let's go through the possibilities: Double seated ski lift. Restraining bar clamped across your lap. You were using protection I assume? After all it is about twenty feet above the ground. You could break a leg. You are wearing multiple layers of clothing. Your ski jacket, and ski pants come up under your jacket like a pair of overalls. Gloves, hand warmers, you always use hand warmers. So ski pants, the under liners, what are they called, Red Hot Chilly Peppers. I am not trying to advertise anything here, but they are warm, and I don't know why you have to wear silk long underwear underneath them, though you always do. In any case all this, and particularly the restraining bar, I assume, would lend certain positions impossible, or at least tricky. This is not karma sutra terrain. So we will eliminate the missionary position, doggy style, the act that shall know no name, and what are we left with?

The Post

I don't know, what are we left with?

New York Times

A hand job. That's about it.

The Post

You know, I thought this was my confession. You have taken it over completely. Why don't you finish the story?

New York Times

So what happened next?

The Post

So she didn't say anything- no small talk whatsoever. But even that wouldn't have been proof one way or the other. I considered myself handsome then. Maybe that was the reason. It helps being handsome, don't you think? Maybe she was horny. Maybe she had swallowed Quaaludes or eaten oysters down at the lodge, I have no idea. But she slipped her hand under my jacket and then unzipped my ski pants starting with the zipper just below the neck. She pulled it down to a point below my penis, and then worked her fingers first through the fly of my Red Hot Chilly Peppers and then through the fly of my black silk long underwear and grabbed my penis and pulled it out through the silk long underwear, the Red Hot Chili Peppers and the zipper of my ski pants and started jerking, jerking, jerk, jerk, jerk, jerk, jerk-a-di -jerk, jerk, jerk...

New York Times

O.K. I get the picture.

The Post

At least that 's what I remember. As we continued our ascent, the fog grew thicker at the same time the snow fell silently and softly, softly and silently on the bogs, silently on the waves of Shannon, hushed through the...

New York Times

Was she left handed or right handed?

The Post

I don't see how that is the least bit relevant.

New York Times

I do. Listen closely: Albrecht Dürer, Alexander the Great, Angelina Jolie, Anthony Perkins, Barack Obama, Bart Simpson, Benjamin Franklin, Bill Clinton, Bruce Willis, Carol Burnett, Caroline Kennedy, Cary Grant, Cecil Beaton, Charlemagne, Charlie Chaplin, Cloris Leachman, David Letterman, Diane Keaton, Dick Van Dyke, Emma Thompson, Eva Marie Saint, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, George Burns, Goldie Hawn, Hal Linden, Hans Holbein, Harpo Marx, Henry Ford, Isaac Hayes, Jack-the-Ripper, Jay Leno, Jean Genet, Jeff Koons, Jerry Seinfeld, Jimi Hendrix, Joan of Arc, Joanne Woodward, John Dillinger, Julia Roberts, Julius Caesar, Keanu Reeves, Kermit the Frog, Lenny Bruce, Leonardo da Vinci, Lewis Carroll, Marilyn Monroe, Marshall McLuhan, Michael Landon, Mickey Rourke, Napoléon Bonaparte, Nicole Kidman, Oprah Winfrey, Paul Klee, Paul McCartney, Paul Simon, Peter Lawford, Queen Victoria, Ramses II, Raphael, Rex Harrison, Richard Dreyfuss, Ringo Starr, Rip Torn, Robert DeNiro, Robert Redford, Rock Hudson, Rod Steiger, Ronald Reagan, Rudy Valee, Sergei Rachmaninoff, Shirley MacLaine, Sylvester Stallone, Steve McQueen, Terence Stamp, The Boston Strangler, Tiberius, Tiny Tim, W.C.Fields, Greta Garbo. What do they all have in common?

The Post

I don't have a clue.

New York Times

They are all left-handed.

The Post

Gretta Garbo was left-handed?

New York Times

You didn't notice?

The Post

So what if Greta Garbo was left handed. What does that have to do with me, and the girl on the ski lift, if in fact she was a girl.

New York Times

It would allow me to rationalize the act through an imaginative light.

The Post

You don't have to rationalize anything. There is nothing to rationalize. It was an indiscretion, a meaningless act in the somewhat distant past. She jerked, I came. Big woop!

New York Times

You came?

The Post

Of course I came, otherwise what's the point? We weren't eloping for God's sake.

New York Times

Did she come?

The Post

I told you, she sat down on the ski lift to the left of me. We ascended. The ride was relatively lengthy. As we approached the top of the mountain we pulled out of the fog. The sky was clear, the air crisp. It was late in the day. The sun touched the horizon as we slid off the lift. I interpreted the whole encounter as an act of generosity.

New York Times

Wait a minute. You're not getting away that easily. I need details. Did she take off her gloves?

The Post

I wouldn't pluralize. She took off A glove.

New York Times

A mitten?

The Post

Yes, a mitten?

New York Times

What color was it?

(Silence)

What color was it?

The Post

Pinkish.

New York Times

Ish? It either was pink or it wasn't.

The Post

It was light red.

New York Times

And when she took off her glove you obviously got a look at her fingernails.

The Post

Nicely manicured.

(Long silence)

OK, they were bright red. I think Revlon calls it 'Red Bikini.'

New York Times

You see a narrative developing here, don't you?

The Post

Not particularly.

New York Times

OK. So we have a pony tail, pink gloves, red bikini fingernail polish, and the personal pronoun 'she' which admittedly is ambiguous in its current usage, signifying at once male and female, but nevertheless...'

The Post

I told you before. All those signs are quite easily faked. They prove nothing, and in any case even if considered together they imply that she was a she, I am using the term properly since I don't know for sure if she was a she. The proper usage of the personal pronoun when both genders are considered is 'she.' So in this context, the 'she' means nothing one-way or the other. And regardless if it were a he or a she--either way, it was an indiscretion, and I have now officially admitted to an indiscretion, enough said!

New York Times

Why have we become so proper all of a sudden?

The Post

Technically speaking, the only thing that seems to matter here is whether or not the particular hand at issue --and I will admit that it was her left -- was connected through various and complex systems of tissues, arteries, veins, and nerves, etcetera-- up the fingers across the complexities of the wrist, then elbow, forearm, armpit, riding humpty dumpty over the various ribs of the rib cage down the pelvis--finally arriving at either a penis or a vagina. Actually I think my anatomy is not altogether correct. The above-mentioned arteries and veins probably take a more circuitous route via the heart, but that is neither here nor there. The ultimate proof of the pudding for you it seems is the taxonomy of the so-called sexual organ. And for that matter we could have an argument if you like about which organs are, in fact, sexual. I, for one, feel that all organs are sexual, every one of them-- the

pancreas, the eyes, nose, mouth, epidermis, tongue,
testicles, ovaries, heart, liver, nose, eyelashes, you name
it. All of them!

New York Times

Eyelashes aren't organs.

The Post

So forget about the eyelashes. Anyway, they could have been
false, I had no way of knowing.

New York Times

I-I-I was just worried, I s-supposed that you had switched
sides, wadded to another shore... toasted marshmallows with
unfamiliar campers...shifted oars... sambaed to a different
drummer... discarded the paisleys I gave you that snowy
Christmas Eve in London so long ago, and swapped them for
tartan.

The Post

Anyone can wear false eyelashes, look at Michael Jackson!

New York Times

Those weren't false eyelashes. That was permanent eyeliner.
He had his eyes tattooed. But how did Michael get into
this? You always carried a torch for him, ever since that
episode you two had backstage at the, where was it? Webster
Hall? Those were the good old days, but he's dead now,
caput. No longer exists. No more moon walks, no nothing.

The Post

Lucretius!

New York Times

Well, at least I don't have to worry about him.

The Post

I am trying to lighten things up.

New York Times

I don't get it.

The Post

So I hop on a ski lift, there's an open seat aside of me. This person-- not sure if she's male or female although all the signs admittedly point to the latter-- unzips my ski pants, wiggles her fingers into the fly of my Red Hot Chilly Peppers, then into my silk long underwear that you bought me for Christmas, and gently pulls out my cock, caresses it, and gives me a blow job.

New York Times

Blow Job, wait a minute, you didn't mention a 'blow job.'
I assumed it was just a hand job.

The Post

How often does that happen in life, someone hops on a ski lift, says nothing, not even a bit of small talk, then opens your pants and starts sucking--Does it happen once, twice-- most likely never. And by the way, that was it. No romantic dinners-- quiet difficult under the circumstances. We get to the top-- clear blue sky. I zip up, we push up

the restraint as we slide down the exit ramp, gliding our separate ways back into the fog, into that thick white haze. The snow and the sky are no longer snow and sky, not two different words, just undefined phenomena. This is the whiteness I herby confess to, null, void, empty, except of course for the sensation of wobbling ankles, and perhaps the fear, the fear that THIS IS IT, famous last words of Michael Jackson as well as Lucretius. Lucretius, of course, uttered them in Latin. Perhaps he never actually uttered them at all, he just paraphrased them, but as I disappeared in the misty fog, which is, after all, just a low lying cloud, I felt shameless, guiltless, and why should I feel guilty? Why should I have tried to make small talk? I mean she or he couldn't have responded anyway, because through some quirk of evolution, some Darwinian glitch, our varied orifices have multiple functions—eating, drinking, speaking, peeing, sucking-- so, her or his mouth was already full, incapable of consonants or even vowels, and 'This is it,' has both. You know, in junior high school, dangling from the jungle jim, I received my first so-called 'blow job.' It felt great, but at the same time I was very confused. I mean there wasn't any blowing going on as far as I could tell-- just the opposite. Up until then, the act was merely a post-pubescent rumor. And for that matter, I didn't see it as a job either. I still don't. Marx-- not Grocho--Karl, would never have approved. 'Blow jobs' are not bona fide labor of any sort. They're not hammer and sickleish enough. Actually we don't want a sickle anywhere near it. And on this particularly occasion, the fluffy flakes of snow, the light wind, the whiteness, the oblivion, particularly at climax, was incredibly

pleasurable. Certainly it can be for both sucker and suckee. I can attest to that from both sides of the aisle, from both ends of the stick. That's the long and short of it, and ...

New York Times

Sickleish? What the hell is 'sickleish? Karl Marx had nothing to do with the hammer and sickle. He certainly didn't design it.

The Post

Then who did?

New York Times

God, if I know. Perhaps it was your friend Andy.

The Post

I don't think so. The Soviets waved a flag with the hammer and sickle as early as 1917—They engulfed the tools in lush bikini red. Andy wasn't even alive. Neither was Marilyn, or for that matter, Michael.

New York Times

When was he born?

The Post

Who?

New York Times

Andy.

The Post

He was born on August 6th, 1928. I went to his birthday party years later--wild-- although he always maintained his cool--so serene. I also attended his funeral. His casket was closed. But I imagine him serene then as well. For us-- painters, sculptors, photographers, thespians, poets, novelists, danseurs, lounge lizards, all of us-- it was as if God had died. He was religious--not God, Andy--you know. Went to church every Sunday. Near the end he painted the 'Last Supper.' I don't think he sensed it was the end, just the unfortunate consequence of a gall bladder malfunction. Unfortunately his last supper was hospital fare.

New York Times

So it wasn't a hand job... it was a blow job?

The Post

Well if you want to get technical, it was a bit of both-- a potpourri.

New York Times

And while all this is going on, I am innocently sitting in the lodge warming my toes by the fire.

The Post

Innocently? You always feign innocence. What were you drinking?

New York Times

Not sure.

The Post

Come on, what was it?

New York Times

I don't remember... I think it was a chocolate milkshake.

The Post

We both know better than that.

New York Times

OK, it was a burgundy, a Romanée Conti, circa 1982.

The Post

That is the biggest crock of shit I ever heard. No one ever serves Romanée Conti at a ski lodge, especially not at Mad River Glen. They take pride in their proletarian roots. The vines of Romanée Conte have extremely aristocratic roots.

New York Times

O.K. I confess. It was a White Russian--vodka, Kahlua and cream--on the rocks. That simple. I wasn't as concerned about my weight as I am now.

The Post

You should have been.

INTERMISSION

During intermission, the stage is dimly lit. You can see the bed and the two pillows, which are subtly spotlighted. There are live microphones hanging in the restrooms- all channeled to two speakers hidden under the pillows.

Act 2

Scene 1

AT RISE:

The lights dim so the audience can only see the foot of the bed near the edge of the stage and the numbers on a digital alarm clock beside the bed. Everything else is dark. After several minutes, the alarm rings loudly throughout the theater.

New York Times

What the fuck? It's three o'clock in the morning.

The Post

Churchill called it his 'darkest hour.'

New York Times

What does Churchill have to do with it?

The Post

He was quite depressed in his later years. He used to wake up at three in the morning and couldn't go back to sleep.

New York Times

But this isn't London. It's not the Blitz. And even if it were, you wouldn't need an alarm clock. You had bombs.

The Post

I didn't want to leave it there.

New York Times

Leave what where?

The Post

We were in the middle of an argument.

New York Times

About what?

The Post

Alleluia.

New York Times

I don't feel the least bit celebratory.

The Post

Did you know that trees walk?

New York Times

Trees? Walk? What kind of trees?

The Post

Socratea exorrhiza. They can actually uproot themselves and move away from where they were germinated.

New York Times

Why would they want to do that?

The Post

Any number of reasons. Perhaps they feel crowded, need a different perspective on life. Perhaps they crave company of a different sort. Who knows? Perhaps they want to break up. In the course of a year they can travel three feet in any direction.

New York Times

I wish we had a bigger bed.

The Post

Why? We don't need anything more than a queen.

New York Times

It could be a bit harder, stiffer, I suppose.

The Post

The trees are native to South American rainforests. They have stilt-like roots. Different species of epiphytes grow on these trees. One could say the epiphytes like to hitch a ride.

New York Times

Epiphytes, that explains everything. Can we continue this conversation later in the morning?

The Post

You know, when the previous owners lived here, Clement Greenberg was a guest. He once slept in this bed- and before that, Lillian...

New York Times

The abstract expressionist?

The Post

He wasn't an abstract expressionist, he was an art critic, and long before that, Lillian Gish slept in this very bed. She was friends with the guy-Lofting I believe-- who wrote about talking animals.

New York Times

Were they having an affair?

The Post

I don't know, but from what the previous owners told me, they skied together.

New York Times

Look, I'd rather get off that subject.

The Post

There were no lifts, it was all cross country. Actually I found their skis up in the attic.

New York Times

Really? Why didn't you tell me?

The Post

I didn't think it relevant, but I was alone one night. I am not sure where you were, off on one of your little jaunts, Napoli as I remember. You always loved Napoli for some reason. I was awakened by an alarm, not an alarm clock-- a car alarm. The alarm had gone off in the Audi parked next to the shed where we keep the tools. It was honking and the lights were flashing on and off, off and on. And at first I thought it was a dream. I had jerked off before going to sleep, and I thought maybe this nightmare was a result of my jerking off, a kind of warning signal of some sort, as if a burglar had come, stolen my sperm, and was at this very moment trying to break into the Audi to make his getaway.

New York Times

To make his getaway? What, with one of those little sandwich bags full of your chizz?

The Post

Don't make fun. You know I don't like spilling it on the sheets. I spend a lot of time washing and ironing these sheets. They are one hundred percent linen. The pillow cases too. But I realized soon that it wasn't a dream, that in fact I was wide awake and the car was really honking, honking and blinking, as if it were trying to cry—I won't go as far as to say 'cry rape,' but something close to it. So I knew I had to do something. We are out here in the middle of nowhere, and no one will hear the car alarm but me. I could never go back to sleep with it honking and blinking like that. Something made the car honk and flash. It didn't just decide to honk and flash for no reason. Cars are rational, particularly German cars. So what could have caused it? Someone must have tried to get into the car, or at least leaned against it. So these were the two possibilities— the most likely possibility being the bear, the one that always tries to get into the garbage. He could have sat on the hood of the car as he snacked on the crumbs of your Twinkie rappers. Two, it could be a burglar. I am not so silly as to think he was stealing my sperm, although there is a Planned Parenthood facility in Kingston, and who knows, perhaps someone likes my genes. But we do have a beautiful set of English silverware, I think the hallmarks are from 1873, London. He could have been making off with that. I had a friend once, a platonic friend, who was a cat burglar. He was thrown in prison at eighteen for stealing silverware. Someone, not sure who, maybe a cousin, gave him a set of oil paints, and so he began to paint. But the only thing he had to paint were the verticals, the vertical bars of his cell, so...

New York Times

Look I know where you are going with this. He could have used his imagination. He could have varied his verticals. He could have made things up, like trees, rockets, even lipstick. But I do know that now it is approaching four in the morning and its going to break light at five thirty, and then all the cheepy -di cheap twirty little song birds are going to start chirping, and after that the black crows are going to move in and take over with their raspy caws, and then I am never going to get back to sleep. And in any case, you would think that if a burglar were going to steal the silverware--the box is quite heavy-- that he would have brought his own getaway car, or at least a motorbike, and would not have relied on getting away with our car. What if it's locked? What if the battery is dead? What if it has a flat tire? So what did you do?

The Post

Well, you know we don't believe in guns, there's no guns in the house, and even if there were, I wouldn't know what to do with it.

New York Times

Yes.

The Post

So I picked up the sling shot, the one we keep in the cupboard next to the salad whirl.

New York Times

Salad whirl?

The Post

You know, that plastic bowl with all the little slits. You push the shaft down on top and the bowl turns and twirls inside until the arugula is dry.

New York Times

Yes I love spinning it. I never understood how one little push could make it spin so fast. So you grab the slingshot..

The Post

So I grab the slingshot, and of course it's dark except for the headlights blinking--no moon, no Orion, big dipper, no nothing--and so I put on my slippers, the ones with the golden monographs you gave me for my birthday...and then I realize I don't have anything to load into the sling shot. No stones, no ball bearings. And I can't just walk outside with the flashlight searching for pebbles. What if he ambushes me from behind?

New York Times

The bear or the burglar?

The Post

Perhaps they are in cahoots. So I look around the house for something, heavy and small, small but lethal. There are some white grapes in the fruit bowl. They won't work. In fact they might enjoy them. Black bears love grapes, particularly the white ones. I would imagine burglars enjoy grapes too. After all, they are probably stealing so

they can afford the better things in life. So I think, what about a bottle of your pills?

New York Times

Which ones?

The Post

The legal ones, of course. I wouldn't use the others. I mean who knows what affect they would have on a bear or a burglar. I was only going to use the lipitor, the metaphorine, the baby aspirin. Of course these are all too small. Wouldn't do a thing, just stick in the fir or the mustache assuming the burglar has a mustache. And so I rustle around in your desk drawer, discover a pack of Trojans, and immediately become suspicious because we haven't used Trojans, or any other brand, for that matter, in years, and what are they doing in the drawer stuffed in a pair of recently purchased socks with the price tag still on? They won't work anyway-- for the bear or for the burglar--they would bounce right off--so I leave them, and then I discover a pack of Bic ball point pens--six to a pack, and I have an epiphany-- if I can only imagine the slingshot as a crossbow I can use the pens as arrows, but simultaneously, I think this is a stupid idea. It's not going to work. And then I think of Rumsfeld rationalizing the lack of Humvee amour in the Iraqi War, saying 'you go to war with what you've got.' But this does not convince me, never did, and I am sure it will not convince the bear or the burglar either. But these pens are all I've got, there is nothing else, and I know they are not going to work, that I am risking my life by taking this poor excuse

for a crossbow out to kill or at least maim a bear or a burglar. If it's the bear, perhaps I will distract him, and perhaps he will run after the pen in a game of fetch, and if it's the burglar, the burglar who I now imagine is my painter friend no longer imprisoned, but out in the world, famous, showing with Pace, having received the Turner prize, etcetera. You remember he once came to dinner and commented on the silver. Perhaps my pathetic weapon will amuse him, and he will take pity and leave me alone. But there was another problem.

New York Times

What was that?

The Post

Theoretically I confront the bear or the burglar, I am holding the handle of the slingshot or crossbow--whatever you want to call it-- with my left hand. With my right hand I am pulling back the thick rubber band as I pinch the end of the ballpoint pen with the thumb and index finger of said hand.

New York Times

Yes?

The Post

The problem is that it's pitch dark outside. How do I hold the flashlight? How can I fucking aim if I can't see who or what I am shooting at? As I mentioned, there was no moon. It simply wasn't out that night.

New York Times

So what did you do?

The Post

I put on my slippers, my bathrobe that the previous owners left in the house, with the presently incorrect initials D.D. embroidered on the left breast pocket, and I walk out into the night, holding the sheath of pens, the slingshot, the flashlight, which was not turned on because I didn't want to give away my position, and one more thing.

New York Times

What was that?

The Post

The car key.

New York Times

The car key?

The Post

So I get outside, I'm about fifty feet away or so, still close enough to the back door in case I want to retreat, and I aim the key at the car, which is still bleeping and blinking, and I press the button on the spot that says 'open.'

New York Times

So?

The Post

So the car stops blinking and bleeping. And then I notice that the stars have come out, and whatever clouds were blocking them have drifted away. It's a bit nippy. I can see my breath, like an over-spilling ghost, a glut of soul. I'm not really chilly. I am not cold. Perhaps my ankles- a bit, because I didn't think of putting socks on, but my toes are all cozy tucked in the slippers' sheepskin lining. And the air is crisp and clear. I breathe in, I breathe out. And one star is moving, but not too quickly, too slow for a shooting star. It's more like an airplane. And I think of the passengers in the airplane, having previously taken off their belts and shoes before boarding, putting them back on, and then finally relaxed and seated, falling asleep far above me, and how, if this were the time of Lucretius, and I had aimed the key at the car, the people in their hillside huts would look up and think it was a sailing ship of the gods directed by my magic wand. And perhaps they would conclude that I was a sorcerer and burn me at the stake just like Joan of Arc. But the people in the airplane would think it was an airplane, or at least hope it was, or otherwise how could they trust being there, and many of them would be sleeping anyway, unaware of burglars or bears, or me, and actually I don't relish being alone. I want to be you, not just with you. I want to be you. And then something really extraordinary happens.

New York Times

What's that?

The Post

A huge black bear emerges from behind the shed.

New York Times

Really?

The Post

Yes, and he stands on his hind legs, his long hooked claws pawing the sky, and he stares at me for what seems like an eternity, his profoundly blank eyes glistening in the moonlight.

New York Times

How did you know it was a he?

The Post

It was quite obvious considering his full-frontal stance. I think all this excitement really turned him on.

New York Times

Wait a minute, did I miss something? You said the moon wasn't out that night.

The Post

Well I guess during the above mentioned eternity the moon arose.

New York Times

Arose?

The Post

Rose, rose up, is that correct? Similar to a sunrise, but quiet the opposite.

New York Times

So this is why you woke me up, to tell me a story about a bear? Bedtime stories are meant to put you to sleep, not to wake you up. Anyway, I think the original story was about three bears, not just one. What happened to the other two bears? What about mama bear and baby bear?

The Post

One bear is quite enough, really. It was NATURE, just two hours above New York Fucking City, Two hours north of what used to be Max's Kansas City, two hours north of Studio 54,

(Reciting a poem)

TWO HOURS NORTH OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY,
YOUR HUDDLED MASSES YEARNING TO BREATHE FREE,
THE WRETCHED REFUSE OF YOUR TEEMING SHORE.
SEND THESE, THE HOMELESS, TEMPEST-TOST TO ME,
I LIFT MY LAMP BESIDE THE GOLDEN DOOR!

(Stops reciting)

I know that's all in the past except for the statue. That's still there, but nevertheless--a real bear, wild, totally wild! He could have torn me to shreds. Of all things to finally finish you off, a bear! I know I am going to die, but I thought it would be because of some mishap like a car crash, a plane crash, global warming, or being machine-gunned to death in a --I am not going to finish that sentence--or just old age. Nature! I thought we had gone beyond the nature of things.

New York Times

Old age is nature. But you are here, alive and still quite capable of setting off an alarm clock. So what happened

with the bear? How come there are no claw marks anywhere on your scrawny little body as far as I can see? You are wearing your pajamas, but I didn't see any scars the last time we took a shower together.

The Post

That was years ago.

New York Times

I am well aware!

The Post

So I stand and gaze at him in awe. He gazes back at me. I have no idea what is going on in that medieval brain of his, if there is any humanity, any sympathy, any grace, any forgiveness, any redemption.

New York Times

I can't imagine it had anything to do with forgiveness. And I think his brain goes farther back than the so-called middle ages. Even farther back than Ivan the Terrible, Henry the VIII, Richard the III, Nero of Rome, Ramesses the Great, Vlad the Impaler.

The Post

So why has it been years since we took a shower together? Why has it been years since we had six?

New York Times

Six?

The Post

Six.

New York Times

Six --as in one, two, three, four, five?

The Post

Six, as in seven, eight, nine, ten. I mean how many years has it been? I have lost count! Many a night I am lying here in this queen-sized bed all alone while you go off on your so-called business trips, your jaunts, as you call them, to Montpelier, Rio, San Paulo, Trieste, even Napoli!

New York Times

We really do need to get a dog.

The Post

A dog? That's your solution, a dog?

New York Times

It works quite well.

The Post

But I am allergic to certain breeds, particularly Dalmatians, perhaps it's the spots. You know that. Even a walk in the park makes me sneeze.

New York Times

But how do you know it's the Dalmatians? It could be the squirrels or the rats, even the people. People have all sorts of spots--freckles, zits, etcetera. And what about

Sorrow, he's a dog, isn't he? At this very moment he's tucked under the covers, sleeping at your feet.

The Post

I never thought of him in that way. Our relationship is transitive. I have not objectified him. And as you may have noticed, he doesn't have any spots.

New York Times

That's true, come to think of it. He never heels when I say 'heel.' He never comes when I say 'come.' Only occasionally does he sit when I say 'sit.' Perhaps he isn't a dog.

The Post

He's not a dog, he's an anarchist with a tail.

New York Times

Anyway those were bona fide business trips, every one of them. We needed the money. All you think about is six and sex. You might as well be a pornographic multiplication table. I'll never be able to compute you.

The Post

Everything is about six-- the stars, the moon the attraction and repulsion of the atoms spinning through our veins. It's all about six.

New York Times

So how is it all about six? Can you give me a scientific explanation?

The Post

So I was walking Sorrow west across Bleeker Street, past the Other End, where Dylan sang in the sixties. For a second I forget what I am doing there. Normally I walk him south of Houston Street so I don't have to cross. It's so wide-- a six-lane highway, three lanes going east, and three going west, adding up to six, with a half dozen trees growing in the middle. But there I am on Bleeker street, and actually he likes it on the north side because he gets bored on the south side of Houston, and then I remember, I must mail a letter, and the only mailbox left in SOHO, really the only mailbox left anywhere, is the one across Houston Street which is actually not technically in SOHO, but on the outside edge. So I drop the letter in the mailbox and walk north past the Grand Union, or what was once called the Grand Union. An old troll inhabits the sidewalk between the metal fence of the NYU apartments and the fenced-in forest that is supposed to be a model of an aboriginal arbor. His weathered face looks as if it was carved from mahogany. He smokes a pipe..

New York Times

He smokes a pipe?

The Post

... and his hair is all matted Rastafarian style dangling in one thick clump to the ground. When it is cold he covers his makeshift shelter with canvas and the sort, and huddles inside, but I can hardly tell if he is there or not. The wind blows through his home and the canvas flaps flutter. Is he inside blustering, or is it just the wind blowing

through his absence? So I walk chilly west Bleeker Street, then turn the corner onto Sullivan, and I see the lights of the yet unfinished World Trade Center, tall as hell, poking into a cloud, as it blinks red, green, blue, yellow, even pink, as I get closer to the church of Saint Anthony's. Saint Anthony is the saint of birds, I suppose, because in Napoli he stands stone-faced in a park surrounded by marble pigeons on the sidewalk as real ones compete frantically for kernels of popcorn dropped by patrons exiting a late-night cinema. I hear a raspy phonograph, and I anticipate Handel's Messiah with many Alleluias, but the tune is a humbler recording of children singing Hark the Herald Angels Sing, glory to the... etcetera, and I don't remember actually where I have heard this now--on Houston Street coming from behind the life sized crétch of Saint Anthony's, or in Napoli on the promenade where, at night, the isle of Capri floats like a studded tiara in the Tyrrhenian Sea. I take a thousand steps up the labyrinth of the ancient quarter, and a crackling old lady sits in her shop selling carved figurines, Mary, Joseph, the three wise men, bits of bogus hay, and little carved sheep, cows, and donkeys, and further on to via dei Tribunali, where two blackened bronze skulls rest on sills in front of Santa Maria delle Anime del Purgatorio. The skulls are shiny in places, especially around the nasal cavity, because children want to touch it, to caress the orifice. They want to stick their fingers in the hole. A Vespa sputters transporting driver and passenger--arms around waist fondling penis, ebus, es, off into the night to fuck, to make love in an arbor by the sea designated for such

declensions, a common denominator now and again, on a Saturday night in Napoli.

(Long silence, as several snores are heard, slow and at long intervals.)

The Post

(Groggy)

What's that?

New York Times

It's Sorrow.

The Post

I could have sworn it was you.

New York Times

It's not me. I was busy having a dream.

The Post

What's that?

New York Times

A fish monger. A fishmonger is standing over us.

The Post

Really, what's he selling?

New York Times

He is selling fish.

The Post

Is he having any success?

New York Times

Yes.

The Post

What kind of fish is he selling?

New York Times

Eel, flounder bass, goby, Lipophrys pholis, you name it.

The Post

What the hell is Lipophrys pholis?

New York Times

It looks rather Jurassic and feeds on crustaceans.
But he also sells squid and octopus.

The Post

Well, they really aren't fish now, are they?

New York Times

No, I suppose not.

The Post

They don't qualify as fish, do they?

New York Times

No, but I do love the taste of octopus. Where's my wallet?

The Post

It's over by your keys on the dresser.

New York Times

We will need a lemon, won't we?

The Post

Yes I suppose so. I think there's one in the fridge.

New York Times

We are still in Napoli, aren't we?

The Post

Yes, of course.

New York Times

So let's take the boat to Capri.

The Post

The boat?

New York Times

Of course. We certainly can't swim?

The Post

True enough.

New York Times

You know, if we are having a proper argument, we should be shouting, or at least raising our voices.

The Post

Yes, but if we were shouting we would wake up Sorrow. Let him sleep. Otherwise he may start barking. Let's catch the boat, we can discuss him later.

New York Times

I love the salty air, the spray in my face, the afternoon breeze. When we get there let's splurge and take the little blue taxi to the top of the Island. It's a convertible.

The Post

Ok, but you sit on the right side going up the hill. I can't bear looking down over the cliff. It's gotta be six hundred painful rocky feet down to the sea. You know me and my vertigo.

New York Times

O.K. I wouldn't want you choking on the octopus. It's was good, wasn't it --particularly with that sparkly white wine. You know this is where Oscar took Lord Alfred Douglas, better known as Bosie, after he got out of prison. Imagine that!

The Post

Imagine what?

New York Times

Bosie has a problem with his father who is suspicious of his affiliation with Oscar. So he asks Oscar to sue his father, because his father accused Oscar of supposed crimes and misdemeanors with respect to that affiliation. Happily, in most states now, those supposed crimes and misdemeanors are no longer crimes and misdemeanors, thank heaven, but that is irrelevant to our present conversation because, they were in England in 18---. The supposed crimes and misdemeanors were actually real crimes and misdemeanors then, and Oscar actually committed those crimes and misdemeanors with Bosie and several other young beautiful boys who consequently were recruited as whitenesses for the prosecution.

The Post

Surely you mean 'witnesses.'

New York Times

As a result of Oscar's lawsuit against Bosie's father for libel, Bosie's father strikes back and formally accuses Oscar of said crimes and misdemeanors so Oscar is tried for those supposed crimes and misdemeanors and winds up in jail. Actually, as I remember it, it was only crimes-- no misdemeanors. Serious stuff back then. After two years of hard labor at Reading Goal, he gets out, and Oscar, always the romantic, immediately calls Bosie.

The Post

I didn't know... Did they have telephones then?

New York Times

Not sure. Maybe he calls, or maybe he sends him a hand written letter, perhaps he just knocks on the door, but as soon as he gets out of jail, Oscar invites the very provocateur of his imprisonment, the very devil of his demise, the unabashed denizen of his downfall, Bosie, to Capri for a romantic holiday.

The Post

But Oscar is free. He can do what he wants.

New York Times

Freedom is relative, wouldn't you say? He's addicted to Boise, and addiction is not exactly the epitome of freedom. And besides, the chamber where Oscar currently resides is huge, but nevertheless a bit claustrophobic after a while.

The Post

I suppose.

New York Times

So he get's moved to Père Lachaise, first being buried somewhere in the suburbs, can you imagine, Oscar Wilde in the suburbs? And they ensconce him in this spectacular sarcophagus with a buck naked angel on top, and then boys and girls start kissing the sarcophagus, not sure if it is marble or sandstone, but anyway, years go by, decades actually, and the stone starts to deteriorate, to crumble, not much, but enough to be somewhat annoying.

The Post

Why did it deteriorate?

New York Times

Because of French lipstick-- some kind of chemical.

The Post

Oh come on, you cant blame it on the lipstick.

New York Times

So what do they do? They clean all the lipstick off and put a glass box around the tomb, and now, if someone wants to kiss Oscar, they have to kiss glass. They can't kiss stone anymore.

The Post

Are we almost there?

New York Times

I suppose so. Can we do a little shopping? Ask him to hold the cab.

The Post

Don't you want to stop and get a hotel first? We have a reservation; at least I hope you got one?

New York Times

We don't need a reservation, let's shop. You need any boxers?

The Post

Look at all that bling.

New York Times

Yes we could dress up like Tijuana pimps.

The Post

This isn't Tijuana, this is Napoli. Let's get our delusions straight.

New York Times

We don't need bling. We need sheets and pillow cases.

The Post

Oh shit, where's my wallet. That guy over there, he's getting away with it. He just pick-pocketed my new ostrich skin wallet your bought me for my birthday. Get him. Quick, he's almost out the door.

New York Times

OK, here's the plan, you run out the In door, and I'll run out the out door, and I'll head him off at the pass.

This isn't a spaghetti western. Forget about the pass. There aren't any passes in Capri.

The Post

Shit, these damn wingtips, I wish I had my Nike's.

New York Times

You know, Nike was the goddess of victory—daughter of Pallus and Styx.

The Post

Yes, isn't that her standing at the top of the stairs in the Louvre, the winged Victory of Samothrace, the one with the wings, but no head?

New York Times

That's her. Too bad about her head, lobbed off by ancient hunters.

The Post

A travesty, But I'm getting used to it. I mean, you see someone time and time again, and then one day it doesn't seem to matter if they have lost their head. You just take it for granted.

New York Times

I think we're gaining on him.

The Post

I'm gonna tackle, wait! Here goes. Umph.

New York Times

He dropped it. Great! but he's getting away.

The Post

We have the wallet. That's all that matters.

New York Times

Yes, but I think I ripped my pajamas.

The Post

Let's look on the bright side.

New York Times

The bright side?

The Post

The bright side-- your ostrich skin leather wallet, which we have right here on the dresser next to your keys, is worth way more than a pair of pajamas that may or may not be ripped. And inside the wallet are all your cards, particularly your American Express, which has a twenty thousand dollar credit line, not sure what that is in Euros, and you have about three thousand dollars in Euros there, all in five hundred notes. I told you to break a few of those. It's really difficult to spend them. Imagine going into Rays Pizza and handing them a seven hundred and fifty dollar note for a two dollar and fifty cent piece of pizza. You think that they'd accept it?

New York Times

You know that pizzas were invented in Naples?

The Post

By whom?

New York Times

Raphaele Esposito. I didn't even know there were seven-hundred and fifty dollar notes. Have you ever seen one?

The Post

Of course I haven't seen one, they don't exist. This is all theoretical. Are you alright?

New York Times

Yeah, I just feel a bit nauseous, short of breath. It must have been all the excitement.

The Post

Well that was quite a run. But if we walk a little further up the hill we will be in Anacapri. You think you can make it?

New York Times

How do you know so much about Capri? Have you ever been there?

The Post

I've certainly been here. Stop hogging the covers.

New York Times

Life should be so symmetrical.

The Post

When it comes to linen sheets, yes. We have the same amount of toes on each side of our bodies, the same amount of fingers, our nostrils are equidistance from the imaginary centerline of our face, so shouldn't we have the same allotment of sheet?

New York Times

I'll give you that.

The Post

There's an apothecary up on top, just to the right. We can get you some aspirin.

New York Times

I don't need aspirin, maybe an Advil.

The Post

Aspirin works better, it's a blood thinner. What about a hotel? It's getting dark.

New York Times

I arranged for all that ahead of time.

The Post

Very thoughtful of you.

New York Times

Villa Saint Michele. The most beautiful place on earth.

The Post

Earth?

New York Times

Earth.

The Post

Does it have five stars? Boise would have insisted on five-stars.

New York Times

Oscar was broke. He couldn't afford it, even if it were a hotel. At the time they visited it was the home of an eccentric—with beautiful gardens--I know the gamekeeper. We can stay in the cottage on the hillside overlooking the sea. If we hurry, we can watch the sunset, one of many, I suppose, considering the overall scheme of things.

The Post

Do you know the gamekeeper in the biblical sense of the word?

New York Times

It was a long time ago. It's just you and me now. He was old then, he is older now. You have nothing to worry about.

The Post

When we get up there, I just want to have a cup of Assam and snuggle up.

New York Times

Up where? True, there's no heat. Nippy. But at least there's Sorrow here to warm the toes. Have you walked him?

The Post

So what about dinner?

New York Times

Already prepared. The wine is breathing.

The Post

Well I am happy something is still breathing, but there's no lights here, no heat, no electricity.

New York Times

We don't need electricity. Oscar was a romantic. We have candles.

The Post

What about music? We don't have any music?

New York Times

We can sing, we can always sing.

The Post

OK, so what will it be?

New York Times

How about that old Billie Holiday tune.

The Post

What's that?

New York Times

(He starts humming a tune
to 'I'll be seeing you.')

Da da de da de da da da de da de da...

The Post

I know it, but what are the words?

New York Times

You've heard it before?

The Post

I played it on the trumpet back in high school. Don't worry, it was way before we met. Where are the violins?

New York Times

Violins? We don't need violins. Billie Holiday didn't have any violins. I tell you what, I'll say the words and then you sing the lines. We're not going to get back to sleep anyway. I'll be seeing you

(Sung haltingly)

I'LL BE SEEING YOU

(Spoken, with intermittent coughs)

In all the old familiar places

The Post

(Sung)

IN ALL THOSE OLD FAMILIAR PLACES

New York Times

(Spoken)

That this heart of mine embraces

The Post

That this heart of mine embraces

New York Times

(Spoken, coughing)

All day and through. Sorry, feeling a bit queezy, go on.

Where's Sorrow?

The Post

He is under the sheets like he always is.

New York Times

He's not at my feet. My feet are cold. Can you nudge him?

The Post

If I nudge him he is going to wake up and growl. You know he hates being nudged when he's fast asleep.

New York Times

Well, OK, go on then...

The Post

(Sung)

ALL DAY THROUGH.

New York Times

(Spoken)

In that small café

The Post

(Sung)

IN THAT SMALL CAFÉ

New York Times

(Spoken)

The park across the way

The Post

(Sung)

THE PARK ACROSS THE WAY
THE CHILDREN'S CAROUSEL
THE CHESTNUT TREES, THE WISHING WELL

New York Times

So you do know the words, don't you? What else are you
keeping from me?

The Post

Why don't you just sing along?

(Sung by both in harmony
with violin. But The Times
fades)

I'LL BE SEEING YOU
IN EVERY LOVELY SUMMER'S DAY
IN EVERYTHING THAT'S LIGHT AND GAY
I'LL ALWAYS THINK OF YOU THAT WAY

(More violins join in and
keep playing through the
dialogue.)

The Post

(spoken alone with violin)

AND WHEN THE NIGHT IS NEW

(Pause)

I'll be looking at the moon.

(Pause)

But I'll be ...

(Violins continue with same
song)

New York Times

Air. I need some air. I'm light-headed. I feel like- I
don't know what- like a Winged Victory or something. I'll
be...

The Post

Look outside... the heavens, iridescent... a peacock's tail:
Pink... yellow... lavender... scarlet... ultramarine... cerulean.

New York Times

I'll be... stardust, sparrows, spaniels, sunsets, suns, or
something else.

The Post

Indigo, azure, crimson, blue.

New York Times

Sorry, Sorrow, please come, heal. Sorrow, please come,
heal.

(Theater slowly gets
lighter. Violins, on stage
and in the audience,
continue. Birds chirp for
several minutes, then crows
come in with their caws.
Music continues.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF ACT 2)

(END OF PLAY)