SEXCAPADES

An Evening of One-Act Plays

by Sergei Task
COITUS

A one-act play

by Sergei Task
CHARACTERS

HE, a student playwright
SHE, a student actress

TIME: Late afternoon.
PLACE: A small apartment.

NOTE: Coitus, the act of sexual intercourse, esp. between human beings. [<Latin: a coming together, uniting.]
(A very tidy bedroom, save for a pile of clothes on the floor, which does not seem right. On a desk, a laptop computer with a glowing screen. On a couch, a couple is engaged in ferocious lovemaking.)

HE Is that it?

SHE Mmmmm. Mmmmm.

HE That's it?

SHE Give it to me . . . yes . . . oh my God . . . oh my God.

HE Ah . . . um . . . oh-oh-oh . . . Jeeeeeeeee!

SHE Yes, yes, yessss.

(Residual commotion followed by a long silence. He takes a pack of Gauloise and an ashtray from the bed stand and lights a cigarette. She motions that she also wants one, and he lights it for her. They are puffing away languidly. Then--)

SHE Well.

HE Yeah.

SHE I tell you . . .

HE Yeah?

SHE It was like . . . you know.

HE Uh-uhm.

SHE Whew.

(Beat.)
SHE (Cont’d)
Strong stuff. *(puts out her cigarette)* Well. I'm going . . . lippety-lippety. *(she gets on her feet and loses her balance)* Oops! You get some rest, steam pump.

*(She goes to the bathroom. Having finished his cigarette, he collects her clothes scattered on the floor and routinely hangs them in the closet, next to his. He wraps himself up in a bed sheet, sits down at the computer and continues to work on something that appears to have been interrupted by this little tryst. After a while the girl is back dressed in man's bathrobe.)*

SHE
Already betraying me with this little thing?

HE
Don't tell me you're jealous.

SHE
Beware of Medea! *(He goes to the bathroom, humming a tune. She sits down at the computer and reads.)* She: "Interesting play." He: "Thanks." She: "Do you fuck as intensely as you write?" *(to him, loudly)* Bastard. These are my words!

HE
*(from the bathroom)*
They are?

SHE
Don't get smart with me. It's exactly what I asked you after the reading!

HE
Hm.

SHE
Only I didn't say fuck.

HE
*(appears in the doorway)*
I had to revise it.

SHE
Really.

HE
Sounds more . . . intense. What do you think?

SHE
What do *I* think? I think you're one fucking snoopy son of a bitch.

HE
Yeah, well--

(Pause. She is reading the script.)

SHE
You squeeze as much as you can out of it, huh?

HE
I'm sorry.

SHE
The hell you are. (a sudden thought) Are you saying you're going to describe in detail how--?

HE
I'll make the coffee.

SHE
I asked you a question.

HE
What was the question?

SHE
You're not really going to recap how we, you know . . . or are you? (he shrugs in response) You shmuck.

HE
. . . wait a m. . .

SHE
I can't believe it!

HE
Wait--listen--listen to me--look. I'm not even using real names--

SHE
Thank you. Thank you very much.

HE
Aw, come on. Everything is going to look different on paper, can't you see?

SHE
Sure.

HE
. . . plotted out, distilled . . .

SHE
Whereas here it was messy, dirty. Where are my clothes? Where are they?

HE

. . . I . . . (he points to the closet)

SHE

(incredulous)
You hung them in the closer? Are you Mother Goose or something?
(she is getting dressed without as much as a word)

HE

(watching her)
It's from the army. The Red army. If they saw one crease on the bed spread, they sent you off to play chess . . . a euphemism for cleaning floors in the latrine. They usually have checkered tiles. I learned to sew white collars on my fatigues every day. Clean the buckle on my belt until it gleaned. Pluck hairs off my ears.

SHE

No.

HE

The sergeant wanted us to look like his darling babies. I think he was gay.

SHE

Gays can serve in the army there?

HE

Actually they don't say "gay" there, they say "blue." But everyone was supposed to be red, as far as the Soviet army was concerned. They didn't look in your pants--at least not on a regular basis.

(Beat.)

SHE

Are you saying . . . ?

HE

Practical jokes, you know.

SHE

Poor thing. When did you move here?

HE

Oh. Three years.

SHE

And then you began writing in English?
Kind of.

Kind of?

(Pause.)

You eat pancakes?

Sometimes.

How do you like them?

Well done. Why?

I used to fry the Russian side of my pancakes first, then I would flip them over on the English side.

You mean . . . the translation routine?

Right.

But you don’t do it anymore?

No.

Does it feel different?

(reaching under her pullover)

You bet.

(They kiss.)

So what do you think about my breasts? Linguistically speaking?
Let me see. I like that well rounded phrase with a little arrogant exclamation mark . . . if I can pull one off.

SHE

A line from a future play?

HE

Want to censor it?

SHE

Depends on--

HE

--whose breasts I’m going to feature in the production?

SHE

Well . . .

HE

The part is yours.

(Pause.)

SHE

(disengages herself)

I'm not sure.

HE

You're not sure.

SHE

It's not you, OK?

HE

/loading the coffee maker, his back to her

No?

SHE

I can't play myself, can I?

HE

Why not?

SHE

Why not indeed.

HE

It's a challenge.

SHE
Yeah.

It is.

Bullshit.

I want you to leave.

What--?

I want you to leave and make your entrance and say what you said (he glances at his watch) half an hour ago.

What did I say?

You said, "It didn't take me too long?" Take it easy. We'll improvise.

Take it easy yourself.

(She exits. He gets into bed with a paperback. A tentative knock.)

I could've grown a beard. (loudly) It's open!

(She re-enters.)

It didn't take me too long? (pause) What?

You want me to get the whole picture?

What are you talking about?

How you showered and shaved your legs while you were on the phone with a friend and then you went to borrow a pill from a neighbor because you ran out . . . .
You got all that from one innocent line?

HE

If anything, it was not innocent. You sounded like a pro.

SHE

Is that right?

HE

I mean your character sounded like a--

SHE

Foul play.

HE

. . . I apologize . . .

SHE

There are things you don't bring up. Even if they are true.

HE

So I was close?

SHE

That's not the fucking point.

HE

Being professional?

SHE

I call it trespassing.

HE

That's our job. I didn't make the rules.

SHE

Meaning there are none?

HE

Like you said: That's not the fucking point. You don't like it, you land a better job.

SHE

Playing tough, eh?

HE

I am not! I'm not playing tough, for heaven's sake! This is about truth, don't you get it? That fucking come-and-get-me tease! You follow her all the way bedazzled by her baboon privates and

HE (Cont’d)
just when you think you've got your chance she's probably mating with a jerk who doesn't even care. Jesus! I must sound like Rush Limbaugh. Hey, wait! Where you going?

SHE
*(stops at the door)*

Shall I try again?

HE
Try . . . ? Oh *that*. Why don't we skip the foreplay? Cut to the chase.

SHE
You mean--?

HE
*(points to bed)*

Act Two.

*(Pause.)*

SHE
You suggest that we rehearse lovemaking?

HE
Why not?

SHE
Do all the blocking?

HE
If you want the part.

SHE
This is it? Now can I laugh?

HE
Listen. There is this scene in the play--well, there *will be* a scene--where they make love. So I proposed working on it--anything wrong with that?

SHE
I think someone here is not quite right upstairs.

HE
OK.

SHE
Really.

HE
If you say so.

Take it easy, young man. You'll live.

Doctor, won't you please elaborate--?

Simple: we've just done it.

So you can't come again.

Very funny.

I'm trying to follow your train of thought.

SHE

(exaggerated patience)

It's us. You and me.

HE

So?

SHE

So. We can't pretend it's all "acting," don't you see? As if it's not real.

HE

(enchanted by the idea)

True feelings, yes! I'm all for it!

SHE

It's not theatre, it's--

HE

Yes?

SHE

--it's shameless exhibitionism in front of an unknowing audience.

HE

So they will know.

SHE

But the cost!
The cost? (thinks it over for a moment) Four dollars for students, five for adults. I find that reasonable for a real eye-opener. Personally, I wouldn't charge senior citizens. With their experience, they might even give us some tips.

Aha. So it was a joke, I see.

SHE

HE (draws her closer)

Shhh, shhh.

SHE

Let go!

HE

We're stuck.

SHE

Don't make me laugh.

HE

Sit . . .

SHE

Who the hell do you think--?

HE . . . please . . . (she sits down, reluctantly) I need you.

SHE

Ha!

HE

I mean it.

SHE

My Dad used to say that when I tried to sneak out of the house. Minong. Population 557. You missed your period, you were the talk of the town. And if I were smart enough to sneak out, the only place to go would be a diner. The diner. (he crosses to the counter to make their drinks) It's where you put your fortunes at stake. The dice, they smelled of licorice. What a game! The loser paid for the drinks. Soft drinks. The most memorable event of the week. Minong, Wisconsin. The ultimate paradise in your rear-view mirror. If anything can still make me run for my life it's that old familiar I-need-you routine.

HE

Here. (he is holding two cups)

SHE
What is this?

HE

Black Russian.

SHE

(takes a sip)

Wow.

HE

Kahlua and vodka. Well?

SHE

Well. (they clink and drink) Why would you need me anyways?

Forget it.

SHE

Come on.

You won't believe it.

HE

I'll believe anything, my dear. Just warn me in advance.

You see, experience . . .

SHE

What?

HE

. . . I write from experience. I don't concoct, I don't fantasize, I go for "it."

SHE

And--bang!--you came. See, and you thought I wouldn't get it.

HE

We may horse around, but that's what life is all about. It's what they go for: blood, sweat, and tears. Not some soap opera for dispepsic viewers--the real thing that hits you in the guts.

SHE

To put it bluntly, you need to prime your pipe to get your story going.

HE

If "blunt" is what you're looking for.

SHE
What are *you* looking for?

(Pause.)

HE

A model, I think, is a better way to put it. A model you sketch and draw and paint in private until you’re ready to display her charms to connoisseurs.

SHE

Very subtle. I'm afraid I didn't sit much.

HE

You were the best.

SHE

How many seances do you think it will take?

HE

One never knows. Five . . . ten . . . Is there a problem?

SHE

Let me see. *(she opens her memo pad)* Monday I can't. Tuesday I take two tests so I doubt I'll be up to it. Wednesday . . . I have a window between 2:15 and 3:00. You think we could squeeze it in?

HE

Hardly.

SHE

Yeah. How about Thursday? Nah, Thursday I go to Des Moines about my car insurance. Friday. Friday should be perfect. Classes are over by three, we could have dinner somewhere and then just hit the sack. You could fuck me--I mean *paint* me--till you drop dead. Damn it! Nicole, my sister, is gonna be in town. Bad luck.

HE

What about the weekend?

SHE

*(gives him a strange look)*

The weekend?

HE

Yes. Saturday, Sunday.

SHE

You think we could do it on the weekend?

HE

Why not?
I don't know. Somehow it doesn't feel right.

It doesn't... I don't get it.

Look. Ours is a business relationship, right? Weekend is leisure time. It's when everyone else is doing it spontaneously and we simply cannot afford it.

Now wait a minute, wait a... How are we different from everyone else? All it takes is being hungry.

(suspiciously)

Being hungry?

Exactly. You're hungry, you help yourself.

(shocked)

You mean doing it for kicks?

And why not?

You really don't get it or are you pulling my leg?

... as a matter of fact...

Use your profession as a screen for idle lust?

Hmn.

As a lame excuse?

All right, all right!

It's gross.
HE
I take it back, OK? I never looked at it that way, I'm sorry. And, yes, it's a point well taken. Anyway . . . next week?

SHE
I'll be in Chicago for auditions.

HE
You must be a sadist.

SHE
Sorry.

HE
(after an ominous pause)
So what do I do? There's a timeline, you see.

SHE
What's the timeline?

HE
May. I have to produce it in time for the festival. So the script is due the end of April. At the latest.

SHE
Pooh. You may as well forget it, as far as I'm concerned. (pause)

HE
You can't walk out on me!

SHE
Listen--

HE
No you listen. This project, it's been approved. I got the money, I got the studio, even the date of the premiere has been set, for Pete's sake! Who do you think I am? An asshole?

SHE
Calm down.

HE
Her sister's gonna be in town! Here's to an all-American sex-free day!

SHE
You're nuts.

HE
Holy Jesus!
Don't be a wimp. There's always a solution.

Solution my ass!

Wait--

What?

(Pause.)

It's crazy.

Huh?

Forget it.

Say it!

I don't even know how it crossed my mind. Well . . . I could talk to my sister.

Your sister.

I can't guarantee anything.

But you could talk to her?

I guess I could.

How old is she?

Does it matter?

No. I guess it doesn't.
Seventeen.

Seventeen?

She's come of age, if that's what you were thinking.

It's not what I was thinking. Is she a virgin?

At seventeen? Who is a virgin at seventeen these days!

Is that an answer to my question?

It's a general statement.

Get it straight: it's about fucking art, not the art of fucking. I have a business relationship, I finish my play, it's over. No strings attached. I don't mess with some cherry who's going to hold me responsible for her husband's impotence and her lousy extramarital sex.

And why should you?

So back to first base: Is she a virgin?

No. (pause) Yes.

I'll pass. She wouldn't go for it anyway.

How do you know?

A cherry? With a total stranger?
Not a total stranger. She saw you last fall when she came to visit. At the Monday night in-house reading.

(It takes him a few moments to pin her down.)

HE
That puny thing? You're kidding, she must be thirteen!

SHE
Don't be ridiculous, she'll be sixteen in October.

HE
I thought I heard seventeen.

SHE
I must have been thinking of Lisa. Lisa is seventeen.

HE
Hey, what is this, the Woman's National Figure Skating Championship? And your third sister will be what--twelve?

SHE
You have options, Mr. Grumble?

HE
You know I don't, which is what makes your teasing all the more insulting.

SHE
Teasing! Didn't I say I was gonna talk to her?

HE
If you are serious then you're not being realistic.

SHE
Are you listening? She saw you, she liked you!

HE
She liked me.

SHE
Weird, huh?

HE
She liked me?

SHE
Imagine that.

HE
As a playwright?

SHE
Frankly, I doubt she cares much about your play. Or any other play, for that matter.

HE
So she liked me as a--?

SHE
As a man, yes.

HE
She told you that herself?

SHE
Who else.

HE
Hm.

SHE
I'm her big sister, she listens to me. Not that I would ever dream of pushing her into this, you understand.

HE
Right.

SHE
But she'll tell me if, for whatever reasons, she chooses to go for it.

HE
She wouldn't.

SHE
Maybe she will.

HE
Never.

SHE
She might.

HE
No.

SHE
Yes!
Not for love or money.

Yes she would! She will! I know it!

How do you know?

'Cause she told me, dummy.

How could she tell you before you even asked her?

I didn't have to ask her. She said it to me in the middle of that stupid reading six months ago.

(Beat.)

You're saying . . . Are you saying that you slept with me so that she could--?

Now you know.

Come on. I bet you just made it up.

You may win the title of Major League nitwit before you know it.

Why would she need a go-between? She wanted it so badly, she could--

Yes?

I don't know. There are lots of ways a girl can--

Not when you're seventeen . . .

. . . fifteen . . .

. . . sixteen and a virgin and highly selective about the person she's going to--
Oh brother. I'm the Lucky Prince on whom she's going to bestow her virginity.

SHE
She may be a little fussy about it but isn't that what rubs the ego of you men? Come on, admit it. You are flattered to be the chosen one.

HE
Said Abraham to his son Isaac as he picked up his axe.

SHE
Big deal. It’s not gonna kill you.

(Pause.)

HE
How long's she gonna be around?

SHE
As long as you need her to keep the project alive. She has an extreme sense of responsibility.

You must like her a lot.

SHE
I'd do anything for her.

HE
Well. I don't know.

SHE
She needs you, you need her, it's perfect. And come to think of it: you may be the first man ever to reach twin climax--in life and in a play. It's a win-win situation.

HE
Hm.

SHE
Are you going to work on a daily basis?

HE
If she can handle it.

SHE
Can you handle it?

HE
I have to meet the deadline.
Of course.

HE

Look, do you mind if I . . . . (he points at the computer)

SHE

Go ahead. I was about to leave anyway.

HE

No no no. Please. It's eh . . . just a thought. Won't you finish your coffee?

SHE

I may as well.

(A long pause. She is sipping her coffee, he is expertly running his fingers across the keyboard. Then--)

HE

Funny.

SHE

What?

HE

This whole thing.

SHE

Yes?

HE

I could utilize it.

SHE

You could utilize it?

HE

It's a veritable play. A writer starts an affair. He is using this girl. Until he finds out she was using him. Then this other girl comes forward. You know. It's quite a plot.

SHE

The other girl?

HE

The real thing. Her sister.

SHE

Her sister?
Nicole.

SHE
There's no Nicole, I thought you knew it all along.

HE
You mean--?

SHE
I made her up five minutes ago.

HE
How witty. (pause)

SHE
You know this show I'm in?

HE
Which one?

SHE
Set in the Bronx? Late sixties?

HE
So?

SHE
I play this girl who is not there. Lives in her dream world. Mixes facts and fiction. Well... I work on my character, I make things up.

HE
(a short pause)
Not bad. Not bad at all.

SHE
You think it's a joke?

HE
No. I think it's a good joke.

SHE
Here. (she produces a notebook from the pocket of her slacks)

HE
What's that?

SHE
Character study.
Huh . . . well . . . really . . .

See?

Yep. So who was that puny thing anyway?

Daughter of the girl I share the apartment with. She was my responsibility that day so I took her along with me. I should've known better. Five minutes through the reading, and her ears were the color of your national flag.

I didn't know there was someone underage until I was finished.

You're not mad at me?

No.

Didn't mean to offend you.

No offense taken.

Friends?

Friends.

(a sigh of relief)

For a moment, you know, I thought you could kill me.

Uh-uh.

You had that face.

Yeah?
Like, Lady, you're in trouble!

No no. You took me in completely, and . . . I'm thrilled.

A while ago someone implied I was a bad actress.

Who? I?

Said I sounded like a pro.

I meant "professional."

You meant "prostitute."

Absolutely not! You're a marvel. I'm taking my hat off to you. I mean it. At any rate, we are even.

Even?

You were late for today's reading.

Five minutes.

You missed the announcement.

What announcement?

That Mike Lipshit was meeting with his agent to negotiate a deal with Universal. You ever heard of a Lipshitz who’s lost his “z” down the road?

(ignores it)

So?

. 
So he couldn't read his play. So he asked me to read it for him. So I did. We are best friends, you know. (Pause.)

**SHE**

Lottery?

**HE**

Mmm.

**SHE**

It's not your play?

**HE**

Uh-uh.

**SHE**

You stole your friend's limelight.

**HE**

I confess my sin, Mother Superior.

**SHE**

You are a jerk, and you can quote me on that.

**HE**

Not in bed though?

**SHE**

No, not in bed.

**HE**

Why, thank you. The game was worth the candle, don't you think?

**SHE**

I don't know. I need some time to get my thoughts together.

**HE**

Speaking of time, we should get out of here before he's back. (he crosses to closet to dress up)

**SHE**

Who?

**HE**

Mike. (Beat.)

**SHE**

It's his apartment?
His apartment, his bathrobe, his computer. His bed too. I couldn't possibly invite you to where I live.

SHE

You stole everything from your best friend.

HE

As a matter of fact, he gave me the key so that I can use his laptop once in a while. But the news that I screwed his aficionado in his own bed might upset him.

SHE

So you'd rather not tell him?

HE

There is a proverb in my home country: "Simplemindedness is worse than stealing." He is a very nice kid even if he is abhorrently tidy, as you have shrewdly noticed. (he begins to make the bed, she joins him a moment later) I hope he struck this deal with Universal. They'll rent him a place on location, you know, so he can do the rewrites--

SHE

--while you work on your play in his bed.

HE

Well let's just look at it objectively in terms of acting space. Isn't it perfect? I mean it's just right for two--maybe even three actors.

SHE

I see your point.

(She collects their cups. She will rinse them in the sink, put them away and wipe the counter.)

HE

And?

SHE

You think your artistic method will be readily accepted by Actors' Equity?

HE

Are you ready to accept it?

SHE

Do I have a contract?

HE

We'll work something out.

SHE

I'm sure we will.
We can discuss it over the dinner. How about The Kitchen?

SHE

Sounds good.

HE

Then off we go? *(he lights a cigarette, sitting on couch)*

SHE

What about the computer?

HE

What about it?

SHE

Aren't you worried that Mike is going to read your notes? The things we did, the things we said. . . ?

HE

*(with surprising indifference)*

It's all fiction. If he can use it--fine. In a sense, it all belongs to him, right?

*(Sitting beside him, she borrows his cigarette, takes a drag, gives it back to him.)*

SHE

The notes?

HE

Yes.

SHE

But not me?

HE

No, not you. Definitely not you.

*(Lights fade to half. As a song Froggie Went A-Courtin' picks up, we see a red glow of a cigarette being passed back and forth in the dark. It could be the end of the play, but it isn’t. Lights go up again. )* 

HE

Well?

SHE

*I didn’t see any problems.*

HE

I said *things*. There appear to be *things* that may *lead* to a problem.
Not to *my* knowledge.

**HE**

You don’t have to walk on tiptoe around me.

**SHE**

I’m not walking on tiptoe around you! You may of course change a thing or two, I mean if you feel like it, but it’s definitely moving in the--

**HE**

A thing or two, huh?

**SHE**

Oh don’t get paranoid.

**HE**

No no no, *tell* me.

**SHE**

There’s nothing to tell, really.

**HE**

No “emotionally inadequate behavior” this time, I promise.

**SHE**

Well--

**HE**

Fire out.

**SHE**

I don’t know. Little things like--

**HE**

Yes?

**SHE**

--Mike Lipchitz.

**HE**

Mike Lipchitz?

**SHE**

He’s our landlord.

**HE**

So?

**SHE**
The guy in your play is screwing “his aficionado” in “his” apartment--so?

HE

He’ll never know.

SHE

You gonna shoot him in the foyer?

HE

(covers his stomach in mock fright)

“They shot me in the foyer!” (he is doing an imitation of their landlord) He’ll think the foyer is French for the underbelly. Are you kidding? The man’s never been to a live show.

SHE

Honey--

HE

Okay, I’ll make it Zissimopoulos. What the hell, they’re going to skin me alive anyway. It’s a big joke! It’s not touching, it’s not funny--

(She hugs and rocks him like a little child.)

SHE

Shhhh, shhhh.

HE

(voice muffled)

It’s stilted, it’s tacky--

SHE

No.

HE

--it’s clunky, it’s fuzzy, it’s sleazy, it’s schlocky, it’s--

SHE

Shhh, baby.

HE

I could choke on my own words.

SHE

Not if you saw the last rehearsals. We tried things out when she comes from the bathroom--whew!

(He raises his head showing some interest.)

HE

Yes?

SHE
“It’s dynamite.”

HE

Hmn.

SHE

“It’s shaping up faster than you know it.”

HE

Right. I had a thought about her Minong, Wisconsin monologue. *(he chuckles)* Really weird.

SHE

“You just keep fishing where the fish are biting.”

HE

Speaking of fish.

SHE

“Mmm?”

HE

“I love you, trout.”

SHE

“Love you, mackerel.”

*(He sprawls out comfortably on the bed in his shoes.)*

Honey? Do you realize that the only time you ever made this bed was when we here worked on your play today?

*(He ignores it.)*

HE

“There’s one other thing.”

SHE

*(with a sigh)*

Yes?

HE

“That opening scene--?”

SHE

Their lovemaking.

HE

Right. I’ve been thinking . . .”

SHE
Oh.

Like, the chemistry?

Go ahead.

It’s all so . . . *rehearsed*, you know what I’m saying? Like you guys are really *working* on it. Take us. *We* don’t work on it do we? It just . . . happens, I guess.

You want to throw it out?

As a matter of fact--

You know what they’ll say. They’ll say you chickened out.

Come on . . .

No fancy stuff with my dear little wifie.

That’s bull!

It’s theater. People talk.

Well that’s exactly out of the play: shameless exhibitionism in front of the--

*(Telephone rings.)*

Sorry, hon.

*(She gets it.)*

Hello? Oh how do you do. *(she covers the mouthpiece)* It’s Lipchitz. *(into phone)* Yes. Oh thank you, thank you very . . . *(to husband)* Shoot. He knows about the show. *(into phone)* Yes, that’s correct, a week from now. Friday. Are you really? Oh that’s wonderful. *(to husband)* That asshole’s gonna fuck it up! *(into phone)* Maybe we can, eh, *(bravely)* give you a complimentary tick--*two* tickets, of course. Oh, no trouble at all, we’ll be delighted to . . . What is it about? Oh,
boy meets girl, girl meets boy, you know . . . Actually, at his friend’s apartment, but she doesn’t . . . (her smile wilts, replaced by a growing dismay) Mr. Lipchitz . . . Mr. Lip . . . shit . . .

HE (alarmed)

What?

SHE (into phone)
You see, my husband didn’t use your name, sir. It’s a coincidence, a very unhappy coincidence, but we’re going to take good care of it, sir. In fact he has already changed it to . . . to . . . (she desperately motions for a clue, but neither of them is able to think of a single name) So there’s really no . . . What do you mean he doesn’t have to?

(Her face assumes an expression of utter disbelief.)

HE (panicky)

What?!?

SHE (into phone)
I see. I see. That’s a very brave decision, sir. (to husband) He’s changing his name. . . .

CURTAIN
ANTHROPOIDS

A one-act play

by Sergei Task
CHARACTERS

BIG BEN
CHI CHI
ZA ZA
CINDY
SANDY
In the darkness, we hear a campy potpourri of popular tunes, then loud cheers. Lights come up. We see the Great Ape House. Floor covered with mats. Ropes and flying trapezes dangle from the ceiling. A high platform, up left. Down left and right, lie ski poles. Center stage, a stack of books and magazines; torn-out pages are scattered around.

With cheerful cries, actors dressed in unitards swing on the ropes and trapezes, do leapfrog and cartwheels and somersaults. Sounds of the zoo, at first barely recognizable, then increasing in volume, finally arrest their attention. Actors stop their pranks and give ear to the animal sounds; their shoulders sag, they stoop, etc., transforming into monkeys.

This goes on for a while until BIG BEN gives a warning grunt. They come forward, pick up ski poles and, one after another, with a hateful, embittered scream, drive them into the floor, upright, to form two rows of cage bars.

Blackout.

Lights up again. We see the two smaller gorillas, CINDY and SANDY, facing the audience. As far as these two are concerned, there is no audience, not yet. The zoo is to open in about half an hour.

SANDY is scratching CINDY'S back with the remarkable precision of someone who has been doing it for years. She must be secretly enjoying it, in her own way, judging by how she shifts her body, signaling another sensitive spot.

Excited grunts and howls from the adjacent cage suggest that breakfast has arrived. The two gorillas seem to pay no attention; their expression is that of aloofness and quiet melancholy.

ATTENDANT

(offstage)

Easy, easy. There's enough for everyone. Hey, what do you think you're doing? Stop it! Now. I'm not giving you your bananas until you say how sorry you are. (whimpering sounds) Are you ashamed? (more whimpers) All right. I want my belt back, and someone better zip my pants before I really get cross.

CINDY
What's so special about them? (pause) I'm talking about them orangs? (pause) He treats them like Chinese mandarins.

(SANDY is scratching her back.)

I'm not even sure they are from China. (she shifts her body) That is Imperial China. Confucius, koans . . . you know.

SANDY
Want me to do your butt?

(She half-rises to allow him better access.)

CINDY
Boy, can they be mean! Remember that story? The Murder on . . . whatever. Edgar Allan Poe.
(She sits up, thus indicating the scratching routine is over. She picks up torn-out pages from the floor and reads at random. He lights a cigar, puffs away, then offers it to her.)

SANDY
Wanna try a Cuban? They are the best.

CINDY
You want me to throw up again.

SANDY
Nah. You got sick on dope. Dope is hallocinogenic.

CINDY
Hell o' what?

(He rummages through his books stacked up downstage.)

SANDY
I think it's Latin.

CINDY
You looked it up?

SANDY
Za Za told me.

(Pause. She reshuffles the pages in what she thinks is the right order, then scans them as she speaks.)

CINDY
How would she know?

SANDY
She and Big Ben, they did drugs in L.A. before they were moved up here. Went into therapy. It was pretty bad. You could be a retard, you know.

CINDY
What about you?

SANDY
(reluctantly)
Me too. Unless my Mom’s Chi Chi.

(He picks up a telephone directory and begins to read it, while she goes down on all fours looking for a missing page.)

CINDY
She didn't do drugs?
SANDY
She comes from Albuquerque. So-so zoo, very tight security. A man slipped a candy through the bars, they cut his balls off.

CINDY
No kidding.

SANDY
You might like it. (SANDY passes her the cigar, CINDY takes a puff, goes into a coughing fit. He pats her on the back.) There, there.

(Enter CHI CHI from what appears to be a shelter in the same cage, upstage. She wears a poncho, red glass beads and a charm bracelet. She is peeling a banana.)

CHI CHI
(suspiciously)
What's going on here? Cindy, you can spare me your little spectacle. (CINDY takes offense and retreats to the far corner where she produces hair ribbons and sets to work on her “weirdo.” SANDY smartly sits on his cigar. CHI CHI gives him the once-over.) You may not realize it, but we are opening in (glances at her one-dollar watch) half an hour. (about to leave)

Chi Chi?

SANDY

CHI CHI
(munching)
Hmm?

SANDY
Why do you say we?

CHI CHI
(points at her banana)
Because I have a sense of responsibility. (She smells something in the air, crosses to SANDY and sniffs him all over.) Sandy?

SANDY
What?

CHI CHI
You stink.

SANDY
I'll ask them to smuggle in a bottle of shampoo.

CHI CHI
Wise guy.

(She exits. Pause.)
SANDY
She's so damn self-righteous I feel like I'm frying in hell.

CINDY
It's only a cigar.

SANDY
Eh? (*He retrieves the stub from under his seat and buries it in the sand, then opens the directory again.*) Another work day, huh?

(CINDY comes over.)

CINDY
Sandy--

SANDY
Mmm?

CINDY
Do we have to do it . . . upside down?

(*She gives him a nudge to make him look at her weird hairdo, he does, without much interest, and goes back to his reading.*)

SANDY
Tut tut tut.

CINDY
It's so--

SANDY
You think I like it?

CINDY
Then why--

(*Having finished the page, he tears it out without taking his eyes off the next one.*)

SANDY
'Cause they pay for it. They are primitive, they are dumb, but they are eager to learn. Why do you think we attract the biggest crowd?

CINDY
I'm not sure.

SANDY
You saw that watch on Chi Chi's wrist?
CINDY
Anyone can steal a watch.

SANDY
Well she didn't. It was a tip for her performance. And was she good!

CINDY
Phew. *(pulls a headband over her ears)* I think I’m going to wear this.

SANDY
*(looking up briefly)*
I don't care.

Maybe you do.

*(He slams the book shut.)*

SANDY
You want me to be jealous of some sucker in Bermuda shorts who doesn’t even have hair on his chest?

CINDY
*(changing subject)*
I think you lied to me about--what's that word again?

Which one?

SANDY

CINDY
It starts with a “V.”

SANDY
Oh yes. *(looks it up)* Voyeurism.

CINDY
It doesn’t make sense. I mean it’s like watching someone else eat a lollipop while your mouth is watering.

SANDY
Which is exactly what we did when we spied on our folks.

CINDY
*I didn't enjoy it.*

SANDY
Of course.
It may have been . . . informative, but such a grind.

One learns to appreciate these things.

The beauty of it?

Why not.

The high art?

Yes.

(CINDY retrieves dirty cards from a little cache under the mat.)

Hmn . . . there must be something to it.

(Cards are falling down, she does not seem to notice. SANDY is promptly on his knees anxious to put the cards away before he is caught red-handed.)

Thief!

Pervert!

(Enter BIG BEN, a striking stud. He is stretching after a nap. Young monkeys freeze.)

Big.  Try that out and you'll wind up in the emergency room.  Now this would work--with some skill and Penzoil. Big Ben done it all. Gimme a sleeve joint with a reverse thread, and I'll screw my way into it. Come over, Sandy boy!

(SANDY hastily retreats. BIG BEN collects the cards and studies them reflectively, paying no attention to the young monkeys bickering in the background.)

Big Ben (Cont’d)

Well. Try that out and you'll wind up in the emergency room. Now this would work--with some skill and Penzoil. Big Ben done it all. Gimme a sleeve joint with a reverse thread, and I'll screw my way into it. Come over, Sandy boy!

(SANDY approaches him timidly. CINDY grabs the end of a dangling rope and begins to sway, watching the other two from afar. BIG BEN gives SANDY a box on the ear.)
Ow!

BIG BEN

Where'd you get 'em?

SANDY

I--

BIG BEN

The truth!

SANDY

Mr. Finch.

BIG BEN

(shuffling cards)

Your new pal. He'll teach you. Cripples are the worst kind. I'll be damned if he didn't show you X-rated movies. Hunh? Sure. (smacks SANDY who has offered his ear dutifully) They don't know nothin'. Except what they learned from us apes. (louder, for CINDY'S benefit) Evolution my ass. Your Darwin wouldn't stand a chance against marsupial rats, fuckwise.

(CINDY snorts. BIG BEN spreads the cards like a fan.)

'Cause them humans live in this shitty--

(He turns to CINDY for help.)

CINDY

Habitat.

(BIG BEN motions for SANDY to make his pick. SANDY sheepishly takes a card.)

SANDY

(mumbles)

Habitat . . .

BIG BEN

There.

SANDY

What about our habitat?

BIG BEN

We're here by choice. Nothing to be ashamed of.

SANDY

Their choice.
BIG BEN
Only because we let 'em. We allow ourselves to get caught to save the human--

(He turns to CINDY for help.)

CINDY
Species.

(BIG BEN has spread the cards, and SANDY takes one.)

SANDY
Species?

(BIG BEN solemnly)

BIG BEN
--species from biological death.

CINDY
Why would they die? According to recent--

(BIG BEN solemnly)

BIG BEN
'Cause they don't know how. We’re here to give it to them--A to Z. Sheer and clear. They’re dumb, OK? You wanna kill ’em for that? Next thing we’ll see a pack of fucked-up sex-crazed bipeds start a demolition derby. Ain't there enough wackoes running loose?

(CINDY jumps off the rope and crosses to him.)

CINDY
I don’t have to make a fool of myself so they can learn about lovemaking! It's not my idea of enlightenment. And I hate their cheap tokens of affection!

(She dumps her headband and storms out. Beat. BIG BEN stands up.)

BIG BEN
Smart bitch. What's wrong with you guys? Since when has it become hard labor? You need days off? You need a sanitarium to recoup? I been twenty years on the job, I know the ins and outs, and here’s my friendly message: fuck you. F-U-K is how I spell it, and I don’t need you guys to tell me if I’m wrong. You have a clue how many hours of showtime you had to do for one banana in my day? One goddamn stinking banana! Now they swamp you with presents, you have books, you have TV after hours . . . and look at you! No work ethic. None. Hey, dick-wit? What’s the shifting from foot to foot about?

SANDY
I--I'm horny.
You are?

It must be Pavlovian. Conditioned reflex. Just thinking of them watching me, hands on iron bars, eyes popping out . . . I get so virile. Almost like you. The ultimate primate. My own strength almost scares me, but it also fills me with pride. For a moment I forget I’m their captive, their monster plaything safely caged away with others of my kind. I am a gorilla! Isn’t it a wonderful feeling?

Mmmm. *(he turns to go, confused and short for words)*

Big Ben?

Huh? *(he stops)*

What’s so special about them?

Who?

Men.

A pile of shit.

What makes you say that?

Case closed.

*(He is ready to enter the shelter when CINDY appears in the doorway. Her expression changes, she looks frightened. She throws her arms around BIG BEN’S neck.)*

What. Huh. *(tries to set himself free)* What’s got into you?

It's that man in Bermuda shorts that she--

Shut up. *(to CINDY)* What is it?
Oh! It's so brutal! (BIG BEN is struggling to shake her off.)

Mmm?

How can they!

Who are you talkin’ about?

Nobility. Princes of blood.

She’s out of her mind.

They relish it! (BIG BEN finally breaks away.)

You better make sense, gal.

In China--

China?

They have these tables with a hole in the middle, the size of a head, so only the top of it would show. And-- (she falls silent)

What?

It is the ultimate delicacy. A pleasure of the palate. They would tie up a poor monkey under the table, slice off the top of its head, and eat its brains!

(She has covered her face, her body shaking badly. He puts his hand around her.)
BIG BEN
Shhh.

CINDY
While it is still alive!

BIG BEN
They would, huh? As we speak?

SANDY
Last time, about twelve hundred years ago. The T'ang dynasty.

(BIG BEN uncovers CINDY’S face; her eyes are dry.)

BIG BEN
There's not much that we can do about it now, can we?

(He brushes her aside and stoops to enter the shelter. Something going on there arrests his attention. He turns to CINDY, who looks away. It becomes clear that her act was only a cover-up for something BIG BEN was not supposed to see.

Pause.

BIG BEN picks up a stick and weighs it dangerously in his big palm.

To the sounds of “Makin’ Whoopie” by Ray Charles, enter ZA ZA, unperturbed, wearing a blouse with a low cleavage, a wrap-around polka dot skirt, which she is tying up at the moment, and high heels; dangling from her neck on a chain are three pairs of glasses she uses to quiz her opponents. She takes the stick from BIG BEN and does a little tap dance routine.

In her step follows CHI CHI, flushed but reassured by her girlfriend's cockiness. She slips into her poncho and nervously tugs at it as if trying to cover her nakedness.

Ready for a spectacle, the young monkeys climb ropes for a better view.

Finally BIG BEN comes to his senses.)

BIG BEN
You!

(ZA ZA taps, ignoring him.)

ZA ZA
Don't let your brain teach your feet--they always seem to know how. And what can it tell them anyway but a (she does a line of steps) one-two-three-four and one-two-three-four . . . Ah, my dancing class. I didn't take it behind bars, I tell you.

BIG BEN
Watch your tongue, Za Za.
ZA ZA
(dancing)
Imagine a ballroom with a shining floor. And mirrors, many mirrors. When you were awkward, it came back to you tenfold, but when you did it right--ah, the sensation of falling in love with your own body! Its litheness, its . . . completeness.

(She stands still, center stage, caressing her body.)

I knew everyone was watching my (she chuckles) step.

CHI CHI
(pleadingly)
Za Za . . .

(She makes an attempt to stop ZA ZA, who just waltzes out of her embrace.)

ZA ZA
Andy did. Andy who certainly didn't look apish by a long shot.

BIG BEN
(menacingly)
Now--

(He makes a move to hit her, but CHI CHI is quick to intervene. Sensing danger, SANDY climbs even higher.)

ZA ZA
He took me to this bar where you order three drinks and they give you your next one for free. I was zapped in no time. I say, Andy, I could probably do it with you . . . but I'd rather do it with your sister. He was shocked.

(Pause.)

You see, they had sex, he and his sister, three or four times, and she . . . well . . . she always fainted. Passed out even before it really got started. Now that wouldn't exactly qualify as "having sex," would it? And here someone was comparing them, and even worse, in her favor. It drove him absolutely crazy.

(Pause.)

But he wanted me bad. So he set us up. In his apartment. And, well, it was just . . . great. I mean no fainting or anything. So I ask Chris, What's this about your fainting? And she says, Oh I cannot stand that foreign thing inside me.

(She laughs softly; even CHI CHI smiles cautiously.)

BIG BEN
Funny, huh? (The young ones are also giggling, which irritates him all the more.) Are you trying to make a fucking point or what?
ZA ZA
Why yes, I think I'm trying to make a fucking point: We are not what we claim to be.

(Beat. SANDY loses his grip and goes down with a thud.)

SANDY
How do you mean?

BIG BEN
(glaring at ZA ZA)
You're going to regret this.

SANDY
What are we?

ZA ZA
Big Ben is on the warpath. I saw you in all your glory, my dear. Are you saying you have a surprise for me?

CHI CHI
(a warning)
Za Za--

ZA ZA
Sandy, this may dishearten you, but you are not a gorilla. Indeed, no one in this cage is, in spite of our somewhat unrefined manners.

(Beat.)

CINDY
(sliding down)
Well. (she crosses to the iron bars)

ZA ZA
(to BIG BEN)
Do you know something? You are a milksop--like any big man. Tons of muscles concealing a faint heart. Wasn't it fear of failing as a man that brought you here? And fear of flopping as an ape that got us pregnant?

(With a loud cry BIG BEN lunges for ZA ZA, but finds CHI CHI in his way. While he struggles with her, ZA ZA unties her skirt, which drops to her ankles leaving her in a unitard, kicks off her heels, gets hold of a rope and makes it onto the high platform. BIG BEN makes an attempt to intercept her but finally leaves her alone, exasperated.)

BIG BEN
All right then.

ZA ZA
THE GORILLA FAMILY GROWS BIGGER. You made the headlines and secured your future.
BIG BEN
What about yours?

ZA ZA
Inadvertently, yes. For which I never really extended my thanks to you, did I?

(SANDY, still unclear about who he is, is feeling himself all over.)

SANDY
(incredulous)
Are you telling me that I am not an ape?

CINDY
Sandy, she may have drawn, indeed, some hasty conclusions, as far as you are concerned.

(She gives him a pinch, which is supposed to awaken him to reality, then moves about the cage, touching the walls, experiencing with renewed bitterness the sensation of claustrophobia.)

SANDY
Ouch! Until this minute I thought I was a smart monkey, and now I'm what, a dumb human being?

CHI CHI
Darling, I feel that way every time we do it before the audience.

BIG BEN
Milksop, ha! What brought you here? Spunk?

ZA ZA
Indifference? After Chris died in a car accident I was a wreck. I didn’t even have the pep to kill myself, much less hang on. At least they made decisions for you here.

CHI CHI
C'mon, sis. Admit it.

(Pause. SANDY is studying himself in CINDY'S looking glass, which he has found under the mat.)

ZA ZA
So I like the public. But back then, in front of that cage, it was the last thing on my mind. I wasn't even sure that man was talking to me. “Can you picture yourself on the other side of the grille?” “Yeah, why not.” I mean I didn’t care, period.

BIG BEN
Ha!

ZA ZA
Are you saying that this pathetic act of jejune commotion, those lamentable excercises in gland secretion are supposed to be fun? I wish I knew!
(Pause. BIG BEN, who has lost interest in the argument, is sniffing coke. Once the storm has passed, CHI CHI gets her yarn and knitting needles and sets to work. Still crouching, CINDY, as though she is dazed, is moving along the grating, downstage, catching glimpses of the “free world” through the bars.)

Listen. Hey. You've lost me.

Yes, dear?

We are not gorillas?

Not quite.

We are pretending that we are?

As best we can.

What about them?

Them?

Spectators. The audience. Are they pretending they don't know?

Ask your father.

(She sprawls out comfortably.)

Are they?

BIG BEN

It's a screwed-up world. When I entered this monkey business some twenty years ago it was a mine field. Anthropoids' stronghold. You were lucky to live through the day. A lotta shit hit my fan, son, but here I am. Big Ben he made it.

SANDY

What about others?
BIG BEN
It took a while. Like with them Indians--apes were losing their territory. Man always gets his way once he sets his mind to it.

CINDY
(angered)
But we are the only anthropoids in here!

BIG BEN
Right, now it's our turf. We kicked them out, every last one of them.

CINDY
What about--? (she points to the other cage) What about the orangutans?

Who knows.

(Beat.)

(After coke he appears subdued and harmless. CINDY joins SANDY, and they prepare to listen to what BIG BEN has to say much like a child would listen to a bedtime story.)

BIG BEN (Cont’d)
Maybe it is fear. I was a misfit. In school, teachers made me talk so that everyone could have his laugh. I didn't last long. (pause) In the Marines, there was this ensign who was on my ass, so I took a fire-pump and washed him overboard. (pause) Then there was that film company. Hard-core porn. They warmed you up, filed in a single line, like it's a beauty contest or something, and you paraded back and forth: you lost your erection, you lost your job.

ZA ZA
But you did fine, my dear.

BIG BEN
I did fine. I got my stall in their stable of studs.

ZA ZA
Man's language. The heady aroma of horse dung.

CHI CHI
So what happened?

BIG BEN
What do you mean what happened? Nothing happened. She was there (he points to ZA ZA), she knows. "Take One," and you're pumping away, no questions asked.

CHI CHI
I mean why did you quit?
I didn't.

You did too.

Well it's not like--

Yes?

Okay, so I quit. (pause) It was the producer's wife.

Aha!

Yeah, but he was the one who made me do it, like it was my other job. She was a hag. A scarecrow. And the guy was with her for fifteen years? Fifteen years just having her around, not to mention this? I mean the guy was lucky to get impotent. He couldn't have a better excuse for backing out of it, could he?

(Pause.)

Well, he tells me the story of his life over a beer, after we killed a bottle of serious stuff, and he slips that contract across the table, with this provision about his old hag, and I sign it, like it's a joke. I mean I didn't even know how ugly the bitch was.

Snatches and pitfalls, that's what man's world is all about, children.

(Sensing no danger, she gets down by way of a rope to join her friend CHI CHI.)

So you're doing your other job.

So I'm doing my other job, but I'm taking it half seas over, like I'm two balls short. Very low key. Sure enough, the bitch is whining, the boss threatens to take me to court, and I'm trying to figure out if I can put her away without going to jail. So one night I come over to their fancy condo, the boss is out of town, and I set to work. I screw her and I screw her till she's screaming her frizzy head off and then she's crying her eyes out and then she goes limp in my arms, and I just can't stop, this hate is driving me on and on. Next thing I know it's dawn and she's stiff as a board. I sneak out and I leave the door ajar to alert the neighbors, you know, so they can take care of the stupid bitch.

(Pause.)
BIG BEN (Cont’d)

Well, two hours later we're shooting this hot movie and I'm a happy man. Except for one cloud in the sky: the phone. The phone’s not ringing. Late afternoon and there's nothing in the wind. The bitch is stiff, for chrissake, and no one seems to care.

(Pause.)

So after we're done I drive back to their condo. The door is shut, no trace of police, nothing. So I open the door with my key, which came with the job, and the first thing I set my eyes on is the crazy bitch, very much alive, in a see-through gown. She takes me by the hand and she leads me to the dining-room where I see a table laid for two, the whole nine yards, not to mention burning incense sticks. And I'm like a piss frozen in midair, my mind's a blank, and she says . . . with that screwy smile on her face . . . she says, You scratch my back, I scratch yours.

(Pause.)

CHI CHI

I see.

SANDY

I don't.

ZA ZA

You never told me she was in a see-through gown.

BIG BEN

I have no regrets. At least here you're on salary, plus fringe benefits.

CINDY

But we are not monkeys!

ZA ZA

(implying the audience)

They too have been maintaining this for the past one hundred thousand years, and it may well be the biggest hoax in the history of civilization.

CINDY

(up on her feet)

I want out of here!

ZA ZA

No you don't.

CINDY

Now!

(Beat.)
Benny?

ZA ZA

She didn't mean it.

BIG BEN

Cindy?

ZA ZA

Don’t you know me?

CINDY

ZA ZA

(to BIG BEN)

She means it.

(BIG BEN gets up slowly and moves downstage to the cage grating. He gets hold of two ski poles. His muscles bulge in a painful effort, but nothing seems to be happening. And then he pulls the poles out making the opening wide enough to slip through.)

(Pause.)

ZA ZA

Cindy? What are you waiting for? We’ll soon be open to the public.

(CINDY approaches the opening and halts. Everyone is watching her in silence.)

CINDY

I'm sorry.

(Pause.)

ZA ZA

It's nothing. Big Ben hasn't had his final say. (to BIG BEN) Have you, dearest?

(With a mighty outcry, BIG BEN drives the poles back in their place.)

ZA ZA

There you are.

CINDY

What are we going to do now?

ZA ZA

Nothing, God help us.

CINDY

Didn't you accuse Big Ben of--
ZA ZA
Duplicity is all I accused him of. You found out who you are? *Now* you can live in peace.

(SANDY gets up and crosses downstage to inspect the grating.)

CINDY
But we are a laughing stock, Mother!

ZA ZA
We are the best.

CINDY
Ha.

CHI CHI
Do you know how long the waiting list is just to make an interview which may not even get you here? Or any other ape house, for that matter?

CINDY
Come on, Chi Chi.

CHI CHI
It's worse than Al Italia in high season.

CINDY
Really.

CHI CHI
We are talking about people who care. People who work like horses and die like dogs. Zoos, national parks--they are everywhere. They will go out of their way to preserve an endangered species.

CINDY
Are you saying--?

CHI CHI
I was not locked up. Neither was Za Za. Or Big Ben. It was our decision, and not an easy one. You may fail to recognize it as a mission, but at least you can respect our choice.

SANDY
Chi Chi is right. (he beckons CINDY to come over and shows her how easily one can pull the bars apart) If you can walk away it's not like you're in prison. I'm free.

CHI CHI
Which is why they come to you, and not the other way around.

BIG BEN
They know they can learn from us. They sure do.
(A distant buzz of a crowd growing louder by the minute. Silence in the cage. ZA ZA finally breaks the silence by doing a few bars of a Ray Charles song, very quietly.)

ZA ZA
Another season
Another reason
For makin’ whoopie . . .

BIG BEN

Time.

(They warm up, all except CINDY, who is immobile and unresponsive.)

SANDY
Cindy? Is there anything I can get for you?

CINDY
(vaguely)
Fruit, flowers.

SANDY
What?

(The other three come to a standstill to listen.)

CINDY
When Walter de la Mare was on his deathbed, his daughter asked him, Is there anything I can get for you? To which he weakly replied: Too late for fruit, too soon for flowers.

(Hubbub of the excited crowd outside. The inhabitants of the Great Ape House demonstrate the wonders of sexual acrobatics.)

CURTAIN