

PLACED 6TH OUT OF 239 ENTRIES FOR THE
NANTUCKET (RI) 2005 SHORT PLAY FESTIVAL

Of Barons & Queens
A One-act Comedy by Stafford Krause

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By

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

Roxanne Ryan: Ernie Ryan's wife. A housewife in her mid-fifties.

Ernie Ryan: a 60-ish, slightly overweight retired postman.

***Grandpa Williams:** Roxanne's father. A live-in, outspoken old coot.

***Fortune-teller:** Roxanne's female fortune-teller.

Pete Vincenti: Ernie's side kick. A balding, retired sanitation truck driver.

***Tony's Wife:** Wife of the owner and the bartender at Tony's Bar & Grille.

***Larry Bryant:** A Bronx Barons bowling team buddy of Ernie and Pete.

***Phil Barnes:** A Bronx Barons bowling team buddy of Ernie and Pete.

Gilda Vincenti: Pete's wife and Roxanne's best friend.

***Beautician:** A beautician at Paula's Pampered Beauty Salon.

***Mr. Horowitz:** Owner of Horowitz & Son, Fine Apparel

***Father O'Malley:** Ernie and Pete's Irish parish priest.

***Friar Ruspusti:** Rasputin looking member of the Holy Popov religious order.

***Larry's Wife:** Larry Bryant's wife.

***Phil's Wife:** Phil Barnes' wife *May play multiple parts.

THE SETTING

The play is set in the present in the Bronx, New York City.

Scene 1: The Ryan's living room. Monday morning in late Spring.

Scene 2: The Ryan's living room. Monday afternoon in late Spring.

Scene 3: A Fortune-teller's studio. The same Monday afternoon.

Scene 4: Tony's Bar & Grille. The same Monday night.

Scene 5: The Ryan's living room. The following Saturday morning.

Scene 6: A hallway of the Hilton Casino, Atlantic City. The same Saturday night.

Scene 7: Paula's Pampered Beauty Salon. The following Monday morning.

Scene 8: Horowitz & Sons, clothing store. The same Monday evening.

Scene 9: The Ryan's living room. The following Tuesday.

Scene 10: Tony's Bar & Grille. A few days later.

Scene 11: A city street. Several evenings later.

Scene 12: Father O'Malley's study. The next afternoon.

Scene 13: The Ryan's living room. A few days later.

Scene 14: The Ryan's living room. Two evenings later.

Scene 15: Tony's Bar & Grille. The following evening.

Scene 16: The Ryan's living room. A few evenings later.

A suggested staging is a 3-part fixed set. Stage right is a set depicting the Ryan's living room. Stage left is a set depicting Tony's Bar & Grille. Both sets require two doors... a front door and a door to a hallway. Stage center is a rotating stage or scrim area, where secondary scenes with removable props are spotlighted.

(Or all sets may be just props right, left and center; spotlighted on a dark stage.)

SCENE ONE

(As the curtain rises the stage lights are up on the Ryan's living room, stage right. It is a Monday morning in late Spring.

ROXANNE is talking on the telephone.)

ROXANNE

C'mon Gilda. Its Tony Bennet. He's appearing at the Hilton Casino in Atlantic City next weekend. I found a five day/four night special package in the Sunday paper. We can take the bus to Atlantic City from the Port Authority Bus Terminal on Friday, catch Tony Bennet's show on Saturday... and have a few days left to sit around the pool, do some shopping, have a few drinks and great meals... AND even disco a little.

(Pause)

Come on. You didn't want to go the last time either but remember how much fun we had.

(Pause)

Yes I know that last time you slipped and fell into the pool with all your clothes on.

(Pause)

You know I didn't mean to laugh so hard. *(Aside)*... but I just couldn't help myself.

Come on. This may be our last chance to see Tony Bennett.

(Pause)

No. I didn't mean that your time is coming.

(Pause... ROXANNE rolls her eyes.)

Yes I know that your gastritis has been acting up

(Pause)

Of course I'll help you remember to take your pills.

(Pause)

No. I don't think anyone will notice the carpel tunnel syndrone brace you have to wear while playing the slots.

(Pause)

Oh, wonderful. I know we're going to have a great time.

(Pause)

Well I have to run now. I have an appointment to get my hair done and then I'm off to see my fortune-teller.

(Pause)

Yes I do believe in that... "stuff".

I'll make all our reservations and be back in touch. Bye now .

(ROXANNE hangs up the phone)

(Lights fade out)

SCENE TWO

(Lights come up again on the Ryan's living room, stage right. It is that same Monday but afternoon. ERNIE is lying on the couch watching a Giant's baseball game. Roxanne's Father, GRANDPA WILLIAMS enters.)

GRANDPA

And how's the Bronx champion couch potato today.

(HE looks at the TV)

You still watching those traitor San Francisco Giants.

Left the Big Apple for the land of fruits and nuts.

You ought to be ashamed of yourself.

ERNIE

Well at least I didn't go over to those damn Yankees.

Bought every Pennant and Series they've ever won.

GRANDPA

And where is your useless couch potato buddy, Pete, these days?

ERNIE

Now don't go getting on Pete. For some reason, un-be-known to me, he seems to like you.

GRANDPA

Yeah!. As much as you do.

That's why you two short-sheeted my bed again last week.

Besides, Pete always seems to have an aura about him.

ERNIE

Hey. Stay away from there. You know how sensitive Pete is about having driven a garbage truck all those years.

GRANDPA

Yeah! Pete's sensitive all right. About as sensitive as a toilet seat.

Besides he's always sniffing around like he still smells garbage.

I'm just going along.

ERNIE

Since you're so used to going along...
(HE flips his backhand at GRANDPA)
...how about just going along?

GRANDPA

(GRANDPA waves)
See you... New York Traitor

ERNIE

And here's something from the Bronx for you.
(ERNIE gives GRANDPA a Bronx Cheer)
(GRANDPA exits)

(Lights fade out)

SCENE THREE

(Spotlight comes up in the scrim area center stage. The scene is a fortune-teller's studio. It is the same Monday afternoon. The FORTUNE-TELLER and ROXANNE are seated at a round table with a crystal ball in its center. The FORTUNE-TELLER is gazing into the crystal ball. SHE speaks with a Russian/Slavic type accent...)

FORTUNE-TELLER

Yes, it is you I see. They are applauding all around you. And you are taking bows with this handsome man with Roman features.
Does that mean anything to you?

ROXANNE

I'm going to meet Tony Bennet.
I just know that I'm going to meet Tony Bennet.

FORTUNE-TELLER

That image is fading.
(Pause)
But wait I see another vision.
It's very hazy, but I can make out you standing there and someone coming towards you.
(Pause)

Yes, I see a man walking towards you.
You seem to recognize him and yet you don't.

(Pause)

An old lover perhaps?

(Pause)

A glimpse of your past?

ROXANNE

Oh. Tell me. Tell me.

What does he look like? What color are his eyes? His hair?

FORTUNE-TELLER

He is very well groomed. His clothes are dark and flow as he walks.
I can't make out his facial features, but... yes... he has dark hair.

(Pause)

I'm sorry. It's fading.

(Pause)

It's gone.

(Lights fade out)

SCENE FOUR

(Lights come up on the bar scene, stage left... Tony's Bar & Grille.

It is Monday night. ERNIE and PETE are sitting at the bar.

TONY'S WIFE (or substituted male - TONY) is tending bar.

LARRY BRYANT and PHIL BARNES, the boys' bowling team buddies, are standing, talking at the end of the bar.

TONY'S WIFE

Well you guys ready for another beer?

ERNIE

Sure! And I'll buy this round to toast another successful bowling season for the Bronx Barons.

(TONY'S WIFE takes each empty glass and fills it from the tap, as the MEN continue to talk.)

LARRY

Yeah! And next year we'll really stuff those bums from Queens, like we did last year.

PHIL

Almost did it again this year.

(showing a space between his thumb and fingers)

Just missed by this much.

PETE

Hey! When and where is our bowling banquet this year?

LARRY

It's in three or four weeks. On the 8th.

As always, right here at Tony's.

(TONY'S WIFE reaches up and changes the channel on the TV.)

TONY'S WIFE

Sorry if anyone was watching that program, but my one indulgence... and I DO also own this place... is 20/20.

You know... that program that looks into all kinds of news stories and current events.

PHIL

(finishing his beer)

You can watch whatever you want to watch. I'm out of here.

LARRY

(finishing his beer)

Me too. See you guys.

ERNIE

(calling after them)

Write if you find work.

(ALL laugh.)

(LARRY and PHIL exit through the front door.)

PETE

(pointing to the TV)

What's she saying?

ERNIE

Something about homosexuals.

TONY'S WIFE

For God's sakes, Ernie. Listen up!
She didn't say homosexuals. She said metrosexuals.

ERNIE

So who cares whether they live in the country or in the city?

TONY'S WIFE

No Ernie! Metrosexuals are not homosexuals who live in the city.
As the gal is saying, they're just guys like you and Pete who are paying
more attention to how they look and feel.
Now shut up and listen.

*(ERNIE and PETE sip their beer as all watch and listen intently to the
TV.)*

ERNIE

Hey! Did you hear that? That guy's a postman, just like me before I
retired.
Boy he's well groomed, well dressed and in pretty good shape.

PETE

Yeah! Just like you before you retired... and 30 years before that.
(TONY'S WIFE and PETE laugh while ERNIE grimaces.)

TONY'S WIFE

Would you guys shut up and listen?

ERNIE AND PETE

OK! OK!

*(ALL sit in silence for a few moments as they watch the program.)
(Then TONY'S WIFE reaches up and flips back to another channel.)*

TONY'S WIFE

OK guys. My time's up. Back to the NASCAR race replays.

(TONY'S WIFE heads down to the other end of the bar and begins polishing glasses.)

ERNIE

Well I learned something.

PETE

What's that?

ERNIE

You know, with a little attention us guys can look pretty good. Maybe not as good as those young guys, but I think you and I could pick up a notch or two.

PETE

(skeptical)

Come on!

ERNIE

No! Really!
Remember back in high school. You and I didn't cut a bad pattern. Remember our slicked hair...

PETE

(touching his bald spot)

Yeah... hair.

ERNIE

... snappy clothes and even cologne.
We were pretty sharp.
And the girls thought so too.

PETE

Yeah! And remember that Sheila Connors...

ERNIE

Yeah!

PETE

... and her big boobs...

(sighs)
...and tight cashmere sweaters.

ERNIE

Yeah! Those were the good ol' days.

PETE

Well, maybe so and maybe not.
We certainly thought about it a lot. But we sure didn't get much.
I carried a "pro" around for four years and the only thing I got was a big
"O" ring pressed into the leather of four new wallets.

ERNIE

Quit crying!

PETE

OK! Big ass-man!

ERNIE

No, Pete. You don't get what I'm driving at.
I'm not talking about going out and bopping the Sheila Connors of the
world.
What I'm saying is ...wouldn't it be great to grab a little of the "cool" we
had back then.
Well-dressed, groomed and maybe even in better shape.
I don't see any reason why we couldn't be metrosexuals.

PETE

Yeah! If Roxanne and Gilda can spend so much time pampering
themselves, why not us. If they can be queens, we can at least be barons.

ERNIE

Why not! Let's do it!

PETE

Yeah! Let's do it now!

ERNIE

We won't tell the girls.
They'll be away at Atlantic City for five days.

We'll just have our makeover and surprise them when they come back.

PETE

Yeah!

Hey! Let's toast our pact.

(PETE motions to TONY's WIFE to come over.)

TONY'S WIFE

Well what will it be boys ... a couple more beers?

ERNIE AND PETE

(looking at each other)

No!

(Pause)

Chardonnay!

(Lights fade out)

SCENE FIVE

(Lights come up on the Ryan's living room, stage right. It is the following Saturday morning. PETE is standing in the open door leading to the hall. ERNIE, presumably in the bathroom, is yelling to PETE from offstage. There is the sound of a shower running.)

ERNIE

(yelling over the noise of the shower)

I'll be with you in a minute, Pete. I'm just rinsing my hair now.

Saw Roxanne do this several years ago before she started going to all those beauty parlors.

PETE

Hurry up Ernie. I've got a bunch of hair-pieces I want to show you.

By the way where's Grandpa?

ERNIE

(yelling over the noise of the shower)

I shipped the old coot off to my brother-in-law's. Didn't want him and his caustic comments around while we were doing our makeover.

(PETE goes back into the room and stands in front of a mirror near the hall door trying on various wigs and hair-pieces. The sound of the shower stops.

ERNIE enters wearing a bathrobe and drying his hair with a towel that covers his head. BOTH men are almost face-to-face. ERNIE removes the towel from his head as BOTH men turn toward each other.

As they see each other, BOTH throw up their hands and scream. Ernie's hair is bright pink and Pete has on an Afro hair-piece.)

ERNIE

Geez! You scared the hell out of me.

PETE

Well you're not exactly Red Buttons yourself.

ERNIE

(looking in the mirror)

Holy Mother of God! What a disaster!

I thought I did everything it said on the package.

Well, at least it doesn't smell like it used to back when Roxanne did her own hair.

(PETE begins to sniff the air. ERNIE stares at him for a few moments.)

For God's sakes Pete, cut that out.

(PETE takes a handkerchief from his pocket and pats it under his nose)

PETE

Well, what are we going to do now?

ERNIE

Well, I'm not going to stay like this.

Let's pick out your toupee first.

Then I'll call for an appointment to get this mess straightened out.

Then it's off to find some new clothes... and get our ears pierced.

PETE

Oh no! Not me! I'm not getting my ears pierced for anyone.

Besides. That's what those gay guys do.

ERNIE

If you're going to be a metrosexual, you have to look the part.

Even basketball and football players have their ears pierced these days.
Besides. Gay guys only have one ear pierced.

PETE

Yeah? Which one?

ERNIE

Haven't you ever heard the expression "left is right"?

PETE

Yeah! But what the hell does it mean?

ERNIE

It means that if you have an earring in your left ear, then you are the right one.

PETE

Which right one? The gay one or the straight one ?

ERNIE

Geez, Pete. You can't expect me to remember everything.
Let's get them both pierced.

(Pause)

Now let's see those hair pieces.

(PETE tries on various wigs and hair-pieces as ERNIE grimaces with each new style. They finally BOTH throw up their hands in disgust and ERNIE grabs a baseball cap and pulls it way down to cover his hair.)

ERNIE

(exiting through the hall door)

Enough already! I'll get dressed and we'll get on with it.

(Lights fade out)

SCENE SIX

(Spotlight comes up in the scrim area, center stage. The scene is a hallway on the first floor of the Hilton Casino where Roxanne and Gilda are staying in Atlantic City. It is the same Saturday

evening. A doorway prop in the back of the set is opened to a dark area. GILDA is standing in the middle of the hallway, shuffling through her pillbox as ROXANNE watches.)

ROXANNE

Gilda for God's sakes, what are you doing now!

GILDA

I'm checking to make sure that I have two red pills and one blue one to take at Intermission.

ROXANNE

Gilda, you took so long checking your cholesterol count of the food at dinner that we're late now.

I don't want to miss a moment of Tony Bennett.

He's always so well groomed and handsome. And that voice !

(Pauses, pointing to the door)

I think we can cut through this courtyard and still make his opening.

GILDA

But Roxanne it's dark out there.

ROXANNE

Just stick close to me and you'll be OK.

(ROXANNE and GILDA exit through the door and we hear their voices coming back from the outside.)

GILDA

I can't see.

ROXANNE

As I said, stick close to me. You'll be OK.

Just head for that door over there with the light coming under it.

(Pause)

Gilda! Where did you go?

GILDA

(crying)

I fell in the pool.

(Blackout)

SCENE SEVEN

(Spotlight comes up in the scrim area. It is the following Monday morning. A closed prop door is at the rear of the set. A wall sign proclaims Paula's Pampered Beauty Salon. PETE is in a reclining chair, with a BEAUTICIAN standing over PETE.)

BEAUTICIAN

(pulling a piece of tape off of Pete's forehead)

Now, Mr. Vincenti. Here go all those nasty little hairs between your eyes.

PETE

(screaming and bolting upright as she pulls.)

Ow!

BEAUTICIAN

(pushing Pete back down and hunching over him with tweezers)

Now just one more hair to pluck and we'll have your eyebrows all done.

(pulling hard on the hair but getting nowhere.)

My this is a difficult one.

(now pulling with both hands and almost falling over backwards when the hair come free.)

There.

PETE

(as HE bolts upright and grabs his eyebrow.)

God! I didn't know you could take scalps from the front of the face.

BEAUTICIAN

(pushing PETE back down and wrapping a warm wet towel around his face.)

Now, Now Mr. Vincenti. We're all done with your eyebrows.

Just lean back and we'll soften up your face for a nice facial massage later on. In the meantime I'll work on your fingernails.

(SHE sits down next to PETE and takes his left hand to work on)

(ERNIE enters through the prop door.)

ERNIE

Excuse me Miss, but I believe that this is where I was to meet one of my friends.

BEAUTICIAN

Oh! What does he look like?

ERNIE

You know... a guy...

BEAUTICIAN

I'm sorry but we're the only ones here right now.

PETE

(mumbling through the towel)

Mmmff.. Mmmff

ERNIE

(to the reclining figure in the chair)

Pete?

PETE

(mumbling louder through the towel)

Mmmff... Mmmff... Mmmff... Mmmff

ERNIE

(peaking under folds of the towel)

Pete. Are you in there?

What are you doing?

PETE

Softening my face for a metro-facial.

Paula's staff is really up on this metrosexual thing.

You should try it.

ERNIE

Maybe next time.

I just spent two hours getting what they call a "color and set".

My head is numb.

I don't know why the girls think that's fun.

PETE

You think that's torture.
Let them "wax and pluck" your eyebrows.

ERNIE

(pointing to his hair)
But anyway what do you think?

PETE

Well... it's you.
(HE pauses, observing ERNIE.)
But it's not the striking you of your previous color.
(Pulling back his hand from BEAUTICIAN and putting it under his seat)
Ow! That hurts.

BEAUTICIAN

Mr. Vincenti, we're never going to get your cuticles done if you keep sitting on your hands.

PETE

Why don't you skip the preliminaries and just stick splinters under my nails like those Chinese tortures?
Besides, I'm not sure I want cute cuticles.

BEAUTICIAN

(tugging at and finally pulling Pete's hand out from under him)
Now...Now Mr. Vincenti let's be brave.
(starting to put Pete's hand in a bowl of water)
Here now... we'll just soak your hand for a while in some nice warm water.

PETE

(Pulling back his hand in horror)
Oh, No!! The last time anyone soaked my hand in warm water was one night in the Army... and I pee-d my bed.

(Blackout)

SCENE EIGHT

(Spotlight comes up in the scrim area. The scene is Mr. Horowitz's clothing store in the Bronx. A sign stating, Horowitz and Son, Fine Dry Goods hangs on the wall. It is the Monday evening. MR. HOROWITZ wears a white shirt with the sleeves rolled up, and has a measuring tape around his neck. ERNIE and PETE open the closed prop door and enter. Ernie's hair is a normal dark color and Pete wears a reasonable style of hair-piece. Both have new pierced ears with fake diamond earrings MR. HOROWITZ, speaks in a heavy Jewish accent.)

MR. HOROWITZ

Vell Ernie and Pete. How are you?
You're both looking younger than ever.

(ERNIE and PETE look at each other then back to MR. HOROWITZ.)

ERNIE

We're doing just fine Mr. Horowitz.

PETE

Yes, just fine Mr. Horowitz.

MR. HOROWITZ

I'm glad you came in today Ernie.
I just received some nice trousers in that postal blue color that you like so much.

ERNIE

Well, Mr. Horowitz I was really looking for something in black.

MR. HOROWITZ

In black?
Vell, I do have this nice pair of black wool trousers.

ERNIE

I was really thinking of something in silk.

MR. HOROWITZ

You vant silk?

ERNIE

Yes. And a nice flouncy, black silk sport shirt to match.

MR. HOROWITZ

You vant black silk trousers and a shirt that's flouncy?

ERNIE

Yes. And also a black silk dress shirt and black silk tie.

MR. HOROWITZ

What are you going to do? Rob banks?

(Pause)

And vhat about you Pete? Do you vant the same

(HE grimaces and emphasizes the word...)

costume?

PETE

No!

MR. HOROWITZ

Finally! Some sense!

PETE

No. I think I'd like both a black silk tie and white silk tie to go with my silk dress shirt. And maybe a violet, silk sports shirt also.

ERNIE

Good idea, Pete. I'd like a baby blue one too.

MR. HOROWITZ

(shooing the boys out)

Out! Out! Let me have my nervous breakdown in peace.

(Lights fade out)

SCENE NINE

(Lights come up on the Ryan's living room, stage right. It is Tuesday. ROXANNE AND GILDA are just coming through the front door.)

GILDA

Well Roxanne. It was a lot of fun in Atlantic City. And I didn't catch half the things I thought I would.

Fun that is, except for when I fell into the pool.

ROXANNE

Oh yes. That.

GILDA

I can't believe you didn't even stop to help me out.

ROXANNE

Well we were running late.

I could hear them playing Tony Bennett's theme song already.

Besides, I knew you could swim.

And you got out OK and made it back before Intermission.

GILDA

Great friend!

ROXANNE

Anyway it was good to get away for a few days.

(looking around)

I wonder where the boys are?

(ERNIE AND PETE enter through the hallway door. THEY wear black silk sport shirts and trousers with patent leather shoes, lots of gold jewelry, and of course their earrings and redone hair.)

ERNIE AND PETE

(flipping their hands like a magician showing a magic trick)

TaDa!

(ROXANNE AND GILDA are struck dumb by their husbands' makeover appearances. Finally ROXANNE speaks.)

ROXANNE

(breathing the word softly)

Well...

(ROXANNE and GILDA stand staring for several more seconds.)

PETE

(as HE goes over to give Gilda a big hug)

Welcome home, Pooky.

GILDA

Oh Peter. Don't you look nice. And smell nice too.

(GRANPA comes in the front door.)

GRANDPA

God! We've been invaded by the Viet Cong in their black pajamas!
Man the battlements.

(Pause)

What are you two ding-hooeys up to this time?

ERNIE

(to Roxanne, ignoring Grandpa)

Just decided to take a little better care of ourselves.

GILDA

Well I like it.

ROXANNE

(with little enthusiasm)

Yes, it's... ah...nice.

GRANDPA

I don't know about taking better care of yourselves, but you sure do smell
like one of those \$10,000 funerals.

GILDA

Come along Peter. I've got to unpack.
We'll see you all later.

OTHERS

We'll see you.

(PETE AND GILDA exit through the front door)

GRANDPA

(to ERNIE as GRANDPA exits through the hall door)

Yes! See you_ou, Bruce_cee.

(After they leave, ROXANNE turns to ERNIE)

ROXANNE

Well my fortune-teller warned me. But I didn't expect this.

(Lights fade out)

SCENE TEN

(Lights come up on the bar scene, stage left... Tony's Bar & Grille. It is a week later. TONY'S WIFE (or substituted male, TONY) is behind the bar and LARRY and PHIL are seated at the bar on barstools. ERNIE AND PETE enter through the front door.)

LARRY

Phil? Do you smell something?

Don't turn around but I think a couple of those girls from Fourth Avenue just came in.

PHIL

(looking over his shoulder)

No Larry. It's just the Section-8-Boy-Boys.

LARRY

(looking back also)

Well so it is. Wonder what they're doing here?

PHIL

Why, all the beauty parlors must be closed.

ERNIE

Cut the crap you guys.

LARRY

Crap! You don't know what crap is.

Since you guys started your fruit-loop adventure, our wives have been ragging on us night and day.

PHIL

(imitating his wife)

Philip, I don't know why you can't be more like Ernie and Pete. Now at least get up from that couch and shave for God's sakes.

LARRY

(imitating his wife)

All you do is lie around all day in that dirty old shirt and sweatpants, sopping up beer. Honestly, Lawrence I don't know what I ever saw you.

PHIL

Yeah, day in day out it's a feast of cold shoulder and hot tongue. And at my age, I don't need it every night... but I've been shut off for days.

TONY'S WIFE

(to ERNIE and PETE)

Well what'll you have, guys.

PETE

We'll have a couple of glasses of Chardonnay, please.

PHIL

Hear that Larry? They not only smell like girls... they drink like girls.

(TONY'S WIFE puts the glasses of Chardonnay down in front of ERNIE and PETE.)

LARRY

(slamming down his glass)

Well, I for one don't want to drink in a ladies' lounge.

I'm out of here.

C'mon Phil. Let's find a man's bar.

(LARRY AND PHIL throw some bills on the bar and exit through the front door.)

TONY'S WIFE

You know guys, you've been coming here for years and Tony and I appreciate that.

However, a lot of our other customers have supported us for years also. I don't know how to say this but... I think your recent ...ah... change... is turning off a lot of our customers.

As a favor to us, do you think you could lay low and not come in for a while... that is until things quiet down.

(Lights fade out)

SCENE ELEVEN

(Spotlights comes up in the scrim area. A corner of a building is represented by intersecting fake brick walls. It is several days later in the evening. ROXANNE is peering around the corner, with GILDA trying to see over her shoulder.)

GILDA

Can you see them?

ROXANNE

Yes.

GILDA

What are they doing?

ROXANNE

They're just paying the cab.

Now they're...

(pushing GILDA back against the wall and flattening HERSELF against it also)

They're looking this way.

GILDA

Oh, I feel so awful.

I've always trusted Pete.

And never, never, ever spied on him before.

ROXANNE

Well you can bet that when a couple of overweight couch potatoes start worrying about their looks, there's more involved than just trying to impress their bowling team.

My bet is that there are other women involved.

GILDA

Oh no! I'm beginning to feel my blood pressure go up another 20 points.
(*ROXANNE peers around the corner again.*)

GILDA

Where are they now?

ROXANNE

They've just gone into that bar up there named Rosie's.

GILDA

Oh Rosie's. That sounds like a nice Italian place.
Let me see.

(*looks around the corner*)

Oh yes. And look there's a nice picture of a young man in dark glasses,
holding a rose.

ROXANNE

Yes, it covers the whole side wall of the place.

(*Pause*)

Oh my God!

GILDA

What is it?

ROXANNE

(*blessing herself*)

Saints preserve us!

GILDA

Roxanne! Roxanne! For God's sakes, what is it?

ROXANNE

Look in that young man's ear. It's an earring!

GILDA

So what. A lot of young men wear earrings in their ears these days.

ROXANNE

But Gilda. The earring is in his right ear.

(*Pause*)

It's a gay bar. Our husbands have gone to a gay bar.
It's worse than they're chasing women. Ernie and Pete are chasing men!

(BOTH WOMEN look at each other in surprise. Then THEY break down into sobs and hug each other.)

(Blackout)

SCENE TWELVE

(Spotlight comes up in the scrim area. The scene is set as Father O'Malley's study at St. Mary's Church, that Ernie and Roxanne attend. It is the following afternoon. FATHER O'MALLEY is behind his desk while ERNIE sits in a chair across from him. FATHER O'MALLEY speaks with an Irish brogue.)

FATHER O'MALLEY

Well now Ernest, you and I have known each other a long time.

ERNIE

Yes Father. Back to when I was an altar boy.

FATHER O'MALLEY

We can be honest with each other then, can't we.

ERNIE

Of course, Father.

FATHER O'MALLEY

I'll come right to the point, Ernest.
Roxanne is concerned about this... this... ah... change in you.

(Pause)

When did you begin to feel this...ah... other you?

ERNIE

Well Father, we were watching 20/20.
You know, the TV show that explores current topics.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Ah!... 20/20.

ERNIE

And there were these guys on there.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Guys?

ERNIE

And there was even a postman, like I used to be before I retired.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Ah-ha. A postman.

ERNIE

Well anyway, these guys were very poised and in great shape.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Poised? Shape?

ERNIE

You know.

They were very self-assured and had great bodies.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Bodies?

ERNIE

Yeah! Broad chest and shoulders.

You know... tight butts...

FATHER O'MALLEY

(in a raspy, high pitched voice)

Tight!

(after a moment staring open-mouthed, HE regains his composure)

And how do you feel now?

ERNIE

Oh, very relieved Father.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Relieved?

ERNIE

Yes, Father.
Happy that I let this, as you said, other self out.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Out! Out!
(Pause)
And don't you feel any regrets?

ERNIE

Well, Roxanne doesn't seem to like it.
But I think she may be jealous... you know like I'm competing with her.

FATHER O'MALLEY

Competing?

ERNIE

But Father, I feel that I'm doing just what I should have been doing all along.

(Pause)
So, Father. Why did you want to see me?

FATHER O'MALLEY:

My Son. Let us pray silently together.

(Light fades out)

SCENE THIRTEEN

(Lights come up on the Ryan's living room set. It is a few days later. ROXANNE is talking on the telephone.)

ROXANNE

Yes, thank you Father O'Malley. Friar Rusputski did call.
As a matter of fact he's coming here this evening.

(Pause)
Yes, Father. You did say that the Holy Popov religious order, to which Friar Rusputski belongs, is on the fringe of the Church. That they still combine some ancient and almost pagan beliefs in their ceremonies.

(Pause)

Yes. But you did say they have sometimes been effective, and it does seem to be one of the few choices for the spiritual cleansing Ernie needs. I am desperate.

(The doorbell rings)

Oh. There's the doorbell now. It must be Friar Rusputski.

(Pause)

Yes, Father. I will call you if things seem to be taking a wrong turn. Thank you, Father. Goodbye now.

(ROXANNE hangs up the phone and goes to answer the front door.)

ROXANNE

(opening the door)

Friar Rusputski?

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Da!

(FRIAR RUSPUTSKI is dressed in a brown hooded cassock. His hair and (optional) beard are long and disheveled and he has the wild look of Czar Nicholas II's advisor Rasputin. HE speaks in a thick Russian accent and gestures broadly.)

ROXANNE

Friar Rusputski, thank you so much for doing this.

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Da!

(FRIAR RUSPUTSKI enters, carrying a black book.)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

You spread powder on your husband's side of the bed last night? Da?

ROXANNE

Yes I did. Just as you told me to.

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

You find rooster claw prints of demons in powder this morning? Da?

ROXANNE

No. Just Ernie's size 12 hoof prints.

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Good! Might not be demons in him yet.
But can not be too careful. Demons have fooled us before.

(Pause)

Husband spends lots of time in toilet? Da?

ROXANNE

Yes he does. It seems to be his favorite room. Why do you ask?

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Talmud says ...

"Whoever is modest in a privy is delivered from three things: serpents, scorpions and evil spirits. "

ROXANNE

You don't think...

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

One never knows.

(At this point ERNIE starts eavesdropping on the conversation from the open door to the hallway. PETE keeps trying to go around ERNIE to listen also, but ERNIE keeps pushing PETE back out of sight. ROXANNE and FRIAR RUSPUTSKI are looking away from the doorway and do not notice ERNIE and PETE.)

ROXANNE

So what do we do?

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Must try to ban bad spirits from entering your husband, Ernest, or rid him of them.

You spoke with your friend, Mrs. Vincenti, and her husband Peter will also be meeting with us? Da?

ROXANNE

That's right, Friar Rusputski.

What are you going to do?

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Will use exorcism ritual preserved for centuries by Holy Popov Order.

ROXANNE

How will we know if it works?

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Know that exorcism works, when person throws off evil spirits.

ROXANNE

And how do we know when they're throwing off the evil spirits?

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Roll eyes, fall on floor, shake all over. Like that.

(PETE AND ERNIE talk together so that the others cannot hear them.)

PETE

Hell I'm not gay and I'm not going to roll on the floor.

ERNIE

Please Pete. Just play along.

Roxanne hasn't spoken three words to me since she and Gilda saw us at that gay bar.

Just follow my lead.

PETE

Well OK. But only because I'm in the same soup with Gilda.

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Is time to begin exorcism.

You get the olive branches I ask you?

ROXANNE

Yes I did Friar Rusputski.

I finally found seven olive branches and bent six of them into circles.

I also made two sets of the hanging bottles on a string to place around the boys' necks. Those things you call amulets or magic charms.

In one pair of bottles I put sheets of paper with all those unintelligible words you told me written on them. On the other pair of bottles I painted the letter "S".

I'm sorry, but we don't have many little bottles around here. The best I could do were some of Ernie's empty pony beer bottles.

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

Not sure that what ancients had in mind... but we give try.
Please light candles for proper mood for exorcism.

(ROXANNE lights the various candles in the room and turns off the other lights. FRIAR RUSPUTSKI prepares a small table-like altar with the six circular olive branches arranged on it. The seventh olive branch HE lays down within easy reach. HE places a chair on either side of the table, facing forward.)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

We call Ernest and Peter to come now.

(ERNIE AND PETE scurry quickly down the hall, so as not to let on that they were eavesdropping. ROXANNE goes to the hall door and calls them.)

ROXANNE

Ernie, Pete. We're ready for you.

ERNIE

(from down the hall)

We'll be right with you, Honey. We were just finishing up this hand of Gin.

(A few moments pass. ERNIE AND PETE enter.)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

(pointing to chairs)

You, Ernest, sit. You, Peter, sit.

(Pause)

All close eyes and feel mood. Da?

(PETE begins to sniff the air.)

ERNIE

(whispering hoarsely between clenched teeth)

Can it, Pete!

(PETE pulls a handkerchief from his pocket and pats under his nose.)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

(reading very loudly from the black book)

Hail God of Abraham!

(Friar Rusputski's incantation catches PETE totally by surprise and PETE falls off his chair. HE gets himself back up and tries to appear involved in what the minister is saying.)

(FRIAR RUSPUTSKI glares at PETE and clears his throat. FRIAR RUSPUTSKI puts down the black book in front of him. Then, HE puts his hands together in prayer, bows low to the makeshift altar and mumbles two or three unintelligible sentences from the book.)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

(FRIAR RUSPUTSKI continues to read loudly)

below seven

within seven

(HE holds up each of the seven olive branches with both hands and bows low to the makeshift altar.)

Direct power to souls, Ernest and Peter

Drive Satan, unclean demon within, away

(FRIAR RUSPUTSKI points at ERNIE and PETE)

I command you, demon by power of

Sabarbarbathioth

(As FRIAR RUSPUTSKI proclaims each Sabarbar incantation HE whacks ERNIE and PETE with the unbent olive branch.)

Sabarbarbathiouth

(After the second whacking, ERNIE AND PETE have their knees tucked up and are holding their hands on their heads to protect themselves.)

Sabarbarbathioneth

(whack)

Sabarbarbaphai

(whack)

(FRIAR RUSPUTSKI then pauses with arms outstretched toward the sky and his eyes closed.)

(ERNIE steals a glance at FRIAR RUSPUTSKI. Then HE puts his head back and starts rolling his eyes. PETE sees him and starts doing the same.)

Come out, demon, whoever you be.

(ERNIE puts his arms out and begins shaking all over. PETE follows suit.)

Stay 'way from Ernest and Peter.

(ERNIE is now swaying his arms back and forth above his head. PETE is following his example.)

Come out, demon! Now!

(ERNIE falls to the floor and begins shaking, kicking the air and rolling all over. PETE does the same.)

I bind you with unbreakable chains of adamantite!

(ERNIE rolls over on his stomach and pounds the floor with his hands and feet. PETE follows.)

I cast you into abyss of Hell!

(ERNIE AND PETE roll back over and gradually stop kicking and shaking. Then they lie very still for several moments)

ERNIE

(opening his eyes)

What happened? Where am I?

PETE

(opening his eyes)

Me too!

ROXANNE

You're right here, Darling. Free from all those... ah... different thoughts.

(ROXANNE clutches Ernie's head to her breast.)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

(very proud of himself)

Good! Good! Da?

(Pause)

But exorcism not work unless Ernest and Peter wear magic charms around your necks for three days.

Mrs. Ryan, you bring amulets?

(ROXANNE brings the pony beer bottle amulets on a pillow and holds the pillow for Friar Rusputski's presentation to Ernie and Pete.

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI has stepped in front of the makeshift altar facing stage left and ERNIE and PETE face him. ERNIE and PETE stand with their heads bent down, and with great ceremony, FRIAR RUSPUTSKI takes the amulets from the pillow and places them around their necks.

At the end of the ceremony ERNIE AND PETE stand upright again, and FRIAR RUSPUTSKI kisses each recipient on both cheeks as if they had received the Legion of Honor .)

FRIAR RUSPUTSKI

(smiling broadly, with his arms outstretched to the sky)

Da! Is good! Is good!

(ERNIE and PETE shrug their shoulders).

(Blackout)

SCENE FOURTEEN

(Lights come up on the Ryan's living room. It is a couple of evenings later. ERNIE AND PETE are on the couch in their old couch potato garb, watching a baseball game. BOTH still have the amulets around their necks)

PETE

(to the TV)

You bum! What do you mean strike three. Are you blind?

ERNIE

Well I can't say it was fun while it lasted.

All the crap everybody gave us.

PETE

Yeah! All except for those gay guys. They were really nice and wanted to be helpful with our new lifestyle.

ERNIE

Boy they knew a lot about clothes, grooming, color-coordination and all that.

PETE

And they didn't even try to hit on us.

ERNIE

(Sigh)

But now these...

(holding up the amulets)

... damn things.

(Pause)

Roxanne was really hot to have me prove my manhood, but with these "magic charms" hanging down, it didn't really turn her on.

PETE

Yeah and it's tough to sleep with these things. Especially when you roll over...

(HE grabs his back and grimaces.)

But I found with Gilda, if I bent down a little and tucked the cords and bottles under one arm...

ERNIE

Oh for God's sake Pete. I don't need a blow by blow description of your marital positions.

(Pause)

But I guess, at least this way we know who we are.

PETE

Yeah at least according to everybody else.

(GRANDPA comes in the front door and crosses toward the hallway door.)

GRANDPA

Well, if it ain't ol' Bossie and Bessie.
Just lying around , chewing on their cuds.
Shouldn't you two bovines wander out to pasture about now with your
bells a-clanging?

(moving quickly toward the hallway door)

Must be just about milkin' time.
Don't want to keep Old McDonald waiting.

*(ERNIE grabs a telephone book and barely misses Grandpa, as
GRANDPA exits through the hall door.)*

ERNIE

Well at least its over.
(holding up the amulets)
And tomorrow these things come off.

PETE

Yeah. What the hell. We can get back to normal.
It's going to seem good to be with Larry and Phil again at our bowling
banquet tomorrow evening.
But you know, I still can't believe that we got kicked out of our favorite
bar.

ERNIE

Well as you said... what the hell... it's over now.
(Pause)
Come on you Giants!
(Lights fade out)

SCENE FIFTEEN

(Lights come up on the bar scene, stage left... Tony's Bar & Grille. It is the following evening. LARRY and PHIL'S WIVES are seated at the table as the RYANS and VINCENTIS enter. ERNIE AND PETE are wearing their Bronx Barons bowling shirts, Levi's and sneakers)

ERNIE

(to Pete)

Well it's certainly nice to get back to normal.

PETE

(with a thumbs up to Ernie)

Yeah! Go you Bronx Barons!

(LARRY and PHIL'S WIVES rise and the girls all hug.)

ERNIE

Great to see you girls, but where's the other half of the Bronx Barons bowling team.

LARRY'S WIFE

Call of nature.

(LARRY and PHIL enter from the hallway)

PHIL'S WIFE

(gesturing in the direction of LARRY and PHIL)

Here come the heroes now.

(ALL turn toward LARRY and PHIL. ERNIE, PETE and THEIR WIVES stare in disbelief as LARRY and PHIL enter dressed in metrosexual clothes... bright silk sport shirts and black silk trousers and patent leather shoes. THEY also sport earrings and lots of gold chain jewelry)

LARRY'S WIFE

Like they say. "Clothes do make the man."

(Blackout)

SCENE SIXTEEN

(Lights come up on the Ryan's living room. It is evening, a few days later. ROXANNE and GILDA are wearing light Spring coats. ERNIE and PETE are still offstage up the hallway. GILDA is standing near the front door. ROXANNE is pacing back and forth.)

(ROXANNE stops pacing as she speaks to GILDA)

ROXANNE

Gilda, I can't believe we're waiting for them.

(ROXANNE starts pacing again.)

(After several seconds, ROXANNE can not take it anymore and storms over to the hall doorway. SHE calls up the hall.)

Aren't you two ready yet?

ERNIE & PETE

(in unison)

We're coming! We're coming!

(ROXANNE resumes pacing. Several moments later, ERNIE and PETE appear in the hall doorway in their metrosexual clothes, wearing bright silk sport shirts.)

ERNIE & PETE

(in unison, as EACH flicks a hand above his head)

TaDa!

(ROXANNE stops pacing and glares at Ernie and Pete. GILDA looks over at them)

PETE

(to ERNIE)

I just had such an awful time selecting which silk sport shirt to wear.

ERNIE

(to PETE)

I know what you mean.

I just couldn't decide between the Wild Winds or Sea Breeze colognes.

ROXANNE

(still glaring at ERNIE and PETE)

Don't push your luck boys!

We're still not 100% sold on this thing?

Are we Gilda?

GILDA

(shrugs her shoulders and says quietly)

I like it.

ROXANNE

(in an admonishing tone)

Gilda!

ERNIE

(changing the subject)

Well, is everybody ready for a night of discoing on the town?

PETE

Ready as ever! Barons and Queens!

(The GIRLS exit through the front door first. As ERNIE AND PETE exit, they give each other a thumbs-up sign.)

CURTAIN