

A Life in the Theater

Adapted for Radio

By Michael Winn

A Life in the Theater

By David Mamet

THIS DRAFT AND THE PROPOSED RADIO PRODUCTION
ARE AN EXPERIMENT IN RADIO THEATER
BY SAN DIEGO RADIO THEATER

MATERIAL HEREIN THAT IS THE PRODUCT OF DAVID MAMET BELONGS
TO DAVID MAMET AND MAY NOT BE USED WITHOUT PERMISSION

MATERIAL HEREIN THAT IS THE PRODUCT OF MICHAEL WINN BELONGS
TO MICHAEL WINN AND MAY NOT BE USED WITHOUT PERMISSION

A LIFE IN THE THEATER

By David Mamet

Adapted for two voices and contrabass viol by Michael Winn for San Diego Radio Theater

There are six settings: 1) onstage, before an audience, 2) onstage with an empty house, 3) onstage in the wings, with and without an audience in the house, 4) backstage in a small dressing room, 5) a space backstage outside the dressing room where there is a telephone, 6) a rehearsal space backstage where there is a dance barre. In scenes before an audience, the two characters, John and Robert, play roles in costume for performances. In the backstage scenes, they are “themselves”, the actors who play these roles. Robert is an older actor whose career reached its zenith in earlier days. John is a young man whose career has just begun. In the original staging, a second proscenium set was placed upstage behind which an imagined audience watches the performance. A curtain was set in this false proscenium. Audiences saw the players in these scenes, as if from behind them, whereas, in the other settings, the actors faced the audience. In the New York production a silent character was added, the STAGE MANAGER. In this adaptation for radio, the STAGE MANAGER is voiced to serve the same kind of purpose.

An audio adaptation relies on sound and music to distinguish spaces as well as to establish mood, passage of time and transitions in time and space. The effect is similar to changing voices in prose, which changes the world that is perceived. Music is to be solo contrabass viol, although there is room for experimentation with a percussion element, such as, tabla. Music includes a signature theme, “leitmotif” passage to distinguish the dressing room scenes and varied elements for dramatic and comedic effect.

The most important concept for the director of radio drama to bear in mind, which is perhaps unnecessary to state, is that this is an orchestrated audio performance with parts for bass, human voices and sound effects. There is latitude for interpretation and ad-lib invention in every case.

Characters

ROBERT, an older actor

JOHN, a younger actor

STAGE MANAGER

BASSIST

The playwright, David Mamet, put portions of the dialogue in parentheses to mark a slight change of outlook on the part of the speaker—“perhaps a momentary change to a more introspective regard”. This practice is not followed because methods for radio naturally embrace these distinctions and they are cleared up in rehearsal and marked when needed with ellipses, or the italicized word, “pause” in parens. Directions to actors appear in parentheses, and this applies as well to Music and Sound cues.

MUSIC: Vibraphone chimes riff on traditional NBC radio chime

SOUND: Audience in theater as house lights are dimmed.

ANNOUNCER: A LIFE IN THE THEATER by David Mamet is brought to you by the San Diego Radio Theater.

MUSIC: BASS under announcer.

ANNOUNCER: A Life in the Theatre was first staged by Michael Merritt and Gregory Masher, the play’s first designer and director, respectively, at the Goodman Theatre Stage Two, in Chicago. This adaptation was written for San Diego Radio Theater Experiments in American Classics program by Director, Michael Winn. JOHN and ROBERT, the two actors in a play called, A Life In The Theater have just completed a stunning performance and are removing their costumes and makeup in a small dressing room, which they share.

SOUND: Enthusiastic applause, bravos, etc. Applause fades out

MUSIC: Solo bass, segue.

ROBERT: Good night, John.

JOHN: Good night.

ROBERT: The bedroom scene tonight was brilliant.

JOHN: Did you think so?

ROBERT: Yes, I did. *(Pause)* Didn't you think it went well?

JOHN: *(shrugs)* I guess so.

ROBERT: I thought it went brilliantly.

SOUND: Occasional sounds of brushes, water, etc.

JOHN: Thank you.

ROBERT: I wouldn't tell you if it wasn't so. *(Pause)*

JOHN: Thank you.

ROBERT: Not at all. I wouldn't say it if it weren't so...

JOHN: The show went well tonight.

ROBERT: I think it did.

JOHN: The audience were very bright.

ROBERT: Yes. They were.

JOHN: ...It was. Would you, please, hand me the tissues.

SOUND: Tissue box

ROBERT: What? What was it? Here.

JOHN: Thanks. An intelligent house. Didn't you feel?

ROBERT: I did.

JOHN: They were...attentive.

ROBERT: Yes. *(Pause)* They were acute.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Yes. *(Pause)* They were discerning. I thought they were.

ROBERT: Perhaps they saw the show tonight *(pause)* on another level.

JOHN: Another, what? another...plane, eh?

ROBERT: On another level of meaning. Do you know what I mean?

JOHN: I'm not sure I do. They've changed the formula on this cold cream.

ROBERT: A plane of meaning.

(Pause)

JOHN: A plane.

ROBERT: Yes. I feel perhaps they saw a better show than the one we rehearsed.

JOHN: Mmm. Excuse me, I just need to get that towel off the hook.

ROBERT: Yes. What are you doing tonight?

JOHN: What am I doing now?

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Going out.

ROBERT: Mmmm.

(Pause)

JOHN: For dinner.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: I'm famished.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: I haven't had an appetite for several days.

ROBERT: Well, we've opened now.

JOHN: Yes. *(Pause)* I'm hungry.

ROBERT: Good.

(Pause)

JOHN: It almost makes me feel...

ROBERT: Go on.

JOHN: As if I'd earned the right... *(Pause)* I was going to say "to eat..."

ROBERT: Oh?

JOHN: ...but I'm not sure that that is what I really meant.

ROBERT: What did you mean?

JOHN: A show like tonight's show...

ROBERT: Yes?

JOHN: Going out here...

ROBERT: Yes, go on.

JOHN: It makes me feel...fulfilled.

ROBERT: Ah. *(Pause)* Well, it can do that. *(Pause)*

JOHN: I liked your scene.

ROBERT: You did.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Which scene?

JOHN: The courtroom.

ROBERT: You liked that?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: I felt it was off tonight.

JOHN: You didn't.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: It wasn't off to me.

ROBERT: Mmm.

JOHN: It did not seem off to me.

ROBERT: I felt that it was off.

JOHN: If you were off, you didn't look it.

ROBERT: No?

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: Mmm...

JOHN: The doctor scene...

ROBERT: Yes?

JOHN: ...may have been a trifle.

ROBERT: Yes?

JOHN: Well...

ROBERT: Say it. What? The doctor scene was what?

(Pause)

JOHN: Brittle.

(Pause)

ROBERT: You thought that it was brittle?

JOHN: Well, I could be wrong.

ROBERT: I trust your judgment.

JOHN: No, I could be wrong. I have been out-of-sorts...my eating habits haven't been...they've been a little...

ROBERT: And you found it brittle, eh?

JOHN: Perhaps. I may have found it so. A bit.

ROBERT: Overly brittle?

JOHN: No, not necessarily. Pause.

ROBERT: The whole scene?

JOHN: No, no. No. Not the whole scene, no.

ROBERT: What then?

JOHN: A part. A part of it, perhaps.

ROBERT: I wish that you would tell me if you found the whole scene so.

JOHN: It's only an opinion of a portion of the scene and, in the last analysis, we're talking about a word.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: I'm sorry if I...

ROBERT: Not at all. I value your opinion.

JOHN: Yes. I know you do.

ROBERT: Young people run the theatre...tomorrow's leaders.

(Pause)

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Both of us, or was it only me?

JOHN: Of course not. I told you that I thought you were superb. *(Pause)* She was off.

ROBERT: You felt that too, eh?

JOHN: How could I not?

ROBERT: I know. You felt that, eh?

JOHN: I did.

ROBERT: Specifically tonight.

JOHN: Perhaps tonight especially.

ROBERT: Yes. *(Pause)* Especially tonight.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Interesting. *(Pause)* Yes.

JOHN: To me it's a marvel you can work with her at all. *(Pause)* But to work with her so well.

ROBERT: You do the best you can.

JOHN: It's enviable.

ROBERT: The show goes on.

JOHN: I find much in that I must admire.

ROBERT: Well, thank you.

JOHN: Not at all. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: You have a job to do. You do it by your lights, you bring your expertise to bear, your sense of rightness fellow feelings...etiquette...professional procedure...there are tools one brings to bear...procedure.

JOHN: No, it's quite inspiring.

ROBERT: Thank you. *(Pause)* The mugging is what gets me, eh?

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Stilted diction and the pregnant pauses I can live with.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: The indicating and the miming, these are fine, I can accept them.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: But the mugging.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: It rots my heart to look at it.

JOHN: I know.

ROBERT: No soul...no humanism.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: No fellow-feeling.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: I want to kill the cunt.

JOHN: Don't let it worry you.

ROBERT: It doesn't worry me. It just offends my sense of fitness.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: If I could do her in and be assured I'd get away with it, I'd do it with a clear and open heart.

(Pause)

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: That she should be allowed to live (not just to live. but to parade around a stage...

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: ...and be paid for it.)

JOHN: I totally agree with you.

ROBERT: She would make anyone look brittle.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: You bring me the man capable of looking flexible the moment that she (or those of her ilk) walk on stage.

JOHN: I Can't.

ROBERT: No formal training.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: No sense of right and wrong.

JOHN: She exploits the theatre.

ROBERT: She does.

JOHN: She capitalizes on her beauty. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: What beauty?

JOHN: Her attractiveness.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: It isn't really beauty.

ROBERT: No.

JOHN: Beauty comes from within.

ROBERT: Yes, I feel it does.

JOHN: She trades on it.

ROBERT: She'll find out. *(Pause)* Perhaps.

JOHN: It is a marvel you can work with her.

ROBERT: It's not a marvel, John, you learn. You learn control. *(Pause)* Character. A sense of right from wrong.

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: I tune her out.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: When we're on stage, she isn't there for me.

JOHN: Mmm. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: How'd you like the table scene?

JOHN: I loved it.

ROBERT: My, that scene was fun tonight.

JOHN: It looked it.

ROBERT: Oh, it was.

JOHN: I wanted to be up there with you.

ROBERT: Did you?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Where?

JOHN: Up there.

ROBERT: At the dinner table? *(Pause)* You mean up there around the dinner table, or up upon the stage?

(Pause)

JOHN: In the house.

ROBERT: Around the dinner table?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Oh, yes, that scene was heaven. *(Pause)* It made me glad to be alive.

JOHN: It showed.

ROBERT: The audience...

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: That scene was a little play. It was a poem tonight.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Just like a little walnut.

JOHN: Yes. (How do you mean?)

ROBERT: You know.

JOHN: No.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Well, I mean that it was meaty.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Uh, meaty on the inside.

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: And tight all round.

JOHN: Ah.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Now that is superior theatre.

JOHN: Yes. *(Pause)* Mmm-hmm.

ROBERT: Where did you say you were off to?

JOHN: Now?

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: I was going for dinner.

ROBERT: Ah.

JOHN: I've been feeling like a lobster.

ROBERT: Ah.

JOHN: All day.

ROBERT: Mmm. Shellfish.

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: I Can't eat at night.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: No. My weight.

JOHN: You're having trouble with your weight?

ROBERT: Yes, always. It's a constant fight.

JOHN: But you're trim enough.

ROBERT: Do you think so?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Then that makes it worthwhile. *(Pause)* Thank you.

JOHN: Not at all. What are you up to this evening?

ROBERT: Now, you mean?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: I thought I might go home and read.

JOHN: Ah.

ROBERT: Perhaps take a walk.

JOHN: Ah.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Why'd you ask?

JOHN: No real reason.

ROBERT: Oh.

JOHN: Just asked. I'm just asking.

ROBERT: Well, I thought that I'd take a walk.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Why did you ask me that?

JOHN: No real reason at all. *(Pause)* Unless you'd like to join me for a snack?

ROBERT: A "snack." I really couldn't eat.

(Pause)

JOHN: Well, then, some coffee. I could use the company.

ROBERT: I'll walk with you a ways, then.

JOHN: All right.

ROBERT: Good.

(Pause)

JOHN: You have some makeup on your face.

ROBERT: Where?

JOHN: There. Behind your ear.

ROBERT: Yes?

JOHN: Here. I'll get it. I'll get you some tissue.

ROBERT: It's all right.

JOHN: No. Wait. We'll get it off.

ROBERT: Did I get it on my coat?

JOHN: No.

SOUND: JOHN moistens tissue with his saliva and rubs it on ROBERT'S face.

JOHN: There.

ROBERT: Did we get it off?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Good. I didn't get it on my coat?

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: Good. Good. Thank you.

JOHN: Not at all. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: Shall we go?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: I'm famished.

JOHN: Me too.

ROBERT: Good.

SOUND: *FOOTSTEPS, DOOR OPENS AND CLOSES AS THEY exit.*

MUSIC: *Bass interlude.*

SOUND: *Audience ambiance*

STAGE MGR: Two minutes, gentleman.

ROBERT: Your hat. *(Pause)*

JOHN: Thank YOU.

ROBERT: Like an oven in here.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Got no space to breathe.

JOHN: No. *(Pause)* Am I in your way?

ROBERT: No. Not at all. *(Pause)* Quite the contrary.

JOHN Your hat.

ROBERT: I thank you. *(Pause)* (Soliloquizing) My hat, my hat, my hat. *(Pause)* Eh?

JOHN: Mmm.

STAGE MGR: Curtain!

SOUND: Chatter of machine gun fire, occasional mortar rounds. Shouting.

JOHN: They left him up there on the wire.

ROBERT: Calm down.

JOHN: Those bastards.

ROBERT: Yeah.

JOHN: My God. They stuck him on the wire and left him there for target practice.

ROBERT: Gimme that cigarette

JOHN: Those dirty, dirty bastards.

ROBERT: Yeah.

JOHN: My God.

ROBERT: Calm down.

JOHN: He had a home; he had a family. *(Pause)* Just like them. He thought that he was going home....

ROBERT: Relax, we'll all be going home.

JOHN: On the last day, Johnnie, on the last day.

ROBERT: That's the breaks, kid.

JOHN: Oh, my God, they're signin' it at noon. *(Pause)* Poor Mahoney. Goes to raise the lousy flag, the Jerries cut him down like wheat. . . Johnnie, two more hours and we're going home. *(Pause)* And those bastards went and cut him down.

(Pause)

ROBERT: That's the breaks.

JOHN: No. Not by me. Uh-uh. Not by a long shot.

ROBERT: What are you doing?

JOHN: I'm going to blow those bastards a few new assholes.

ROBERT: What are you doing, Billy?

JOHN: You hear me, Heinies? Huh? This is for Richard 3. Mahoney, Corporal A.E.F., from Dawson, Oklahoma. *(Pause)* Do you hear me? It's not over yet. Not by a long shot. Do you hear me, Hun?

SOUND: Billie scuffling out of trench running through dirt

SOUND: A single shot is heard, then silence.

ROBERT: *(draws on his fag deeply, then stubs it out, uncocks his rifle).*

SOUND: Rifle latch.

ROBERT: Well, looks like that's the end of it.

MUSIC: Bass interlude

SOUND: Applause.

(Scene 4, ROBERT and JOHN are completing a curtain call.)

ROBERT: Say, keep your point up, will you?

JOHN: What? When?

ROBERT: When we're down left, eh, right before the head cut. You've been getting lower every night.

JOHN: I'm sorry.

ROBERT: That's all tight. Just make sure that you're never in line with my face. I'll show you: Look:

SOUND: (ROBERT begins to demonstrate the fencing combination)

ROBERT: You parry...parry...THRUST, but, see, you're thrusting high... aaaand head cut. May we try it one more time?

JOHN: All right.

ROBERT: Good.

SOUND: FOILS clashing as they engage.

ROBERT: "But fly my liege and think no more of me." Aaaaand head cut. Eh? You're never in line with my face. We don't want any blood upon the stage. *(Knock on wood.)*

SOUND: Robert knocking on wood.

JOHN: No.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Please knock on wood.

(Pause)

SOUND: *John knocking on wood.*

ROBERT: Thank you.

MUSIC: *Bass, balletic*

ROBERT: (Counting while working at the barre.) One two arabesque five six plié eight...Isn't it strange...

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: That people will spend time and money on their face and body...

JOHN: Mmm?

ROBERT: On smells, textures and appearances...

JOHN: Uh huh.

ROBERT: And yet are content to sound like shop girls and sheep-herders.

JOHN: Umm.

(Pause)

ROBERT: It's quite as important as physical beauty.

JOHN: On the stage, you mean.

ROBERT: On the stage and otherwise.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Sound.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: The crown prince of phenomena.

JOHN: Quite.

ROBERT: An ugly sound, to me, is more offensive than an ugly odor.

JOHN: Really?

ROBERT: Yes. To me, an ugly sound is an extension of an ugly soul. An indice of lacking aesthetic. *(Pause)* I don't like them. I don't like ugly sounds. I don't like the folks that make them. *(Pause)* You think that's harsh, don't you?

JOHN: Not at all.

ROBERT: You don't?

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: I know. I'm strange about this. It's a peeve of mine. To me it's like an odor. Sound. For it emanates from within. *(Pause)* Sound and odor germinate within, and are perceived within. *(Pause)* You see?

JOHN: No.

(Pause)

ROBERT: All that I am saying is that it comes from within. *(Pause)* Sound comes from within. You see?

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: I am not opposed to odors. *(Pause)* On principle.

JOHN: No.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Do you know when I was young my voice was very raspy.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: But I was vain, I was untaught. I felt my vocal quality—a defect, in effect—was a positive attribute, a contributory portion of my style.

MUSIC: Bass lyrical raspy

(JOHN is on the backstage telephone.)

SOUND: Telephone keypad, ringing.

JOHN: *(Into telephone)* Hi. It's me. *(pause)* Oh, no. I can't. I'm going out with someone in the show. *(Pause)* No, in fact, an Actor. *(Pause)* I don't know. Midnight. *(Pause)* I'd like that very much. *(Pause)* Me, too. *(Pause)* How have you been?

SOUND: Door opens as Robert enters.

ROBERT: *(calling to John)* You ready?

JOHN: Hold on...*(covering phone)* Yes. *(into phone)* I'll see you then. *(Pause)* 'Bye.

SOUND: Hangs up telephone.

ROBERT: We all must have an outside life, John. This is an essential.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Who was it?

(Pause)

JOHN: A friend.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: What is style?

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: Style is nothing.

JOHN: No?

ROBERT: Style is a paper bag. Its only shape comes from its contents. *(Pause)* However, when I was young, I made a fetish of my imperfections.

JOHN: It's a common fault.

ROBERT: It makes me blush today to think about it. *Pause.*

JOHN: Don't think about it.

(Pause)

ROBERT: You're right. You start from the beginning and go through the middle and wind up at the end.

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: A little like a play. Keep your back straight.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: We must not be afraid of process.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: We must not lie about our antecedents.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: We must not be second-class citizens. *(Pause)* We must not be clowns whose sole desire is to please. We have a right to learn.

(Pause)

JOHN: Is my back straight?

ROBERT: No. *(Pause)* Do you follow me?

JOHN: I think I do.

ROBERT: We must not be afraid to grow. We must support each other, John. This is the wondrous thing about the theatre, this potential.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Our history goes back as far as Man's. Our aspirations in the Theatre are much the same as man's. *(Pause)* Don't you think?

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: We are society. Keep your back straight, John. The mirror is your friend. *(Pause)* For a few more years. *(Pause)* What have we to fear, John, from phenomena? *(Pause)* We are explorers of the soul.

(Pause)

JOHN: Is my back straight?

ROBERT: No.

MUSIC: *Bass interlude*

(JOHN and ROBERT encounter each other coming into the theatre for an early-morning rehearsal.)

ROBERT: Good morning.

JOHN: Morning.

ROBERT: ‘Nother day, eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Another day. *(He sighs.)* Another day.

MUSIC: *Bass interlude*

SOUND: *Audience ambiance before a performance—at the makeup table.*

JOHN: May I have the tissue, please? Thank you. How do you feel this evening?

ROBERT: Tight. I feel a little tight. It’s going to be a vibrant show tonight. I feel coiled up.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: But I don’t feel tense.

JOHN: No?

ROBERT: No. Never feel tense. I almost never feel tense on stage. I feel ready to act. That’s a lovely brush.

JOHN: This?

ROBERT: No. The quarter-inch.

JOHN: This one?

ROBERT: Yes. Is it new?

JOHN: It’s an eighth-inch.

ROBERT: That one?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: That’s an eighth-inch?

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Well, it's awfully splayed, don't you think?

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: It's not splayed a bit?

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: Well, it's not new. Is it new?

JOHN: No, I've had it a while.

ROBERT: A while, eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: A long while?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: What is it, camel?

JOHN: It's sable.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Sable brushes... You keep your things well.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: It's impressive. No. It's one of the things, which impressed me first about you.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: You take excellent care of your tools. *(Pause)* May I ask you something, John?

JOHN: Of course.

ROBERT: Could you do me a favor?

JOHN: What?

(Pause)

ROBERT: In our scene tonight...

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: Mmm?

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: Could you... perhaps... do less?

JOHN: Do less?

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Do less???

ROBERT: Yes...

(Pause)

JOHN: Do less what???

ROBERT: You know.

JOHN: You mean... What do you mean? Pause.

ROBERT: You know.

JOHN: Do you mean I'm walking on your scene? *(Pause)* What do you mean?

ROBERT: Nothing. It's a thought I had. An aesthetic consideration.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: I thought maybe if you did less...

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: You know.

JOHN: If I did less.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Well, thank you for the thought.

ROBERT: I don't think you have to be like THAT.

JOHN: I'm sorry.

ROBERT: Are you?

JOHN: I accept the comment in the spirit in which it was, I am sure, intended.

STAGE MGR: Two minutes, gentlemen.

ROBERT: It was intended in that spirit, John.

JOHN: I know it was.

STAGE MGR: Two minutes!

ROBERT: How could it be intended otherwise?

JOHN: It couldn't.

ROBERT: Well, you know it couldn't.

JOHN: Yes, I know.

ROBERT: It hurts me when you take it personally. (He stands.) Shit!

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: My zipper's broken.

JOHN: Do you want a safety pin?

ROBERT: I have one.

JOHN: *(rising, starting to leave)* Do you want me to send the woman in?

ROBERT: No. No. I'll manage. Shit. Oh, shit.

JOHN: You're sure?

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: You don't want the woman?

ROBERT: No. I do not want the woman. Thank you.

JOHN: You want me to pin it for you?

ROBERT: No.

JOHN: I'll do it. Let me pin it for you.

ROBERT: No. Thank you. No. I'll get it.

JOHN: Oh, come on. I'll do it. Come on.

SOUND: Chair sliding on wood floor as JOHN pulls out chair.

JOHN: Get up here up on the chair. Come on. Get up.

SOUND: ROBERT gets up on the chair.

JOHN: Give me the pin. Come on.

(ROBERT hands JOHN the pin. JOHN drops it on the floor).

ROBERT: You dropped it!

SOUND: PIN dropping.

JOHN: I'll find it...

SOUND: JOHN gets down on hands and knees to look for it.

ROBERT: Oh, Christ.

JOHN: You got another one?

ROBERT: No. Oh, Christ, come on. Come on.

JOHN: I'm looking for it, for God's sake.

ROBERT: There it is!

JOHN: Stand still.

ROBERT: Come on, come on.

(JOHN attempts to pin ROBERT'S fly).

ROBERT: Put it in.

JOHN: Just hold still for a moment.

ROBERT: Come on, for God's sake!

JOHN: All right. All right. You know, I think you're gaining weight...

ROBERT: Oh, fuck you. Will you stick it in?

STAGE MGR: Places!

JOHN: Hold still. There.

ROBERT: Thanks a lot.

SOUND: He gets off the chair.

JOHN: Good show!

ROBERT: Thank you.

STAGE MGR: Curtain!

(A scene from a play in a lawyer's office. ROBERT is behind a desk, talking on the telephone.)

SOUND: Telephone keypad, ringing, phone picks up.

ROBERT: *(On telephone)* Ralph, listen to me. Perhaps you find it harsh, but I do not. I've always felt that we were friends. *(Pause)* I know you have, and so have I.

SOUND: Door opens, footsteps as John enters the office.

ROBERT: *(aside)* Sit down, I'll be with you in a moment.

ROBERT: *(On telephone)* I know you have. I feel that there is some common ground, I feel our interests are similar. *(Pause.)* No, not identical, but similar, certainly negotiable.

ROBERT: *(To John)* Have a cigar, David?

JOHN: *(quietly)* No thanks.

ROBERT: *(Pause)* I've always felt so. *(Pause)* When? *(Pause)* I'm sorry, I'm tied up the entire morning. *(Pause)* Yes? *(Pause)* Yes? All right, then. *(Pause)* And I'm sure this can be settled to our mutual satisfaction. *(Pause)* So do I. I'll have my girl take care of it. *(Pause)* Not at all. *(Pause)* Not at all. *(Pause)* And the very same to you. *(Pause)* Good-bye.

SOUND: Telephone hanging up

ROBERT: (*hangs up the telephone*) Forgive me, David.

JOHN: Not at all. I've just been admiring the view.

ROBERT: Lovely, isn't it?

JOHN: I should think one would get used to it.

ROBERT: Well, it's been thirteen years, and I haven't seemed to do so.

JOHN: Yes. (*Pause*) It's funny, you know, how things attain the force of habit.

ROBERT: The force of habit... yes.

JOHN: Take me and Gillian.

(*Pause*)

ROBERT: Yes? (*Pause*) Is that what you've come to talk about?

SOUND: Intercom rings.

ROBERT: (*into intercom*) Hold all calls, please. (*To JOHN*) Is there something wrong between you and Gillian?

JOHN: Gillian's going to have a baby.

ROBERT: Why, this is marvelous. How long have you known?

JOHN: Since this morning.

ROBERT: How marvelous!

JOHN: It isn't mine.

ROBERT: It's not.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: Oh. (*Pause*) I always supposed there was something one said in these situations . . . but I find . . . Do you know—that is, have you been told who the father is?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Really. Who is it, David?

JOHN: It's you, John.

ROBERT: Me!

JOHN: You.

ROBERT: No.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: How preposterous.

JOHN: Is it?

ROBERT: You know it is.

JOHN: Do I?

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Oh, John, John, John. *(Pause)* I think that I'll have that cigar now.

ROBERT: I think that I'll join you. *(Pause)* She's told you that I am the husband.

(Pause)

JOHN: No.

(Pause)

ROBERT: She's told you that I am the father.

JOHN: Yes. *(Pause)* What are we going to do about this?

ROBERT: I don't know, David. You could—I suppose you could do me some physical damage.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Or we could sit and discuss this as gentlemen. Which would you prefer?

JOHN: Which, in the end, is more civilized, John?

ROBERT: I don't know, David, I don't know. *(Long pause.)*

SOUND: INTERCOM RINGS

ROBERT: I asked you to hold all calls. *(Pause)* Perhaps you should take this.

MUSIC: Bass jazz pizzicato

(Backstage in the Wardrobe area.)

ROBERT: The motherfucking leeches. The sots. *(Pause)* The bloody bores. All of them... All of them...

JOHN: Who?

ROBERT: All of them.

JOHN: All of whom? *(Pause)*

ROBERT: What?

JOHN: All of whom? *(Pause)*

ROBERT: You know. All of them. Bloody shits.

JOHN: What about them?

ROBERT: Why can they not leave us alone? *(Pause)* Eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: What? Eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: You're damn right. *(Sotto voce)* Boring lunatics.

MUSIC: Bass bowed

SOUND: Hall ambiance

JOHN: Oh, the autumn. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Autumn weather.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Oh, for the sun.

ROBERT: Will you pass me my robe, please?

JOHN: Your lap robe.

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: Maman says just one more day, one more day, yet another week.

ROBERT: Mmm.

JOHN: One more week.

ROBERT: Would you please close the window?

JOHN: What? I'm sorry?

ROBERT: Do you feel a draft?

JOHN: A slight draft, yes. *(Pause)* Shall I close the window?

ROBERT: Would you mind?

JOHN: No, not at all. *(I love this window.) (Pause)*

SOUND: WINDOW sash as John closes the window.

ROBERT: Thank you.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: This room...this room.

JOHN: If we could leave this afternoon.

ROBERT: Mmm?

JOHN: If we could just call...bring the carriage round, just leave this afternoon.

ROBERT: It's much too cold.

JOHN: Just throw two shirts into a bag...

ROBERT: ...the roads..

JOHN: Just meet the train. *(Pause)* Nice...

(Pause)

ROBERT: It's much too cold. Pause.

JOHN: Would you like a glass of tea?

ROBERT: What? Thank you, yes.

SOUND: Tea pouring

JOHN: I like this room.

ROBERT: Yes, so do I.

JOHN: I always have. Pause.

ROBERT: So have I.

JOHN: I'll ring for tea.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Thank you.

MUSIC: Bass, bowed, then transition into different feel

(Backstage. ROBERT and JOHN changing clothes.)

ROBERT: I wish they'd wash this stuff more often.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Smells like a gym in here.

JOHN: The building's old.

ROBERT: Yes. Yes. *(Pause)* Tired?

JOHN: No...A little.

ROBERT: Mmm.

MUSIC: Bass swells up and out.

SOUND: Hall ambiance, no audience

(JOHN and ROBERT are sitting and reading a new script.)

ROBERT: Good. All right. Got a match?

SOUND: JOHN lights ROBERT'S cigarette.

ROBERT: Mmm. Thank you. (exhales)

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: All right. Good. *(deep breath, and enunciates)* "One day blends into the next"...I'm not going to do the accent. Eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Good. "One day blends into the next. Scorching sun. shiv'ring moon. Salt. . . saltwater."

JOHN: "It'll rain soon". . .

ROBERT: *(musing)* "Salt..."I'm sorry "...saltwater".

JOHN: I'm sorry. What?

ROBERT: No, I'm just thinking. Salt. Saltwater. Eh? The thought. He lets you see the thought there.

(Pause)

JOHN: Mmm.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Salt! Sweat. His life flows out. *(Pause)* Then saltwater! Eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: To the sea.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: All tight. Good. "One day blends into the next. Salt. Saltwater."

JOHN: "It'll rain soon."

ROBERT: "Rain? What do you know about it?" *(Pause)* "I've spent my whole life on the sea, and all that I know is the length of my ignorance. Which is complete, sonny." *(Pause)* "My ignorance is complete."

JOHN: "It's gotta rain."

ROBERT: The motif, eh, the leitmotif. He takes the descant through the scene—"It's got to rain." You look at it, he does the same thing through the play.

(Pause)

JOHN: Mmm

ROBERT: Go on.

(Pause)

JOHN: "It's gotta rain."

ROBERT: "Tell it to the marines."

JOHN: "It doesn't rain, I'm going off my nut."

ROBERT: You see: it will rain, it's got to rain, it doesn't rain. . . . all right, all tight. "Just take it easy, kid what you don't want to do now is sweat." *(Pause)* "Believe me."

(Pause)

JOHN: "We're never getting out of this alive." *(Pause)* "Are we?"

ROBERT: "How do you want it?"

JOHN: "Give it to me straight."

(Pause)

ROBERT: "Kid, we haven't got a chance in hell." *(Pause)* *(Musing)* We haven't got a chance in hell. "We're never getting out of this alive." *(Pause)* Eh? He sets it on the sea, we are marooned, he tells us that the sea is life, and then we're never getting out of it alive. *(Pause)* Eh?

(Pause)

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: The man could write. . . All right. All right. *(Pause)* Let's go back a bit.

(Pause)

JOHN: *(sighs)* "It'll rain soon".

MUSIC: Bass bowed

(ROBERT and JOHN are eating Chinese food at the makeup table between shows.)

ROBERT: Is there any soy?

JOHN: There, by the rice.

ROBERT: *(Eating)* You had an audition this afternoon, eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Water?

JOHN: Have some.

ROBERT: How did it go?

JOHN: Well, I thought.

ROBERT: Yes?

(Pause)

JOHN: They were receptive. I thought it went well.

ROBERT: What is this? Chicken?

JOHN: Imperial Shrimp.

ROBERT: How did you feel?

JOHN: What? I felt good; they liked it.

ROBERT: That's nice.

JOHN: I thought so.

ROBERT: That's very nice. *(Pause) (Eating)* There are two classes of phenomena.

JOHN: There are? *(Pause)*

ROBERT: There are those things we can control and those things which we cannot.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: You can't control what someone thinks of you.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: That is up to them. They may be glum, they may be out-of-sorts. Perhaps they are neurotic.

JOHN: How's your duck?

ROBERT: Fine. *(Pause)* One can control, however, one's actions. One's intentions.

JOHN: Pass the wonton, please.

ROBERT: That is all one can control.

JOHN: Please pass the wonton.

ROBERT: You're eating pasta?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Oh. *(Pause)* Chinese pasta. Here it is.

JOHN: Thanks.

ROBERT: If they hadn't liked you, that would not have signified that you weren't a good actor.

JOHN: No. I think I know that.

ROBERT: Yes. I think perhaps you do. *(Pause)* Yes. I'm glad they liked you, though.

JOHN: Thank you.

ROBERT: You think they're going to hire you?

JOHN : I don't know.

ROBERT: Well, I hope they do.

JOHN: I hope so, too.

ROBERT: That would be nice for you.

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: *(to self)* Good things for good folk.

MUSIC: Bass chords, dramatic

SOUND: Audience ambiance before performance.

(JOHN and ROBERT are dressing backstage.)

SOUND: Clothes rustling, hangars, etc.

ROBERT: We could do without these costumes.

JOHN: Shall I button the back for you?

ROBERT: We should do this whole frigging thing in rehearsal clothes, you know? Eh? Do it in blue jeans and T-shirt and give it some life, you know?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Eh? And give it some guts. *(Pause)* Give guts to it. *(Pause)* And to hell with experimentation. Artistic experimentation is shit. Huh?

JOHN: Right.

ROBERT: You're frigging well told. *(Pause)* Two actors, some lines. . . and an audience. That's what I say. Fuck 'em all.

STAGE MGR: Curtain!

MUSIC: Bass segue into battle noises

(Onstage. The Barricades.)

SOUND: Continue battle noises under.

ROBERT: And the people cry for truth; the people cry for freedom from the vicious lies and slanders of the age... the slanders of the body and the soul. The heart cries out: the memory says man has always lived in chains...has always lived in... *(Pause)* Bread, bread, bread, the people scream...we drown their screaming with our heads in cups, in books... in newspapers ... between the breasts of women. . in our work. . . enough. A new day rises...those who must connect themselves to yesterday for succor will be left behind...their souls are in the histories, their heads on pikes around the buildings of our government. Now we must look... Our heads between the breasts of women, plight our troth to that security far greater than protection of mere rank or fortune. Now: we must dedicate ourselves to spirit: to the spirit of humanity; to life. *(Pause)* To the barricades! *(Pause)* Bread, bread, bread.

SOUND: CUT BATTLE NOISES

MUSIC: Bass, slow cadence

(At the makeup table.)

ROBERT: A makeup table. Artificial light. The scent of powder. Tools. Sticks. Brushes. Tissues. *(Pause)* Cold cream. *(Pause)* Greasepaint. *(Pause)* Greasepaint! What is it? Some cream base, some coloring . . . texture, smell, color . . . analyze it and what have you? Meaningless component parts, though one could likely say the same for anything . . . But mix and package it, affix a label, set it on a makeup table . . . a brush or two.

JOHN: Would you please shut up? *(Pause)*

ROBERT: Am I disturbing you?

JOHN: You are.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Enough to justify this breach of etiquette?

JOHN: What breach? What etiquette?

ROBERT: John.

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: When one's been in the theatre as long as I . . .

JOHN: Can we do this later?

ROBERT: I feel that there is something here of worth to you.

JOHN: You do?

ROBERT: Yes.

JOHN: *(sighs)* Let us hear it then.

ROBERT: All right. You know your attitude, John, is not of the best. It isn't. It just isn't.

JOHN: *(Pause)* It isn't?

ROBERT: Forms. The Theatre's a closed society. Constantly abutting thoughts, the feelings, the emotions of our colleagues. Sensibilities *(Pause)* bodies . . . forms evolve. An etiquette, eh? In our personal relations with each other. Eh, John? In our personal relationships.

(Pause)

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: One generation sows the seeds. It instructs the preceding . . . that is to say, the following generation . . . from the quality of its actions. Not from its discourse, John, no, but organically. *(Pause)* You can learn a lot from keeping your mouth shut.

JOHN: You can.

ROBERT: Yes. And perhaps this is not the place to speak of attitudes.

JOHN: Before we go on.

ROBERT: Yes. But what is “life on stage” but attitudes?

JOHN: *(Pause)* What?

ROBERT: Damn little.

(Pause)

JOHN: May I use your brush?

ROBERT: Yes. Here. One must speak of these things, John, or we will go the way of all society.

JOHN: Which is what?

ROBERT: Take too much for granted, fall away and die. *(Pause.)* On the boards, or in society at large. There must be law, there must be a reason, there must be tradition.

(Pause)

JOHN: I’m sorry that I told you to shut up.

ROBERT: No, you can’t buy me off that cheaply.

JOHN: No?

ROBERT: No.

(Pause)

JOHN: Would you pass me the cream, please?

ROBERT: Certainly. *(Passes the cream.)* Here is the cream.

JOHN: Thank you.

MUSIC: Bass crescendo from cadence, segue into sloshing water.

(Onstage. The famous lifeboat scene.)

ROBERT: One day blends into the next. Scorching sun, shivering moon. Salt. Saltwater...

SOUND: Sloshing water slapping sides of boat

JOHN: It’ll rain soon.

ROBERT: Rain...? What do you know about it? *(Pause)* I’ve spent my whole life on the sea, and all that I know is the length of my ignorance. Which is complete, insanity. *(Pause)* My ignorance is complete.

JOHN: It’s gotta rain.

ROBERT: Tell it to the marines.

JOHN: It doesn’t rain, I’m going off my nut.

ROBERT: Just take it easy... What you don’t want to do now is sweat. *(Pause)* Believe me.

(Pause)

JOHN: We're never getting out of this alive. *(Pause)* Are we?

ROBERT: How do you want it?

JOHN: Give it to me straight.

ROBERT: Kid, we haven't got a chance in hell. *(Pause)* But you know what? *(Pause)* You shouldn't let it get you down. And you know why? 'Cause that's the gamble. That's what life on the sea is about.

JOHN: Can I tell you something?

ROBERT: Shoot.

JOHN: You're full of it, I mean it. Don't you tell me about Men and the Sea, because that's been out of the picture for years. If it ever existed. No, it probably did. Back in the days when a man had a stake in what he went out after, when he had a stake in his ship... and a stake in himself. But now... Now we're dyin' 'cause some black bastard ship-owner in Newport decided that rather than make his ships safe for men, it was cheaper to over-insure them. *(Pause)* THAT'S what we're dying for.

(Pause)

JOHN: The rig breaks down...

ROBERT: Danny...Danny...A ship!! A SHIP!!!

SOUND: Bass making sound of a ship's horn, segue into repetitive drumming

(JOHN and ROBERT are standing in the wings. JOHN is about to go on.)

ROBERT: Ephemeris, ephemeris, eh?

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: Ephemeris, ephemeris.

(Pause)

JOHN: What are you saying?

ROBERT: Time passes.

(Pause)

JOHN: What comes after: "The men got together, ma'am, and we kind of thought you'd like to have this"?

ROBERT: She says, "Thank you."

JOHN: I'm aware of that, I think. After that. What comes after that?

ROBERT: Your line?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Uh.

JOHN: Have you got a script?

ROBERT: What would I be doing with a script?

JOHN: I'm going to go get a script.

ROBERT: Wait. I know what the line is..

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: Uh, after YOU give her the watch, right?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Right. You give her the watch. You give her the watch.

JOHN: And?

ROBERT: Ah, Christ ... you hand the cunt "Ma'am, we kinda thought that maybe..."

JOHN: "The men all got together, ma'am..."

ROBERT: Yes. and... um... this is ridiculous...you give her the watch. What's her line?

JOHN: "Thank you."

(Pause)

ROBERT: Ah, fuck. You'd better get a script. You want me to?

JOHN: Sshhhhh!

(Pause)

ROBERT: What?

JOHN: Shut up. I'm trying to hear my cue. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: What's happening? *(Pause)*

JOHN: I think I missed my cue. *(Pause)* I think I missed my cue.

(Pause)

ROBERT: What's happening?

JOHN: Sshhhhh!

ROBERT: Can you see?

JOHN: I'm going on. *(Pause)* I'm going to go on. *(Pause)* What do you think?

ROBERT: *(shrugs)* Whatever...

(Pause)

JOHN: Christ. I'm going out.

ROBERT: You want me to get a script?

JOHN: I've missed my cue. . . . I've missed my cue.

ROBERT: Well, go out there. . . go on. *(Pause)*

JOHN: Oh, God. I've missed my cue.

ROBERT: Get out there. . .

JOHN: *(making his entrance)* "Missus Wilcox?? Missus Wilcox, ma'am? The men all got together.... .

MUSIC: BASS staccato

(Backstage, JOHN is dressing. ROBERT enters, speaking slowly to himself.)

SOUND: Door opening and closing.

ROBERT: Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God. *(He sees JOHN. Pause)* New sweater?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Nice.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: What is it?

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: What is it? Cashmere?

JOHN: I don't know.

ROBERT: Looks good on you.

JOHN: Thanks. I'll be outside.

ROBERT: Mmm.

SOUND: Door opens and closes.

(Backstage. JOHN is at the telephone, waiting. ROBERT enters.)

SOUND: Telephone key pay, ringing, door opens and closes as Robert comes out.

ROBERT: And everybody wants a piece. They all have got to get a piece.

JOHN: *(On phone)* Hi, Ms. Erenstein, please. *(pause)* No, I'll wait.

ROBERT: What?

JOHN: I'm on the phone!

ROBERT: We spend our adult lives bending over for incompetents. For ten-percenters, sweetheart unions, everybody in the same bed together. Agents. All the bloodsuckers. The robbers of the cenotaph. Who are we?

JOHN: Who? (*On phone*) Hello? Hello?

ROBERT: Who indeed?

JOHN: (*on phone*) I'm holding for Miss Erenstein.

ROBERT: If we cannot speak to each other. . . what do we have but our fellow workers? If we do not have that, what do we have? Who can speak our language, eh?

JOHN: (*to ROBERT*) We have our talent.

ROBERT: And what of it? (*Pause*) What of humanity? (*Pause*)

JOHN: What?

ROBERT: I don't know. (*Pause*) Let's get a drink.

JOHN: I'm on the phone.

ROBERT: Hang it up.

JOHN: (*into phone*): Hello, Bonnie? John. How are you?

ROBERT: We enslave ourselves.

JOHN: (*into phone*): No!

ROBERT: God.

JOHN: (*into phone*) Why, thank you. Thank YOU very much. (*Pause*) On the film? Yes? Yes? I'll check my book.

ROBERT: One does not have to check one's "book" to get a drink. (*To himself*) A drink cannot buy itself.

JOHN: (*covering phone*) Do you know who this is, Robert?

ROBERT: I am going to drink. For I must drink now. Do you know why?

JOHN: Why?

(*Pause*)

ROBERT: It is fitting. Bye...(*Exits.*)

SOUND: *Footsteps, then door closing*

JOHN: (*into phone*) Yes. Eleven's fine. (*Pause*) Wonderful.

SOUND: *Phone hangs up.*

MUSIC: *Bass busy passage/*

SOUND: *Applause*

MUSIC: *Bass backstage theme.*

(*Backstage after performance. ROBERT and JOHN are taking off their makeup.*)

ROBERT: Fucking leeches.

JOHN: Mmm. Pass me the tissue, please?

ROBERT: They'll praise you for the things you never did and pan you for a split second of godliness. What do they know? They create nothing. They come in the front door. They don't even buy a ticket.

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: They've praised you too much. I do not mean to detract from your reviews—you deserve praise, John, much praise.

JOHN: Thank you.

ROBERT: Not, however, for those things which they have praised you for.

JOHN: In your opinion.

ROBERT: Yes, John, yes. From now on. *(Pause)* You must be very careful who you listen to. From whom you take advice.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Never take advice.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: ...from people.

JOHN: May I have my comb, please?

ROBERT: ...who do not have a vested interest, John, in your eventual success.

JOHN: I won't.

ROBERT: Or, barring that, in Beauty in the Theatre.

JOHN: I thought that they were rather to the point.

ROBERT: You did.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Your reviews.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: All false modesty aside.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Oh, the Young, the Young, the Young, the Young.

JOHN: The Farmer in the Dell.

ROBERT: Oh, I see.

JOHN: Would you hand me my scarf, please? Pause.

ROBERT: You fucking TWIT.

JOHN: I beg your pardon?

ROBERT: I think that you heard me. *(Takes towel from JOHN'S area and begins to use it.)*

(Pause)

JOHN: Robert.

ROBERT: What?

JOHN: Use your own towels from now on.

ROBERT: They're at the laundry.

JOHN: Get them back.

MUSIC: Bass leads into dark passage

(A dark stage, one work light lit. JOHN is rehearsing.)

JOHN: Now all the youth of England are on fire
And silken dalliance in the wardrobe lies.
Now thrive the Armorers and honor's thought
Reigns solely in the breast of every man.

ROBERT: *(from offstage)* Ah, sweet poison of the actor, rehearsing in an empty theatre upon an empty stage.

JOHN: Good evening.

ROBERT: ...but full of life, full of action, full of resolve, full of youth. *(Pause)* Please continue. *(Pause)* Please, please continue. I'd like you to...I'm sorry. Does this upset you? Does it upset you that someone is watching? I'm sorry, I can understand that. *(Pause)* It's good. It's quite good. I was watching you for a while. I hope you don't mind. Do you mind?

JOHN: I've only been here a minute or so.

ROBERT: And I've watched you all that time. It seemed so long. It was so full. You're very good, John. Have I told you that lately? You are becoming a very fine actor. The flaws of youth are the perquisite of the young. It is the perquisite of the young to possess the flaws of youth.

JOHN: It's fitting, yes. . .

ROBERT: Ah, don't mock me, John. You shouldn't mock me. It's too easy. It's not good for you, no. And that is a lesson which we have to learn. *(Pause.)* Which you have to learn.

JOHN: And what is that?

ROBERT: That it is a hurtful fault, John, to confuse sincerity with weakness. *(Pause)* And I must tell you something.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: About the Theatre—and this is a wondrous thing about the Theatre—and John, one of the

ways in which it's most like me...

JOHN: And what is that? *(Pause)*

ROBERT: Simply this. That in the Theatre (as in life—and the Theatre is, of course, a part of life...No?)...Do you see what I'm saying? I'm saying, as in a grocery store, that you cannot separate the time one spends...that is, it's all part of one's life. *(Pause)* In addition to the fact that what's happening on stage is life...of a sort... I mean, it's part of your life. *(Pause)* Which is one reason I'm so gratified (if I may presume, and I recognize that it may be a presumption) to see you...to see the young of the Theatre...(And it's not unlike one's children)...following in the footpaths of...following in the footsteps of those who have gone before. *(Pause)* Do you see what I am saying? I would like to think you did. Do you? John? *(Pause)* Well... well. Goodnight, John.

(Pause)

JOHN: Goodnight.

ROBERT: Goodnight. I'll see you. *(starts to exit.)*

JOHN: Good night. *(Long pause)*

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS as JOHN examines the wings where ROBERT has exited. More hollow sounding, as JOHN takes the stage.

JOHN: They sell the pasture now to buy the horse
Following the mirror of all Christian Kings
With the winged heels as English Mercuries.

(Pause)

For now sits Expectation in the air

(Pause)

And hides a sword.

(Pause)

SOUND: FOOTSTEPS as JOHN talks into the wings

JOHN: Are you back in there? Robert? Are you back in there? *(Pause)* I see you in there. I see you there, Robert.

ROBERT: *(offstage voice)* I'm just leaving.

JOHN: You were not just leaving, you were...looking at me.

ROBERT: On my way out, John. On my way out. Christ, but you make me feel small. You make me feel small, John. I don't feel good.

(Pause)

JOHN: Are you crying? Are you crying, Robert, for chrissakes? *(Pause)* Christ. Are you crying?

ROBERT: Yes.

(Pause)

JOHN: Well, stop crying.

ROBERT: Yes. I will.

JOHN: No, stop it now. Stop it. Please. *(Pause)* (Robert stops crying.)

ROBERT: Better?

(Pause)

JOHN: Yes. *(Pause)* Are you all right?

ROBERT: Oh, yes. I'm all right. I'm fine. Thank you, John. *(Pause)* Well, I suppose I'll... (You're going to work some more, eh?)

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Then I suppose I'll... Well, I was leaving anyway. *(Pause)* Goodnight. Goodnight, John.

(Pause)

JOHN: Are you all right now? *(raising his voice)* Robert! Are you all right now?

ROBERT: *(far offstage)* Yes. Thank you. Yes. I'm all right now. *(Pause)*

(JOHN takes the stage again, is about to begin declaiming.)

ROBERT: *(from far offstage)* You're not angry with me, are you?

JOHN: No.

ROBERT: You're sure?

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: I'm glad, John. *(Pause)* Thank you.

JOHN: Goodnight, Robert. *(Pause)* Robert? *(Pause)*

(JOHN takes the stage.)

JOHN: Now all the Youth of England are on fire.

(Pause)

JOHN: Robert?

(Pause)

ROBERT: Yes, John?

JOHN: Are you out there?

ROBERT: Yes, John.

JOHN: *(sotto voce)*: Shit.

MUSIC: Comical theme

SOUND: Audience ambiance before performance

(ROBERT and JOHN are dressed in surgical smocks, and stand behind a form on an operating table.)

SOUND: Medical monitoring and surgical equipment

MUSIC: Bass begins a quiet rhythm like a heart beating which continues through this scene, crescendo at the end of the scene.

ROBERT: Give me some suction there, doctor, will you...that's good.

JOHN: Christ, what I wouldn't give for a cigarette.

ROBERT: Waaal, just a few more minutes and I think I'll join you in one. *(Pause)* Nervous, Jimmy?

JOHN: No. Yes.

ROBERT: No need to be. A few years, you'll be doing these in your sleep. Suction. Retractor.

SOUND: Instruments, suction, etc.

ROBERT: No, the large retractor.

JOHN: Sorry.

ROBERT: It's all right. Give me another one, will you?

JOHN: What's that?

(Pause)

ROBERT: I don't know. *(minutely)*.

JOHN: Mmm. *(worried)* What *is* that?

ROBERT: I don't know. *(minutely but emphatically)*.

(Pause)

JOHN: *(whisper-mumbles something inaudible)*

ROBERT: *(inaudible mumbles something to John)*

ROBERT: Would you, uh, can you give me some sort of reading on the, uh, electra. . . urn. . . on the. . .
. . . Would you get me one, please? No . . . on the, uh. . . would you get me a reading on this man?

JOHN: What Is that!!!?

ROBERT: What is what? Eh?

JOHN: What's that near his spleen? *(Pause)* A curious growth near his spleen?

ROBERT: What?

JOHN: A Curious Growth Near His Spleen? *(Pause)* Is that one, there?

ROBERT: No, I think not. I think you cannot see a growth near his spleen for some time yet. So would

you as this man's in shock...would you get me, please, give me a reading on his vital statements. Uh, Functions...? Would you do that one thing for me, please?

JOHN: *(sotto voce)* We've done that one, Robert.

ROBERT: I fear I must disagree with you, Doctor. Would you give me a reading on his vital things, if you please? Would you? *(Pause)* For the love of God!

JOHN: *(sotto voce)* That's in the other part.

ROBERT: No, it is not. He's in shock. He's in shock, and I'm becoming miffed with you. Now: if you desire to work in this business again, will you give me a reading? If you wish to continue here inside the hospital? *(Pause)* Must I call a policeman!!? *(Pause)* Have you no feeling? This man's in deepest shock!!!

(Pause)

SOUND: JOHN takes off his mask and walks away.

ROBERT: And now where are you going? *(Pause)* You quitter!!

(Another pause.) (To audience)

ROBERT: Ladies and gentlemen. What we have seen here today is—I won't say a triumph, but a very good example of successful surgical technique, performed under modern optimum conditions, uh ... and with a minimum of fuss...a minimum of mess and bother...and I hope that you have...

SOUND: *Audience hubbub.*

(The curtain is being rung down on him)

ROBERT: ...that you have found it every bit...

SOUND: *Audience muffled.*

ROBERT: *(generally)*: Does anybody have a script?

MUSIC: *Climax, then interlude*

(Backstage. Robert holding his left wrist with his right hand.)

ROBERT: Oh God, oh God, I've cut myself.

JOHN: *(entering)* What have you done?

ROBERT: I'm bleeding. Oh, my God.

JOHN: Christ.

ROBERT: What a silly accident. Can you believe this?

JOHN: Come on.

ROBERT: Where?

JOHN: We're going to the hospital.

ROBERT: Oh, no. Oh, no. I'm all right, really.

JOHN: Come on.

ROBERT: No. What would they say? Kidding aside. *(Pause)* No. I'm quite all right. My razor slipped and now I'm fine. I had a moment, though. I did. *(Pause)* John... *(Pause)* John....

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: Did you know in olden times they used to say "cleanshaven like an actor"? *(Pause)* Did you know that?

JOHN: Are you all right?

ROBERT: Oh, yes. I'm fine. I've lost a little blood is all. It's nothing, really. *(Pause)* A mishap. *(Pause)* Cleanshaven.

JORN: God, what's wrong with you?

ROBERT: There's nothing wrong with me. My hand slipped. *(Pause)* I'm tired. That's all. I'm tired. *(Pause)* I need to rest. We all need rest. We all need rest. It's much too much. It's just too much. I'm tired. *(Pause)* You understand? I'm tired.

JOHN: Well, I'm calling you a doctor.

ROBERT: No. You're not. No. Please. I'm only tired. I'm going to go home. I'm only tired. We think we see things clearly when we haven't enough sleep. But we do not. I've cut myself. I've dirtied up the basin. *(Pause)* I'm going to go home now.

JOHN: I'll come home with you.

ROBERT: No. Thank you. I'll get home alone. I only have to rest now. Thank you. *(Pause)* But thank you all the same.

JOHN: I'll take you home.

ROBERT: What? No. I think I'm only going to sit here for a moment. *(Pause)* I'll be all right. I'll be all right tomorrow. I'll be my old self. I'm all right now. *(Smiles)* *(Pause)* I'm only going to rest a moment...and then I'll go home.

JOHN: Well, all right. *(He looks to ROBERT for a moment, then exits.)*

SOUND: Footsteps off, door closes

ROBERT: *(remains onstage alone for a moment, then slowly exits).* I'll go home...

SOUND: Footsteps off, slowly...

MUSIC: Segue into backstage theme.

(Backstage, after a show.)

ROBERT: I loved the staircase scene tonight.

JOHN: You did?

ROBERT: Just like a poem. *(Pause)*

JOHN: I thought the execution scene worked beautifully.

ROBERT: No. You didn't.

JOHN: Yes. I did. (*sneeze*)

(*Pause*)

ROBERT: Thank you. Getting cold, eh?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: (*to himself*) It's getting cold. (*Aloud*) You know, my father always wanted me to be an actor.

JOHN: Yes?

ROBERT: Always wanted me to be. *Pause.*

JOHN: Well! Time for the umbrella...

ROBERT: It's raining?

JOHN: I think it will. You got a fag?

ROBERT: Yes. Always wanted me to be. (*ROBERT hands JOHN a cigarette.*)

JOHN: Thank you.

ROBERT: Mmm. You going out?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Where? A party?

JOHN: No. I'm going with some people.

ROBERT: Ah.

JOHN: Damn. You have a match?

ROBERT: No.

SOUND: *JOHN hunts for a match on the makeup table.*

JOHN: Where are the matches? Are you going out tonight?

ROBERT: I don't know; I suppose so.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: I'm not eating too well these days.

JOHN: No, eh?

ROBERT: No.

JOHN: Why?

ROBERT: Not hungry.

JOHN: Ah, here we are.

ROBERT: Here, I'll light it.

JOHN: Do you mind?

ROBERT: No.

SOUND: ROBERT lights JOHN'S cigarette.

JOHN: Thank you. *(Pause)*

ROBERT: A life spent in the theatre.

JOHN: Mmm.

ROBERT: Backstage.

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: The bars, the house, the drafty halls. The penciled scripts...

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Stories. Ah, the stories that you hear.

JOHN: I know.

ROBERT: It all goes so fast. It goes so quickly. *(Long pause)*

JOHN: You think that I might borrow twenty 'til tomorrow?

ROBERT: What, you're short on cash?

JOHN: Yes.

ROBERT: Oh. Oh. *(Pause)* Of course.

SOUND: He digs in his pocket, finds money, hands it to JOHN.

ROBERT: Here you are.

JOHN: You're sure you won't need it?

ROBERT: No. No, not at all. No. If I don't know how it is, who does?

(Pause)

JOHN: Thank you.

ROBERT: Mmm. Goodnight.

JOHN: Goodnight.

ROBERT: You have a nice night.

JOHN: I will.

ROBERT: Goodnight.

SOUND: Footsteps as John exits and door closes, then more footsteps as Robert walks onto the stage.

ROBERT: Ephemera, ephemera. *(Pause)* “An actor’s life for me.”

SOUND: APPLAUSE

(ROBERT clears his throat and addresses the empty house.)

ROBERT: Thank you. Thank you. Please. You’re too kind. *(applause settles down)* You’ve been so kind... Thank you, you’ve really been so kind. You know, and I speak, I am sure, not for myself alone, but on behalf of all of us... *(composes himself)* all of us here, when I say that these... these moments make it all... they make it all worthwhile.

(Pause)

JOHN: *(quietly reappears)* You know...

ROBERT: Oh, John, you’re still here...

JOHN: They’re locking up. They’d like us all to leave.

ROBERT: I was just leaving.

JOHN: Yes, I know. *(Pause)* I’ll tell them.

ROBERT: Would you?

JOHN: Yes.

(Pause)

ROBERT: Thank you.

JOHN: Goodnight.

ROBERT: Goodnight. *(Pause)*

SOUND: Footsteps and door closing as John exits.

ROBERT: *(to himself)* The lights dim. Each to his own home. Goodnight~ Goodnight. Goodnight.

MUSIC: Bass bowed to conclusion.

ANNOUNCER: You have been listening to David Mamet’s stage play, “A Life In The Theater”, starring _____ as Robert and _____ as John. _____ played the Stage Manager. “A Life in The Theater” was adapted for radio by Michael Winn. The original music for this evening’s performance was created and played by contrabassist _____. Recording and editing was done by _____, assisted by _____. Michael Winn directed. This program was a production of the San Diego Radio Theater, Phillip Van Oppen, Producer.

This is your announcer, _____, wishing you a pleasant evening.