

THE WALL OF WATER

Sherry Kramer

BROADWAY PLAY PUBLISHING INC

224 E 62nd St, NY NY 10075-8201

212 772-8334 fax: 212 772-8358

BroadwayPlayPubl.com

THE WALL OF WATER

© Copyright 2000, 2008 by Sherry Kramer

All rights reserved. This work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America. No part of this publication may be photocopied, reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher. Additional copies of this play are available from the publisher.

Written permission is required for live performance of any sort. This includes readings, cuttings, scenes, and excerpts. For amateur and stock performances, please contact Broadway Play Publishing Inc. For all other rights contact the author c/o B P P I.

Earlier versions of THE WALL OF WATER were published by B P P I starting in 1989.

1st printing: Nov 2008. 2nd printing: Aug 2010.
I S B N: 978-0-88145-423-9

Book design: Marie Donovan
Word processing: Microsoft Word
Typographic controls: Ventura Publisher
Typeface: Palatino
Printed and bound in the U S A

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sherry Kramer is the author of over fifteen plays that have been produced here and abroad. Plays include: DAVID'S REDHAired DEATH, WHAT A MAN WEIGHS, THINGS THAT BREAK, THE WORLD AT ABSOLUTE ZERO, THE MAD MASTER, THE LONG ARMS OF JUPITER (a croquet performance piece), THE BAY OF FUNDY: An Adaptation of One Line from the Mayor of Casterbridge, THE LAW MAKES EVENING FALL, IVANHOE, MO, ABOUT SPONTANEOUS COMBUSTION, THE RELEASE OF A LIVE PERFORMANCE, THE RULING PASSION, A PERMANENT SIGNAL, THE MASTER AND MARGARITA (a singing-theater work with Margaret Pine), and NAPOLEON'S CHINA (a play with music with Ann Haskell and Rebecca Newton). Selected Productions: Actors Theater of Louisville-Humana Festival, Yale Repertory Theater, NY's Second Stage, the Woolly Mammoth Theater, Soho Repertory Theater, Ensemble Studio Theater, the Tokyo International Arts Festival, and the Theater of the First Amendment. She has been awarded the Weissberger Playwriting Award, the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, the L A Women in Theater New Play Award, a New York Drama League Award, the Marvin Taylor Award, and is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, a McKnight National Fellowship, a Pew

Charitable Trust/Playwrights Center Residency, and a commission from the Audrey Skirball-Kenis Theater Project. She was the first national member of New Dramatists, and is a Core Member of the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She holds M F As from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the Iowa Playwrights' Workshop. She teaches playwriting at Bennington College, The Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas, Austin, and the Iowa Playwrights' Workshop, where she was previously head of the workshop.

THE WALL OF WATER was developed at Midwest Playlabs. It was then produced by Yale Repertory Theater, Lloyd Richards, Artistic Director. It opened on 14 January 1988 with the following cast and creative staff:

MEGDebra Jo Rupp
JUDY Caroline Lagerfeld
DENICE Aleta Mitchell
WENDI Laurie Kennedy
JACK David Chandler
JOHN Tom McGowan
STUARTJohn C Vennema
GIG Terrence Caza

Director Megs Booker
Set designer David Birn
Costume designerCraig Clipper
Lighting designer Scott Zielinski
Assistant director Anne D’Zmura
DramaturgJoel Schechter
Production dramaturgBecke Buffalo
Stage managerAnne Marie Hobson

THE WALL OF WATER was written with the help and support of the Dorset Colony, New Dramatists, and Victor D’Altorio.

CHARACTERS & SETTING

MEG, *the newest roommate, early thirties*

DENICE, *party girl, stunning, mid-thirties*

JUDY, *a research allergist, mid-thirties*

WENDI, *once wonderful, now insane, fortyish*

JOHN, *psychotherapeutic nurse, mid-twenties*

JACK, *MEG's old boyfriend, early thirties*

STUART, *JUDY's boyfriend, cancer researcher, mid-thirties*

GIG, *WENDI's therapist, late-thirties*

A huge apartment on the Upper West Side. Centerstage, and downstage, is the bathroom. It has three doors—one connecting to WENDI's room, one to MEG's, and another, leading upstage, connecting to the hallway. There is a long hallway that twists and turns through the apartment, leading to the kitchen, and to the front door. A hallway outside the front door is suggested, as are JUDY and DENICE's rooms.

Time: The present

ACT ONE: *A Saturday morning*

ACT TWO: *That night*

I wrote this one for Victor

ACT ONE

(Lights up on brilliantly lit bathroom as MEG walks in and turns on the hot water in the shower.)

MEG: Did you ever notice how the sound of the hot water changes when it gets hot? I did.

I noticed a lot of other things, besides.

One day I woke up and noticed that most of those things made me angry.

Then I noticed something else.

That if I took a long hot shower, I wasn't angry anymore.

(Lights up on the kitchen, where DENICE and JUDY are eating breakfast and reading The New York Times.

DENICE is eating bacon and eggs, bagels with cream cheese and butter, and drinking coffee.)

(JUDY is eating a big bowl of sea-green algae mush.)

JUDY: Denice—I found one for you. Martin Overstreet, seen here after pleading no comment on his recent trade restriction indictment.

(She gives the paper to DENICE, who is busily getting out her scrapbook, scissors, and glue.)

DENICE: Judy, I can't use this! He's got his briefcase up in front of him to avoid the photographers! I can't even see his face. *(She thrusts the paper back at JUDY.)*

JUDY: Well, you could if it were a hologram. All you'd have to do is peek around the briefcase like this: (*She demonstrates, edging her face around the newspaper.*)

DENICE: It is not a hologram! It is *The New York Times*!

JUDY: That's not my fault.

DENICE: This is the tenth time in a row this has happened. Is it me? Or is it just a trend?

JUDY: Hiding your face when you're ashamed is not a trend, Denice. It is the evolution of a human impulse. Martin is just lucky that civilization has provided him with a briefcase— (*Looks at picture again*) —and in this case, a really nice briefcase, to hide his shame.

Do you still keep in touch with him, Denice?

DENICE: Why?

JUDY: I've been looking everywhere for the perfect gift for Stuart's birthday and I'd love to know where he got that briefcase.

MEG: Then I had a bunch of thoughts, all at once. Thoughts like, what if the water shortage gets really bad. What if the boiler breaks, and stays broken for a long time, and all my friends are out of town, and all the hotel rooms are full.

What if Adolf Hitler had taken more hot showers. What if he did, and it didn't help. What if one day I took a long, hot shower, and I was still very angry about a lot of things when I came out.

What then. What would happen when I got out of the shower, even angrier than when I got in? What if I got out, wet and clean and angry? (*She smiles.*)

JUDY: Denice—here's another one! Roberto Montoya. Denying antitrust allegations on the courthouse steps. Picture on page two.

(DENICE picks up her scissors, they turn to page two expectantly. When they see it, DENICE sighs, and puts down her scissors.)

JUDY: The briefcase he's hiding his face with isn't nearly as nice as Martin's.

DENICE: You see? It is a trend. And it's ruining my scrapbook.

JUDY: It is not a trend. Nothing is a trend until someone has figured out a way to make money from it.

DENICE: HAH. I can see the commercials now. "Hi. I hope you don't know me, but whenever I'm indicted, I always make sure to have my Fendi attaché on hand. Its ample proportions give me full face and profile protection, and Fendi uses special flash-bulb resistant dyes for years of use without fading."

JUDY: I don't think they'll be asking Roberto to do an endorsement, not with his taste in briefcases.

MEG: What if I'm going to take that shower now? What if I've already taken it, and don't know? What if I'm getting angrier and angrier and they could heat the Canadian side of Niagara Falls to the boiling point, keep the American side running cold, put handles on the side, throw me a big bar of soap, and it still wouldn't calm me down. *(She turns off the shower.)* What then?

JUDY: You know, *The New York Times* is filled with pictures of men who aren't covering their faces with briefcases.

DENICE: Yes, but I haven't slept with them.

JUDY: So? Why not do it the other way around? Find pictures of men you like, cut them out, and they'll be all ready to put in your scrapbook if you sleep with them. It would be very scientific.

DENICE: It would be cheating.

JUDY: It would be efficient. If you would just—
Denice—didn't Roberto take you to Paris for Bastille
Day this year?

DENICE: Yes.

JUDY: And didn't Martin take you the year before?

DENICE: Yes. So?

JUDY: Isn't that a little strange? A little spooky?

DENICE: No. It's an expensive hotel room, a Paris
original, and a case of jet lag.

JUDY: All the same, you have to admit that it's a very
interesting coincidence.

DENICE: Come on, Judy. You think it's an interesting
coincidence when you run into an ex-lover on the
street, but you have to run into someone, don't you?
There's a finite number of people you can run into
on the street.

JUDY: Even so, when things happen, and a pattern
develops, it has to mean something.

DENICE: Why?

JUDY: Because if it didn't, everything would be
coincidence.

DENICE: Everything is. After all, if it weren't for
coincidence, you would never see the same person
more than once. Even you couldn't count on being
the same person twice.

JUDY: But what if for weeks the only men covering their
faces with briefcases on the front page of *The New York
Times* are men you've slept with. What would that
mean?

DENICE: It would mean we'd have to cancel our subscription to the *Times*.

MEG: And what if what I was angry about was something petty. Something small. Something that really didn't matter. What if I was so angry about something that didn't really matter that even a perfectly temperature-regulated Niagara Falls couldn't calm me down.

Because you know why I'm angry? You really want to know?

(Lights up on WENDI's room as WENDI sits up in bed, screams, and slaps her arm.)

(WENDI regards the place where she has slapped herself with frozen horror.)

MEG: Wendi, my roommate. Creates a rage in me greater and more terrifying than the rage created in me by the thought of early death caused by many forms of cancer, even though Judy, who is a doctor, swears that even if I got cancer, it could be diagnosed in time, and I could probably be saved. Unless it was head cancer. Or throat cancer. Or lung cancer. *(She takes a cigarette from behind her ear, lights and smokes it.)* Which I have almost no chance of getting, if I stop smoking.

But that's not why I'm going to stop.

WENDI: *(She leaps up from her bed. She is wearing an open kimono and nothing else. She sweeps down the hallway toward the kitchen, wailing and sobbing.)* I imagine a world completely pestilence ridden. The slightest touch, the smallest bruise, will blossom and decay. I imagine bank lines, stretching for miles, and none of the tellers caring, and all the people in the lines oozing and bleeding from arms and legs and faces covered with open sores and scabs. Piebald from rashes. I imagine great armies of mosquitos preying upon these people, wafting down on them in swarms that quite cloud the sky. They suck

and sting their way up and down the line, spreading the pestilence, a thousand separate plagues, from one pock-marked, stinking carrier to the next, the bills and bank cards in their hands soaked and slimy with death and disease.

Suddenly, the attack is called off. The cloud of mosquitos rises, riding the city thermals up and up. And one of them...one of them...one of them floats inside my open window. I mean to keep it closed. I mean to keep it closed but I forget. It comes in my open window, and it bites me. It bites me. And it carries in its bite a hundred horrible plagues and all of them will deform me hideously while I die.

There is only one way to save myself.

(She lunges for DENICE's scissors, and attempts to stab her arm with them. DENICE grabs them away, hands them off to JUDY, who hides them deftly—they've played this scene many times before.)

WENDI: I have to cut the poison out.

(She lunges for the silverware drawer, takes out a butter knife. DENICE gets it away, hand off to JUDY as before. DENICE slams the drawer and leans against it to keep it shut.)

DENICE: No knives, Wendi, you promised.

WENDI: NO KNIVES? All right. *(She goes for another drawer, pulls out a cookie cutter. She holds it up so it shines in the light.)* A cookie cutter! Yes, it's perfect. It will cut out a perfectly circular diseased plug of my flesh. *(She begins stabbing at her arm with it.)*

JUDY: *(Sighing, she calmly takes the cookie cutter away from her.)* Wendi, you don't have to do that.

WENDI: *(Grabbing for the cookie cutter)* But I do, I do, I'll die if I don't. *(She gets it, begins stabbing at her arm again.)* This is the only way, the only way, the only way—

JUDY: (*Taking it from her, calmly, again*) Yes, it was the only way, but now we've come up with something better.

WENDI: You have?

JUDY: Yes, of course. We can't have everybody cutting holes in their flesh, now, can we? They'd look like swiss cheese.

WENDI: (*Meditatively*) Swiss cheese.

JUDY: I developed the antidote for this in the lab just yesterday. (*She opens the refrigerator, takes out a large brown medicine bottle labeled ANTIDOTE.*) There.

(*WENDI stands patiently while JUDY swabs some of the liquid onto the bite*)

WENDI: I don't see how it can reach the poison fast enough like that. Here, let me rip it open for you.

(*She lunges for a fork; DENICE intercepts.*)

JUDY: No, it passes directly into the blood stream in seconds. Don't you feel better already?

WENDI: Yes. I do. Thank you. It's just like on T V. (*She leaves the kitchen, wailing more softly, heading down the hall.*) Just like on T V! Just like on T V!

JUDY: (*She begins drinking from the brown "antidote" bottle.*) You've got to face up to it. Sooner or later you'll meet the ultimate, the final scrapbook entry, and you'll be out of here like that. Then who's going to take care of her?

DENICE: She'll get better before that happens. I just know it.

JUDY: We've got to get started. These things take time. Dr Hollis will know of a nice, clean place for her.

DENICE: We don't know for sure she won't get better. It could happen.

JUDY: Wendi has a better chance of winning the Triple Crown on foot than she does of getting better.

DENICE: You're being cruel.

JUDY: I'm being practical. She's crazy, and the crazy get about a million chances to get sane, and if they don't, they stay crazy.

DENICE: Maybe not. Maybe one day just by... coincidence, Wendi will walk out of her room and she'll be...someone else. Someone who remembers Wendi, yes. Fondly, but not too well.

JUDY: You know better than that.

DENICE: I know, but I can't help it. I always hope for the best with Wendi.

JUDY: And I don't know why.

DENICE: That's because you're a doctor, and you know better. I'm a party girl, and party girls never learn.

JUDY: You don't have to be so smug about it.

DENICE: Why not. You are. You've based your entire career on knowing better.

JUDY: But you should know better. You've got one M B A, two Ph.D's, three English degrees—

DENICE: And a partridge in a pear tree, but none of them are legitimate reasons for not hoping Wendi will get better.

JUDY: Except she's getting worse. And she's going to keep getting worse until we put her someplace where they're trained to help her get better. Someplace where they don't keep her around, just because the lease is in her name.

DENICE: Excuse me?

JUDY: You heard me.

DENICE: I heard you. And I'm warning you, Judy. Don't you ever say that to me again.

MEG: I have plenty of good reasons to stop smoking. Who doesn't? But I am not going to stop smoking for good reasons. I don't have to. *(She finishes her cigarette, stabs it out.)* Because greater than my fear of rotting from the inside out with lung cancer, or from the outside in with head cancer, or from both sides at once with throat cancer, is the delight I would take in denying Wendi anything approaching a moment of pleasure in this world. Because Wendi has stopped smoking cigarettes.

(WENDI has sneaked into MEG's room, switched on the light, and is sneaking maniacally over to MEG's desk.)

MEG: But that doesn't stop her from stealing mine.

(WENDI pounces on the pack of cigarettes on the desk. She shakes all of the cigarettes out of the pack. She gleefully stuffs most of them into the sleeves of her kimono. Then, she sticks one in her mouth, and, holding up the last, lonely cigarette—she puts it back in the pack. She takes great pains to lay down the pack exactly as she found it. She lights up, smokes furiously, and leaves, wailing paranoically on the exhale, as she slithers down the hall. She smokes the cigarette desperately, as if she were trying to suck all of life in through it.)

MEG: I take it only as a sign of the influence of a civilization on even the criminally insane that Wendi never takes my last one. It has nothing to do with consideration. Compassion. Courtesy. Wendi has left all those things far behind.

Trains can't stop her. Bullets can't stop her. She threatens to leap from tall buildings in a single bound. Medical science can't help her. Deep hypnosis can't reach her. But the myth of the last cigarette stops her. Dead. Every time.

If she would just take the last cigarette, maybe I

wouldn't be so angry. But no, she takes nineteen and stops. She opens a fresh pack, empties them all out, and replaces just one.

I want to kill Wendi.

JUDY: Whose turn is it this time?

DENICE: It isn't anybody's turn, yet, and you know it.

JUDY: Whose turn?

DENICE: She's nowhere near a total break, Judy. Nowhere near. She could snap out of it just like that. *(She snaps her fingers.)*

WENDI: *(She dashes from her room holding the cigarette, burned to the filter, in one hand, and an ash tray, a shoe, and an umbrella in the other. She is terrified.)* Which one which one which one. *(She arrives in the kitchen.)* Which ONE! *(She holds them imploringly out to DENICE.)*

(JUDY begins fanning at the cigarette smoke—she is allergic—and begins fighting off a sneeze.)

DENICE: All three, Wendi. *(DENICE takes WENDI's hand, the one holding the cigarette, and stabs it out in the ashtray.)* This one like this. *(She takes the ashtray from WENDI, and takes WENDI over to the sink.)* This one like this.

(She positions WENDI's hand, holding the shoe so it is up in the air, like a weapon. She opens the cabinet doors under the sink, to dump the ashtray in the trash. Lots of cockroaches escape. WENDI smashes at them.)

DENICE: Cockroaches! Get 'em—get 'em—that's right, good girl. *(She helps WENDI open the umbrella so that it creates a shield between them and JUDY.)* And this one like this.

(JUDY sneezes hugely, three times rapidly.)

WENDI: Thank you. *(She scurries back to her room.)*

MEG: Judy keeps telling me not take any of the things Wendi does to me personally. Judy keeps telling me that Wendi is not doing any of the things she is doing to me, to me. Then who is she doing these things to, I ask. Is it my fault for getting in the way? Judy keeps telling me Wendi is sick, and can't help it, but Judy is a doctor, and for doctors, sickness makes a certain sense.

JUDY: She's scrambled eggs, Denice. Whose turn? I know it's not mine.

DENICE: Come on, Judy, she's not maintaining very well, even I'll admit that, but it's not her fault that mosquito bit her, and if we lived in the malarial belt, her reaction would be well within normal limits. And I think she showed a lot of common sense with the cigarette. She got the ashtray right with almost no help from me, and the shoe and the umbrella came in very handy.

JUDY: Denice, it's your turn.

DENICE: Well, it might be. You see, it all depends.

JUDY: DENICE—

DENICE: You see, it might be my turn, but I have a party tonight, I have to go to it.

JUDY: All right then, it's Meg's.

DENICE: I don't think Meg's quite ready to take her turn yet—

JUDY: You made me take my turn the second week I moved in here!

DENICE: You're a doctor. You're used to it.

JUDY: Used to it! I'm an ALLERGIST!

DENICE: Well, you have often told me that Wendi was allergic to life.

JUDY: It's Stuart's birthday. We have plans.

DENICE: What about the time I took your turn because you were going on your first date with Stuart? I didn't have to take your turn. It would have been like having a first date in the attic with Mister Rochester's first wife in *Jane Eyre*. "What's that banshee-like wailing, Judy?" "Oh, nothing, Stuart." "What's that smell of burning flesh, Judy?" "Oh, nothing, Stuart." "What's that kitchen knife in my thigh, Judy?" "Oh, nothing, Stuart, dear."

JUDY: No, and that's final.

DENICE: But I have to go to that party. I'm a party girl, remember?

JUDY: Meg has been here for two months. I think she's been very good with Wendi.

DENICE: She hasn't spoken to her in weeks!

JUDY: Well. That's what I mean. She hasn't been cruel or combative with her. Now has she?

DENICE: No. But—

JUDY: Meg knew, when she moved in here, that she had to take her turn. If she's not willing to take her turn she shouldn't have moved in.

DENICE: It's not that she's not willing, Judy.
It's that she doesn't exactly know.

JUDY: She doesn't exactly know! WHAT EXACTLY DID YOU TELL HER!

DENICE: I told her Wendi had a problem.

JUDY: I think Meg's smart enough to have figured that out on her own, don't you?

DENICE: I told her it was with reality, okay! I did say that!

JUDY: And what did she say?

DENICE: She said. Who doesn't.

Look—let's not get into this. There's no point.

JUDY: I agree. Because you are going to tell Meg everything, right now.

DENICE: I'll tell Meg. Okay. I promise. But not now. I mean, Wendi still might not have a complete break, right? They've always started with her heart before, so let's just wait until her heart stops, okay?

WENDI: (*Sits bolt upright in her bed and screams at the top of her lungs*) MY HEART HAS STOPPED!

JUDY: (*Stands up from the table and sighs*) Do not TOUCH the food section till I get back. (*Goes down hall to bathroom. Pounds on door.*) MEG? Denice wants to talk to you. RIGHT NOW.

(*JUDY goes into WENDI's room, sits beside her on the bed. DENICE has left the kitchen and gone into her room the minute JUDY was out of sight.*)

MEG: I know what they want to talk to me about. WENDI. But I have nothing to apologize about when it comes to her. Day after day I have remembered that no matter what Wendi does to me, Wendi is sick. Wendi is weak. Day after day I have participated in absurd, tiny tragedies. I have even agreed on several occasions that the sky looked bruised. I have spent long nights pretending that everything that terrifies Wendi terrifies me too, but that I can handle it—hoping to help Wendi by my brave example.

And I have spent even longer nights longing for any one of those terrifying things to come true. I would not mind, for example, if starting tomorrow the intestines of every woman wearing a red dress suddenly splashed out onto the ground, as long as Wendi was wearing one. I would also not object, for instance, if every sound that has ever been made since the Earth's surface cooled, sounds from the past ten or twenty billion years

or so, suddenly reversed their journey out to the stars and returned in a deafening barrage that made conversation impossible and was just barely survivable by the population at large, as long as Wendi does indeed have hearing as sensitive and delicate as if she had dog ears, a fact she is constantly reminding me of whenever I am having a normal conversation in my room that she cannot possibly hear or playing my stereo at barely audible levels....*(She has been raving for several moments—she gets ahold of herself.)* ...Excuse me.

I would not mind the end of life as we know it, and the loss of the known world, as long as Wendi was lost with it.

I suspect that this is not healthy for me.

JUDY: Wendi, is this absolutely necessary? Wendi, this is your last chance....Wendi. Denice has a party she has to go to, it's Stuart's birthday tonight, and it's just an all-around really bad time for your heart to stop... Wendi, please? *(She takes her stethoscope, places it over WENDI's heart.)* All right, we'll do it your way, we always do.

MEG: So, assuming that the dirty dishes in the sink are not going to grow teeth during the night and eat her, I have to face this problem myself. I have to face the fact that I can't go on like this. I have to face the fact that I must fight back. Wendi is stomping on me. I must stomp back. And, since I would never stomp on anybody weaker than I am, I have to face the fact that Wendi is, in reality, stronger than I am. *(She realizes it's true!)* Yes—OF COURSE!! SHE IS!! IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT! THE EVIDENCE IS EVERYWHERE!!! WENDI IS STRONGER THAN I AM! She's got me giving up cigarettes, doesn't she, a thing I love. A thing I love to do at the risk of throat cancer, and head cancer, and lung cancer, the three most hideous ways that cancer comes. She is the one who is stronger.

And everybody knows that while you aren't allowed to stomp on anybody weaker than you are, you are actually encouraged to stomp on anybody stronger... if you can.

SHE IS STRONGER! (*She stomps into WENDI's room through the door connecting the bathroom to WENDI's room.*)

WENDI!! WENDI!!!! WENDI I AM GOING TO—

JUDY: SHHSSSSSSS!!!

MEG: (*Pulls up abruptly*) What's wrong.

JUDY: Her heart has stopped.

MEG: OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD OH MY GOD!!!!

JUDY: SHSSS!!

MEG: Don't you want me to call an ambulance— don't you want me to do something?

JUDY: No.

MEG: You mean—it's too late?

JUDY: I can handle it.

MEG: How can you handle it? You're an allergist.

JUDY: I can handle it. Just be quiet.

MEG: How can I be quiet? WENDI IS DEAD.

DENICE: (*Enters the bathroom, dressed in a very stunning and sexy daytime outfit. She takes nail polish out of the cabinet and begins to do her nails.*) When I was a child, I could make something absolutely wonderful in five minutes. You probably could too. (*She turns on a timer, sets it to five minutes.*) It fucked my level of expectation of life right to hell and back.

I don't know about yours.

For awhile, I considered writing a book about it. Here is the title I considered: *Denice Van Gelden, Victim of Fate*.

I spent considerably longer than five minutes trying to write it. It was shit. So I entered a beauty contest. I

won it. I entered another one. I won that too.

I wasn't any prettier than most of the girls I competed against, I was just a little more interested in making something wonderful.

JUDY: (*She has prepared WENDI for the ritual.*)

Wendi—Wendi—listen carefully, Wendi. The bird still sings in its cage.

WENDI: (*Distantly*) The bird still sings in its cage.

MEG: SHE'S TALKING! SHE'S ALIVE! SHE'S—

JUDY: Meg, if you don't shut up this will take me all day. The bird still sings. It beats its wings.

WENDI: It beats its wings.

JUDY: Its wings are getting stronger and stronger. Its wings are so strong they could carry the bird up to the stars—

WENDI: Or down to the sea, but the bird stays—

JUDY: —in its cage—

WENDI: In its cage. The bird stays in its cage and sings.

MEG: Judy?

JUDY: Not now, Meg. Please. (*To WENDI*) It will not fly away. It will stay in its cage forever—

WENDI: It will stay in its cage forever, beating its strong, beautiful wings. (*She sits up, smiling beautifully.*)

DENICE: Gradually, the charm—that is to say, the pageants promise—of the pageants faded. I gave them up. But I kept a scrapbook I had started. There were fourteen pages I had not filled.

MEG: (*Through clenched teeth*) Now let me get this straight. There's nothing wrong with Wendi's heart at all, is there?

JUDY: Wendi's just fine, aren't you, Wendi?

WENDI: Oh, yes. The bird still sings in its cage, even though it could fly all the way up to the stars. (You idiot.) Everybody knows that.

MEG: Good. Because now I am going to kill her. (*She lunges at WENDI.*)

SHE SCREAMS IN THE MORNING! SHE SCREAMS IN THE NIGHT! SHE SCREAMS IN MY DREAMS!

WENDI: I don't think Meg's feeling well, do you, Judy?

MEG: SHE CUTS UP MY DAY WITH HER SCREAMING AND THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME! NOTHING LEFT FOR ME!

WENDI: Not well at all. What a shame.

DENICE: I attended two colleges, three business schools, and a science-fiction convention. I earned degree after degree. All of them took longer than five minutes to get, and none of them showed

me the way to make something wonderful again.

MEG: SHE FRIGHTENS AWAY MY HOUSEGUESTS. I leave them here for a minute while I run to the store, and when I come back THEY'VE TAKEN THEIR LUGGAGE AND THEY'VE JUST GONE! THEY DON'T EVEN LEAVE A NOTE HALF THE TIME THEY'RE IN SUCH A HURRY!

JUDY: Let's go talk about this in the kitchen, Meg, RIGHT NOW!

MEG: NO! She surprises my boyfriend on the toilet. I have to get up in the middle of the night and stand guard while he goes!

WENDI: Poor, poor Meg.

MEG: SHE COVERS THE CLOCKS WITH MASKING TAPE IF SHE DOESN'T LIKE WHAT TIME IT IS!!!

WENDI: Judy, shouldn't we give her something for that? *(She gets a bottle of pills and dumps them on the bed.)* I have pills for everything—I have plenty to spare—

JUDY: *(She releases MEG, and goes to WENDI.)*
Wendi—don't do that, Wendi, please.

WENDI: *(Another bottle)* I don't know what these are for, exactly, but they always help me when I'm in a blue mood.

JUDY: *(Putting the pills back in as WENDI spills out more)*
Wendi, no, —no—

WENDI: Now these, of course, are nice almost any time at all—

JUDY: Wendi no—*(To MEG)*
Now look what you've done!

MEG: Look what I'VE done!?!

DENICE: I lived with a man I met at that science-fiction convention for almost a year in an apartment decorated to resemble the bridge of the Starship Enterprise. During the sexual act he announced the progress of his passion in a Scottish brogue. *(Scottish accent)* She's up ta Warp Five. She's climbing up past Warp Six. She's on tha way ta Warp Seven. Warp Eight. WARP NINE! She wasna built ta take it, Capt'n. She's breaking up! She's gonna explode, Capt'n! SHE'S GONNA EXPLODE!!!!

But making something almost wonderful that lasted five minutes did not, in the end, feel like making something wonderful, at all.

WENDI: These pink ones are nice, but only when you take them with the green ones, now where are the green ones.

JUDY: No more, Wendi, please, now come on—

MEG: SHE EATS THE CENTERS OUT OF THINGS
AND PUTS THEM BACK IN THE REFRIGERATOR!

JUDY: Everybody does that, Meg, now you're being ridiculous—

MEG: I'M TALKING ABOUT HAMBURGERS! I'M TALKING ABOUT FRUIT! And sometimes she puts things in them so you can't tell she took the insides out.

Have you ever bitten into an apple and found a turkey sandwich? I HAVE!!!

DENICE: I despaired.

However, since I didn't gain any weight, no one took my despair seriously. I retreated into my shell. I did continue, however, to go to parties. Parties became my life. In retrospect, I would have been better off gaining the weight.

MEG: And she steals my cigarettes.... *(She is creeping toward WENDI with her last ounce of strength.)* SHE STEALS MY CIGARETTES. SHE STEALS EVERY CIGARETTE BUT MY LAST CIGARETTE AND I'M GOING TO KILL HER!

(She makes a desperate lunge for WENDI. JUDY intercepts and drags her away.)

JUDY: Let's go, Meg, that's a good girl. *(She pounds on the bathroom door.)*

DENICE THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH!
YOU GET INTO THE KITCHEN AND TALK TO MEG
RIGHT NOW!

DENICE: *(Timer goes off.)* So, now you know it all.

Except you don't know about Wendi.

You see, when I moved in here, Wendi was wonderful.

JUDY: I MEAN IT DENICE!

DENICE: OKAY OKAY I'M GOING!

(JUDY drags MEG into the kitchen.)

DENICE: Judy thinks—well, I can't tell Judy. She wouldn't understand. Judy thinks I take care of Wendi

because of the apartment. But I know that if I can just keep her here, and take care of her, that Wendi will be wonderful again someday. *(She leaves the bathroom and heads for the kitchen.)*

WENDI: Poor, poor Meg. I must do something to help her. *(Noticing the mound of pills on her bed)* But first I have to do something about this MESS! *(She scoops up all the pills, seems confused for a moment, then gleefully dumps them all into the sleeves of her kimono. She waves them.)*

JUDY: *(She plunks MEG down in a chair.)* Meg. Denice has something to tell you. *(She plunks DENICE down in a chair.)* Denice, Meg has just tried to kill Wendi. *(She picks up the food section of The New York Times.)* I am taking the food section, and retiring to the bathroom. Unless there is a great deal of blood lost during this conversation, I'll appreciate not being disturbed. *(She heads for the bathroom.)*

WENDI: I know! I'll dedicate this dance to Meg. Maybe that will make her feel better. *(She begins a slow kabuki dance to wrong music in her head, playing with her pill-heavy sleeves.)*

MEG: Why didn't you warn me? I thought you liked me. I thought you were my friend.

DENICE: I was afraid if I did you wouldn't move in, and I wanted you to move in. You're a great roommate—except when it comes to Wendi.

MEG: You still should have warned me.

DENICE: I didn't want to prejudice you against her before you got the chance to know her yourself.

MEG: Thanks for the memories. I always wanted to make friends with someone completely, irretrievably insane.

WENDI: She's feeling better. I can feel it.

DENICE: (*Insulted*) Now look here, Meg, there are people who would die to live in this apartment.

This is possibly the most incredible apartment for the least rent in the world. It's a city block wide, in a great neighborhood, on an express stop, we have illegal cable hookup, both Showtime and H B O—

MEG: So what, Denice. SO WHAT! YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME THERE WAS A CATCH! YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME THAT THE MOST WONDERFUL APARTMENT IN THE WORLD HAS ONE LITTLE, ITTY BITTY CATCH. IT COMES EQUIPPED WITH ITS OWN NATURAL DISASTER. YOU HAVE TO SHARE YOUR LIFE WITH THE ROOMMATE FROM MARS!

(*JUDY is sitting down on the toilet, reading the food section by now. The toilet is in a sort of alcove, and only her toes are visible, unless she is leaning over addressing the audience.*)

WENDI: (*Finishing the dance with a grand flourish*) Well! That helped Meg, I'm sure. But there must be more I can do. (*She contemplates.*)

DENICE: Meg, you don't know the whole catch, exactly, yet.

MEG: I don't?

DENICE: I'm afraid not. You see, Wendi is probably about to have a complete psychic break.

MEG: Probably?

WENDI: I know what will help Meg! I'll cook her a nice home-cooked pasta dinner! (*She speeds toward the kitchen like a locomotive.*)

DENICE: Actually—she's already started. Judy and I know all the signs.

WENDI: (*Racing past them, almost knocking MEG down*)
MEG! I'M COOKING YOU DINNER! (*As she begins an*

immense flurry of horrible kitchen activity) I know you aren't feeling well and a nice pasta dinner is just what you need. *(She cooks at incredible speed. She chops onions like Lizzie Borden, and boils the pasta and heats the sauce over flames tall enough to roast Joan at the stake. Bits of food and globs of tomato paste fly everywhere.)*

MEG: *(The small voice of hysteria)* It's ten o'clock in the morning and Wendi is cooking me a nice pasta dinner because she knows it's just what I need.

WENDI: Even though Judy never eats my pasta because she's allergic, even she agrees. Pasta is good for the soul.

MEG: Even a murderer's soul, Wendi?

WENDI: *(Very seriously and angelically)* I don't know. I've never known a murderer.

MEG: Would you like to?

DENICE: MEG!

WENDI: *(Thinks it through)* I don't think so.

(MEG gets up and starts to leave the kitchen in a hurry.

DENICE stops her.)

DENICE: Meg—you still don't know the whole catch.

MEG: I don't?

DENICE: You see, whenever Wendi has one of her breaks, one of us takes charge. It's really not that hard, Meg, you just call her therapist, and—

MEG: Oh, I'd love to call her therapist.

DENICE: You would?

MEG: Yes. I'd love to call him a lot of things. Things like asshole. Things like fucking cretin asshole loser of the universe how the hell can you call yourself a therapist when you let a maniac like Wendi loose on the unsuspecting world—

DENICE: Meg, come on—

MEG: WENDI IS A MENTAL TYPHOID MARY!
WENDI IS EMOTIONAL GERM WARFARE THAT
THE GENEVA CONVENTION WOULD OUTLAW!

WENDI: *(She takes the pasta off the stove to the sink, dumps it all in a strainer, getting her sleeves all wet.)* Oh, my beautiful sleeves are all wet. Oh, well. Even when you are making pasta, you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs. *(She giggles at her joke and begins playing with her sleeves. She wrings them out, and looks inside. She pulls a handful of wet pills out of her sleeves.)* What's this? Lots and lots of little eggs. How cute. Lots of little eggs, all different colors like Easter eggs. Is it Easter again already? *(She dumps them into the sauce, and empties and shakes her sleeves out into the sauce too.)*

DENICE: I know you don't want to hear this, Meg, but Wendi's not so bad as roommates go. I've had much worse.

MEG: Who were you living with? The Boston Strangler?

DENICE: Believe me, Meg, I would never have asked you to move in here if I hadn't thought that you and Wendi wouldn't be...well...not friends, exactly, but sometimes, when someone new moves in, it snaps her out of it, for awhile.

MEG: SNAPS HER OUT OF IT! YOU ASKED ME TO MOVE IN HERE TO SNAP HER OUT OF IT?!?

DENICE: I didn't mean it like that, Meg—

MEG: I MOVED IN HERE TO LIVE HERE, DENICE!
NOT TO JOIN YOU ON COMMANDO RAIDS INTO
THE TWILIGHT ZONE!

Oh, God, help me. HELP ME!

WENDI: *(Very, very brightly. Dinner is served.)* Oh, no, the Lord only helps those who help themselves. HELP

YOURSELF!! (*Giggling at her joke as she slams down a monstrously huge and terrifying plate of pasta and sauce.*)
I hope the pasta isn't too *al dente*.

(MEG looks from WENDI to the food, from WENDI to the food. She picks up her fork in one hand, her knife in the other. Up. Up. Her face fills with the killer's instinct.

A deadly rage. DENICE slams down MEG's hands, clamping them under hers, keeping them on the table.)

WENDI: What's the matter? Cat got your fork?

(*Riotous laughter. She picks up the serving spoon and tries to jam a large wad of food into MEG's mouth. MEG's mouth is clenched shut. Tomato sauce dribbles down her chin.*)

WENDI: The train is having trouble getting into the hanger, Meg.

DENICE: (*Intense whisper*) She won't leave till you've tasted it, Meg. Meg, it's the only way.

(MEG opens her mouth, WENDI rams the food home. MEG chews, making a tremendous crunching sound on the uncooked pasta.)

WENDI: Oh, good. It's not undercooked a bit. I don't know why I worry so. Enjoy, Meg. (*She kisses MEG on the top of her head, carefully rinses off the cooking spoon, and leaves it to drain in the sink.*) That's that. (*She wipes her hands on her kimono and surveys the kitchen. It is a total disaster.*) I like a nice clean kitchen. (*In the most insane, monstrous, maniacal voice so far:*) DON'T YOU! (*And is gone*)

DENICE: You've just got to keep an open mind about Wendi.

MEG: (*Her mouth full of crunchy pasta*) An open mind? I think it's a miracle I haven't lost whatever mind I have at all!

(She slowly releases MEG's hands and jumps back quickly, getting out of MEG's reach. MEG, in shock, continues to chew up the mouthful of pasta.)

(DENICE leaves the kitchen, heads for the bathroom.)

(WENDI has gone into a closet in her room. She opens the door, emerges wearing another kimono. She hangs up her wet kimono and begins blowing on the sleeves so they will dry.)

DENICE: *(Knocking on the bathroom door)* Judy? Judy?

JUDY: Is it a life-or-death situation, Denice?

DENICE: Not yet, but it does have possibilities.

JUDY: Well, when and if they develop, call me.

(MEG rises from the table and goes to her room like a sleepwalker. She wipes her mouth on the bedspread and lies down.)

DENICE: But Judy—

JUDY: I AM READING THE FOOD SECTION, DENICE.

DENICE: All right, all right. *(She goes back to the kitchen.)*
All right. I'll do it. I always do it.

(WENDI comes across an empty pill bottle. She blows in it, to dry the "pills".)

(DENICE goes to a phone in the kitchen, dials.)

DENICE: Hello, I'm calling about one of Doctor Hollis' patients. He is? I'll hold.

JUDY: *(Starts speaking while still hidden behind the alcove. Gradually leans further and further out toward the audience, as the recipe progresses)* Coulibiac. The favorite dish of the last Imperial Czar. A pastry shell, a yard long, made from white, bleached, infinitely refined flour. A layer of steamed rice, milled and hulled past all nutritional value. Mushrooms and scallions, sauteed in butter, heated to just under the highly carcinogenic point,

cooked just long enough to rob them of all their natural advantages, but leaving the flavor intact. Take a whole salmon fillet, a beautiful pink fillet alive with microscopic parasites and saturated in mercury deposits, and place it gently on the bed of rice.

Make a cream sauce. A cream sauce. The hemlock of the gourmet world. Make two quarts of it, stirring constantly. Ladle it on, and on, and on. Melt a p...p... pound of butter over a slow flame and squeeze in a lemon. Bake for an hour, at three-hundred-fifty degrees. *(She sighs.)* The above recipe kills twelve to fifteen, and should be served with a steamed green vegetable, with pine nuts in olive oil. *(She lets the food section fall to the floor. She is exhausted. Directly to the audience:)* I am highly allergic to everything in that recipe, except the pine nuts. No doubt, so was the czar. *(She points at them.)* And so are you.

DENICE: Doctor Hollis? I'm calling about Wendi Rice. Not so good, I'm afraid. Yes, completely.

JUDY: *(She has gotten off the toilet, flushes it, and goes to wash the newsprint from the food section off her hands.)* I am highly allergic. You are highly allergic. All God's children are highly allergic.

DENICE: You'll send special medication over with the nurse—oh, Doctor, remember to send over only a male nurse, Wendi relates so much better to men.

JUDY: We are allergic to the food. We are allergic to the water. We are allergic to the air. We are allergic to ourselves. We are allergic to each other.

Highly, highly allergic to each other.

DENICE: I'll leave keys and instructions for him, with the doorman. But I can't be here tonight—no, I don't want to commit her unless it's absolutely necessary—*(Resigned)* All right, all right, I'll be here and I'll sign the papers if the nurse says it's—*(An idea)* Doctor, you've

never met any of us, have you?...nothing. You know, Doctor, it slipped my mind, but you could call my service, if the nurse thinks it's necessary, and I'll rush right back. My name is Doctor Judy Wilson, and my service is 555-2933.

JUDY: From the moment of conception, when the egg and sperm attempt to overcome their allergies to each other and combine into something magnificent, we are allergic. Occasionally, of course, the attempt succeeds. Occasionally an egg finds itself in the path of a sperm to which it is not highly allergic!

This accounts for Mozart, Einstein, Shakespeare.

DENICE: Of course, as soon as you see her, you'll—what do you mean, you can't see her? She has to see you, you're her doctor! Well, I know an interview in *The New York Times* about your new book is a once in a lifetime event, but Wendi needs to see you and—*(Total voice change)* Will they be taking a picture of you, Doctor Hollis? *(Incredible voice change)* Oh. Doctor Hollis. Are you by any chance free tonight?

JUDY: The rest of us spend our lives striving to overcome our native allergic condition. Humanists explain this struggle like this! *(She opens her hands in the classic "What can I do?" gesture.)* "That's life."

But what would the phrase mean when every man, woman, and child was a Mozart, Einstein, Shakespeare? In a world filled with the unallergic, a world without sickness, without cancer, what would the struggle that is "That's life" be like then!

I know the way. I am close to finding it. I know!

Alone, in the lab at night with my rats, I can feel it.

DENICE: Yes. Shall I meet you there at say, eight? Oh—what kind of briefcase do you carry? No, no special reason. Just trying to imagine what you look like. Well, till tonight—*(Puzzled)* Discuss my theories on anti-allergic therapy and genius in rats? *(Trapped)*

Oh, I wouldn't say I was the famous Doctor Judy Wilson. Not at all. *(She hangs up, quickly writes a note, puts it in an envelope along with a set of keys.)*

JUDY: I will be known as the famous Doctor Judy Wilson. The woman who invented the food that changed the world. The FOOD OF THE GODS. I can almost taste it.

MEG: *(Utterly destroyed)* I can't. I can't stay here. Not another minute. I just can't. And I won't. I don't care how many people make fun of me for leaving the best apartment in the world for the least money. I have to go. And I'm going. Now. *(She begins packing. Her anger resurfaces.)* They couldn't pay me enough to stay here after this, no sir, not me. *(She begins throwing things into her suitcase, a little violently.)* They could beg me to stay, I wouldn't.

(DENICE goes out the front door with the envelope.)

(MEG is kicking things around, punching them into the suitcase.)

MEG: What I can't take with me, they can burn for all I care. It's contaminated anyway.

(WENDI has been occupying her spare time trapping her breath in her empty prescription bottles. She continues to do so as DENICE enters.)

DENICE: Wendi. I just thought I'd let you know that one of those nice young men will be coming to stay with you tonight.

WENDI: That's nice. You mean a nurse, don't you?

DENICE: Well, yes.

WENDI: Then why don't you say it?

DENICE: I was keeping it for a surprise.

WENDI: Surprise? Surprise? Don't give me that crap, Denice. You think I don't know what you really think of me but I know. I know. I KNOW. And I'm sick and tired of it. Just sicksicksick.

There will be some changes around here. Because I will not have it. I will not have it.

You think I don't know what goes on around here, but I know. You and Judy conspiring against me, day after day.

DENICE: (*Sadly, but not upset, she's been through this before.*) Wendi, you know that's not true.

WENDI: DO I? DO I? (*A real question*) Do I?

DENICE: (*Calmly*) Yes. (*Lovingly*) You do. Sometimes, I know it's hard for you to remember, but deep down inside, I know you know that I would never do something wrong for you.

WENDI: (*Caught in the struggle between her paranoia and the faint glimmer she has of truth*) I...I do know...but sometimes...I get so angry...at something...or it just seems things are breaking, things are breaking, and I can't make them stop.

DENICE: I know, I know, Wendi. It's all right. It's all going to be all right. (*She holds WENDI. She sees the empty prescription bottles. Terror*) Wendi?

WENDI: Yes?

DENICE: (*Very carefully*) Wendi. Where are your pills?

WENDI: My pills.

DENICE: Your pills.

WENDI: I know where my pills are.

DENICE: Wendi please. This isn't funny. Think. Did you take all your pills?

WENDI: Oh, Denice. I always take my medication. Always. I'm a good girl.

DENICE: No. I mean all of them. All of them. Where are the rest of your pills. Did you hide them somewhere, or did you—think. Wendi, please, it's important.

WENDI: I'll try to remember.

MEG: I HATE THIS APARTMENT MORE THAN ANYONE HAS EVER HATED AN INANIMATE THING IN THEIR LIFE. I HATE EVERYTHING ABOUT IT. EVERYTHING ASSOCIATED WITH IT. I HATE THE BRICKS IT IS MADE OF. THE GROUND IT STANDS ON. THE AIR THAT PEOPLE BREATHE WHEN THEY ARE IN IT. I HATE SHOWTIME, I HATE H B O. I HATE—

(The phone rings. MEG answers.)

MEG: Hello.

Jack Roller. Well of course I sound surprised. I did say I never wanted to see you again as long as I lived, didn't I, Jack?

No, Jack, I acted like I meant it because I did.

Jack, now is not a good time for me to talk to you. Okay? Goodbye, Jack, I'm sorry. Jack. Goodbye.
(She hangs up.)

WENDI: I can't remember, Denice. I'm trying, but I can't.

DENICE: You—you just stay right here, okay, Honey? I'll get Judy. *(She rushes into the bathroom.)* JUDY—
JUDY!! I think she's taken all her pills again.

(JUDY and DENICE rush back into WENDI's room.)

MEG: *(The phone rings again. She answers.)* Jack, really, you don't want to talk to me now. I'm sorry. Goodbye. *(She goes into the bathroom, collects her toothbrush, etc.)*
I HATE THIS BATHROOM. I HATE THE WATER IN IT. I HATE THE WAY THE TOILET FLUSHES. I HATE

THE WAY THE SHOWER LEAKS NO MATTER HOW
HARD YOU TRY.

(DENICE begins tearing WENDI's room apart, looking for the pills.)

JUDY: We've only got a few minutes to find them,
otherwise we go.

Wendi, I wonder if you'd mind going into the
bathroom with me.

WENDI: Last time I went into the bathroom with you
I didn't like it at all.

JUDY: *(Dragging her along)* Neither did I. Try not to bite
my fingers this time, okay?

*(The phone rings again. MEG leaves the bathroom just as
JUDY and WENDI enter.)*

MEG: Jack, do not call me again. Jack, I do not care
why you are calling me. Jack, if you call again I am
not answering the phone. *(She hangs up.)*

JUDY: *(Has dragged WENDI over to the toilet. She stands
behind her, holding her hair out of the way.)* Try real hard,
Wendi. Please, try.

*(WENDI begins gagging. She's not really visible behind
the alcove.)*

MEG: *(The phone rings again.)* I warned you, Jack,
I warned you—

*(MEG rips the phone jack out of her answering machine
to make the phone stop ringing. The answering
machine turns on with a loud click.)*

JACK: *(O S)* I know you're there. I know you can hear
me. I'll get to the point. I'm calling you because even
after what happened, and I'm sorry, I have to see you.

MEG: See me? You have got your nerve. Jack, you broke my heart. You think you can just call, and it will be all right?

JACK: (O S) I know that I can't say anything about what happened that will make it all right, but I...I... *(He begins to sob.)*

MEG: *(She has her luggage in her hands, bags slung over her shoulder, she is almost out the door. She drops them and goes over to the phone machine.)* Jack—you're crying.

WENDI: I'm sorry, Judy, I can't. There's nothing there.

JUDY: Okay. Keep trying. *(She rushes out of the bathroom, going into her room, yelling as she goes.)* DENICE.
NO LUCK. WE'VE GOT TO GO.

WENDI: *(Looks out into the audience, smiling serenely)*
Hello.

(DENICE enters the bathroom, pulls WENDI up off her knees and drags her out of the bathroom, throws a coat over her and pulls her toward the door.)

MEG: *(Softly)* Jack, don't cry. You didn't scar me for life. Well, you did, but it passed. It's okay. Please don't cry Jack. It's not like you to cry.

(JUDY, hastily dressed, hurries out after DENICE and WENDI.)

JACK: (O S) The reason why I'm calling...why I have to see you...this is so hard, it's funny, I thought it would be easy, through it all I just kept saying to myself that I would call you and tell you about it and it would be okay, somehow....

MEG: Jack, tell me what's wrong.

JACK: (O S) The thing is...my mother just died...uhh, two days ago, and...uhh...

MEG: JACK. OH, JACK, oh, stay on the line, I'll get the phone.

JACK: (O S) ...and I...and I...I've just kept thinking about you, and wanting to come and be with you, and....

I don't know, maybe it's not fair of me, I don't know.

(MEG finds the phone, races back to the answering machine with it.)

MEG: I'm coming, Jack, I'm— (She tries to plug it back in. She realizes she has ripped the plastic connecting module off.)

I'M ADDING THIS TO THE LIST, WENDI! I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU MADE ME DO THIS, BUT THIS IS YOUR FAULT TOO!

JACK: (O S) I guess I sort of expected you to uhh, talk to me at this point.

But uhhh, maybe you've got the volume down, or maybe you're in the other room, or maybe...I don't know, there's a doctor here, gave me some kind of medication to help me get through the funeral... I'm not thinking any too clearly....

MEG: I'm here, Jack, I'm here— (She cradles the answering machine, crying into it.)

JACK: (O S) So look—here's what I'll do. I'll just come.

MEG: Here? Oh, no, Jack, don't come here. I'll see you anywhere, on the Moon, on the street, you name it, but not here, I can't come back here Jack.

JACK: (O S) You don't have to see me, of course.

MEG: Jack, just tell me where you are and I'll call you back. TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE!

JACK: (O S) Look, they're calling my flight. I'm in Cleveland, where my folks...my uh...anyway I'll come to you right from the airport. I know you may not be able to be there when I get there—but leave me a

message with the doorman.

Please Meg—don't say no.

MEG: I CAN'T BE HERE, JACK, I CAN'T, YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

JACK: (O S) I gotta go. (*He hangs up.*)

MEG: (*The wail of the lost*) JACK!!!!!!! (*She paces insanely.*)

WHAT TO DO WHAT TO DO....KILL WENDI—

(*She heads for the door.*) No, that never seems to work.

It will just waste time.

I've got to get out of here, one. And two, I've got to be here for Jack.

I know—I'll leave him a set of keys, with a note, and tell him to come directly to my room and wait for my call. If he follows my instructions exactly, he might be safe. (*She grabs paper, starts writing a note.*) Oh, boy, Jack, this is just like you. Just. All these years I imagined you crawling back to me. I imagined all the things you would say to me, and all the things I would forgive you for, and the incredible sex we would have, Jack, oh, Jack, we had the most incredible sex we'd ever had in our lives, when you came crawling back to me, in my mind. (*She swoons, slightly.*) Just thinking about it makes me feel faint all of a sudden. (*She feels her forehead, shakes her head, shakes the feeling off. She puts the note in an envelope, along with a set of keys.*) This will do it. I'll just give it to the doorman. (*She grabs her bags and heads for the front door. She seems slightly woozy, but she ignores it, stumbling along as best she can. She is at the front door.*) I made it. I made it. I'm doing it. I'm free! I'm leaving and I'm never coming back. Never. NEVER! I'm history. HISTORY. (*She leaves.*)

(*Several beats*)

(*The door opens, MEG is back. She is very unsteady. She doesn't have her bags, or the envelope.*)

MEG: I feel funny. I feel so strange. I feel—I feel—
oh, boy, it must be that bite of pasta I ate, it— *(She holds
her stomach.)* Poisoned. WENDI HAS POISONED ME.

JUDY— *(She stumbles through the rooms and hallway.)*

DENICE SHE'S POISONED ME!

JUDY HELP ME! *(She slides onto the floor.)*

OH MY GOD OH MY GOD OH GOD— *(She begins
crawling toward her room.)*

JOHN: *(The sound of the key in the front door)* Hello?
Anybody home? *(He enters, holding a set of keys and an
open envelope.)*

MEG: *(She crawls into her room and sees the phone.)* 9-1-1.
9-1-1! *(She punches the buttons.)* 9...1...1. Help—help—
I've been poisoned, I've been— *(No dial tone. No nothing.
The phone falls from her hand as she begins to weep.)*

JOHN: *(Reading the note)* I'm sorry I couldn't be here,
but if you follow these instructions, you might be safe.
Safe?

MEG: NO. NO! She's not going to get away with this!

JOHN: Go down the hallway, taking your first right.
DO NOT UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES TALK TO
ANYONE COOKING, SOBBING, OR WEARING A
KIMONO. It's the second door on the left. I'll call and
leave a message on the machine as soon as I can. Well—
Doctor Hollis warned me this one wouldn't be easy.
(He starts down hallway.)

MEG: *(She has taken a lipstick from her purse.)* I've got to
let them know who did this to me. I've got to let them
know that it was— *(She scrawls "Wendi" on the wall.)*
WEN...DI... *(She falls to the floor, clutching the lipstick,
the I trailing off like an arrow pointing right at her.)*

JOHN: *(Knocks on door)* Wendi? May I come in? *(He opens
the door, and enters. MEG's room is obviously the room of
a madwoman, after a rampage. He hesitates, then takes*

courage.) Wendi? Wendi? (He doesn't see her at first, then sees her name on the wall, and MEG beneath it.) Ah. Wendi. (He takes out his hypodermic.) Don't you worry about a thing, Wendi. Now that I'm here, everything's going to be all right.

(Lightening crashes outside, as a storm begins, illuminating JOHN as he holds up the hypo, and squirts a small stream of liquid into the air.)

(Blackout)

END OF ACT ONE