

**Truth and Contradictions:
Inside the Mind of Ralph Gorolinski**

by Phillip W. Weiss

**Phil's Literary Works LLC
19 West 34th Street
Penthouse
New York, NY 10001
www.philsliteraryworks.com
pwnycny@aol.com
212-388-8690**

Copyright © 2015 Phillip W. Weiss

This is a one-act play consisting of eighteen scenes.

Cast of Characters

Ralph Gorolinski – a retiree

Ralph's alter ego – a projection of Ralph's mind

Ralph's women:

Shila

Cynthia

Loretta

Bettina

Jeanine

Delores

Inez

Other women:

A jogger

A female intern

Cassandra Clark – an ATM patron

Two waitresses

Ralph's friends:

Delbert

Harry

Other characters:

Stanley – Cynthia's friend

A man in bed – Shila's friend

The Super

Ernie

Vic

A guy

A waiter

A student

A worker

A bicyclist

A counterman

A male intern

A priest

A man smoking a cigarette

Police officers

Security guards

Library patrons

Bartender

Ralph's mother

Radio announcer

Imaginary woman

Time: the present. Place: New York City. Time span: one twenty-four hour period.

Scene 1

Time: 6:30 AM

Place: A studio apartment. Ralph Gorolinski, a sixty-five year old man, is drying himself off with a towel. He is looking at himself in the mirror. Ralph's alter ego enters. (Note: Throughout the play, Ralph speaks with his alter ego, which is a projection of Ralph's mind, that is, an hallucination, but to Ralph is a real person. Throughout the play, Ralph is self-reflective, often referring to himself in the first person, while the alter ego speaks to Ralph in the second person. This creates an odd impression that Ralph is ignoring another person when in fact he is talking with himself. Also, in different parts of the play, imaginary characters enter. They too are products of Ralph's mind but to Ralph they also are real. All this is evidence of severe psychological disturbance.)

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Boy, I'm becoming an old man right before my eyes. I remember when I had a good, solid body with firm muscle tone. It really impressed the ladies, unfortunately not the ones I wanted to impress. But that's in the past. I don't have to worry about that now. Now I'm all flab. My muscles are mush. It's a miracle that I still function.

ALTER EGO

What are you talking about? You were never in good shape. Girls laughed at you. In fact, they still laugh at you.

RALPH

People tell me that I look younger than my age. That just proves that looks can be deceiving and that people don't know what they're talking about.

ALTER EGO

As the saying goes, it takes one to know one.

RALPH

I'm constantly tripping over things, and whenever I trip, which happens to me just about every day, with all the defects and obstructions in the streets, I feel it. I go to doctors and they give me that look, you know, that "you're wasting my time" look, like you're a nothing, when in fact they're wasting my time, and money, not helping me.

ALTER EGO

That's because your problems are not physical but mental and because there's no known cure for being a clod.

RALPH

They prescribe me pain medication but that stuff is junk. I know that because I've taken enough of it.

ALTER EGO

While using booze as a chaser.

RALPH

They don't care.

ALTER EGO

When it comes to you, that is true.

RALPH

All they do is touch me here, feel me there, do a few tests, then rush me out of the office, that is, once I pay my co-pay. After I pay, we're the best of friends and they gladly schedule me for follow ups. So much for the doctor-patient relationship. I could use a Marcus Welby, instead I always wind up with a Dr. Kiley.

ALTER EGO

Have you ever wondered why that is?

RALPH

Some fool suggested that I go to the VA because I served in the military, and I said to myself, for what?

ALTER EGO

That fool, by the way, was your shrink.

RALPH

Are the doctors there any better? Besides, I told myself, I have health insurance, so why do I need the VA?

ALTER EGO

You DO need the VA, but not for the reason you think.

RALPH

My military service was nothing special, like my life in general, except for one incident, when I accidentally dropped my rifle at the rifle range during basic training and the thing went off.

ALTER EGO

That was no accident. You wanted to empty the clip into your sergeant because he kept calling you a faggot. But since you didn't have the guts to point your rifle at him and shoot him, like you wanted to do, you decided to throw the rifle on the ground to try to make it look like an accident.

RALPH

That was scary.

ALTER EGO

Scary for everyone else, not for you. Luckily the chamber jammed after one shot that ricocheted off a wall and sent the entire company scrambling for cover.

RALPH

The top sergeant had a fit.

ALTER EGO

A fit? That's a gross understatement. He was ready to shoot you.

RALPH

He was absolutely livid, even the CO showed up to find out what was the matter, but that's another story. Suffice it to say that it was not a good day for me.

ALTER EGO

Nor was it a good day for the army. You should have been arrested right on the spot and charged with attempted murder. The army determined that it was an accident but you know better. You hated being in the army but didn't have sense enough to avoid it like a lot of your pals did.

RALPH

Anyway, I never went overseas.

ALTER EGO

That's because you were being considered for a section eight.

RALPH

I was stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey.

ALTER EGO

Where you did absolutely nothing except fuck off and get drunk.

RALPH

When I tell people I was stationed in the states, they look at me like I pulled a fast one. In fact, they don't even believe that I was in the army.

ALTER EGO

Why should they? Look at you! The way you look, the way you sound. You're a geek.

(Stage goes dark. When lights go on, the year is 2005. Ralph is talking to a guy.)

GUY

My father was an infantry soldier in World War Two.

RALPH

Really? I was in the army too.

GUY

(incredulous)

YOU were in the army?

RALPH

Yeah, I was in the army. You didn't hear me the first time?

GUY

You don't look like the army "type."

RALPH

Well, I was.

GUY

(skeptical)

Whatever you say, pal. *(pause)* Where'd you do your basic training?

RALPH

Fort Dix, New Jersey.

GUY

What was your MOS?

RALPH

(angry)

Why are you giving me such a fucking hard time?

(Stage lights go out. When lights go on, it is again the present. Ralph and his alter ego are continuing their conversation as if never interrupted.)

Well, let me tell you something. True, I wasn't sent into combat, but the army is still the army no matter where you're stationed. I worked with guys who had been in combat overseas. I helped process them out of the service.

ALTER EGO

They should have processed YOU out of the service. Even the chaplain couldn't deal with you.

RALPH

A lot of those guys had issues.

ALTER EGO

But theirs were service connected and legitimate, while yours were a fiasco and self-inflicted.

RALPH

We did what we could to make their transition out of the military as smooth as possible. All those guys were heroes and all of them deserve our respect.

ALTER EGO

Get out of here! You don't believe that for a second. You resented them because they had what you lacked – guts.

RALPH

Anyway, yesterday I received my medicare card. So now I'm officially a senior citizen, you know, an old man, part of that growing army of old geezers who used to be young and productive, but now are shunted off to the sidelines with nothing to do except think about the past and endure all the mundane insults of life that vex me and really make me wonder if life is still worth living.

ALTER EGO

What's there to wonder about? You already know the answer.

RALPH

Like, for instance, getting the super to replace the fucking shower arm already. Why is he being so mean to me?

ALTER EGO

Because he hates you.

RALPH

The guy downstairs is constantly complaining about me flooding his apartment, but nothing ever gets done to fix the problem. If the pipes are messed up, that's not my fault. Well, fuck 'em. Let the guy complain all he wants. In the meantime I still have to deal with the super.

End of scene 1

Scene 2

Time: 7:30 AM

Place: Outside the super's apartment. Ralph is arguing with the super in the hallway.

RALPH

When will you replace that damn shower arm?

SUPER

You broke it, so you replace it.

RALPH

What? You think I broke it? All I did was remove the shower head.

SUPER

Who told you to remove the shower head?

RALPH

It was my shower head, and so I removed it. After you adjusted the shower controls you reduced the water pressure so much that I had to buy a new shower head to compensate for the reduced water pressure.

SUPER

I don't care why you removed the shower head. All I know is that you broke the shower arm and messed up the pipes inside the wall, and that's your responsibility.

RALPH

What the are you talking about? The shower arm came with the apartment.

SUPER

I've told you to again and again that your showering is causing water to leak into the guy's apartment downstairs and is causing lots of damage to the building too, for which you will be held responsible.

RALPH

First, I don't make any floods, and second, I'm not causing any damage to the building. Okay?

SUPER

You're gonna have to deal directly with the landlord about this. It's out of my hands.

RALPH

Thanks for nothing.

The super gives Ralph "the finger," then exits. Ralph's alter ego enters.

(to his alter ego)

He doesn't give a damn. In fact, nobody cares. Nobody. I could die right now and who would care? No one.

ALTER EGO

That's right. No one would care. That should come as no surprise to you.

RALPH

What a life, or should I say existence. I thought senior citizens are supposed to get respect. You'd never know that with me. I paid my dues. So why am I still dealing with all this crap? It's demoralizing; it affects my sleep too. I haven't had a decent night's sleep since I don't know when. No surprise that I always feel tired.

ALTER EGO

You feel tired because you drink like a fish.

RALPH

And people wonder why I want to move from New York. Boy, what a nasty, ugly, vicious city; everything in this city is a struggle. Living here is like being in a prison, with no way to escape except to take that final plunge.

ALTER EGO

Which is looking more and more appealing to you.

RALPH

I can't even get a simple thing like a shower arm replaced. If it isn't one thing, it's something else. The annoyances just keep piling up. That's my life: one big fuck up.

End of scene 2

Scene 3

Time: 7:45 AM

Ralph is walking on Lexington Avenue when a young woman jogger runs by him, almost colliding with Ralph.

RALPH

Hey, bitch, watch where you're running.

JOGGER

(stops, turns around facing Ralph)

Up yours, loser!

The jogger resumes running and exits.

RALPH

(yelling in the direction of the jogger)

And up yours too, you fucking twat! What you're doing for fun I had to do in the army, with full pack! *Ralph's alter ego enters.*

(to his alter ego)

Damn show-offs, fucking stuck-up snobs. They think they own the street. They run around like prima donnas showing off their bods, as if anybody cares. Little do they know that I'm them thirty or forty years later. I'm their future, they just don't know it yet.

ALTER EGO

Stop griping. You envy them. Especially the guys. Admit it.

RALPH

Everything they're doing now other people have done. The jogging, the partying, the show boating, the carousing, the traveling, the yelling, the boozing, the acting out, none of it is new, and all of it is futile.

ALTER EGO

Futile to you only because the party has passed you by.

RALPH

I'd like to see one of those fucking prima donnas do a quick march wearing combat boots and in full gear, like I did in basic.

ALTER EGO

They would have ran circles around you. They would have left you literally eating dust.

RALPH

That's why my feet hurt. Maybe I should go to a podiatrist. *(pause)* Ah, fuck it. That wouldn't help.

ALTER EGO

No, It wouldn't because you're problems go way beyond your having flat feet and ingrown toe nails.

RALPH

Nobody cares anyway.

End of scene 3

Scene 4

Time 8:00 AM

Place: Midtown Manhattan. Ralph is walking north on Madison Avenue. From off stage comes the sound of rumbling and clanking of metal which gets progressively louder. When he arrives at the corner, he looks to his right where there is a commercial garbage truck in the middle of the block noisily hoisting and unloading large dumpsters into the truck, all producing loud clanking noises and huge swirling clouds of dust. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Oh no, not another garbage truck. These stinking trucks are everywhere fouling up the air, but do you think they care? No! So much for quality of life. What a disgusting city and look at those guys. They're not even wearing masks! Probably foreigners. There's no job too low that they won't do.

ALTER EGO

You mean work you couldn't do even if you wanted to.

RALPH

These foreigners don't give a damn about this city or United States, or about me or what I may represent, and why should they?

ALTER EGO

You show me where one of those so-called foreigners has ever said quote, I don't give a damn about the United States, closed quote.

RALPH

It's not their country.

ALTER EGO

It is their country, their adopted country. And don't forget that they pay taxes too.

RALPH

Our laws mean nothing to them.

ALTER EGO

They mean as much to them as they mean to you.

RALPH

Unions can't organize them.

ALTER EGO

Unions are having a rough time organizing anyone nowadays. And if they do organize them, then what? How will that make things better?

RALPH

Our history is irrelevant to them.

ALTER EGO

They're making history which is making you irrelevant.

RALPH

What do they care about the Civil War, World War One, World War Two, Vietnam, the civil rights struggle?

ALTER EGO

That stuff is in the past. This the present and that's what counts.

RALPH

They're just the hired help, the modern-day slaves and coolies, doing the mindless mentally numbing grunt work that no one else wants to do for any amount of money.

ALTER EGO

Who are you to talk? After you graduated from college you took an entry level job that paid less than a hundred dollars a week.

RALPH

Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not knocking anyone who wants to work and make some money nor am I knocking the kind of jobs they take.

ALTER EGO

You are knocking them, and who are you to judge them anyway? What makes you think that you're any better than them?

RALPH

The work has to be done and somebody is willing to pay them to do it. But what I cannot understand is: where the fuck is their consciousness?

ALTER EGO

Now you're trying to get inside their heads? Isn't it enough to have to deal with all the crap inside your own head?

RALPH

Why aren't they outraged that they're the ones stuck doing those deadend jobs?

ALTER EGO

Deadend you say? In all the decades you worked, you were promoted exactly once, and that happened only after a position opened up that nobody else wanted, so they gave the job to you. Now, THAT'S deadend.

RALPH

Just because they do the grunt work doesn't mean they have to like it.

ALTER EGO

And if they like it, what's it to you? They're getting paid. They're making money. Why can't you get that through your head?

RALPH

I know I wouldn't. And I can't understand how anybody could feel differently about that or passively accept it.

Ralph takes out his camera and starts video recording the truck. One of the workers, a large burly man, notices Ralph. Ralph's alter ego exits.

WORKER

Hey you, what are you doing with that camera?

RALPH

Nothing.

Ralph stops video-recording

WORKER

Don't lie. You were pointing your camera straight at us.

RALPH
(intimidated)

No, I wasn't.

WORKER
(annoyed)

Get out of here!

Ralph turns and quickly exits.

WORKER
(yelling, laughing)

That's right, punk, run away. *(Stage goes dark)*

Stage lights go on. Ralph is alone. He turns and yells.

RALPH

Stupid schmuck!

Imaginary Worker enters.

(Rhymes)

You stupid schmuck,
You clean the muck,
A dirty job,
It makes me sob.

You smell and reek
Like ev'ry geek
Who does such work
Which makes me smirk.

You do not care
Or even dare
To think about
What makes me pout.

Nor do you think,
About the stink,
That you do spread,
And which I dread.

IMAGINERY WORKER

(to Ralph)

You're calling me a schmuck? Fuck you! You're the schmuck. I haul garbage for a living. I'm one of the guys that does the heavy lifting that keeps this country going. That's more than I can say for you. You ought to be thanking me, not knocking me.

Imaginary Worker exits. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

I'm supposed to thank him? For what? For making noise and fouling up the air? And then he cops an attitude on top of that?

ALTER EGO

Your arrogance borders on the grotesque. You're lucky that all he did was cop an attitude.

RALPH

Just because I called him a schmuck? Nowadays people are much too sensitive.

ALTER EGO

Especially when you go out of your way to insult them.

RALPH

Ah, fuck 'em all.

End of scene 4

Scene 4a

Place: inside Ralph's mind

The stage is bare. Ralph is on stage. Then an imaginary woman enters. She faces the audience and recites a poem:

WOMAN

People talk, sometimes yell,
making noise, need to quell.

People work, sometimes slave,
losing sleep, but cannot save.

People fight, sometimes flee,
losing peace, never free.

People laugh, sometimes cry,
want relief, but the well's all dry.

People seek, sometimes find,
they get upset, and want to hide.

People scream, and argue too,
it's not so nice, and it's not so cool.

People dream, and have ideas,
for a better life that brings more cheers.

Alter Ego enters.

RALPH

(to Alter Ego)

I have no idea who this woman is or what she's talking about. *(to the woman)* Who are you?

ALTER EGO

(laughs, to Ralph)

You don't know? You are so clueless. You're not even hearing yourself.

End of scene 4a

Scene 5

Time: 8:45 AM

Place: A bagel shop. Ralph is eating toast and drinking tea. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH
(to his alter ego)

You know, maybe I should call Shila. She did call me during the hurricane, so maybe she likes me.

ALTER EGO
Likes you? She was just being polite, you dolt.

RALPH
True, I never called her back but as the saying goes, better late than never. Right?

Ralph grabs his cellphone and starts calling Shila. The stage goes dark. When the lights go on, the stage is divided into two sets: Stage left: Ralph in the bagel shop and stage right: Shila in bed with a man. Shila's phone is ringing; She answers the phone. Ralph's alter ego exits.

SHILA
Hello.

RALPH
Hello. Shila?

SHILA
(trying to be polite)
Oh, Ralph, it's you.

RALPH
I thought I'd give you a call and see how you're doing.

SHILA
I just got back from Jamaica yesterday and was going to give you a call but I've just been so busy.

RALPH

Did you finally graduate?

SHILA

Oh, yes, and with honors too and now I'm in looking for a job. Before I forget, I did get your emails and tried to email you back from Jamaica but my sister's computer wasn't working properly.

RALPH

Sure, That's okay. Those things happen. At least you tried. *(pause)* Hey, maybe we can get together sometime when you're in Manhattan.

SHILA

Yes, maybe.

RALPH

Well, give me a call when you can.

MAN IN BED

Who is that?

SHILA

Just a friend from school. Nobody special.

MAN IN BED

(laughs)

If he's nobody special then get rid of him and stop keeping me waiting.

RALPH

Am I interrupting something?

Man in bed grabs the phone

MAN IN BED

Hey, pal, the lady's busy, so fuck off.

(rhymes)

Who are you now I want to learn,
 You make me mad you make me burn,
 You make me want to mash your nose,
 And twist you like a garden hose.

You sound just like a stupid sop
 Who dresses like a prissy fop
 And pushes garbage with a mop,
 But really wants to be on top.

To me you're just a flimflam guy
 It makes me really want to cry
 For all I know you're just a bore
 Who picks up junk right off the floor.

I'm onto you, you sly rascal,
 You called my gal, you're not her pal.
 She is my babe, so back away
 I'm in no mood to joke and play.

Man in bed hangs up the phone. Then Shila and the man embrace as stage right goes dark. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

I call a woman and I wind up being berated by a man. That kind of says it all about my life.

ALTER EGO

In a way, it does.

Imaginary Shila enters. Alter ego exits.

IMAGINARY SHILA

(points at Ralph, taunting)

Ralph, I was yours for the taking. But you fucked it up, and that's because you're a pansy and a loser. Now I'm with a real man. *Dream Shila laughs hysterically.*

RALPH

Get lost!

Imaginary Shila continues laughing.

End of scene 5

Scene 6

Time: 9:30 AM

Place: Somewhere on Madison Avenue. Ralph is walking to the public library. A man is standing in front of a building smoking a cigarette. The smoke is blowing into Ralph's face. Ralph stops walking. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(loudly, to his alter ego)

Anyone who smokes cigarettes is a first-class numbskull.

The smoker continues smoking. Ralph's alter ego exits.

(To the smoker)

Excuse me. You're blowing smoke into my face. Why are you doing that?

SMOKER

Sorry. It's just the way the wind's blowing.

RALPH

Whatever the reason, it's blowing right in my face and I don't like it.

SMOKER

Listen, mister ...

RALPH

How can you smoke that crap? It says right on the pack that it's dangerous to your health.

SMOKER

Yeah, I know that, but I like it, and it's my right.

RALPH

Disgusting.

SMOKER

(annoyed)

Hey, man, why don't you just shut up.

RALPH

You're gonna make me?

SMOKER

Suit yourself, pal. *(The smoker puts the cigarette in his mouth and starts walking toward Ralph who starts backing away.)*

RALPH

(angry)

I hope you choke on that damn weed!

Stage goes dark. When the stage lights go on, Ralph is alone. He is gasping for breathe. Ralph's alter ego enters.

(To his alter ego)

I had to get away from that guy. The smoke was choking me. I should of smashed him in the face.

ALTER EGO

But instead you ran away.

RALPH

But what good would it have done? There's no escaping them. Maybe I should join them. Become a smoker. Back when I was a kid, doctors said that cigarette smoking was good for you. In fact, most doctors themselves smoked. I remember our family doctor. Whenever he made a house call, he had a cigarette dangling from his mouth. He also had no problem jabbing me with a hypodermic needle in the butt.

ALTER EGO

Later on you learned that your family doctor was a medical officer in the Army Air Force during World War Two and that he treated brave airmen who were wounded in combat. Of course, none of that mattered to you. You were just a snotty kid, not much different than the way you are today. What a come down it must have been for him to have to deal with the likes of you. No wonder he smoked.

RALPH

One tobacco company even boasted that their brand was endorsed by twenty-seven thousand doctors. Now that's a strong endorsement for a product! But now the same medical establishment that endorsed cigarette smoking now says that cigarette smoking can kill you. Talk about doing a flip-flop.

ALTER EGO

Get off your high horse already. The only reason you're all wound up about smoking is that the smoke bothers you. Otherwise you couldn't care less who's smoking.

RALPH

Yet, from the looks of all the cigarette butts littering the streets, it seems that more people than ever are smoking. The idea of someone sucking on a cigarette is repulsive. Yet people do it, by the billions. They know it's bad for them yet they won't stop. What is wrong with them?

End of scene 6.

Scene 7

A public library in midtown Manhattan. Ralph is sitting at a table reading book. Opposite Ralph sits an elderly man, dressed in shabby clothing. Suddenly the man lets out a loud sneeze. Ralphs alter ego enters.

RALPH

(Loudly, to his alter ego)

Ugh! He sneezed right in my face! What a slob.

MAN

Sorry, pal.

RALPH

Yeah, right.

Man shrugs his shoulders.

That guy doesn't care and there's nothing I can do about it. His germs have already entered my system.

ALTER EGO

You are such a fucking wuss. *(Alter ego exits.)*

MAN

Hey, pal, will you please stop your mumbling.

A black man enters and sits next to Ralph. Ralph glances at the man then gets up and exits. Stage goes dark. When stage lights go on, Ralph is alone. Then his alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Stop judging me.

ALTER EGO

You're judging yourself.

RALPH

I get nervous around black people. I can't help it. There's just too much racial tension out there and I want to avoid problems.

ALTER EGO

You're the problem.

RALPH

I used to love watching Amos and Andy when I was a kid. That show really made me laugh. Then they took them off the air. People complained that the show was racist. No way! It was clean, wholesome, innocent fun. They made people laugh.

ALTER EGO

Because they were black, that's why.

RALPH

What was wrong with that?

ALTER EGO

Everything, especially your hypocrisy.

RALPH

I loved the Kingfish and Algonquin J. Calhoun. They were wonderful characters, played by incredibly talented actors. Who could find anything objectionable about them? Was the Kingfish any more ridiculous than, let's say, Chester A. Riley, Ralph Kramden, Freddie the Freeloader, or Crazy Guggenheim? Was Stepin Fetchit any more absurd than, let's say, Gabby Hayes? Was George Jefferson more of a joke than, let's say, Archie Bunker?

ALTER EGO

In this country poking fun at a black guy is not the same as poking fun at a white guy, and you know it.

RALPH

It was satire; they were caricatures.

ALTER EGO

To you it was real.

RALPH

Now the Kingfish and his pals are gone, and I miss them. They were good guys, and lord knows we need more good guys, black and white. Without them, the world is a very bleak place.

Stage lights go on. Time: 1964. Ralph is fifteen years old. With him is his friend, Delbert, who is black. They are arguing.

RALPH

I think that Mays is better than Mantle.

DELBERT

No way! Mantle is the best.

RALPH

You're only saying that because the Giants left town. If they were still here you'd be singing a different tune!

DELBERT

No way, pal!

Two black teenagers, named Vic and Ernie, enter the scene. Both are about eighteen years old. They're tough guys but are acting good natured.

VIC

Hey, whatchya two fellas arguin' about?

Ralph and Delbert stop talking.

RALPH

(defensive)

Nothing.

ERNIE

(laughing)

It didn't sound like nothin' to us.

VIC

(to Delbert, laughing)

Is this white boy giving you a hard time?

DELBERT
No.

VIC
(to Ralph)
Whatchya got there in your pocket?

RALPH
Nothing.

VIC
C'mon now! Don't fuck with me. You got somethin' in there! Now fork it over! C'mon! *(Ernie pulls out a knife. Ralph slowly puts in hand in his pants pocket and pulls out a dollar bill.) (Vic is elated) I knew it! Now just hand it over. (Ralph hands Vic the dollar bill.) That's good. (Vic puts the dollar bill in his pocket.) I'll put this money to good use.*

ERNIE
(to Ralph, brandishing the knife)
What about me? Don't you have somethin' for me?

RALPH
That's all I have.

VIC
(laughing, to Ernie)
Aw, leave 'em be, bro. *(serious, to Ralph)* Listen! We won't fuck you up this time because we like you, seeing that you're hanging out with a bro, which shows that you're cool. But next time, you better have somethin' for my friend too, you hear? *Vic and Ernie exit.*

DELBERT
Ralph ...

RALPH
(sarcastic)
Whatchya want, "bro"?

(Stage goes dark.)

*Stage lights go on. Time: the present. Continuation of the previous scene.
A security guard enters.*

SECURITY GUARD
(to Ralph)

Sir, please keep it quiet.

RALPH
(to the security guard)

I haven't done anything.

SECURITY GUARD
We've received complaints about you talking loudly to yourself and creating a nuisance.

RALPH
I would never do anything like that.

SECURITY GUARD
Okay, but we received complaints, and if we get any more complaints we're going to have to ask you to leave.

RALPH
Okay. Message received.

Stage goes dark. When lights go on, Ralph is alone. Then the Imaginary Security Guard enters.

Rhymes, to Imaginary Security Guard.

I know you think you're swell,
It makes me want to yell,
And hit you on the face,
Then kick you into space.

You looked at me with scorn,
As if I was not born,
That made me feel so sad,
As well as really mad.

IMAGINARY SECURITY GUARD

You want to do what to me?

RALPH

Nothing.

IMAGINARY SECURITY GUARD

You better watch what you say, or else.

RALPH

I will.

Stage goes dark. When lights go on, Ralph is alone. Ralph gets up and puts on his jacket. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

I got to get the fuck out of here. This place is worse than a homeless shelter. In fact, it is a homeless shelter, just another place for creeps to drop in and hang out, and they scare me. They're an affront to everything I believe in, or at least used to believe in.

ALTER EGO

Who are you to be so judgmental?

RALPH

When I was a kid I never heard of anybody being on the street. Yeah, there were hoboes and the like, guys who wandered around, but they were basically just a bunch of broken-down drunks who wound up in flop houses. The street people today are not drunks. They're much worse and much scarier.

ALTER EGO

Scarier than broken-down drunks?

RALPH

Now street life is a way of life, it even figures in our politics. The homeless are now an interest group.

ALTER EGO

With you as their secret admirer.

RALPH

It wasn't like that years ago. Public libraries were places to study.

ALTER EGO

Not for you. You went there to sleep or to check out the girls.

RALPH

Now they're multi-purpose community centers, ironically in a city where communities, as I remember them, don't even exist anymore. I'm like a stranger in my own home town, and that really sucks.

End of scene 7

Scene 8

Time: 11:45 AM

Place: Fifth Avenue near the Empire State Building. Ralph is watching a group of tourists taking pictures. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH
(to his alter ego)

Look at all these fucking, clueless tourists. They don't know what the fuck they're even looking at.

ALTER EGO

These fucking, clueless tourists as you call them support the number one industry in the city. Don't forget that.

RALPH

They gawk at the Empire State Building like it's something special. Get real!

ALTER EGO

You get real. The Empire State Building IS something special. It's one of the most famous landmarks in the world. Why should tourists not want to visit it and admire it?

RALPH

It's an eighty-five year old building, pretty in 1931 maybe, like a young sweet babe but a little worse for wear now, wouldn't you say? In fact, what the hell are they doing here at all?

ALTER EGO

Spending money! Lots of money. Keeping the city going. That's what they're doing here, you fool.

RALPH

They travel thousands of miles to look at what I, and about two million other people, see EVERY DAY! What do they see that's so interesting? I've traveled all over Europe. I've been to Trafalgar Square, the Eiffel Tower, the Colosseum, and the Parthenon. I was in West Berlin and East Berlin. I've hobnobbed with people from all over the world. I even learned German.

ALTER EGO

So you could read Mein Kampf in the original.

RALPH

What I learned from all that traveling is this: It's not where you are, it's where you're at, who you know, and how much money you're willing to spend, not necessarily in that order of importance.

ALTER EGO

You've been to every tourist trap in Europe yet you have the fucking audacity to complain about tourists. What the fuck is wrong with you?

Ralph's smart phone rings. Ralph's alter ego exits.

RALPH

Who the fuck can that be?

Ralph answers the phone.

Hello. ... What's going on, Donnie? ... I agree, the commute is rough ... You know, just to change the subject, I was thinking about how, when I was a kid, me and my friends used to go all over Brooklyn playing basketball, looking for pick-up games. Back then you could do stuff like that. It was fun. I really loved playing basketball and how we would then ... HEY, stop interrupting me! I'm telling you something! ... WHY CAN'T YOU FUCKING LISTEN TO ME? JUST LISTEN? ... But ... but I ... HEY, STOP INTERRUPTING ME! ... Oh, FUCK YOU! (*Ralph abruptly terminates the call. Ralph's alter ego enters.*) (*Angry, to his alter ego*) He's like everyone else: doesn't give a damn. I've known him for almost forty years and this is how he fucking treats me, like I'm a nobody.

ALTER EGO

Because that's what you are.

RALPH

I can't even have a decent conversation with a friend without it turning into a fucking argument. But why should I expect anything different? Being disliked is fine by me. I don't mind being disliked; what really scares me is their indifference.

ALTER EGO

Why should anyone care for a scuz like you?

RALPH

Indifference can be deadly.

ALTER EGO

Then you should have been dead a long time ago.

(Stage goes dark. When stage lights go on the time is 1993. The scene is a living room. Present are Ralph and another man, Harry. They are talking.)

RALPH

So I've been calling Nadine, left a ton of messages on her answering machine and she still hasn't returned my calls.

HARRY

Buddy, I got something to tell you. You may not like it.

RALPH
(concerned)

What's wrong? You being sued? Behind in rent? Need money?

HARRY

Nothing like that.

RALPH

So, what is it?

HARRY

A couple of nights ago Nadine and I got together and ...

RALPH
(surprised)

You and Nadine got together?

HARRY

That's right.

RALPH

How'd that happen?

HARRY

I called her.

RALPH

You called a woman you knew I was fucking?

HARRY

(surprised)

Yeah, why not? What's the big deal?

RALPH

But you knew that she and I were already involved. I told you. You even saw us together. Why the fuck would you want to call her?

HARRY

To get laid.

RALPH

(stunned)

Are you fucking joking?

HARRY

No. I'm not. That's exactly what happened.

RALPH

Stop pulling my yanger. This can't be true.

HARRY

No, it's true. What's the big deal?

RALPH

(indignant)

You went around my back and fucked a woman that you knew I care about?
Are you insane?

HARRY

You cared about her? Don't make me laugh. She's just a slut, so why are you getting on my case?

RALPH

I thought you were my buddy. That you had my back. That you cared. Obviously I miscalculated.

HARRY

I am your buddy! But I also wanted to get laid and she was available. By the way, buddy, she doesn't wanna see you again.

(Stage goes dark. When stage lights go on, it is again the present, same scene. Ralph continues speaking to his alter ego.)

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

You win some and you lose some.

ALTER EGO

And, as usual, you lost.

RALPH

In my case it's almost always on the losing side. Don't ask me why.

ALTER EGO

I'll tell you why. Because you're a loser.

RALPH

If I tell someone a blackboard is black, they'll tell me it's white just to fuck with my head. I remember one time I was talking to this guy and told him that I never saw the sky looking so deeply blue. He told me he'd seen it looking an even a deeper blue. I asked him why he was trying to show me up.

ALTER EGO

Because you're a nobody.

RALPH

He pretended to be shocked, and claimed that he had no idea what I was talking about. I told him that if tried that again with me I'd fucking throw his head in a toilet. I was joking, of course. I just wanted to see his reaction.

ALTER EGO

Actually you weren't joking, and the guy knew it. But since you're all talk and no action that's as far as you took it.

RALPH

We never spoke again. I guess I can be an ass kicker too when I want.

End of scene 8

Scene 9

Time: 2:30 PM

Place: A delicatessen on Fifth Avenue. Ralph is standing at the counter waiting to order some food. The counterman is busy making a sandwich.

RALPH

(to the counterman)

I want a whole wheat bagel toasted with jelly.

The counterman does not reply.

RALPH

Excuse me, I want a whole wheat bagel toasted with jelly, please.

COUNTERMAN

(still making the sandwich)

Hey, buddy, can't you see I'm busy?

RALPH

(annoyed)

I would like a whole wheat bagel and ...

COUNTERMAN

(belligerent)

Listen, you, I'll take your order when I'm good and ready, okay.

RALPH

(taken aback)

What did I do?

COUNTERMAN

Stop being pushy, okay?

RALPH

(offended)

What's your problem?

Counterman doesn't reply; he takes another customer's order.

CUSTOMER

I want scrambled eggs on a roll, with bacon and cheese, and a side order of home fries.

RALPH

Hey, I was here first!

COUNTERMAN

Who cares! Next! *(to Ralph)* Listen, you, I don't like your attitude.

RALPH

Fuck you!

COUNTERMAN

Fuck you too, you stupid maricon. Get out of here!

Ralph turns to exit.

RALPH

(while exiting, screams)

Moron, schmuck! *(Stage goes dark)*

When stage lights go on, Ralph is on the street. Ralph's alter ego enters.

(to his alter ego)

All I wanted was a whole wheat bagel with jelly. Was that asking for too much? It wasn't like I was asking for a seven course meal. Maybe the guy had a bad day, his girlfriend, or boyfriend (these days you can never tell) didn't give him some, but why take it out on me? I used to think Hispanics were okay, that they liked me.

ALTER EGO

All Hispanics like you? Talk about being out of touch!

RALPH

Once again I proved myself wrong. *(Stage goes dark.)*

Lights go on. Time: 1976. The place: a gambling casino in Las Vegas. The casino is crowded and noisy. Ralph is with a young attractive Hispanic woman named Delores. They are standing next to a roulette table.

DELORES

(happy, ecstatic)

Oh Ralph, this is wonderful! I've never had so much fun!

RALPH

I knew you'd like it.

DELORES

Tomorrow let's go to that big dam outside of town.

RALPH

You mean Hoover Dam?

DELORES

(excited)

Yeah! Hoover Dam! I heard it's awesome!

RALPH

Something to write home about, eh?

DELORES

You know, Ralphie, I like you, a lot. My brother was right about you. How do you feel about me?

RALPH

I like you a lot too!

DELORES

You really mean it?

Ralph embraces Delores and kisses her.

RALPH

Of course I mean it.

DELORES

And I meant what I said to you too, just as long as you keep on treating me right.

RALPH
(guarded)

I don't get you.

DELORES
(laughs)

You know, treat me "right."

RALPH

What's going on here?

DELORES
(continues giggling)

If you don't treat me right I'm gonna tell my brother and his friends how mean you've been to me, and they wouldn't like that.

RALPH
(Confused)

You just told me that you like me a lot.

DELORES

And I do! Just as long as you keep on buying me nice things and giving me lots of spending money, right?

RALPH
(Beginning to realize of the actual nature of their relationship)
Are you trying to shake me down? *(Stage goes dark.)*

Lights go on. Time: the present. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(To his alter ego)

Let me tell you something. If my head was screwed on right I would have fled from that girl the moment she opened her mouth. But the problem was that my you-know-what was demanding satisfaction, so I caved in.

ALTER EGO

Your you-know-what had nothing to do with it. The problem was that you were too much of a wimp to tell her and her boyfriend to get lost.

RALPH

I quickly came to terms with the fact that my so-called army buddy, his name was Jose, so he led me to believe, set me up not with his sister but with a hooker.

ALTER EGO

You knew exactly what Jose was about and got off on it.

RALPH

She didn't work cheap. But she was worth the money.

ALTER EGO

You resented having to pay.

RALPH

At least I was spared the aggravation of having to hear the two most repulsive platitudes a woman can ever unload on a man: "I have to get to know you better" and "I just want to be friends." The viciousness of those two statements is equaled only by the cruelty of those who state them.

ALTER EGO

And also by the stupidity of losers like you who can't take no for an answer.

RALPH

So, cavorting with that whore was well worth the money and I gladly paid. How much did I pay? That's none of your business. A gentleman never tells.

ALTER EGO

But you're not a gentleman.

RALPH

Anyway, as I was saying, we met at least once a week for two years. Sometimes I took her out to dinner and once we even spent a weekend in Miami Beach, which was nice.

ALTER EGO

Nice for her; a fiasco for you.

RALPH

It cost me a pretty penny, but so what?

ALTER EGO

That is a gross understatement of the facts. Actually you ran up so many charges that even the hotel became concerned.

RALPH

She was getting what she wanted and I was getting what I wanted.

ALTER EGO

Your statement is literally a half-truth. True for her; untrue for you.

RALPH

Then one day I called her to make a "date." Her number was disconnected and that was that. I never heard from her again. It was over.

ALTER EGO

But nothing ever started!

RALPH

No fan fare, no scenes, no fond farewells, no nothing. She was gone. Out of my life.

ALTER EGO

But you never cared about her! She was just a piece of meat to you.

RALPH

Two years knowing a woman and nothing to show for it.

ALTER EGO

Except a credit card balance that rivaled the US public debt.

RALPH

I tried contacting her pimp Jose but he was gone too.

ALTER EGO

That's too bad for him. You were a good customer. He could have sent you another whore.

RALPH

They probably ran off together to greener pastures. True, she was a whore who shook me down, but still, we did have a relationship of sorts, probably the most honest relationship in my life.

ALTER EGO

Which doesn't say much either for the quality of your relationships or for the quality of your life.

RALPH

I don't know if she's alive or dead. I don't even have a photograph of her.

ALTER EGO

She was not your girlfriend. She was a whore. You can probably find her pic posted online under the search words "popular hostesses in New York City."

RALPH

But, you know, I actually grew to like her, the slut that she was, and I never got to tell her that. I would have told her this: Delores, or whoever you are, I know you're a whore and you're putting out only because I'm "nice to you," but I still like you. I wonder how she would have reacted?

ALTER EGO

She would have grabbed your crotch, picked your pocket and taken off like a banshee counting your money.

RALPH

I'll never know. But that's what my life is about: a big, fat zero. Even whores run out on me.

ALTER EGO

Now you're being melodramatic, but you do make a valid point about yourself.

RALPH

I'm definitely going to Shamrock for a drink.

ALTER EGO

Thinking about booze already. You have the will power of a newborn baby that wants to be fed.

RALPH

But knowing me, I'll fuck that up too.

ALTER EGO

No, you won't. When it comes to booze, you are the expert.

RALPH

Sobriety will be my punishment for being such a schmuck. Or even worse, I'll meet a woman who says that she wants to be my friend and then after I take her up on that, complain that I'm immature.

ALTER EGO

Which you are. You just don't want to admit it.

(Stage darkens. The the lights go on. Time: 1977. Setting: The front seat of an automobile. Ralph is sitting on the driver's side; next to him is a woman, Jeanine.)

RALPH

(upbeat)

That was a great movie. Warren Beatty is such a great actor. How about if we go to Cailey's for a bite to eat?

JEANINE

I don't think so.

RALPH

You sound down. What's wrong?

JEANINE

I've been thinking about us.

RALPH

Thinking?

JEANINE

I'm looking for a serious relationship.

RALPH

What we have isn't serious? We've been seeing each other for six months. We've had a lot laughs, done a lot of stuff together. What's wrong?

JEANINE

You're right. It's been fun, but ... you're just too immature.

RALPH

(shocked)

I'm immature? What are you talking about?

JEANINE

You don't seem to take things seriously.

RALPH

Where is this coming from?

JEANINE

Everything is a joke to you. I should have known that the first time we met at that singles' dance. In fact, my girlfriend warned me about you.

RALPH

She did? You never told me that before. What was so terrible?

JEANINE

How you came on to me, how crude you were, how you were groping me, telling me all kind of dirty things, trying to get me drunk.

RALPH

That's right! I told you exactly what I wanted to do: take you to a penthouse suite, buy you the most expensive drinks, lavish you with the finest food and then do it. And we did it and you loved it!

JEANINE

I was drunk.

RALPH

That made it even better! We drank, we sang, we ate, and we had a lot of fun! What more could you possibly want?

JEANINE

Yeah, it was fun, but since then you've never stopped treating our relationship as a joke.

RALPH

That's not true. I take our relationship very seriously.

JEANINE

I'm not sure about that.

RALPH

Okay, at this very moment, do I sound like I'm joking around?

JEANINE

No, not at this moment.

RALPH

(angry)

That's right, sweetheart, and that's because you're wrong about me. It's obvious that you really don't know me.

JEANINE

I do know you, and what I'm looking for in a man, you don't have.

RALPH

(upset)

Thanks for stringing me along. Who put you up to this? Your girlfriend?
(Jeanine is silent.) You know what? Fuck off! Go find yourself some other sucker
to boss. We're through.

End of scene 9

Scene 9a

Place: same as scene 4a

The stage again is bare. Ralph is on stage. Then the imaginary woman enters. She faces the audience and recites a poem.

WOMAN

So much I want to say,
 so much I want to do,
 so much to think about,
 so here's what I will do:
 I'll say out loud a B,
 then afterwards an L,
 and follow it with A,
 and end up right away
 with a letter called an H,
 which all together
 spells,
 the finest word since pay,
 which is saying more than hay,
 'cause you know right away,
 what it is I want to say:
 Blah, blah,
 blah, blah,
 blah, blah,
 The finest of all words,
 it says it short and sweet,
 how things are in the street,
 the place where people laugh,
 and walk with dogs real neat,
 as they saunter in the heat,
 and say the magic word:
 Blah, Blah!
 to all the world!

RALPH

(indignant, to woman)

This is the second time you've busted into my mind. The first time I didn't say anything because I didn't want to make trouble. But this is now ridiculous.

WOMAN

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah!

RALPH

And blah, blah, blah to you! *Ralph's Alter Ego enters.*

ALTER EGO
(to Ralph)

Congratulations! Now you're finally making some sense.

RALPH
(to the woman)

Listen, bitch, get lost!

ALTER EGO
You know, Ralphie, that's no way to talk to yourself.

End of scene 9a.

Scene 10

Time: 3:00 PM

Place: Herald Square. The place is teeming with people. Ralph is observing the crowd. An elderly woman named Cynthia enters. She is 71 years old and is pushing a shopping cart containing food. She notices Ralph.

CYNTHIA

Is that you, Ralph?

Ralph tunes to Cynthia.

RALPH
(surprised)

Cynthia. Cynthia Vincente. How are you?

CYNTHIA

I'm doing okay. It's been how many years?

RALPH

At least twenty.

CYNTHIA

I barely recognized you. You have gotten a lot ... grayer.

RALPH
(defensive)

Well, we're all getting older, that's for sure.

CYNTHIA

I've been thinking about you and wondering what became of you.

RALPH

Well, you know, I'm just taking it day to day in this rotten city.

CYNTHIA

Still complaining about New York.

RALPH

That's right, you remember.

CYNTHIA

(somber)

Yes, I do remember that and the way you complained about everything else.

RALPH

Well, there's a lot to complain about.

CYNTHIA

Including me.

RALPH

(becoming irritable)

Well, you deserved it.

CYNTHIA

(offended)

No I didn't. You had no right to humiliate me the way you did.

RALPH

Yes I did, when I caught you with Stanley.

CYNTHIA

At a coffee shop. All Stanley and I were doing were having cake and coffee and talking, but you wouldn't listen to reason.

RALPH

Just having coffee and cake? You two were holding hands! I witnessed it! What was there to listen to? You were obviously cheating on me.

CYNTHIA

And this is still bothering you after all these years?

RALPH

Look, it was nice knowing you. Goodbye. *(Ralph turns to leave).*

CYNTHIA

How pathetic you are! You know, I really cared about you. I thought we were going to get married.

RALPH

(angry)

I'm the pathetic one? You trashed our relationship, not me! So don't blame me!

CYNTHIA

(hurt)

That's right. Blame me. *(Cynthia starts crying.)*

RALPH

Oh, now you're crying. *(Looks up)* Why me, Lord? Why does this have to happen to me?

CYNTHIA

(hysterical)

Why are you so mean to me?

RALPH

I don't need to hear this. You know, you were a bitch then and you're still a bitch now.

CYNTHIA

(angry)

And you're still mean! That's why I dumped you!

RALPH

I think you got that backward, babe.

CYNTHIA
(bitter)

You know, I was having a good day until I met you. Now my day is ruined, thanks to you.

RALPH
I ruined your day? You got that backwards too!

CYNTHIA
You're such a rotten bastard. *(Cynthia's crying becomes louder.)*

A large, burly police officer enters the scene.

POLICE OFFICER
(to Cynthia)
Excuse me, miss, is this man bothering you? *(to Ralph)* Hey, mac, what's the problem?

RALPH
(to the policeman)
We were just talking.

POLICE OFFICER
(authoritative)
It didn't look that way to me. So why don't you stop pestering the lady and move on, now.

Ralph glares at the police officer then waves his hands in a gesture of contempt. The stage goes dark. Then the stage lights go on. Time: 1986. Place: a diner. Cynthia is sitting at a table with a man named Stanley. They sitting at a table across from each other, holding hands.

STANLEY
I haven't seen you in years. What have you been up to?

CYNTHIA
Working. Going to school. The usual stuff. *(Ralph enters. Cynthia is glad to see Ralph)* Ralph! Come join us. I want to introduce you to a friend of mine, Stanley. Stanley, this is my boyfriend, Ralph. *(to Stanley)* Ralph and I are engaged to get married.

STANLEY

Well, congratulations to the both of you!

(Stanley goes to shake hands with Ralph. Ralph does not reciprocate. Stanley withdraws his hand.)

RALPH

(Accusingly, to Cynthia)

What are you doing with him?

CYNTHIA

He's a friend from school. Tell him, Stanley.

STANLEY

That's right. We just happened to run into each other on the street.

RALPH

(annoyed)

And I'm supposed to believe that? The two of you were holding hands.

STANLEY

(to Ralph, surprised)

Look, pal, ...

RALPH

(to Stanley)

I have nothing to say to you, and *(to Cynthia)* as for you, as of now we're finished. *Ralph turns to leave.*

CYNTHIA

(calling after Ralph)

Ralph! Come back!

Stage goes dark Then the stage lights go. Time: the present. Present is Ralph and his alter ego.

RALPH
(to his alter ego)

To think that I was once in love with that old bag. It just shows how far loneliness and desperation can push a man.

ALTER EGO
And selfishness and horniness too.

RALPH
It distorts your thinking. She was as atrocious looking then as she is now, I just didn't want to admit it.

ALTER EGO
What you really don't want to admit is that you may have cared about her.

RALPH
Was she fucking that other guy? Who knows. All I know is that she was a first class nut job whose sole value to me was the fact that she put out.

ALTER EGO
She meant more to you than that, and you know it.

RALPH
Whether she liked doing it with other guys concurrently or on a consecutive basis I never found out.

ALTER EGO
You really have a filthy mind.

RALPH
Maybe I should have asked her.

Stage goes dark. Then the stage lights go on. Time: 1981. Place: a bedroom. Ralph is in bed with Bettina, a 29 years old woman.

BETTINA
Me and the kids will go with you to California after we get married.

RALPH

Before we seriously talk about getting married, I need to know how much your ex-husband is contributing for child support.

BETTINA

Nothing. I don't want his money.

RALPH

He's contributing nothing? Are you serious?

BETTINA

He's out of the picture, you're here. So what's the issue?

RALPH

The issue is this: I don't want to be stuck having to support somebody else's children. Didn't you ever go to court for child support?

BETTINA

No. I wanted nothing to do with him. He's a bum, a drunk, and a fool.

RALPH

And the father of your two children.

BETTINA

I want nothing to do with my ex-husband. If I take him to court, he may kill me.

RALPH

(exasperated)

And if you don't take him to court, then I'll be stuck holding the bill and be a laughing stock.

BETTINA

No you won't. You'll be the man my ex-husband never was.

RALPH

I'll be the man forking up money for some other guy's children.

BETTINA

You knew that I had two children when you we started living together.

RALPH

But I presumed you were getting child support. Where I come from men support their children.

BETTINA

Maybe that's how it is where YOU come from. Where I come from none of my girlfriends get child support. Even if we took our exes to court, they still wouldn't pay. Half of them are in and out of prison and the other half never work and can't even hold a job. My ex-husband is mooching off his parents. If it weren't for them he'd be on the street, in jail, or dead. All he knows how to do is drink. He is so limited that he thought being a father meant one thing: to get a woman pregnant. He even told me as much, but I didn't listen because I thought I could change him. I couldn't believe that anyone could be so dense. I thought it was a put-on. But it wasn't. Even his parents warned me about him, but I wouldn't listen to them either. He was a good-looking guy and we had a lot of fun together. The problem was that all he wanted to do was party and that's because he couldn't do anything else.

RALPH

No. That's because you were having fun too and didn't want the party to stop. You were no different than him. But then you got pregnant and blamed him for forcing you to have to grow up real fast.

BETTINA

You don't know what you're talking about.

RALPH

I DO know what I'm talking about, and you know it.

BETTINA

No, you don't. He was a high-school drop out, had no skills ...

RALPH

He did have skills. He knew how to drink, how to party and how to fuck.

BETTINA

You're right. He knew what to do with his mouth and his dick. In that respect he was brilliant. The same can be said for a dog. Meanwhile he could barely read a newspaper, even the army wouldn't take him ...

RALPH
(surprised)

He tried to join the army? What was that about?

BETTINA

That was before we started going together.

RALPH

So you really don't know why the army rejected him.

BETTINA
(annoyed)

So what's your point?

RALPH

The point is that he tried to better himself for which he deserves credit, not scorn. And besides, you think it would have been easy to have been married to a soldier?

BETTINA

I don't know and I don't care. The point is, he was a reject and like a dummy I married him and had two children with him. It was enough for me to take him to court to get a divorce. So you can forget about me suing my ex-husband for child support. There's nothing there to sue.

RALPH

Look, I don't want to be put in the position of having to defend your ex-husband, but while he is alive he is more than just a nothing.

BETTINA

That's what he is to me, and if you care about me and the kids, you'll understand.

RALPH

Thank you for the lecture. But if you think I'm gonna pay for another man's kids without you at least making an attempt to obtain child support, you got another thing coming to you.

BETTINA

(contemptuous)

You haven't heard a word I said. You know, you're just like all the rest of them.

Stage goes dark. Then lights go on. Time: the present. Ralphs alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

I used to believe in that beautiful concept called romantic love.

ALTER EGO

You never believed in romantic love. In fact, you wouldn't recognize romantic love if it were sitting right on your lap.

RALPH

A man and woman meet, connect, fall in love, have a family, and live happily ever after. I learned that from watching movies and television shows. *Father Knows Best, Leave It to Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet, The Donna Reed Show.* They showed me what family life was supposed to be about.

ALTER EGO

You knew those shows were phony.

RALPH

After I broke up with Bettina, that fantasy was shattered forever. At that moment I realized that I was the odd man out, the guy destined to clean up after somebody else's mess, slopping up the leftovers from failed relationships.

ALTER EGO

You bailed out because you didn't have the guts to be a father. That you weren't the biological father had nothing to do with it. You would have felt the same if the kids were yours.

RALPH

Angry, desperate women looking to latch on to any guy receiving a steady paycheck, and then becomes the bad guy when he complains, like I did, when all I wanted was to get laid, preferably without any conditions and with as few complications and distractions as possible. Yes, I was searching for the impossible.

ALTER EGO

Stop your lying. You thought you weren't good enough for a quality woman so you went after the desperate ones who you knew were vulnerable.

RALPH

I guess that's why I never got married. *Enters Imaginary Bettina.*

(to Imaginary Bettina, rhymes)

All you single mothers,
I have some news for you,
About the men you married,
The gents who made you blue.

Once you really loved them,
Each one a shining knight,
Handsome and courageous,
For you they were just right.

Then kiddies came a-plenty,
And bills and things piled up,
Life was soon oppressive,
Your men then sought the cup.

It's not that they were bad,
Or that they did not care,
Or that they craved their beer,
Or never combed their hair.

They stepped up to the plate,
Believed they had the clout,
They gave it all they had,
But only to strike out.

Now bankrupt and busted,
They wallow in their shame,
Yet they still do love you,
And hope you feel the same.

Listen: do yourselves a favor: leave us single guys alone! Stay with the lug you married, for better or for worse, like you vowed to do. Why bother with the likes of me?

IMAGINARY BETTINA

Because I loved you and I needed you, that's why.

RALPH

But I'm no better than that lug of yours. In fact, I'm worse!

IMAGINARY BETTINA

But you were kind and gentle and sweet and ...

RALPH

SHUT UP!

Imaginary Bettina is silent.

End of scene 10

Scene 11

Time: 4:00 PM

Place: A college library. Ralph is using a computer. Nearby is a group of students. They are talking. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Before, it was Cynthia, now it's college students. When do these annoyances ever stop? Their incessant talking is disturbing me and nobody cares.

One of the students starts talking on a cellphone.

Oh fuck! Now one of them is using a cell phone. Why can't they be quiet? Do I have to be the one to tell them to shut up? I really don't want to talk to them. Where the fuck is security?

Ralph starts using the computer again but soon stops.

I can't take it anymore. *(Ralph's alter ego exits.)* *(To the group of students)* Excuse me. *(The students ignore him. Ralph speaks louder)* Excuse me, your talking is really disturbing me.

The students stop talking and look at Ralph. One of the students, a young man, replies.

STUDENT

Sorry.

The students resume their talking. Ralph gets up and goes over to the students.

RALPH

(annoyed)

Look. Your talking is bothering me, okay?

STUDENT

Okay, mister, we heard you the first time. We don't think we're talking that loudly, okay.

RALPH

(getting angry)

I don't care what you think. You were talking loudly.

STUDENT

Well, nobody else is complaining. So, stop hassling us!

RALPH

(raising his voice)

You're hassling me!

A school security officer enters.

SECURITY OFFICER

What's the problem here?

STUDENT

This guy *(points to Ralph)* is pestering us.

SECURITY OFFICER

(to Ralph)

Let me see your student ID.

RALPH

(incensed)

Officer, they were pestering me!

STUDENT

No we weren't. We were talking quietly and studying.

SECURITY

(to Ralph)

I want to see your student ID.

Ralph gives the officer his student ID. The security officer takes out a pad and pen and records Ralph's name and student ID number.

RALPH

(annoyed)

Why are you noting down my name and ID? I didn't do anything.

SECURITY OFFICER

You were causing a disturbance.

RALPH

(raising his voice)

No way.

SECURITY OFFICER

First, lower your voice and second, I'm giving you a warning. If this happens again, you will be removed from this building and reported to the school provost.

The stage goes dark. Then the lights go on. Time: 1995. Ralph is in a cafeteria where he works; he is having lunch. Two young people, a man and a woman enter. On their jackets are affixed identification cards indicating that say medical intern. They are carrying food trays. They sit down at a table next to Ralph's.

RALPH

(to both interns)

Excuse me. I could not help but notice that you are interns.

MALE INTERN

Yes, we are.

RALPH

Did you ever hear of a television show named Ben Casey starring Vince Edwards?

FEMALE INTERN

No, never heard of it. Who's Ben Casey?

RALPH

You're doctors and you never heard of Ben Casey?

MALE INTERN

Sorry, afraid not.

RALPH

What about Doctor Kildare with Richard Chamberlain?

MALE INTERN

You got me there too.

RALPH

Those were two of the most popular TV shows in the sixties. Chamberlain was a huge star.

FEMALE INTERN

We weren't even born then.

RALPH

What about McHale's Navy with Joe Flynn and Ernest Borgnine?

MALE INTERN

You got us there again.

RALPH
(frantic)

What about Doctor Zhivago?

FEMALE INTERN

Was that TV show too?

RALPH
(More frantic)

C'mon! Stop fooling with me! Doctor Zhivago is one of the greatest movies ever made. It came out in 1965. It's about a doctor who gets caught up in the Russian Revolution.

MALE INTERN
(uneasy)

Look, it's been nice talking to you but we got to eat and run.

RALPH
(*desperate*)

What about *West Side Story* with Natalie Wood and George Chakiris or *The Ten Commandment* with Charlton Heston and Anne Baxter? Surely you must have heard of those movies?

The stage goes dark. Then lights go on. Time: the present. Scene: the library. Ralph and the security officer are continuing their conversation.

SECURITY OFFICER

Have I made myself clear?

RALPH

Very clear.

SECURITY OFFICER

Good.

The security officer gives Ralph his ID and exits. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH
(*to his alter ego*)

Richard Chamberlain, Ernest Borgnine, *Doctor Zhivago*, *West Side Story*, great actors, great movies, all forgotten, like they never existed.

ALTER EGO

Is all that Hollywood pulp really worth remembering? All it did was fuck up your head. After you saw *Zhivago* you thought the Russian Revolution was a soap opera, and after you saw *West Side Story* you thought every Puerto Rican girl was a whore.

RALPH

Just like what's in store for me. I could drop dead right now and nobody would miss me, not even for a second.

ALTER EGO

What do you want? A state funeral?

RALPH

But why should I expect anything more in this cold, uncaring world that turns everything that's beautiful into something ugly.

ALTER EGO

Don't blame the world. Blame yourself.

RALPH

Yesterday I was walking on Fifth Avenue and saw this incredibly beautiful woman, and I mean she was knock out BEAUTIFUL, standing on the street, looking like a goddess. I stopped walking and stood there admiring her. Then she opened up her pocket book, took out a pack of cigarettes, lit up and started puffing away like a smoke stack. I was so upset and disgusted that I almost broke down and cried. I used to find women so beautiful.

ALTER EGO

You never found women beautiful. You just wanted to fuck them.

RALPH

Once again, I have to blame Hollywood for that. After watching all so many incredibly charming women on the screen, I thought that was the way women really were: sensitive, understanding, supportive, loving, loyal, in short, the epitome of perfection. They all had perfect bodies, alluring smiles, wonderfully cuoffed hair, melodious voices, everything that a guy could possibly want in a gal. Everything that I wanted in a woman.

ALTER EGO

You mean everything you wanted in a whore.

RALPH

Once again I was misinformed.

End of scene 11

Scene 12

Time: 5:00 PM

Place: A Catholic Church in midtown. Ralph enters in the middle of the homily. Ralph's alter ego enters.

PRIEST

... and to show his love for us, God sacrificed his only begotten son ...

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Who asked him to save us?

PRIEST

... the day of judgment has been prophesized and it's only a question of time ...

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

What happened to Jesus was horrible but if that's how the son of God was treated, then what hope is there for me? Maybe my life is God's way of punishing me, but why me? What did I do so wrong that I should be punished?

PRIEST

... to attain salvation you must embrace Christ ...

RALPH

(bitterly, to his alter ego)

I tried that and it didn't work. All I got was silence.

ALTER EGO

What did you expect? A symphony orchestra?

RALPH

Even the good Lord ignores me. Then again, what should I expect from a religion that believes in original sin? Are people really so evil?

ALTER EGO

You should be asking that question in the first person, not the third.

RALPH

People lose their temper, call each other bad names, hurt each other's feelings, pad bills, cheat on their taxes, cheat on their spouses, eat "unclean" food, cop feels (only guys do that, of course) and do a thousand other stupid, selfish things. So what? Does the good Lord really have time to deal with such petty nonsense?

ALTER EGO

First, stop being presumptuous and second, you know that those "stupid, selfish things" you mentioned are much more than just "petty nonsense."

RALPH

The Lord invested us with human nature so the human condition is something that we cannot possibly change.

ALTER EGO

You're saying that because you don't want to change.

RALPH

It's what makes us human, and for some priest or minister to lecture us about our failings is to me just a waste of time. I listen to what they say, and want to scream to them: why are you telling me this?

ALTER EGO

Because you're a sinner and you know it.

RALPH

Why are you trying to make me feel bad?

ALTER EGO

Because you've acted badly.

RALPH

Why not take your message to all the murderers, rapists and thieves languishing in prison? Let them atone first and then come preach to me about changing my ways and then maybe I'll listen, but only maybe.

PRIEST

... when you feel alone and abandoned, remember, there is one out there who cares ...

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Yeah. Cares about everybody except me.

ALTER EGO

Your self-pity is nauseating.

From offstage someone is singing "Amazing Grace."

RALPH

Let's look at facts.

ALTER EGO

Okay: Fact number one: you're a drunk and fact number two: you're a fool.

RALPH

According to scripture, The Almighty allowed the Hebrews, HIS chosen people, mind you, people who were under HIS protection, to be slaves for four hundred years, and then after liberating them, made them wander in a desert for another forty years. Then later He permitted his only begotten son to be humiliated, tortured and killed, a sacrifice (that nobody asked him to do) in fulfillment of prophesy. He then was resurrected, stayed around for a while, then left the earth and never returned, leaving us mortals to hold the bag here on earth. Given that history, why should I presume that He is there for me? You tell me.

ALTER EGO

First, stop trying to second-guess the Lord and second, if you're not a believer, then what do want from the church? You're lucky they even let you in here. *(Stage goes dark. When the lights go on, the setting is the same. The time is one year earlier. Ralph is sitting in a pew. He has his cell phone to his ear. A man enters. He is the chief of security for the church.)*

CHIEF

(to Ralph)

Turn off the cell phone. No cellphone use allowed inside the church.

RALPH

Yes, sir. (*Ralph moves the cell phone from his ear. A security guard enters.*)

SECURITY GUARD

You heard the man! Turn off the cell phone!

RALPH

I'm turning it off.

A police officer enters.

POLICE OFFICER

(*to Ralph*)

Sir, you were told to turn off the cell phone. Please do it, now.

RALPH

Okay! I've been told that three times already.

POLICE OFFICER

That's right, you have. Please don't make me have to tell you a fourth time.
The Priest enters.

PRIEST

(*to the Police Officer*)

What's the problem?

POLICE OFFICER

He was causing a disturbance with his cell phone.

PRIEST

(*to the Police Officer*)

Is that so? (*to Ralph*) Is there something I can help you with?

RALPH

No, father, nothing at all.

Stage goes dark. When lights go on, it is again the present.

RALPH

Let's face it: the only person who really cares about me is me, and even on that point I have my doubts.

ALTER EGO

The priest cared but you blew him off like you do everyone who actually reaches out to you, and that's because you hate yourself.

RALPH

Lemme outta here. I gotta have a drink.

Ralph and his alter ego exit. Amazing Grace continues to be sung.

End of scene 12

Scene 13

Time: 6:30 PM

Place: A bar on West 23rd Street. The bar is moderately crowded. Some people are drinking at the bar; others are sitting at tables eating drinking and conversing. Ralph is the only customer who is there alone. He is sitting at a table drinking his third screw driver. Sitting opposite him at the table are a young man and young woman. They are both drinking beers and holding hands. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

It amazes me when I think of all the money and time I spent, and wasted, on women who never really cared about me.

ALTER EGO

I think you got that scenario backwards.

RALPH

Like that Russian girl, Natasha, who I met at a singles dance. I thought she loved me but when her visa expired she went back to Russia at the blink of an eye. If she had really loved me, she would have never left, at least not the way she did, without even first discussing it with me.

ALTER EGO

First, you talking about love is a joke. Second, she didn't consult with you because she needed advice from someone strong and caring, which, of course, automatically excluded you.

RALPH

She didn't care, just like the rest of them. Women: I'm finished with them.

Ralph takes out his cell phone and starts deleting numbers.

Don't need Cyndie's number anymore ... done. I called Audrey last week and she never called me back. Her number is now ... history. I haven't heard from Bonnie for the past six months, so her number is now ... gone. Ditto with Denise's number; I haven't heard from her in over a year ... gone. Eve, my one time sweetheart, the girl I thought I would actually marry, I haven't heard from her in years.

ALTER EGO

Look at you acting out like a child. Pathetic. No wonder women leave you.

RALPH

Her number's now ... history. Same for Sandy. She used to come by at night and we'd have some fun, but then she left town. Well, fuck her. Her number's gone as of right now ... Done! I can almost hear my phone thanking me for eliminating all that excess electronic baggage. Let them call me, and if I don't hear from them, then fuck 'em. Who needs 'em? (*Ralph's alter ego exits.*)

The waitress walks by.

Excuse me, waitress.

Waitress stops and approaches Ralph.

WAITRESS

Yes?

RALPH

I would like to have another screwdriver, please.

WAITRESS

I don't think so. I think you've had enough.

RALPH

I have?

WAITRESS

Yes. I've received complaints about you mumbling loudly to yourself and the only reason why I didn't ask you to leave sooner is because you're a regular customer.

RALPH
(*sarcastic*)

Well, excuse me for drinking.

WAITRESS

If you don't leave now, I'm gonna have to ask the manager to come over.

RALPH
(*annoyed*)

Okay, I'm leaving, I'm leaving. Just let me get my coat on. How much I owe you?

WAITRESS

Seventeen fifty.

Ralph takes out his wallet.

RALPH

Here's twenty. Keep the change.

WAITRESS

Thank you.

RALPH

Yeah, right. You're just glad to see me go, but no hard feelings.

*Ralph exits. Stage goes dark. When lights go on Ralph is on the street.
Ralph's alter ego enters.*

(to his alter ego)

Boy, was she a bitch. But so what? I'll just go to another bar.

ALTER EGO

That's right, get sloshed. That's all you're good for.

RALPH

But I'm not driving and I don't care who I offend.

End of scene 13

Scene 14

Time: 7:00 PM

Place: Another bar a few blocks away which is also moderately crowded with customers. Ralph enters. Once again Ralph is the only customer who is alone. Ralph goes to the bar and orders a drink.

RALPH

(to the bartender)

Hello my good man. I would like to have a double scotch straight with ice on the side.

BARTENDER

You got it, mac.

The bartender makes the drink and serves it to Ralph. Ralph takes his drink and sits at a table watching the other customers drink and talk; there is lots of laughter and chatter. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Look at all those people stuffing their faces with food. Ugh! Disgusting!

ALTER EGO

You envy them. They're happy while you're alone feeling miserable.

RALPH

It reminds me of the times when I used to bring Felicia here. She was fun to be with, but there was one problem: she was married, so being with her wasn't too cool.

ALTER EGO

No, it wasn't cool. But you knew that yet you went with her anyway.

RALPH

Actually, the issue wasn't so much that she was married, that alone wouldn't have stopped me from fucking her, but that I was spending a ton of money on a married woman whose husband also happened to be a friend of mine, so I couldn't bring myself to do the deed. That would have been a rotten thing to do to him.

ALTER EGO

Don't be absurd. The only reason why you didn't do the deed with Felicia was because you were afraid that if her husband found out, he would come after you.

RALPH

So the most I ever got was a goodnight's kiss and the pleasure of watching another man's wife consume food and drink at my expense. Now, here I am, alone, in the same place, but at least I'm not making a fool of myself.

A waitress enters. Ralph's alter ego exits.

(to the waitress)

Excuse me.

The waitress stops.

WAITRESS

Yes, may I help you?

RALPH

Did you know that I was once a sergeant in the United States Army? When I tell people that, nobody believes me, and what's worse, nobody cares.

WAITRESS

Well, I believe you, and thank you for your service. Now, would you like to order some food?

RALPH

(speaks in a mock Spanish accent)

Food? I don't need no stinkin' food; food is a waste; it just bulks you up. *(Drops the Spanish accent)* I'm like a car; I run on liquid fuel.

Waitress laughs.

WAITRESS

You're funny.

RALPH

And you are lovely. Perhaps we could continue this rapporte later?

WAITRESS

I'd love to, but I can't talk right now; it's kind of busy here.

RALPH

Oh, okay. Let me give you my card. My cell phone number is on the back.

WAITRESS

Yes, give me your card.

Ralph removes a business card from his wallet and gives it to the waitress who takes the card and puts it in her pocket.

(smiling)

Thanks. Maybe I'll give you a call.

The waitress exits. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Like she's gonna call me; but you can never tell. At least she didn't bust chops. And she's not bad-looking either and has a nice smile.

ALTER EGO

And maybe she'll put out for you! *(The stage goes dark. When the stage lights go on, the setting is a diner. It is six years earlier. Ralph is sitting at a table with a woman. She is attractive and in her mid-40s. Her name is Inez.)*

RALPH

What do you do for a living?

INEZ

I'm an assistant principal for the Board of Education.

RALPH

Sounds like a good job.

INEZ

It is. And you?

RALPH

I work for the city too, in an administrative capacity.

INEZ

Which agency?

RALPH

Family Services.

INEZ

(unimpressed)

So we're both city workers.

RALPH

I guess so.

INEZ

(losing interest)

What do you like to do for fun?

RALPH

Different things. I like going to movies. I'm a real movie buff. How about you?

INEZ

I've done a lot of traveling recently. Ever since my divorce. Are you married?

RALPH

No. I'm single.

INEZ

Were you ever married?

RALPH

(defensive)

Kind of.

INEZ

What do you mean, “kind of”?

RALPH

I lived with a woman.

INEZ

But you weren't married.

RALPH
(*defensive*)

No, we weren't.

INEZ

How come you never got married?

RALPH

Is that important?

INEZ

To me, yes. Because I'm looking to get married again; I'm not a one-night stand and I believe in making commitments.

RALPH

And breaking commitments too.

INEZ
(*defensive*)

That was his fault, not mine. I take my commitments seriously and if you don't believe me, too bad. (*pause*) How about you? What are you looking for?

RALPH
(*sarcastic*)

Someone interesting, like yourself.

INEZ

How do you know I'm interesting? We just met.

RALPH

You have a way with words.

INEZ

You're not just looking for sex, are you?

RALPH

Who said anything about sex?

INEZ

You've never been married, so why else would you want to go out with a woman?

RALPH

(to himself)

Here we go again. *(to Inez)* I think we ought to call it a night.

Stage goes dark. When lights go on, it is again the present.

(to his alter ego)

Anyway, let me finish my drink and then I'm outta here.

End of scene 14

Scene 15

Time: 7:30 PM

Place: Fifth Avenue. Ralph is in the process of crossing the street when a Chinese bicycle delivery man almost hits him. Ralph is intoxicated.

RALPH

(to the bicyclist)

Hey, dick head, watch it with that bike. You almost hit me.

The bicyclist laughs and shrugs his shoulder and turns to exit.

(enraged)

Hey schmuck! What's so funny?

The bicyclist stops, turns around, and gives Ralph "the finger."

Yeah, and up yours too!

The bicyclist exits. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Did you see what that bastard did? He doesn't care. And why should he? I'm nothing to him. *(rhymes)*

Black, beige and olive, yellow and brown,
Swarthy complexions throughout the town,
They cause me to sulk and feel rather down,
Like I'm a zilch who rates no renown.

The world is now a very strange place,
With funny talk from each foreign race,
Whose mumbo-jumbo sounds to me base,
And makes me want to hide my pale face.

It was not like that in days gone by,
When all of us were part of the pie,
We cherished the flag that waved on high,
Over a land that never would die.

Now everything's changed. All the landmarks of my childhood are gone, places I thought would last forever, like the old Yankee Stadium, the old Madison Square Garden, the Polo Grounds, Shea Stadium, huge department stores like Gimbel's, Klein's, and B. Altman's, and many other places, like the grocery store I used to shop in for years, the barbershop I went to for years, the deli I went to for years, the pharmacy I went to for years, the newsstand I went to for years, even my old high school. All gone.

ALTER EGO

That's right. And you're next.

RALPH

And one day I'll be gone too, and forgotten. When I was a kid we were taught that the country was a melting pot.

ALTER EGO

That was pure propaganda, and you bought it.

RALPH

People came here from all over the world and out of the cauldron emerged something new and better. Now we're told that the melting pot was something bogus, a fraud perpetrated on us, that we were naïve, and that ethnic autonomy and separatedness is good.

ALTER EGO

You were naïve. You just don't want to admit it.

RALPH

The problem is: Who wants to be separate? To be separate means to be excluded, to be stigmatized, to be labeled as different, to be ghettoized, to be shunned, hated, despised and rejected.

ALTER EGO

No wonder you're such a mess today.

RALPH

It was a recipe for failure. In the past whole neighborhoods were ghettoes.

ALTER EGO

Including yours.

RALPH

The walls of the ghetto were poverty and race. Now entire cities and regions are ghettoes. Sometimes differences can't be bridged.

ALTER EGO

Not that you ever tried. Building bridges to other people is not one of your strengths.

RALPH

We are what we are and sooner or later somebody gotta give.

ALTER EGO

That's right. Other people gave in the past and now its your turn to do the same.

RALPH

When I was a kid ethnicity was not an issue.

ALTER EGO

Tehnically you are correct. The issue wasn't ethnicity, it was race.

RALPH

We were taught that we were one country, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. And that formula seemed to be working.

ALTER EGO

That formula, as you put it, was nothing but a cliché and you know it.

RALPH

Our neighborhoods were stable, prices were low, and entertainment was cheap and plentiful.

ALTER EGO

More self-indulgent prattle that gives nostalgia a bad rap. When you were a kid, the average life span was twenty years shorter than it is today, people were living in grinding poverty, the air was filthy, and the general level of material wealth was but a small fraction of what it is today.

RALPH

Talking about cheap entertainment, I remember when I was a kid, my friends and I used to go see the Mets play at the Polo Grounds. General admission cost a dollar twenty five. A hot dog cost a quarter and a program fifteen cents. I remember that like it was yesterday.

ALTER EGO

Then you must also remember that the Polo Grounds was a dump that should have been condemned and that the minimum wage back then was twenty-five cents an hour. So, paying a dollar and a quarter for a ticket then would be like paying forty-five dollars today to watch a bunch of guys of questionable talent play a schoolyard game in a slum. Some bargain.

RALPH

The team stunk, but so what?

ALTER EGO

The Mets just didn't stink. They were abysmal, the worst team in the history of major league baseball, a bunch of rejects and has-beens, most of whom had no business being in the major leagues. Yet you squandered your parents' hard earned money to watch them play. Pathetic. It really showed how thoughtless you are.

RALPH

It was a great time to be a sports fan and to be alive, especially for a kid. This was before race riots, AIDS, the Kennedy assassinations, the King assassination, the Vietnam War, Kent State, the 1973 Arab Oil embargo, Watergate, and all the other rotten stuff that came after.

ALTER EGO

More selective amnesia. What about the Cold War, nuclear proliferation, labor unrest, McCarthyism, blacklisting, sexism, Jim Crowism, Communism, environmental degradation, urban sprawl, escalating street crime, the Berlin Wall, apartheid, ICBMs, the widespread use of cigarettes, the military draft, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. You haven't forgotten them, have you?

RALPH

Things were fine. We were all from the same country and spoke the same language.

ALTER EGO

What about your neighbors who came from Greece and what about that family in the next building who were refugees from Poland? And what about those men who worked with your father? They were Russians. And what about that restaurant down the street that was owned by Chinese? And what about the barber shop that was owned by Italians? Same for the pizza place down the block. And what about your own grandparents? None of them were born in the

United States. And what about your two uncles who were born in Eastern Europe? And what about the rector of the church? He was from Ireland. And what about Ricky Ricardo? He was from Cuba. And what about the shortstop who played for the White Sox? He was from Venezuela. Same with the guy who played center field for the Indians. He was from Venezuela too. You even had their baseball cards. And what about that guy who played left field for the Yankees? He was from Panama, and you rooted for him. And what about that pitcher for the Cubs? He was from Canada and he was black too. And what about that Hollywood actor who played Zorba? He was a Mexican playing a Greek. And what about that Hollywood actor who played Zhivago? He was an Egyptian playing a married Russian man who was having an affair with a married woman who was not his wife, and who by the way was played by an English actress. And what about that pretty lady who starred in Breakfast at Tiffany's? She wasn't American, she was English. And what about that actor who played James Bond? Not only was he not an American, he wasn't even English! He was from Scotland! And what about that scientist who headed the US space program? He was German and an ex-Nazi.

RALPH

Our families were intact.

ALTER EGO

What about the couple upstairs who got a divorce, and then their daughter suddenly got married and their son suddenly joined the service? That family disintegrated. And what about the fight that broke out in the street between that girl in the next building and her father who didn't like the guy she was marrying? The police had to be called. You witnessed it. And what about the time that ex-GI in the next building beat up his kid in the playground? You witnessed that too. And what about all the guys who were World War vets? They were good men but they were struggling to survive, all of them. And what about all the young guys who left home to join the service? They were kids. And what about your own relatives? Your two uncles and your aunt's husband, all of whom served overseas? Nothing came easy for them. They were hustling to make a living. And what about your own parents? Nothing came easy for them either. They had their rocky moments too. Yes, families were intact, but only by the slimmest of threads.

RALPH

We were all part of a community.

ALTER EGO

Which evaporated like water.

RALPH

We had confidence in the future.

ALTER EGO

Like when Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal? Or when the Soviets launched sputnik? Or when Eisenhower sent troops to Arkansas? Or when the Soviets launched Gagarin into orbit? Or when the Cuban missile crisis brought us to the brink of nuclear war? Or when the US started fretting over Vietnam?

RALPH

We cared for each other.

ALTER EGO

You cared for yourself.

RALPH

And we all pledged allegiance to the same flag.

ALTER EGO

That's because it was the only flag you knew.

RALPH

Nobody told me that one day it would all change.

End of scene 15

Scene 15a

Place: same as scenes 4a and 9a.

Once again, the stage is bare. Ralph is on stage. Then the imaginary woman enters and faces the audience. Ralph is frantic.

RALPH

You're here again! Stop badgering me! (*the woman ignores him and recites a poem*)

WOMAN

Mickey and Willie and Harmon and Duke,
Marvin and Sandy, Drysdale and the Hoot,
the last guy did pitch, he was really tough,
a Saint Louis Card, who had real great stuff.

And Juan and the Rog, and Willie Mac too,
were also real great just like Eddie Mathews,
and Rocky and Boog could hit the home run
and made it look like they were having fun.

It was a great time to be a sports fan,
when tickets were cheap throughout the great land;
we knew every player; we knew every team
and going to games was something real keen.

But that's in the past; it's now a mere dream
as time rushes on and wipes the slate clean.

RALPH

(anguish)

But why remind me of this? Why torture me?

Ralph's Alter Ego enters and speaks to Ralph.

ALTER EGO

Why are you giving her such such a hard time, Ralphie boy? She's only telling you what you already know, that the good times are gone, forever.

End of scene 15a

Scene 16

Time: 7:45 PM

Place: A storefront ATM bank. A black woman named Cassandra Clark is standing at an ATM talking into a service phone. Ralph enters and goes to an ATM to withdraw cash. Ralph is intoxicated. He is also annoyed by the Cassandra's chatter.

CASSANDRA

My name is Cassandra Clark. I'm having a problem accessing my account at this machine. For some reason the window won't open up. ...

RALPH

(shouting at the machine, slurring his words, trying to talk over the black woman's voice)

Why hello, machine. I need some money. You're my best friend because I know you won't fail me.

CASSANDRA

... and ... excuse me I can hardly hear you. There's a man in here shouting.

RALPH

(Ralph talks even louder)

Wow, what a crappy day, but it'll be all better once I get some money and don't have to listen to this woman talking on the phone.

CASSANDRA

(to Ralph)

Excuse me, is my talking on the phone bothering you?

RALPH

(angry, to the woman)

Who's talking to you? Mind your own business.

CASSANDRA

(into the phone)

This guy sounds like he's losing it. Maybe I should call the police.

Ralph collects money from the ATM and turns to leave.

RALPH

(while exiting, excited)

I heard that! If anyone should be calling the police, it should be me!

CASSANDRA

(Puts down the phone)

Who's stopping you?

RALPH

Nobody. You're black so you have a right to do whatever you want.

CASSANDRA

You don't know what you're talking about *(Into the phone)* I'm going to another ATM. This guy is getting on my nerves. *(She hangs up the phone) (to Ralph, as she exits)*. Racist pig! *Stage goes dark.*

Stage lights go on. Time: 1977. Ralph and a young, attractive black woman named Loretta are in bed.

RALPH

You are a most incredibly beautiful woman. *(Ralph bends forward to kiss Loretta. She pulls away from him.)* What's wrong?

LORETTA

When am I going to meet your parents?

RALPH

Soon. Don't worry about it.

LORETTA

You've been telling me that ever since we met.

RALPH

It's just not the right time. Trust me.

LORETTA

Did you tell them that you have a girlfriend who's black?

RALPH

Why do they need to know that? They're not ready to meet you, yet. You have to trust me on this.

LORETTA

(bitter)

Okay, Ralph, I know where this is going. We're finished. Good bye.
(Stage goes dark.)

Stage lights go on. Time: the present. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(To his alter ego)

That was the last time I ever went out with a black girl. Blacks! Just because they were slaves doesn't mean they have to be so touchy.

ALTER EGO

How do you live with yourself? What defect in your character causes you to say something so dumb?

Ralph's alter ego exits and Imaginary Loretta enters and faces Ralph.

IMAGINARY LORETTA

(contemptuous)

Not dumb, racist. You know, Ralphie, I could call call you a whole bunch of names, but you're not worth the effort because you're a nothing, a nobody. And besides, I'm too much of a lady to lower myself to that level.

RALPH

Nothing I do or say is ever right. *(suddenly, explosive anger)* GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

Imaginary Loretta is silent.

End of scene 16

Scene 17

Time: 8:30 PM

Place: The interior of a diner. Ralph is standing at the counter. Behind the counter is a waiter who is taking the order. Ralph is still intoxicated.

WAITER
What can I get you?

RALPH
I want a hot open meat loaf sandwich with corn and a baked potato.

WAITER
You want anything to drink?

RALPH
How about a scotch?

WAITER
We don't serve alcohol.

RALPH
That's too bad.

WAITER
Anything else?

RALPH
How about a side order of coleslaw?

WAITER
It comes with the food

RALPH
Okay.

Ralph notices packets of crackers on the counter.

(to the waiter)

I bet those crackers cost extra.

WAITER

No, they don't, but if you want one, take it. They're free.

RALPH

(sarcastic)

Something in this city is actually free? That's unbelievable.

WAITER

That's right.

RALPH

I just can't believe that those crackers are free.

WAITER

Well, they are. Take one, in fact take two.

RALPH

I bet if I so much as touch one of those crackers, the next thing you'll be doing is calling the police.

WAITER

(baffled)

What are you talking about?

RALPH

(belligerent)

Nothing in this damn city is for free. You're just trying to fuck with my mind.

WAITER

(placating)

That's not true, pal.

RALPH
(becoming louder)

Don't you "pal" me, okay?

WAITER
(trying to maintain his composure)

If you don't quiet down, I'm going to have to ask you to leave.

RALPH
(loudly)

Boy, the service in this place stinks!

WAITER

Okay, mister. Please leave.

RALPH

What did I do?

WAITER
(Annoyed and concerned)

You're giving me a hard time and you're disturbing the other customers.
Now beat it!

RALPH

Hey, that's no way to talk to a veteran.

WAITER
(angry)

I don't care what you are or who you are. Your order is canceled. Get out of here, NOW! Before I call the police.

RALPH

Okay! I'm leaving! You happy? *(Stage goes dark)*

Stage lights go on. Ralph is now on the street. Ralph's alter ego enters.

(to his alter ego, aloud, drunk, slurring his words)

Nasty waiter. He was trying to set me up to be arrested. Just another foreigner who hates Americans.

ALTER EGO

Now you want to fight a waiter. How fucked up is that? In addition to being offensive, now you're being paranoid.

RALPH

To hell with him. People in this city are so mean. They'll do you in at the drop of a hat. It's a good thing I'm a nice guy.

ALTER EGO

Don't make me laugh.

RALPH

Everyday it's aggravation. I can't even order take-out without it becoming a struggle. Nothing comes easy.

ALTER EGO

That's because you're obnoxious.

RALPH

Nobody cares.

ALTER EGO

That's because you drive people away.

RALPH

Next time that waiter tries to fuck with me, I'll punch his face in. On second thought, he's not worth it.

End of scene 17

Scene 18

Time: 9:00 PM

Place: Ralph's apartment. Ralph is sitting on the edge of his bed, disheveled. He is thoroughly intoxicated. Ralph's alter ego enters. Ralph speaks to his alter ego.

RALPH

Calling Shila was stupid. It really fucked up my mind.

ALTER EGO

Your mind was fucked up way before you made that phone call.

RALPH

Oh hell, let me make myself a drink.

Ralph makes himself a large screw driver, heavily loaded with vodka. He places the drink on the tray.

That is a beautiful drink. Mr. Smirnoff is my only friend. He never fails me.

ALTER EGO

That's because Mr. Smirnoff is making lots of money off of you.

Ralph ignores his alter ego and starts sipping on his drink. He goes to a cupboard and grabs a bag of potato chips. He opens up the bag, puts a chip in his mouth and immediately spits it out.

RALPH

Ugh. The chips are stale. Nothing ever goes right for me. It's all crap! Only my "friend" understands. *(Ralph takes another sip.)*

Ralph grabs the remote control and clicks on the television. He listens for a moment then turns down the sound.

Politicians debating gun control. Nothing but grand standing. That's all they're good for. They'll say anything for a vote. All they care about are themselves.

ALTER EGO

What do you expect? They're no different than you.

RALPH

Fuck 'em. Who really cares what they have to say anyway? I sure don't.
Ralph switches off the television. That's better.

Ralph continues drinking.

Everything's fucked up. Why do I even bother living?

ALTER EGO

Yes. Why do you bother living?

RALPH

What for? *(pause)* Oh yes, I remember: to keep collecting my pension, 'cause I'm living the American Dream which is to work, survive and collect. *(laughs)* And that's exactly what I'm doing, collecting. I just gotta keep putting up with all the stupidity around me.

ALTER EGO

That plan won't work, especially since you're the problem.

RALPH

That Shila; I should have fucked her when she was in my apartment. Maybe I need a woman.

ALTER EGO

You need a woman like a drug addict needs drugs.

RALPH

But I've had women, dozens of them, and what did it get me: nothing! So who needs 'em?

ALTER EGO

You do, but for all the wrong reasons.

RALPH

Besides I can't even get it up anymore. So what?

ALTER EGO

What are you talking about, “so what”? Getting it up is what you live for! Your whole life has revolved around one goal – to stick it in and shoot your load, whatever the consequences. It’s not because of bad luck that all your relationships fail. You make them fail. What about that older doll from Brooklyn who was hot for you? She loved you and treated you like you were a diamond-studded pleasure machine. (*An imaginary woman enters. Alter Ego speaks to her.*)

I give you action
 For a chain reaction,
 You serve my pipe
 And I give you hype,
 You buy me things
 And I give you flings,
 For you’re the doll
 Who’s become my moll,
 And I’m your man
 Who you’ll not ban.

(Imaginary woman exits)

She kept you oiled up and ready for action. Nothing was too good for you. She even took you out to dinner and bought you the finest drinks. All she wanted was that you show her some attention and do nice things to her to make her feel that she was still a beautiful woman. But that wasn’t good enough for you. When you got tired of her you copped an attitude and left her high and dry, and why? Because you decided that her nose was too long, that she was beginning to look more like Cyrano de Bergerac than Roxanne. How fucked up was that? She was willing to ANYTHING for you!

RALPH

The problem is not loneliness, it’s time. Time is relentless, nothing can stop it. Before I know it I’ll be decrepit and then I’ll be dead.

ALTER EGO

But since you can’t get it up, then what’s the big deal if you die?

RALPH

That’s something to look forward to.

ALTER EGO

For you, yes.

RALPH

Boy, if I die in my apartment it might be days or even weeks before anybody even notices that I'm missing. Maybe I should drop dead in the street instead. Make it easier for them to find me.

ALTER EGO

Now that's being considerate.

RALPH

Aw, who cares? Let them clean up after me.

ALTER EGO

Just when I thought you were turning over a new leaf.

RALPH

Now I go to school, and for what? Just to fill in the time. People say: why don't you travel? I tell them: Why don't YOU travel? Why don't YOU disappear?

ALTER EGO

Actually nobody would care one way or another if you disappeared.

RALPH

It's all the same crap wherever you go, just packaged a little differently. Fuck the scenery. Fuck it all. People are people, and they're all rotten to the core.

ALTER EGO

And you know that better than anyone else.

Ralph puts down the drink. He opens a dresser and pulls out a drawer, places it on the bed and starts rummaging through the contents. He pulls out a paystub

RALPH

Look at this! A paystub from my old job with the agency. When I left I was a senior case analyst, but now that's ancient history. My old office is now a storage bin, my job title no longer exists and when I went back there a year ago, nobody recognized me. It's as if I never worked there.

ALTER EGO

Stop your moping. You got your pension. Right?

RALPH

I did my work, kept my mouth shut, and busted my hump so I could get out with a pension and enjoy life. I thought things would be better after I left, but I was wrong. I was chasing a dream. My life is just as empty.

ALTER EGO

That's your fault! You made it empty! That's what you wanted!

Ralph ignores his alter ego and starts rummaging through the drawer again and pulls out a faded newspaper article. Ralph reads the headline.

RALPH

Man saves girl from drowning. (*stops reading*) That man was me. Back in 1982 I pulled a ten year old girl out of the ocean. She was stuck in a rip tide and I went in and plucked her out. Later it was reported in the news.

ALTER EGO

Big deal! Anybody could of done that.

RALPH

What's so sad is that I lost touch with the little girl. (*starts weeping*).

ALTER EGO

Stop your weeping, you faker. You never even bothered to find out the little girl's name! *Ralph ignores his alter ego.*

RALPH

(*Still weeping, Ralph puts down the article.*) Let's see what else is in here.

Ralph reaches into the drawer again and pulls out a document, and reads it aloud.

Dear Mister Gorolinski: On behalf of the governor of the State of New York, I want to personally thank you for the support you provided to the first responders at Ground Zero after the nine-eleven attack. Your generosity was an act of selflessness that brought credit to you as an American and strengthened the entire nation in its time of crisis. Very truly yours, Loreen Taylor-Green, personal secretary to the governor. *Ralph tosses the letter aside.* It was a form letter. Thousands of people got the same letter. I would have done better just to have stayed at home.

ALTER EGO

All you can think about is yourself.

Ralphs reaches into the drawer again and pulls out an old four by six-inch black-and-white photograph.

RALPH

My mother. That picture must have been taken sixty or seventy years ago. She was a good woman, the salt of the earth. She tried her best to care for us but for a long time I didn't realize that. I didn't realize that her yelling at me was her way of showing me love. I only remember feeling put down.

ALTER EGO

Only a mother would have put up with the likes of you.

RALPH

Now she's gone, and my father as well.

ALTER EGO

At least you remember them, which is surprisingly decent of you.

RALPH

They're history, just like I'm going to be, except there won't be anyone around to mark my passing.

ALTER EGO

What about The Four Leaf Clover Tavern? They'll miss you. You're their favorite customer.

RALPH

What a life.

Ralph gulps down the remainder of his drink, drops the glass, collapses on the bed and immediately passes out. Ralph's alter ego exits.

End of scene 18

Scene 19

Time: next morning, 3:00 AM

Place: Inside Ralph's mind. Ralph is dreaming. He is in a room. A woman enters. It is his mother.

RALPH

Mom! Forgive me!

Mother does not respond.

Mom! Forgive me!

Mother looks at Ralph and smiles.

Mom! Forgive me!

Mother looks away.

Mom! Play with me!

Mother suddenly exits. Ralph is frantic.

Mom! Mom! Mom! Don't leave! Don't leave me! Mom, I'm afraid! Mom, don't leave! Don't leave me! Don't leave me!

Stage goes dark. In the dark Ralph can be heard screaming.

MOM! DON'T LEAVE ME!

Stage lights go on. Ralph is in bed. He is awake. He is drenched in sweat and panting heavily. He places his hand on his crotch. Ralph's alter ego enters.

(to his alter ego)

I wetted myself again. How much more of this can I take?

End of scene 19

Scene 20

Time: 6:30 AM

Place: Ralph's apartment. Ralph is drying off after taking a bath. Ralph's alter ego enters.

RALPH

(to his alter ego)

Damn shower; still broken; another dreadful day. More annoyances; more crap. That same horrible dream. Maybe I need to get a job. That's it. *(pause)* What am I talking about? I couldn't last a day working for a boss. Besides, my feet hurt. My teeth are rotting. My neck is stiff. My life is torture. Why do I even live?

Ralph wraps the towel around his waist, goes to a cupboard and takes out a bottle of vodka. He examines the contents.

Maybe I need a drink. What time is it?

Ralph looks at a clock on the wall.

Oh damn, it's six thirty. What the fuck am I doing with this bottle? This is no time to drink! *(pause)* Aw, fuck it, what's the difference. A little swig won't hurt.

ALTER EGO

Your pomposity is positively sickening.

Ralph lifts the bottle to his mouth and takes a long gulp. Then he switches on the radio. From offstage:

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Yesterday the online entertainment network gossipcolumn.com released a video showing all-star football running back Carl McKenzie kicking his wife during an altercation at a gas station. According to unnamed sources, after McKenzie kicked his wife, he doused her with gasoline and threatened to set her on fire, this while she is pregnant with their first child. The police are investigating. The commissioner's office has yet to issue a statement. This is not McKenzie's first brush with the law. Two years ago he was charged with aggravated assault involving another woman and was sentenced to six years' probation. Also, according to reliable sources close to the commissioner's office, at least twenty-seven other football players, including three former MVPs and two who are being considered for head coach positions, are currently being investigated by the league for violations of the rules and for other alleged incidents considered detrimental to football. It is also rumored that state and federal law enforcement officials are involved in these investigations, but this is unconfirmed. When a reporter asked if the rumor was true, an attorney for one

of the players issued a terse “no comment” and then tried to punch the reporter, who is a former college light heavyweight boxing champion and a retired Navy Seal. That led to a brief altercation. The reporter later publicly threatened to file charges against the attorney who responded by allegedly saying, “Bring it on!”

(Ralph switches off the radio. He takes another drink.)

RALPH

(drunk, rambling)

Football players beating their wives. Baseball players taking drugs. Mothers killing their children, fathers disappearing, politicians selling out, women prancing around like whores, men getting drunk, people smoking like chimneys, blacks hating whites, whites hating blacks, garbage in the streets, filth all around us, foreigners taking over everything and laughing at us, creeps and perverts preying on us, never-ending wars, escalating conflicts.

ALTER EGO

No surprises there, so what’s your gripe?

RALPH

What a horrible world! When I was a kid we never heard of stuff like this.

ALTER EGO

Yes, you did. Things were just as fucked up then as they are now. In fact, they were worse. You just didn’t know any better, and you wouldn’t have wanted to know anyway. It would have ruined your fun.

RALPH

We didn’t know that our heroes drank and did stupid, hurtful things. We thought that things were good! That people were good!

ALTER EGO

You believed in a fairy tale.

RALPH

THAT’S WHAT I WANT! I want to live in a world that’s clean, led by heroes, people who care about us, about ME! I want to feel love!

ALTER EGO

This must be the beginning stages of your alcohol-induced dementia.

RALPH

Silly, impetuous, unpredictable, miserable, ecstatic, scary, thrilling, heart-throbbing, heart-sobbing love. I want to love and be loved in a world where goodness is real!

ALTER EGO

It's amazing how alcohol can transform even the most inane-sounding fool like you into a complete blithering idiot. All you want is to be stroked, preferably by a woman although if Jose volunteered, you'd be okay with that too.

RALPH

Instead, there's nothing but filth, deceit, lying, decadence and emptiness. A deep dark pit of nothingness. Women hate me; friends ignore me; life is passing me by. I'm a nothing. A nobody; my life is a disaster, and nobody cares if I live or die.

ALTER EGO

It's also amazing how alcohol can bring out the truth. The fact is, Ralphie, buddy, you are a living joke.

RALPH

My best friend in the world, Ed Jankowski, the only person in the world, except for my parents, who ever cared about me, lost an arm in Vietnam, became a drunk, and soon after died.

ALTER EGO

That's too bad about your best friend. What did you do to help him?

RALPH

The pain was too much for me to bear. He had a wife and two kids. I never went to his funeral, never sent his wife a condolence card, never even went to visit his grave.

ALTER EGO

Some friend you were. You abandoned your pal and his family at their time of greatest need. It doesn't get lower than that. You're beyond redemption.

Ralph grabs a large steak knife. Then he looks upward and prays.

RALPH

God: forgive me for my sins. I harbor hatred for others and for myself. I've been arrogant and hypocritical. My life is a sham. I was born innocent but became corrupted through my own faults. I've been selfish, nasty and mean. I deserve to die. I beg you to show me mercy!

Ralph points the knife at his heart.

One quick plunge and the pain will stop. (*Imaginary Loretta, Bettina and Shila enter.*)

ALTER EGO, IMAGINARY LORETTA, BETTINA and SHILA
(*together*)

No Ralph no,
Yes Ralph yes,
You're life is in shambles,
Your life's in a mess.

You are so mean,
You're such a sham,
You're all worn out,
It's time to scam.

RALPH
(*to all four*)

You're right. I'm all worn out and it's time for me to scam.

IMAGINARY LORETTA
(*excited*)

What are you waiting for? Do it!

IMAGINARY BETTINA
(*excited*)

Stick it all the way in, like you did with us!

SHILA
(*excited*)

I'll be waiting for you!

Ralph takes the knife and presses the point against his chest, the tip piercing his skin. He is now bleeding. He then raises the knife above his head, preparing for the final plunge. Suddenly his cell phone rings. Ralph contemplates the knife for a moment, then puts it down and picks up the phone.

Hello? ... (*Laughs, relieved*) ... Oh, baby, it's so good hearing from you ... You don't know how good ... You just saved my life. (*to all four*) As for you: GET LOST! (*Imaginary Loretta, Bettina and Shila exit.*)

ALTER EGO

I'm leaving too, but I'll be back. We're not finished yet. Our journey has just begun.

Alter ego exits. Then the imaginary woman enters, waves at Ralph, smiles, and blows Ralph a kiss.

The end.