



THE SPLIT

**A Comedy in Two Acts by
Jack Gilhooley & Jo Morello**

SYNOPSIS

Marie and Charlie have been riding the crest of their hard-earned reputation as America's primary playwriting couple... until recently. But they've just suffered their second flop in a row and they lay the blame exactly where it belongs—upon one another. This threatens to dissolve their marriage although Leslie Barnes, their tough-as-nails agent, is only too ready to save the union (and her commission). On the other hand, Leslie sees opportunities if their marriage dissolves: a wide-open romantic path to unsuspecting Charlie and the chance to represent Marie and Charlie separately rather than jointly, scoring hits on their own as she scores with Charlie.

Two unplanned, uncharacteristic, late-night visits to a local country-and-western joint upset everyone's best-laid plans. Lola O'Gorman, an undercover vice cop, and Rudy, a pseudo-cowboy/lothario from Brooklyn, cause more havoc in one night than Marie and Charlie have inflicted upon themselves lately.

6620 Grand Point Avenue
University Park, FL 34201-2125
Phone: 941-351-9688; FAX: 941-306-5042
Cell (Jo): 941-587-8290
www.jomorello.com
jackgilhooley@tampabay.rr.com, jo@jomorello.com
© by Jack Gilhooley & Jo Morello.
Rewritten and updated, 2011.

THE SPLIT

CAST OF CHARACTERS

2 or 3 women • 2 men

MARIE ROSSINI WILLIAMSON.....Attractive, highly successful 45-50ish playwright; married since college to Charlie, her partner in writing as well as life. But now she's chafing for her own identity.

CHARLIE WILLIAMSON.....Marie's equally talented husband. He loves her but he's clueless about their relationship.

LESLIE BARNES..... Their abrupt, no-nonsense, 30-something agent. Very attractive if so inclined but too busy making money to bother.

RUDY..... A pseudo-cowboy who idles away his evenings singing (badly) in a C&W bar. Wears full cowboy paraphernalia, complete with boots and 10-gallon hat (no gun).

LOLA O'GORMAN.....A policewoman. Attractive but hard around the edges. (May be doubled with Leslie.)

PENELOPE POTTS (Voice only)..... Gossip columnist with a British accent.

STACEY (Voice only).....A young woman with a Valley-Girl approach to life.

THE TIME: early in the 21st century

THE PLACE: Primarily a small community in Connecticut, an hour or so north of Manhattan

The authors give permission for a theatre to update any topical references that have become passé (e.g., "Lady Gaga"). We request that you notify us of such changes.

Winner, Manatee Players New Play Contest & workshop production, Bradenton, FL; Winner, West Central Florida Playwright's Process & workshop production, Ruth Eckerd Hall, Clearwater, FL; Second Place Winner, Robert J. Pickering Award for Playwriting Excellence (national); Semifinalist, Mountain Playhouse International Comedy Playwriting Contest, Jennerstown, PA. Monologue published: *The Best Women's Stage Monologues*, Smith & Kraus. Script revised, 2011.

THE SPLIT

LIST OF SCENES

One primary set: living room. All else suggested by lighting

ACT ONE

- SCENE 1 The living room of Marie and Charlie Williamson's house; Early Spring.
- SCENE 2 The same; two weeks later.
- SCENE 3 Manhattan office of literary agent Leslie Barnes; a desk and two chairs
(moved downstage from the previous scene).
- SCENE 4 Same as Scene One; Weeks later
- SCENE 5 The same; the next day, mid-morning

ACT TWO

- SCENE 1 Leslie's office, months later
- SCENE 2 Leslie's office, later that day
- SCENE 3 The O.K. Corral, a Country & Western cocktail lounge: a table and two
chairs. Later that evening (pool of light).
- SCENE 4 The same; Minutes later
- SCENE 5 The police station: a spotlight; a suggestion of bars. Later that night
- SCENE 6 The police station; Still later that night
- SCENE 7 The Williamson living room; About 3 a.m.

ACT ONE

SCENE 1

(The tastefully furnished Williamson living room with twin left and right back wall entrances. Most notable are two “Tony” trophies and posters of plays by Williamson & Williamson (e.g., *Summer Romance*, *The Fat Spinster’s Dream*).

(A light comes up on morose CHARLIE and Marie, entering after a fancy party. CHARLIE picks up the TV remote control, aims it at the audience and clicks on the imaginary TV. Perhaps a glow; no sound.)

MARIE

Some opening night gala.

CHARLIE

More like a closing night wake. We should have had the post-play party pre-play.

MARIE

Charlie, we’ve got to reconcile. Our play suffered from our pain.

CHARLIE

We can’t collaborate if we can’t cohabit.

MARIE

Good line. We should’ve put it in the play.

CHARLIE

Wouldn’t’ve done any good. *The Times* critic hated us. And *The News*. But there’s still *The Post*, tomorrow morning.

MARIE

He hated it.

CHARLIE

How do you know?

MARIE

He left at intermission.

CHARLIE

Maybe he was sick. Maybe his wife was having a baby!

He's gay.

MARIE

So... can I move back into our bedroom tonight?

CHARLIE

(Marie walks to him, arms outstretched.)

Our marriage transcends our bruised egos.

MARIE

(They embrace. She points out to the TV.)

Hey, here's Penelope! She won't let us down. Such a sweetheart.

MARIE

And more than a friend. A perceptive social commentator.

CHARLIE

A passionate patron of the arts.

MARIE

Our bosom buddy. Volume, Hon.

CHARLIE

(Marie hits the remote. Theme music to *Penelope Potts' Showtime* (e.g., "*There's No Business Like Show Business*"). Marie and CHARLIE are upbeat, expectant.)

PENELOPE (O.S.)
Penelope Potts here folks, zeroing in on the real news. Forget Charlie Sheen's flirtation with the priesthood. And ho-hum the revival of *The Sound of Music* with Lady Gaga. The real story has to do with the newest play by the fabulously talented, fabulously attractive, Tony-award-winning team of Williamson and Williamson.

PENELOPE (O.S.)

(The pair hugs happily)

PENELOPE (off, Cont'd)
Marie... Charlie... I've loved you duckies from your first youthful success. And audiences certainly haven't tired of your sparkling comedies. But they will with one more rotten effort like the putrid *Love On A Lily Pad*.

PENELOPE (off, Cont'd)

(The pair sobers.)

PENELOPE (Cont'd, O.S.)
Hey guys, whose idea was it to write a comedy about Mad Cow Disease?

PENELOPE (Cont'd, O.S.)

(CHARLIE and MARIE point at each other.)

PENELOPE (Cont'd, off)

The subject is yesterday, the characters are gross, the jokes are lame and the material is... well, cow flop. (*laughs lightly*) Sorry, I couldn't resist.

MARIE
Bitch!

CHARLIE
Witch!

PENELOPE (O.S.)

Understand this is a tough-love note. But two stinkers in a row? Maybe the ex-*wunderkinds* should go solo.

(Marie zaps Penelope off. Long pause.)

Solo?

CHARLIE

MARIE

Do we take advice from a superficial, limey gossip columnist?

CHARLIE

Hell no, we've got a mind of our own.

MARIE

I mean Brits gave us Mad Cow Disease. ... Whose is the mind?

CHARLIE

Why,... it's... it's a collective mind, dear.

(The phone RINGS.)

MARIE

Let the machine get it.

(CLICK. The machine picks up.)

MARIE (O.S.)

Hi, this is the Williamson residence. Only our pit bulls are home and unfed. We're at the opening night of our new play *Love on a Lily Pad*. Get your tickets now. Or later. It should run for a couple of years. Ciao.

(The machine CLICKS off.)

LESLIE (O.S.)

Hey, it's Leslie. Change your message. Then digest this bit of advice from your agent.

MARIE

(talks at phone) Your bad advice got us in this mess, Leslie.

LESLIE (O.S.)

Listen, you'll be back in no time. Forget the flops and move on. And ignore Penelope, a.k.a. Ethel Hergesheimer from Flatbush. Ignore her for now. But maybe down the road... you should think about writing separately. You've won two Tonys together. No telling how much farther you could go on your own. Call. We'll schmooze. Adios.

(Phone CLICKS off.)

CHARLIE

Same old greedy agent! Two writers. Two plays. Two commissions.

MARIE

And she'd get you!

CHARLIE

Not if I don't want her.

MARIE

Well, we may not have a hit play, but it won't diminish our love.

(She extends her arms. CHARLIE joins her and they head off hand-in-hand to bed.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2

(A yellow crime scene tape runs from the back wall to a stanchion DSC dividing the room equally.)

(The telephone RINGS. CHARLIE—his face covered with shaving cream—bounds into view from a doorway. HE comes to a surprised halt at the line.)

(MARIE enters from the other doorway in a bra and skirt, donning but not buttoning her blouse. HER hair is bound in a towel. SHE threatens CHARLIE as HE retreats.)

MARIE

Don't you enter my zone! Where's your cell?

CHARLIE

I'm living in my cell!

MARIE

You opted for the pool room. We gravitate to our own environment.

CHARLIE

It's a recreation room.

MARIE

Right. A pool table, bar and slot machine. Your idea of recreation.

(A machine CLICKS. A message plays.)

MARIE (O.S.)

You've reached Williamson and Williamson. This is Marie, trying to determine which Williamson she is. Nor can the other one come to the phone, so please leave a message.

PENELOPE (O.S.)

H'lo, ducks. This is Penny.

(Neither attempts to pick up the call. THEY direct remarks to the unanswered phone.)

PENELOPE (O.S.)

About my review last week.... Sorry I was a little harsh.

MARIE

It's OK. Hitler was a little rude.

PENELOPE (O.S.)

Listen, I've heard a nasty rumor... about a split.

MARIE

You helped split us! You... homewrecker!

PENELOPE (O.S.)

I suggested you go solo as writers, not as life partners.

(Grabs the phone, hand over the speaker.)

MARIE

(to *Charlie*) You told this sleaze peddler!

CHARLIE

I wouldn't talk to that parasitic trash recycler.

MARIE

(sweetly into phone) Penny dear, how are you? ... No, you weren't harsh. You were just doing your job.

CHARLIE

Yeah, dominatrix!

(CHARLIE tries to take the phone from MARIE. In the struggle SHE winds up with shaving cream on HER face. She jerks away the receiver and HE lands on the couch, then the floor. THEY whisper loudly.)

CHARLIE

(points towards a window) The neighbor's kids are staring!

MARIE

Oh, God!

(MARIE pulls HER blouse closed. CHARLIE grabs the phone.)

CHARLIE

(sweetly) Misinformed, Penelope. We're the same ole lovebirds, happy to say.

(HE puts his finger down his throat to fake gagging.)

MARIE

(shouts into the phone) He's a lying, snivelling warthog, Penelope. Will you refer me to one of your lawyers?

CHARLIE

Too late. She hung up.

MARIE

She wouldn't have hung up on me. ... Were the neighbor's kids really peeping at me?

CHARLIE

Why not? Their father does. You flit around half-naked just 'cause you've kept your body.

(MARIE buttons up hastily but crookedly.)

MARIE

Did you think I'd give it away? ... Watch how you answer that!

CHARLIE

See, Penelope only meant for us to write solo.

MARIE

No can do. Our lives and our art are inseparable.

CHARLIE

But since we've been apart, things have gotten worse.

MARIE

Semi-split doesn't work. You should move out.

(She picks up one of the Tony statues.)

MARIE

Tony's the only guy I need. (*reads*) "Best Play of The Year." In a year when that meant something on Broadway.

CHARLIE

Nowadays, the play that makes them feel worst is "Best Play of The Year."

(CHARLIE starts to laugh, pointing at MARIE. SHE looks into the reflective disk on of the Tony and sees the skewed buttons and shaving cream. SHE lightens, readjusts. HE wipes shaving cream from HIS face, then wipes HERS.)

MARIE

Gotta admit, a clown is always good for a laugh.

CHARLIE

I made you laugh from the moment we met. Remember? You joined my running club.

MARIE

I laughed at you in shorts. And unlike you, I joined to exercise, not socialize.

CHARLIE

Your sweat was an aphrodisiac. And your looks! I thought, "What a body!"

MARIE

That's how I felt... about Burt, the marathoner. "Honey Buns."

What about me?
CHARLIE

I thought you were a wit. I was half right.
MARIE

On the beach guys would surround you. I could only watch from afar.
CHARLIE

Through binoculars.
MARIE

You thought I was a lifeguard.
CHARLIE

I thought you were a pervert.
MARIE

Then one day I bought you a hot dog.
CHARLIE

Your foot-long Freudian fantasy. Then you insisted we swim.
MARIE

I wanted to rescue you. I was hoping you'd get cramps.
CHARLIE

I already had cramps.
MARIE

I saved you from drowning.
CHARLIE

And copped a feel.
MARIE

Accidentally. It came with the territory.
CHARLIE

You said I needed a buddy.
MARIE

In the water. To hold hands.
CHARLIE

Underwater, you were all hands.
MARIE

CHARLIE

Innocent fun. And later, guilty pleasures. Then marriage and our kids.

MARIE

Joy! And early success. But that success morphed into pressure to succeed. Intensity. I miss talking--

CHARLIE

Stalking? You were stalking me? Not surprising. I can be magnetic.

(SHE moves close to HIM.)

MARIE

I... miss... talking!

CHARLIE

Me too, Marie. But Leslie's pressuring me. We've got a date—

MARIE

That ... witch... always had a thing for you!

CHARLIE

We've got a date. You and I. A contractual date.

MARIE

For our divorce?

CHARLIE

Isn't this a trial separation?

MARIE

Togetherness is our trial.

CHARLIE

We've collaborated on big-time hit plays.

MARIE

But lately, two flops. We agree on fantasy. Reality's our civil war.

CHARLIE

But ending our marriage will end our collaboration.

MARIE

Our collaboration is ending our marriage.

CHARLIE

Maybe we don't have to be married to write together.

MARIE

See, the marriage never mattered. To you, the play's the thing.

CHARLIE

Molnar. Right? Or was it Moliere? I get them mixed up.

MARIE

Shakespeare! Someone you're not above plagiarizing. (*points to poster*) *The Fat Spinster's Dream*. And you wanted to name it *A Lean and Hungry Look*.

CHARLIE

I was paying Shakespeare tribute. A literary allusion.

MARIE

Shakespeare doesn't need your literary delusion.

CHARLIE

Look, if we can't be married, can't we still collaborate? Like Comden and Green ... Ira and George Gershwin.

MARIE

The Gershwins were men.

CHARLIE

Men marry nowadays.

MARIE

Maybe marriage wrecks the formula. Tiger and Elin. "Ah-nold" and Maria. Those women rose up to throw off-

MARIE & CHARLIE (simultaneously)

...the yoke of male oppression!

MARIE

What's this contractual date? After two flops, who wants dead meat?

CHARLIE

The director killed *Love On A Lily Pad*. And the stage manager, the designer ... even the box office guy. He put the critics in lumpy seats.

MARIE

I can't take the critters again.

CHARLIE

One critic liked *Love On A Lily Pad*.

MARIE

The White Plains Weekly Shopper. I need a change from the rat's nest of theatre. I'm going to write an autobiography.

CHARLIE

Include me out.

MARIE

My autobiography. Not yours.

CHARLIE

Except, how can you write your autobiography without me?

MARIE

Successfully, I should think. How could we ever write together, again?

CHARLIE

We'll trade drafts. I give you my draft. You rewrite and give me your draft. I rewrite your rewrite of my draft. You rewrite my rewrite of your rewrite of my draft. I rewrite—

MARIE

All those drafts leave me cold. What's the topic?

CHARLIE

Remember we discussed a sequel to *Connubial Bliss*?

MARIE

A horticulturist and a lepidopterist in love. It took two scenes to explain their professions. I hated that play.

CHARLIE

But we did the impossible. We made scientists sexy. And the play's still making money.

MARIE

It was a romantic comedy. Today, we can't draw on romance. Or comedy.

CHARLIE

Right. Today's audiences relate to depression... angst... marital breakup.

MARIE

We had a formula. "Boy chases girl. Girl catches boy."

CHARLIE

Nowadays, it's "boy chases girl chasing girl."

MARIE

What would we call this sequel? *Son of Connubial Bliss*?

(CHARLIE grabs a manuscript.)

CHARLIE

Connubial Bliss... Redux. Here's the first draft of the first act. I worked on it—

MARIE

Behind my back! I'm committed to a deadline I don't know about, for a story I don't care about for a sequel I'll hate!

CHARLIE

You sound tentative.

MARIE

Our collaboration has never prospered. Except at the box office.

CHARLIE

"Except at the box office"?

MARIE

Our partnership should have been jointly fulfilling... exciting... satisfying.

CHARLIE

It was. We called it sex. Remember sex?

MARIE

Sex was great... but momentary. Some of us have a vertical life. And sex didn't alleviate our neuroses.

CHARLIE

Joy is erotic, not neurotic.

MARIE

Don't knock neurosis. Without it we couldn't have created together.

CHARLIE

We created through sex. Lucy, then Jamie. Remember? And theatre's not a clinic.

MARIE

True. It's an asylum.

CHARLIE

You'd break up Williamson and Williamson?

MARIE

Which one am I?

CHARLIE

The Williamson in the wilderness. As you remind callers.

MARIE

Whatever happened to Marie Rossini?

CHARLIE

She got married. To me, in fact.

MARIE

I wanted to be a nun until we first met.

CHARLIE

Yeah, right. A nun in a string bikini.

MARIE

I'll write my own play. About my family. As Marie Rossini.

CHARLIE

OK. After we finish *CB Redux*. But why start over as "Marie Rossini"?

MARIE

I started out as Marie Rossini.

CHARLIE

But we've got a history. For decades, you've been my strong right arm--

MARIE

Ha! An appendage.

CHARLIE

But my ultimate appendage.

MARIE

We were happier when your ultimate appendage was not an arm. Now, if you lost your good right arm, you'd just have trouble typing.

CHARLIE

You're not a mere typist. You know word processing.

(CHARLIE hands MARIE the manuscript.)

CHARLIE

Marie, I give our characters intelligence, but you give them humanity.

MARIE

So I'm a good-hearted nincompoop?

CHARLIE

When have I ever said that?

MARIE

Every time you throw my pages up in the air. Then stomp on them when they land.

CHARLIE

I'm ecstatic. Dancing with joy. ... Okay, okay. Williamson and Rossini.

MARIE

Rossini and Williamson.

CHARLIE

Agreed. ... Right after *Connubial Bliss Redux*.

MARIE

After? I'm outta here. (*starts off; stops*) What am I talking about? It's my house.

CHARLIE

You're half right. Except it probably will be yours.

MARIE

I should write on my own according to my psychiatrist.

CHARLIE

Y'mean Sigrid Fraud?

MARIE

She says when you can't do it with someone else, you do it by yourself.

CHARLIE

That's not about our writing. It's about her sex life. We'll see who needs who.

MARIE

Whom.

CHARLIE

Whom needs who?

MARIE

I'm through correcting your grammar. Lowering your toilet seat. We're finished! Let's dissolve the contract.

CHARLIE

Our marriage contract?

MARIE
Marriage is more than a contract.

CHARLIE
Agreed. It's a unity based on blind trust.

MARIE
Right. I was blind... and trusting.

CHARLIE
O.K., I'll go solo. Don't expect royalties.

MARIE
The only royal thing I've got. Fifty percent of every play we've ever written.

CHARLIE
Forty-five percent.

MARIE
You've got fifty-five? You two-timing, four-flushing—

CHARLIE
We each get forty-five percent. The other ten percent goes to Leslie. Remember?

MARIE
Oh, yeah. Leslie the Leech! OK, we split our income, evenly.

CHARLIE
Finally, Leslie gets her comeuppance. Your play—minus my sharp dialogue—will flop.

MARIE
Your sequel—minus my deep sensitivity—will never open.

CHARLIE
I hope you're wrong. I've got a boat to pay for.

MARIE
You bought a boat? Then I definitely get the house!

CHARLIE
Uh... just a sort of an... upscale... little. . .dinghy.

MARIE
You just traded your dingy-thingie for your muse.

CHARLIE
Your muse is Tony here. And remember. One of those Tonys is mine!

(SHE grabs a Tony and rears back to throw.)

MARIE

Yeah? Catch!

(CHARLIE assumes a catcher's stance.)

CHARLIE

Come on, Tony! To your rightful owner.

MARIE

You'll drop it! You're no stranger to errors.

CHARLIE

But I'll recover. And throw you out!

MARIE

You're already out at home.

CHARLIE

The umpire from hell!

(SHE throws the Tony. HE misses. It hits the ground and smashes.)

MARIE

Oh, you poor baby. How could I have done that to you?

CHARLIE

You don't know how close you came to losing me, Marie.

(MARIE scurries towards CHARLIE. HE anticipates a reconciliation but SHE picks up Tony tenderly. A piece comes off.)

MARIE

(sadly) It's broken. *(brightly)* Fortunately, it's your Tony, not mine!

CHARLIE

Call your lawyer! I'm packing!

MARIE

Take your bunny slippers with you!

(He storms out as she caresses the Tony.)

BLACKOUT

SCENE 3

(Same day. Office of LESLIE BARNES: a desk and two chairs in a pool of light.)

(Spot up on high-powered LESLIE chewing gum and on the phone. A wide-eyed pause.)

LESLIE

You're splitting up?

(Spot up on CHARLIE, his backpack nearby, with bunny slippers and *The Racing Form* protruding.)

CHARLIE

She's turned her back on our collaboration. So you shouldn't represent her. Only me.

LESLIE

You're suggesting I abandon the woman you love... your wife... who bore your children.

CHARLIE

Hey, I'm no slave to sentiment.

LESLIE

Get real, Charlie. You're separate entities but I rep both of you.

CHARLIE

And you figure two of us solo would produce twice as many plays.

LESLIE

How greedy do you think I am?

CHARLIE

The sky's the limit.

LESLIE

Separate personally. You can e-mail. You'll never have to see one another. ... You guys allowed your marriage to affect your relationship.

CHARLIE

Geez, how did that happen?

LESLIE

Compromise, Charlie. Remember *The American Gypsy*?

CHARLIE

Yeah. Marie wanted to use a child actor. I hate children.

LESLIE

Why, you raised two kids of your own.

CHARLIE

I hate child actors. They're unrelated to child humans.

LESLIE

So you compromised.

CHARLIE

The midget was a bad compromise.

LESLIE

What brought this on after so long a time together?

CHARLIE

So long a time together.

LESLIE

Hey, it was a great marriage. I envy Marie.

CHARLIE

You should. She had the great marriage.

LESLIE

Charlie dear, you and Marie are not the only ones involved.

CHARLIE

The kids'll be taken care of.

LESLIE

Kids? . . . Oh, yeah. The kids.

CHARLIE

At a time like this, you can't be thinking of yourself.

LESLIE

What kind of a person do you think I am?

CHARLIE

You're not a person. You're an agent.

LESLIE

Charlie! You don't know how much that hurt me.

CHARLIE

Leslie, Honey. Easy. A joke. Lighten up. I used that "agent" line in *The American Gypsy*. You loved it.

LESLIE

You and Marie used that line.

CHARLIE

My lines are funny. Marie provided the pathos. All the pathetic moments were Marie's.

LESLIE

There are no pathetic moments in that play. But why did you name the crook "Leslie"?

CHARLIE

What's in a name? Anyway, the crook was a guy.

LESLIE

A guy who chain-smoked, drank a lot and was in therapy.

CHARLIE

Well, you don't smoke anymore. You chew gum. You're orally fixated.

LESLIE

I'll thank you not to speculate on my private life! At least you made Leslie cute and sexy. Even if he was a guy.

CHARLIE

See, that's not you.

LESLIE

I'm not cute and sexy?

CHARLIE

You're not a guy! Geez!

LESLIE

Charlie, you made a killing with *Connubial Bliss*.

CHARLIE

A playwright can make a killing, but not a living.

LESLIE

Great line. But someone else already said it.

CHARLIE

Immature artists imitate; great artists steal.

LESLIE

Now there's an original line!

CHARLIE

Wrong. I stole that one too. ... Leslie, you should promote me for a Pulitzer. A Guggenheim. A Rockefeller. I've got this thing about not finishing college.

LESLIE

I thought you never started.

CHARLIE

What better way to not finish? College would've interrupted my education. And it's not a requirement for a Nobel.

LESLIE

Artistry equals poverty. And anonymity. No more White House dinners.

CHARLIE

That first time, Bubba ignored me. He was focused on Marie. Even gave her a tour. Private.

(The phone RINGS.)

LESLIE

Hold a minute, sweetie.

(SHE hits phone buttons. HE takes the *Racing Form* from his backpack. Light out on CHARLIE.)

LESLIE

Leslie Barnes Agency.

(Light up on MARIE.)

MARIE

It's Marie. Just called to say I'm working on a play, Leslie.

LESLIE

Your play with Charlie?

MARIE

I no longer play with Charlie. I'm finally free.

LESLIE

“Free” is not a word in my vocab. Tell me “No more Statue of Liberty ... no more Central Park ... no more Broadway.” But not “No more Williamson and Williamson.” No way.

MARIE

The Statue of Liberty never gave you ten percent.

LESLIE

Marieeeeeeeeeee! How could you? I love you like a sister. ... Hold! Another call.

MARIE

If it’s Charlie—

LESLIE

I’ll get rid of him. As you’re well rid of him... at home. Hold!

(She pushes phone buttons. Light out on MARIE, up on CHARLIE.)

LESLIE

Honey? That was Marie. That babe needs a life. Where do you stay now?

CHARLIE

A motel near the house divided. A few blocks geographically. A lifetime emotionally.

LESLIE

Maybe I should pop up after work. Help you through this.

CHARLIE

No need. I’m hitting the water with my new boat.

LESLIE

I’ll close early. I have a bathing suit in the office. I’ll get rid of this call. Hold on, Sugar.

(SHE hits phone buttons. Light out on CHARLIE, up on MARIE.)

LESLIE

Sorry, dear. Where are you with your own play?

MARIE

Act One, Scene One. Uh,.. Page Two. Stuck.

LESLIE

You never got stuck with Charlie.

MARIE

I was stuck with Charlie for decades.

LESLIE

How bad could it have been? He didn't beat you. ... Did he?

(MARIE shakes her head. A faraway smile.)

MARIE

Not really. Except when we'd play.

LESLIE

Pinochle? Scrabble?

MARIE

He can't even spell Scrabble. No, at... sexual... (*giggles*) at... our "hanky panky spanky" games. It wasn't ... painful. It was ...funnnn.

LESLIE

Sure...sure. W-We all have our p-p-peccadilloes.

MARIE

Charlie's is cinnabar.

LESLIE

Cinnabar? What's that? A saloon with movies?

MARIE

A color. For lingerie. From Victoria's Secret.

(LESLIE takes a Victoria's Secret catalog from a drawer and riffles through it.)

MARIE

Cinnabar red drives him crazy. Now I'm stuck with a drawerful of dainties.

LESLIE

I'll take them! Uh... I mean ... I volunteer for Big Sisters. Those kids could use—

MARIE

Would that be a proper message for horny adolescents?

LESLIE

What about horny... ? Uh,...Right. Burn your underwear. A bonfire of your vanity.

MARIE

You have such a literary sense. You can help me.

LESLIE

Fine, Hon. But not this weekend.

MARIE

Whenever you're ready. I'm here. All day. All night. All alone.

LESLIE

Ciao, Marie.

(LESLIE hangs up and pushes a phone button. Light out on MARIE, up on CHARLIE.)

LESLIE

Charlie, Baby?

CHARLIE

Who keeps a bathing suit in the office?

LESLIE

For just such a seagoing session. I'll catch a train pronto. We'll discuss our next project.

CHARLIE

Uh ... it's not at the talking stage.

LESLIE

Well, we'll schmooze. I'll soothe your pain.

CHARLIE

No pain. I'm relieved.

LESLIE

Great. We'll celebrate.

CHARLIE

No joy, either. Reality hasn't set in yet. But now that Marie's gone, maybe I can try my new stuff on you.

LESLIE

You mean, beyond... "hanky—" ...uh... Sure. I'm always in search of "new stuff."

CHARLIE

Try this. (*Groucho-like*) "If I said you have a nice body, would you hold it against me?"

LESLIE

Huh? Is this a bad joke. Or a come-on?

CHARLIE

A *double entendre*. Subtext: "... hold your body against me?" A joke. Albeit subtle.

LESLIE

Marie would've blue-penciled that... subtlety.

CHARLIE

It's in my new comedy. Actually a tragicomedy. Y'know, like Samuel Beckett. He won a Nobel Prize.

LESLIE

To hell with Samuel Beckett—if he's not already there! Charlie, I'm no mere businesswoman. I have lusts... passions... desires... hungers...

CHARLIE

Gotcha! Maybe I can help.

LESLIE

You can! You can!

CHARLIE

My cousin's a lesbian too.

LESLIE

I'm not a lesbian! (*Blatantly unfeminine*) What makes you think—

CHARLIE

Geez... sorry. But you don't seem to have a man in your life.

LESLIE

Nor a woman!

CHARLIE

Maybe you have a personality disorder.

LESLIE

If I'm aggressive... competitive... power-driven... it's just the New Feminism.

CHARLIE

The New Feminism is what women hated in the Old Masculinism. Y'know, Les, you'd look a lot less butch if you'd toss the gum.

LESLIE

I'm trying to quit smoking! And don't call me "Les"!

CHARLIE

Smoking can be sexy. If it doesn't kill you. Did you see *To Have And Have Not*? Would Bogie have fallen for Bacall if she chewed gum?

LESLIE

For you, I'll light up.

CHARLIE

No thanks. I've no use for second-hand smoke. I'm sailing off. Ciao.

(THEY hang up. Light out on Charlie.)

LESLIE

Squidbrain! Okay, Charlie. You're rudderless. Hopelessly adrift. You need a shipmate. A strong hand on your tiller. I'll expose you to a tsunami of passion. But if you blow it, you'll be out to sea without your rubber ducky.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 4

(Weeks later. The living room as in Scene 1. No yellow tape. Both Tonys are in evidence, the broken one shabbily reconstructed.)

(MARIE refills CHARLIE'S wine glass. SHE never touches her own full glass.)

MARIE

One more little drinky-poo.

CHARLIE

No more "drinky-poos," Marie. I'm here for a clear-headed division of property.

MARIE

You get the La-Z-Boy. Squatter's rights.

(MARIE exits. CHARLIE calls after HER.)

CHARLIE

Then you should get the telephone.

(MARIE returns with an easel and a large white pad. The cover reads: ROYALTY REALITY - W & W ENTERPRISES, INC.)