

HOLIDAYS IN

A one act play by Jim Sheehan

CAST of CHARACTERS

BEV	<i>Mike's wife</i>
MIKE	<i>Bev's husband</i>
KYLE	<i>their friend</i>
THE MILKMAN	<i>played by KYLE</i>

*There are also the pre-recorded voices
of KIDS, who offer the repeated and
cheerless refrain: "Trick or treat."*

Scene 1: LABOR DAY

BEV and MIKE's living room. Sparse; dull-toned; evocative of very little. Theirs is likely one of those hastily developed, mass-produced, exurban-sprawl townhouse condos.

We see a large TV in front of a large couch in front of a large window. There is a small side table and a small armchair. Right, the front door; up left, the entrance to the kitchen; down left, what looks to be a decorative fireplace.

MIKE, on the couch, watches TV; BEV stands behind him, in front of the window.

BEV

Last day of summer. Gotta make it count, right? We should get out. It looks nice out. Maybe we could barbecue. You know? Steaks, something.

MIKE laughs, remembering.

BEV

Back to the old grind tomorrow. Ha, can't wait for that. They're gonna have me in back. Processing. Like some machine couldn't do that. But I'm a human being. At least for today.

MIKE laughs, remembering.

BEV

We're outdated, aren't we? We could be replaced. They can probably build robots that would live better than we do. Better work, better thoughts, better feelings. *(She looks at MIKE, then away.)* Better sex.

MIKE laughs, remembering.

BEV

We should probably just go ahead and die. Yeah, but in the meantime, we're still waiting for the robots, and who else are they gonna get to buy all their stupid products? Nope, gotta keep the old human beings active. Workworkwork!

MIKE laughs, remembering.

BEV

Boss said I could go in today. Said he could use me. I think those guys are getting holiday pay, like double time. I mean, it might be hell, but you can't complain about double time. *(beat)* Maybe I'll just go in today.

MIKE

(laughs, still watching TV) Friday it was thin, just me and Kyle and few others, right? Ha, that crazy nut. Come lunchtime, everybody's sittin in back, you know, stretchin out, we got the lunchroom to ourselves. Chen's got some kinda... samwich he's brought, Joe's got a little ... samwich of some kind, I got MY samwich—so everybody's haulin out their samwiches, normal as everyday, and Kyle goes to reach into this paper bag he's brought, nothing unusual, right, looks like he's got a samwich too, but then suddenly he pulls out this like two-pound T-bone steak! It's like, BOING! You nut! That's a T-bone steak! In a paper bag! So then he goes over to the nuculator, and heats it up! Right there on the assembly floor. He's got this T-bone steak sizzlin away in the company nuculator. We were all very impressed, like wow, I coulda had a V-8. But Kyle looks at us like hey, whuzzup? "No sense same-old same-old, boys," he goes, "every day's a special occasion." But that's Kyle, you know, he's a real... creative thinker. Ha ha haaah! I invited him over today.

BEV

You invited Kyle over? I should go in.

MIKE

Don't know if he'll come.

BEV

Great. Place looks like shit.

MIKE

You know, I wouldn't mind a nice big T-bone. Nice juicy T-bone. That would really hit the spot... *I think.*

An insistent pounding on the door.

KYLE

(as the Boss) All right, I know you're in there!

BEV

(pause) Is that us?

MIKE

Maybe I'm dreaming, but that sounded like my boss.

BEV

You're kidding.

KYLE

(Boss) Aren't you supposed to be somewhere today?

MIKE

Shit no, it sounds just like my boss.

KYLE

(Boss) Dammit, Fredricks, open this door before I knock it down and ram it up your ass!

BEV

That does sound like your boss.

BEV crosses to the door.

MIKE

No way. It can't be. Don't --

BEV opens the door to KYLE, who bursts in, holding a bag of groceries.

KYLE

Bah hah!

MIKE

You crazy nut!

KYLE

I had you goin! It's fuckin' Labor Day, dork! Duh-y! I told you I was comin over!

MIKE

Shit, yeah, I know. I was gonna say --

KYLE

You were not gonna SAY. You thought I was the old man. I had you droppin a load, hi Bev.

BEV

Hi, Kyle.

KYLE

(handing BEV the bag) Here, I brought you some groceries. No sweat, just a little housewarming thing.

BEV
That's very thoughtful.

KYLE pops MIKE several times on the shoulder.

KYLE
HAAA, got you good, buddy.

MIKE
Yeah yeah.

KYLE
Thought I was the old man.

MIKE
Yup.

BEV
Thank you, Kyle.

KYLE
(turning to BEV) Yeah, I figured we could set up the BBQ out back, maybe brown some ribs, down a few frosty tall boys, you know, kick back, watch the summer sun dwindle. Sound good?

MIKE
Sounds good.

BEV crosses to the kitchen with the groceries.

BEV
(on her way out) Sure.

KYLE
(pause) So. How are you two love birds, enh? I never see you guys. Always home together.

MIKE
Yeah.

KYLE
Bev, come on, what's he got that I don't got? What?

BEV
(from the kitchen) You got me there, Kyle.

KYLE

Nah nah, just kiddin, he's a very special guy, this guy. Girls at work, sheesh, all over this guy.

BEV

(poking her head in) Really.

MIKE

Kyle.

KYLE

Relax, Mike, she doesn't believe me.

BEV

Not really, no.

KYLE

See Mike, you're a confirmed loser.

BEV

Kyle.

KYLE

Come on, Bev, he knows I'm jokin. Doncha Mike?

MIKE

Not really, no.

KYLE

Sure. Hey, know that blonde girl at work? Fuckin beautiful, like yiuuh. What's her name, Betty?

MIKE

Bonnie. You want a beer, Kyle?

KYLE

Yeah sure.

BEV

(disgusted) Don't get up. I'll get it.

BEV returns to the kitchen.

KYLE

Damn right you will. *(to MIKE)* So?

MIKE
So...

KYLE
Bonnie. Cute, huh?

MIKE
Sure, cute, nice girl.

KYLE
I had her last night.

MIKE
No!

KYLE
Oh yeah.

MIKE
No you did not.

KYLE
The fucking ballet, man, does it every time. (*significantly*) Dancing. Did it right: drinks, dinner, more drinks, ninety-five bucks last night—get back to my car, dude, MROW, she's all over me.

MIKE
Bonnie. Jeez. Was it—

KYLE
Wild.

MIKE
Jeez... Did she—

KYLE
I lost count.

MIKE
Jeez.

KYLE
(*as clearly as he can*) They just want someone to take them out.

MIKE
Really.

BEV re-enters with KYLE's beer. She is now wearing her jacket.

BEV

(shoving the beer at KYLE) Here's your beer. *(to MIKE)* I'm going in today.

MIKE

All right.

KYLE

Oh shit, I'm sorry Bev. I bragged about my latest "conquest." That "bothers" you. Come on, don't leave.

BEV

We could use the money anyway, right, Mike?

MIKE

Sure.

BEV starts out the door.

KYLE

Oh Bev, come back here. I'm sorry, I'll be good.

BEV

(at the door) Kyle, I'm going in to work.

KYLE

All right, fine. I'll give you a ride.

BEV

Kyle.

KYLE

No, I'm serious. If I offended you, I wanna be aware of it and make it up, and if I didn't -- hell, maybe it would just be a nice gesture to drive you into work today. OK?

MIKE

Kyle.

KYLE

No, that's reasonable. Here, I'll drive her in.

KYLE crosses to the door.

BEV
(off-guard, reluctant) OK. I don't --

KYLE
Be right back, dude.

MIKE
(off-guard, reluctant) I don't --

KYLE exits.

MIKE
OK.

*After a look to MIKE, BEV follows KYLE out.
MIKE looks confused.*

KYLE pokes his head back in.

KYLE
You don't mind, do ya, buddy?

MIKE
Oh. No, no. Thanks.

KYLE
(about to exit) Cool.

MIKE
Hey. How is she getting back?

KYLE
(coming back in) She'll call. And she'll be pissy. So, you go down and pick her up. With flowers. Looking presentable. Enh? Take her out for drinks. Then dinner. Someplace decent. And tonight?

MIKE
What?

KYLE
Mrow, Mike. MROW.

MIKE
Hmm.

KYLE
It's very simple.

MIKE
She'll think I'm just trying to get laid.

KYLE
She won't care.

Offstage, the SOUND of BEV beeping the horn.

KYLE
Just watch.

KYLE exits.

MIKE
(taking a moment to settle back down) Ah well.

Lights FADE.

Scene 2: HALLOWEEN

The same, except both BEV and MIKE now hold bowls of candy. BEV sighs and swirls the candy around in the bottom of her bowl.

MIKE is in the laborious process of unwrapping a Mary Jane. After much crinkling, he succeeds in separating candy from wax paper. After holding it up in the air for inspection, MIKE wraps it back up and places it carefully in his bowl.

BEV

(Sighs.) You think we got enough? We only got those cheapo Mary Jane things. I don't think we have enough. We should pick up some more.

MIKE unwraps another Mary Jane.

BEV

It's just, you know, all those KIDS! What, 40? 50? A hundred? A lot of kids in this neighborhood. Oh, I don't know, maybe they don't even know we're here. Maybe they don't like us.

MIKE rewraps the candy and puts it back in his bowl.

BEV

I mean, why shouldn't they stop here? Our lights are on. And face it, we look like every other goddamn house around. I'm surprised some kid hasn't already just walked in the door and called us mommy and daddy. Thinking this was her house.

MIKE unwraps another Mary Jane.

BEV

Omigod. Decorations! That's why they're not stopping. We haven't put out any witches or scarecrows or spooky lights. That's how they know! It's all advertising these days. We should go out and pick up some more candy. And decorations. (She looks at MIKE, then away.) And beer.

MIKE rewraps the candy and puts it back in his bowl.

BEV

Of course, by the time we return they'll all probably be back inside stuffing their greedy little faces. *(turning to look out the window)* Why don't they just ring the bell? They've gotta be out there somewhere.

MIKE

I always liked Smarties. *(pause)* They're good. I usually felt very kind to people who gave me Smarties. You know, 'cause there's so many of those little Smarties inside the wrapper, all neat, so you can pop 'em in your mouth all at once or you can like nibble one by one and pretend like you don't have any candy but that one little Smartie pack, and you feel... you know, rich—you can play rich because really you've got this whole big bag of sweets fallin out on the sidewalk pling pling little candies droppin out in a trail. *(Beat. He laughs.)* Like one time, Mom gave out Smarties at our house, so I came back early from trick-or-treating with all this different candy and traded it all for Smarties. I had ... *(counting again in his head)* ... I had about 360 Smarties. Maybe 345. And I sat there in the den, just looking at 'em. And I got this feeling of richness. The more I thought about all those Smarties, the richer I felt. So I got some plastic sandwich bags, and I wrapped all those little Smartie packs into bigger Smartie packs. I got about 30 of them. Then I packed the Smartie sandwich bags into plastic freezer pouches. I got five of them. And I packed the Smartie freezer pouches into one big clear plastic produce bag. I had to dump some lettuce, but it was worth it. I could see I had could see all those Smarties deep and safe inside all those layers of plastic. I felt like a millionaire. All those Smarties. It's always good to have things inside things inside things. *(Beat.)* I think I still have those Smarties. Ha!

BEV

(looking up from the bowl) They're not coming.

MIKE

(He laughs.) Pling pling.

BEV

Everybody's out tonight.

MIKE

Oh yeah, Kyle might stop by.

BEV

Why would he? I'm sure he's got a dozen parties to crash.

There is a loud scratching at the door. MIKE and BEV look.

MIKE

Is that us?

BEV crosses to the door and looks through the peephole.

BEV

Huh. Nobody out there.

MIKE

Huh. I thought I heard scratching.

BEV

I heard scratching. Something was scratching out there.

MIKE

Probably a mouse, scratching or something.

BEV opens the door. Nothing. She leans farther out into the hall. Suddenly, she shrieks and is pulled out of sight.

MIKE

What the --?

KYLE barges in, wearing a Mickey Mouse mask. He pushes BEV before him, hand over her mouth as though holding her hostage, a 6-pack of beer cans at her head.

MIKE

Hey!

KYLE

(in a falsetto "Mickey Mouse" voice:) One fuckin move and I'll spray my fizz all over this bitch!

MIKE

Jesus, I'm not movin!

KYLE releases BEV, who screams at him and pushes him away. KYLE takes off the mask.

BEV

You fucking asshole!

KYLE

Trick or treat! Ha ha!

MIKE

Jesus! Kyle, Christ, buddy!

KYLE

Hey, you slob, scare the shit outta ya?

BEV

You asshole!

MIKE

Scared the shit outta me, you crazy nut.

KYLE

Hey Bev, you wanna put these on ice?

KYLE hands BEV the six-pack.

BEV

I thought you were staying out tonight, Kyle.

BEV goes into the kitchen.

KYLE

(making himself at home) Yeah I was, but man, it's really Halloween out there. I go to Moxie's, BOOM, who's there—in her goddamn fright wig?

MIKE

You saw Beth tonight?

KYLE

I saw her, she didn't see me, man, I ducked right out—pshaow! So then I'm at the Turtle for like two minutes, who walks in? Norma, this chick I was seein last summer.

BEV enters, hands a beer to KYLE.

BEV

So. How is she? Better?

KYLE

(overtly nice and even-tempered) I'm sure she's fine, Bev. She was not wielding a butcher's knife. *(to MIKE)* So anyway, wherever I go, bam, I run into an ex. *(He shudders.)*

BEV

Well, everyone's out tonight.

MIKE

(robotically) Yes. Everyone is out tonight.

KYLE

So what are you couch potatas doin' in here, enh? Enh? Mr. and Mrs. Good Neighbor here.

BEV

Thought we'd give out some candy.

KYLE

Great, anybody come by yet?

BEV and MIKE

(together) They're not coming.

KYLE

Ah bullshit. There's millions of em out there. Just watch.

SOUND: The doorbell rings.

KYLE

See?

KYLE crosses to the door with the candy bowl. MIKE turns back to the TV. KYLE opens the door. As he hands out candy, BEV glances anxiously back and forth, from TV to door.

KIDS

(outside) Trick or treat.

KYLE

(leaning outside) Hey kids! Whazzup? Hey, it's a ghost! Whoooo! Hey that's great! OK, here you go, sport! Come on, come on, plenty for everybody, just reach in grab a few!

BEV

Kyle, not too many, now! We won't have enough.

KYLE

Hey buddy, is that your mommy standing out there? *(sticking his head back in)* Jesus, Mike, I think I had her a few years back. Yikes! *(leaning*

back outside) Hi, is that Elaine? Kyle, remember? Hey. Nice kid. Not mine, is he? Ha! Crazy. OK, see ya, buddy. You're very welcome.

KYLE shuts the door and re-enters the living room.

KYLE

Can you believe that? Elaine! They're all comin back to haunt me. I can't even go home, there'll probably be some horrendous chick stretched out bare-ass in my mound of dirty clothes.

MIKE

Ha!

BEV

Kyle, how many women have you had?

KYLE

Bev, what a question. Grab me another beer, willya?

BEV crosses to the kitchen.

BEV

40? 50?

MIKE

Not even close.

BEV

A hundred? Kyle?

KYLE

I was never good with numbers, Bev. I'm much better with figures.

KYLE pantomimes an hourglass shape, then begins imaginary hip-pumping and butt-slapping.

MIKE

Bah-ha!

BEV

(calling from the kitchen) You're a promiscuous boy, Kyle.

KYLE

Not promiscuous enough, apparently.

MIKE

Hoo boy!

BEV returns with KYLE's beer.

BEV

What are you saying, Kyle?

KYLE

Joke, Bev. I know you two have a normal, healthy sex life. *(pause)* Are you gonna gimme that beer or what? Golly, seems I touched a nerve.

BEV

I should pour it down your pants.

KYLE

I'd only get off on that, Bev. You know me. Sex maniac. *(He snorts.)*

BEV hands him the beer, staring at him. Then she shakes her head.

BEV

You're such an asshole.

SOUND: The doorbell rings.

KYLE

Whup. More kids!

KYLE grabs the candy and crosses to the door. BEV follows. KYLE jerks the door open.

KYLE

(evil laugh) Brew ha ha ha ha ha! Hey, you little worms!

KIDS

(outside) Trick or treat.

KYLE

Well, all rightee! But first I'll need to see some photo ID.

BEV

(laughing) Kyle.

KYLE

What, you have a card, do ya, you little schnook, lemme see! Oh, hey look, Bev, the kid's showin' me a baseball card!

BEV
They learn young these days.

KYLE
Give this man a beer!

BEV
(laughing) Kyle! *(to the kids)* You're welcome. You be careful now.

BEV closes the door.

KYLE
Hey, we need more candy! Come on, Bev, candy run, let's go.

BEV
Can we get some decorations, too?

KYLE
Sure. And spooky music. *(winking in MIKE's direction)* For dancing.

BEV
Did they like the Mary Janes, Kyle?

KYLE
Don't worry, Bev, they're fine, very good with the parents. *(to MIKE:)*
Mike, I'm takin your wife on a candy run. OK?

MIKE
Fine.

KYLE
You comin along?

MIKE
Nah.

KYLE
Cool. OK, back soon.

MIKE
Yup.

KYLE and BEV exit. MIKE continues watching TV, holding his bowl of candy. After a moment, KYLE re-enters.

KYLE

Hey. When we come back, Bev is gonna be loaded. Do whatever she says. She wants to dance, you dance. And tonight?

MIKE

Yeah, I know.

MIKE and KYLE

(together) Mrow.

KYLE

Ah cha-cha.

KYLE exits again.

MIKE unwraps another Mary Jane and holds it up for inspection.

SOUND: The doorbell rings.

MIKE glances up at the sound, then returns to the candy. He sticks out his tongue and licks one side of his Mary Jane.

MIKE

Mine.

He rewraps the candy as LIGHTS FADE.

SOUND: The doorbell rings.

Scene 3: THANKSGIVING

Same. BEV wears oven mitts. On TV, a football game.

BEV

Winter's coming. You can tell. Brisk air. Bare trees. Leaves crumbling into dust. I should have done a turkey. Turkey helps. I was reading the obituaries in my sorority's annual newsletter—Jenny Murphy died, by the way, you met her once at Stuart's birthday, she was a riot—anyway, I worked my way down the list—it's very long—Did you know nine out of ten people die in the wintertime?

On TV, a crowd roars and an ANNOUNCER shouts "Touchdown!" MIKE punches his fist in the air. No emotion, no other noise.

BEV

Think of my family. Mom died last January. Pop was five years ago February 12. Gram, late December. Aunt Jane, at that sidewalk sale on President's Day. Bruno, in August, of course, but that was a volcano. *(a pensive, apparently saddened beat, then snapping her fingers, pleased:)* John Luke! He went in January, too.

On TV: crowd roar and "Touchdown!" MIKE punches his fist in the air.

BEV

See? Knowing that everyone is more likely to die in winter really makes Thanksgiving more important. More vital. *(looking at Mike, then away)* More desperate. *(beat)* I should have done a turkey. And stuffing. And we should have invited your family—yes, I know they're in New Zealand, but at least they're not dead. They would have appreciated the invitation.

On TV: crowd roar and "Touchdown!" MIKE punches his fist in the air.

BEV

We'll just have to get by with mashed potatas. And no gravy, because we don't have any stock, because we didn't cook a turkey. Mashed potatas, and maybe I'll steam a carrot.

On TV: crowd roar and "Touchdown!" MIKE punches his fist in the air.

MIKE

Funny, it happens every year about this time. A craving... like my tongue is actually clicking around in my mouth for the tart taste of cranberry preserves. *(a precious, drawn-out smacking of lips—his tasting noise:)* Mm-yk, mm-yk, mm-yk, mm-yk, mm-yk... *(and about a dozen more times.)* Not like the stuff that's all hardened in the can like jello and comes out zhoomp like one perfect cylinder with the outline of the can ribs, standing up on the plate, wobbling back and forth. You can cut that stuff into little discs with a paper plate. Oh, I've done it. I remember one time I had a disc of cranberry sauce that started to bend over, ready to drop onto the plate, but then, it just stopped. Even though the weight of the top wedge seemed to be pulling it down very slowly, it wouldn't fall. It was adhering to the cranberry sauce cylinder on the bottom by some hydrostatic bond. I watched. I wanted to see how long it would take to separate. But the thing is, it didn't. It stayed there. For hours. But here's the real shocker: when I examined it closely, I found that the fracture line where I'd sliced it had healed over! You couldn't tell where I'd cut it. At that point, the disc had once again become part of the jello cylinder!

*On TV: crowd roar and "Touchdown!"
MIKE punches his fist in the air.*

And there's more: within the next few hours, it began to form a sinewy skin as the exposed moisture began to evaporate. *(describing the event with his hands:)* And as the skin hardened, it began to constrict the cylinder and pull it taut, drawing the wedge back up into its original alignment. It was like a miracle. Within the confines of that corrupted cylinder, the cranberry sauce had a memory of its original form, and would do everything in its power to return to it. And maybe I could read into that some appropriate metaphor for my life, but on the other hand, I really don't like that kind of cranberry sauce. I like the sour, tangy kind with the cranberry pulp still in there. It's better. *(pause)* Of course I've never had that kind. I've always had the hard cylinder kind. That's the kind I always get. Ha ha. Habit, I guess.

*A plume of smoke begins to stream in from
under the front door.*

MIKE

Oh yeah, Kyle might stop by.

BEV

On Thanksgiving? Well, that's just great. Hope he's not expecting anything special.

MIKE

(sniffing) Is something burning?

BEV
My potatas.

BEV dashes into the kitchen.

BEV
(from the kitchen) Nope. Not the potatas.

BEV re-enters, following the smell of smoke.

MIKE
Huh. I thought I smelled something burning.

BEV
I smelled burning. Something's burning around here.

MIKE
Probably somebody's turkey, burning or something.

BEV
What the—?

BEV, seeing smoke, goes to the door.

MIKE
Hey, whoa whoa whoa! Is the door hot to the touch?

BEV gingerly tests the door.

BEV
No, it's fine.

MIKE
Thank goodness. Proceed.

BEV opens the door.

BEV
Kyle?

KYLE enters. He's outfitted as an Indian brave: fringe, paint, feathers, etc. He carries a huge turkey—steaming hot—and smokes a peace pipe.

MIKE

That's him.

KYLE

How. Me bring fat bird to pow-wow, less toil over fire for paleface squaw.

MIKE

Ha ha! You nut! That is so wrong!

BEV

I barely even recognized you! How thoughtful! You're just in time, as always. Thank you, Kyle. See, Mike? Kyle knows how to usher in the holidays.

MIKE

Oh yeah. He's all about the holidays.

KYLE

Yeah, I was just downtown at MegaFood, handin out free turkeys.

BEV

And they made you dress up like Pocahontas?

KYLE

No, that was my idea.

MIKE

I'll bet it was!

KYLE hands the turkey to BEV.

BEV

Good thing I'm wearing oven mitts—it's hot!

BEV takes the turkey into the kitchen.

KYLE

Hell yeah, I went into the bakery department and popped it in the oven. Put it around 325 for four hours. Right?

BEV

(from the kitchen) Sounds about right! Hey, you didn't bring any stuffing, did you?

KYLE produces a baguette from inside his pants.

KYLE

Oh, I got something for stuffin the old bird.

MIKE

Bah!

KYLE stuffs the baguette between his legs so that it pokes out obscenely from his crotch. He crosses to the couch, holding it in front of him.

KYLE

So how's it goin, lover boy? *(tapping MIKE on the head with the baguette)*

MIKE

Oh fine. You know.

KYLE

Dude, you two gotta do some "family planning," kno'wha'msayin? *(taps MIKE on the head with the baguette)*

MIKE

No, not really.

KYLE

You got no center. Just the two of you, in orbit around each other. You need a focal point. *(taps MIKE on the head with the baguette)* Gobble gobble.

MIKE

We have you.

KYLE

Not forever, buddy.

MIKE

Ha. Just watch.

BEV re-enters from the kitchen.

BEV

Well, that's a good start.

BEV crosses to KYLE and reaches for the bread. KYLE waggles it around in front of her, teasing.

BEV

Oh God, you're impossible.

BEV grabs the baguette, but KYLE won't let go. A short tug-of-war.

KYLE

Careful now. You might get a yeast infection.

BEV

As long as it doesn't put a bun in the oven.

KYLE

That's the spirit, Bev!

BEV

(giggling) So, is this a stollen bread?

KYLE

I also got three dozen dinner rolls and a carrot cake out in the car.

BEV

Kyle, you're an outlaw.

BEV finally wrests the bread free.

KYLE

More like an in-law, Bev. Look, we're breaking bread together. Sheesh, where's all the family?

MIKE

They're all dead.

BEV

Or in New Zealand.

MIKE

Or both.

BEV

(to KYLE) Come on into the kitchen, we're gonna make some stuffing. This has gotta be done right.

BEV heads back to the kitchen.

KYLE

Hey, I'll do you right every time baby.

BEV
(from the kitchen) Will you stop it?

KYLE
Well, Miles, looks we're goin into the kitchen to stuff the old bird, OK?

MIKE
Sure.

KYLE
(edging back toward the kitchen) I'll get her nice and warmed up for you.

MIKE
OK. Hey!

KYLE
(turning quickly) What?

MIKE
Did you call me Miles?

KYLE
What?

MIKE
You said Miles. Instead of Mike.

KYLE
Yeah, sure. Miles Long. *(makes an outlandish phallic gesture, scatting a porno-like soundtrack)*

Confused pause. MIKE is unconvinced.

KYLE
(confidentially) Sorry, bud. I've got a lot of stops to make today, kno'wha'msayin?

MIKE
Fair enough.

KYLE winks and exits into the kitchen.

MIKE
(turning back to the TV) Miles. Ah well.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 4: CHRISTMAS

The same. BEV holds a string of Christmas lights.

BEV

I'm not going to New Zealand. It's ridiculous. You know that. We can't possibly afford the flight. We can't do it.

The Christmas lights blink.

A whole day of traveling—two days, because of their stupid “International Date Line”—get there, can't understand anyone, it's the middle of summer, everything's upside-down. And then everybody piles into a truck and drives for another three hours to the one city that has an all-you-can-eat restaurant! I don't know, maybe that's just how it's done in New Zealand, it's your family.

The Christmas lights blink.

And we'd still need a thousand dollars more to buy gifts for those people. Shiny gifts. Trinkets. That's what they expect. But we'd show up with... a Scrabble game or some cheap present for “the whole family”—like they're ever together at once to use it, except for fucking Christmas in New Zealand—and then one of the kids would open it up last? Like maybe somebody stuck it way back under the tree on purpose? Like it's something special, when it's just a stupid Scrabble game... Goddamn it!

The Christmas lights blink.

They are not game-players, your family! And they have a different way of spelling everything down there. And I will not sit through the humiliation of watching some little rugrat tearing open a lousy Scrabble game for like thirty materialistic New Zealanders who can barely read in the first place.

The Christmas lights blink.

BEV

No, I'm not going. I'm just not going. I can't go.

MIKE

Let's make cookies. We can make cookies. You know, stars and sheep and what, candy canes... what else? Christmas trees... Little Frosty the Snowmans. Ha. Camels. Doves. Doves of peace. Yeah, they're good. We should go out and buy some of those cookie cutters. Not hard. You just roll out the dough and press the little cookie shapes in, then you plop 'em in the pan, bake at what 400 for 10 - 15 minutes, somethin like that, let em cool, then ya ice em. It's great: ya slap some colored frosting on em -- doesn't even have to be the right color -- like you could have for instance a purple Frosty the Snowman. That's OK. Cause then it's a joke, right?, like they recognize the shape of the Frosty the Snowman, but hey it's purple, that's weird -- but hey wait, that's funny. And you don't have to eat em. They look good. You know? You can just look at em. Have em up on the tree -- even if it's just for the one day -- and they add a certain special feeling. Then all the kids can eat em -- or hell, if they eat em right outta the box that's fine too -- they're appreciated. Or you can even throw em out after they've been on the tree for a while. Cause they've served their function. Or hell, you could just toss em right out of the box and into the garbage can Christmas Day -- at least they were made. You know? The gift was offered. The effort went in, the love went into the cookies. And even if it's down at the bottom of the garbage can, the love is still there.

The Christmas lights blink.

BEV

Besides, your passport's expired.

MIKE

Oh wait, I have an idea, you could ice the cookies with like letters of the alphabet, and put little numbers too, like under the "J" you could have, say, the number, oh... 8, and under "Q" say 10 and so forth. That could be fun. That would be a nice gift for the whole family.

BEV

Do you hate me?

MIKE

Well, sure I do.

BEV

Why?

MIKE

I dunno. Just kinda worked out that way. Oh yeah, Kyle said he might stop by.

BEV
Ah. Well, I'm going to leave you.

MIKE
Hey, give it a shot.

BEV
I'm going to have an affair.

MIKE
(without malice) Ha! I'll kill you. *(beat)* Of course, that might take a while.

Scuffling sounds from above. They look up. It stops.

BEV
It stopped.

MIKE
I thought I heard scuffling.

BEV
I heard scuffling. Something was scuffling up there.

MIKE
Probably just some squirrels, scuffling in the eaves.

KYLE slides down the chimney into the fireplace, his legs visible.

KYLE
Ho ho ho!

BEV
Kyle?

MIKE
Kyle. Christ, he's nuts.

KYLE is trying to squeeze in.

KYLE
Ho ho ho! *(pause)* There's some kinda shit here, guys, I can't get in.

MIKE
Guess we should let him in. Jesus, what a nut.

BEV removes logs from the fireplace. KYLE crawls out into the living room, tracking soot. He is wearing a beard and Santa suit.

KYLE

Hey, how's it goin'?

MIKE

You nut! Are you crazy? That's not the usual way to come into somebody's house. You crazy nut!

KYLE

Just spreading the holiday cheer.

BEV

None too soon, too.

MIKE

Just spreading soot all over the carpet is what you're spreading, you nut!

BEV

What am I gonna do with you, Kyle?

KYLE

What aren't you gonna do with me, Bev?

BEV

Kyle.

MIKE

Hey. Hey!

BEV

What? What?

MIKE

(pointing to the TV) Frosty. The snowman.

KYLE

Like looking into a mirror, isn't it, buddy?

MIKE

Ha! You know it!

KYLE

Yeah, just watch.

BEV

You want some eggnog or something, Kyle?

As BEV turns toward the kitchen, KYLE pulls her back to him.

KYLE

Something, yes.

BEV

(smiling) Kyle.

KYLE takes BEV onto his lap.

KYLE

What do you want for Christmas, little girl?

BEV

What do you got... big boy?

KYLE

Hmmm... I'm sorry, I seem to have forgotten your present.

BEV

No you didn't. *(She checks his shirt pockets.)* Is it here?

KYLE

No, not that pocket.

BEV

(checking his pants pocket) Ohhhh. It's **this** pocket.

KYLE

Gettin hotter.

BEV

Why, Santa, it feels like... a Yule log.

KYLE

It's a Kyle log -- and it's gonna start smokin any minute.

BEV

We're gonna have to get that thing into the FIRE PLACE real soon.

BEV lustily unzips KYLE's Santa suit.

KYLE

Oh yes, UNWRAP your gift.

BEV

I have something under the tree here for you too.

KYLE starts undressing BEV.

KYLE

You do? Does it go with my log?

BEV

Oh, it should. But it's been so long since I've shopped around, and I wasn't sure of your size...

*BEV gets KYLE's suit below his knees.
Underneath, KYLE wears swaddling clothes
like an oversized diaper.*

BEV

(laughing) Kyle!

MIKE

(glancing over) Ha! You nut!

KYLE

It is time for me to come. Is there no room at the inn?

BEV

You take the holidays pretty serious, don't you?

KYLE pushes BEV into the bedroom.

KYLE

To the hay, then, where I'll become a man! *(turning to MIKE)* You don't mind, do ya, Joe?

MIKE

Nah.

KYLE

(exiting to the bedroom) OK, back soon.

MIKE

Ah well. *(looking up from the TV)* He did it again. My name is Mike!

BLACKOUT.

Scene 5: NEW YEAR'S EVE

*MIKE passes an uncomfortable period of time
silent before the burbling TV.*

MIKE

(helplessly with the TV) 5... 4... 3... 2... 1...

*KYLE bounds in, on cue, whooping and
blowing a horn. He wears an oversized
diaper; a shoulder-to-waist sash proclaims
him "Baby New Year."*

KYLE

Happy New Year!

*Taking the old Santa beard from his diaper,
KYLE puts the beard on MIKE.*

KYLE

Loosen up, bub. It's a party.

MIKE

(leaving the beard on) Jeez, you nut!

BEV

(intoxicated, from the bedroom) Kyle.

KYLE

(to MIKE) Hey there, Pops, time to move on. You don't mind?

MIKE

I guess not. *(considering)* Mmmmn, OK.

*KYLE gently walks MIKE out the front door,
then kicks him in the ass and closes the door.*

KYLE

You can stand out there, by the window, and...

MIKE and KYLE

(together) ... just watch.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 6: VALENTINE'S DAY

MIKE lingers outside the window, peering in benignly. KYLE prances in with bow and arrow, wearing the same oversized diaper and a pair of wings.

KYLE

(singing) Love, exciting and new...

He shoots an arrow into the bedroom. BEV emerges soon after, draped in bedsheets, bloody arrow protruding from her chest. She plucks the arrow from her heart and tosses it aside, running to KYLE. They dance.

BEV

Ah, those moonlit nights adrift on the Aegean...

KYLE

Falling into each other's arms

BEV

Rolling in the surf

KYLE

The salt on your lips

BEV

The sand on your bronze skin

KYLE

And then, the trip to Africa!

BEV

So spontaneous!

KYLE

What were we thinking?

BEV

We left our clothes!

KYLE

We didn't need them.

BEV
Oh, the crowded streets of Tunis!

KYLE
The caravan to Tibuktu.

BEV
Rafting down the Congo.

KYLE
Hang-gliding over Victoria Falls.

BEV
And, oh, those precious Kalahari bush people!

KYLE
Your skill at bulldogging saved their land from the Zulu cattle.

BEV
But you discovered the first *homo habilis* at Olduvai Gorge.

KYLE
Well, your selfless activism put an end to apartheid.

BEV
You perfected the cure for cancer.

KYLE
You created a lasting peace.

BEV
The terrible gap between God and humankind --

KYLE
Yes?

BEV
You narrowed that gap.

KYLE
Maybe so. But the mysteries of the universe --

BEV
Oh those...

KYLE

(tapping her nose) All you. Hey, when are you gonna fill me in, cutie?

BEV

Just never you mind. Girl's gotta have some secrets.

KYLE

(reaching for her) Com'ere, you little vixen!

BEV

(running away) Catch me, you big baboon!

They suddenly freeze, BEV in mid-flight, KYLE in mid-pursuit.

KYLE and BEV

(together) Never on earth was there ever such a love... as long as we had each other.

MIKE

(from outside) Ha, yeah, in fifth grade we all had to bring in valentines. So I spent all night making like these really fantastic handmade ones, except for this girl I really liked, Laura Dominico, I bought her one from the store, like an ordinary Snoopy one.

BEV

(wavering slightly) As long as we had each other

MIKE

I liked her so much I couldn't be too obvious. So it came time to pass them out, and everybody saw mine and was like "Ooo, ahh!"

KYLE

(wavering also) As long as we had each other

MIKE

Except Laura Dominico, and boy was she upset. She passed hers out and when she came to me, she just walked right by.

BEV

(trying to keep her balance) As long as we had each other

MIKE

Then she went right to the front of the room and looked me in the eye and dropped a big fat beautiful handmade valentine right in the wastepaper basket. Then I knew: that valentine... was for me.

KYLE

(losing his balance) As long as we had each other

MIKE

Oh I tried to apologize, but she stabbed me in the hand with her scissors.

BEV falls backward into KYLE, KYLE forward into BEV; together they fall onto the couch in a tousled heap.

MIKE

Ha. And I've been told I have a strange way of expressing affection.

LIGHTS FADE.

Scene 7: EASTER

BEV is seated on the couch, staring eagerly into space. MIKE stands outside, peering around her through the window.

BEV

We don't go... we don't let go. We don't get angry... we don't get happy. Nothing fazes us. We are perfectly satisfied; we are self-enclosed.

A gentle cricket-like chirping sound comes over the TV.

BEV

(sighs) Kyle lives in the bedroom now. Kyle makes love to me 114 times a day. He eats, breathes, dreams, shits love. Kyle *is* Love. And I am Kyle's church.

From the TV: gentle chirping.

BEV

Life is so full. Why can't people just see life for what it is and live for the moment? Oh, if only people could see the splendor that coils beneath every living moment, ready to reveal itself at a haphazard glance.

Voice of MIKE

I'm making little cricket sounds. Chirp chirp. Which portend the promise of spring. Tsierp tsierp tsierp! *(chuckling)* I'll bet Kyle will stop by.

BEV

Oh God! I'm ready! Kyle!

KYLE enters, wearing the same oversized diaper and now wears a beard and wounds on his hands and feet and side; on his head, a crown of thorns.

MIKE

(from outside, delighted) Christ, that crazy nut!

KYLE

(singing, exhausted, broken, depleted) Love, exciting and new...

BEV

Come to me, Kyle!

BEV leans back on the couch and opens her arms and legs to KYLE, who falls into her embrace.

BEV
(plainly, not over-erotic) Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

KYLE
Bev.

BEV
Yes. Yes. Yes.

KYLE
Bev, I gotta go.

KYLE detaches himself from her with difficulty.

MIKE
(makes a couple clucking sounds) There but for the grace of God.

KYLE crosses to the door and exits.

BEV
Why, Kyle, why?

Outside at the window, a golden light FADES UP. MIKE turns toward it.

MIKE
Aw, honey, you gotta see this.

SOUND: a resounding angelic chorus. KYLE has ascended. BEV remains on the couch.

MIKE stares up at KYLE's vanishing form.

MIKE
Just watch. That crazy nut.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 8: MOTHERS' DAY

BEV, on the couch, watches TV; MIKE stands behind her, in BEV's old position. BEV looks exhausted.

SOUND: Off., the single toll of a church bell.

BEV

Well, I'm pregnant. I've gotta be. There's just no way you can have that much, you know, activity, and not, get some results. Right? Well, I'm expecting results.

The single toll of a church bell.

BEV

I'm sure it will be a very nice baby, and I have no trouble accepting that the course of my life has just taken an abrupt shift. From now on, I can just say goodbye to the old. 'Cause I'll be a mother, right? I'll have a new life to care for, I'll have the beginnings of a new family, a sacred unit. I'll MOVE ON to a new chapter in my life. Oh, I'm ready.

The single toll of a church bell.

BEV

I'll call him Kyle Junior. Or Kylie, if it's a girl. Maybe Kay-lee. Or Kayla! Yeah, Kayla. Kayla, my sweet little girl. My Kayla. My-kella. Michaela. Or Michael, if it's a boy. Mike.

*BEV looks up at MIKE. She screams. SOUND:
The single toll of a church bell.*

MIKE

(laughs, remembering) I remember me and my little brother Frank were eating Frosted Flakes one morning, and Mom comes down all gussied up, wants us to go to church. Ha! We're like, "Come on, Ma," like every Sunday, and she says "Would it kill you to do something meaningful with your Mother?" and me, big smart-ass, I say "We're just gonna fall asleep—how meaningful is that?" And Frank says, "Yeah, how meaningful is that?" She gives us this look, like oh, we just stabbed her in the heart, and out the door she goes. Ha ha! Well, about two minutes later, Frank remembers: Hey wait, today is Mother's Day. So we're both like oh man, now we *really gotta* do something meaningful for her!

MIKE (*cont'd*)

We're in the kitchen, right? I think hey, let's bake her a cake. Frank says, "Let's just meet her at church," but I'm like no, meet her at church, we look like we're begging for forgiveness; bake the cake and it looks like we couldn't go to church 'cause we were planning a special surprise all along. Aahh. Frank says, "Yeah let's do that." So we run down to the convenience store and we get this Moist Delicious cake mix, really expensive, like three 29. Frank's twelve, he doesn't have much money, so I pay for it. We run back home and start trying to make it fast, but stupid us, we forgot to look on the ingredients list—we also need milk and eggs and oil. And, of course, we're out of milk because we both ate five bowls of Frosted Flakes that morning, right? Somebody has to go back down and buy a carton of milk. And Frank says he'll go this time. He's eager, too, like this whole feeling of childish goodness is on him, like a secret private goodness inside you that you treasure like a kid who's a little too old to skip is skipping down the street anyway even though there could be people watching. So he goes. And I'm waiting ten minutes, fifteen, twenty minutes—he doesn't return, and I still gotta make this cake before Mom gets back, that little shit. I think he's probably down there talking to some girl. Then, I hear this shouting up front. It's the neighborhood kids, they're all shouting. Truck, Frankie, hospital, ambulance, wowwowww. All those kids shouting, I couldn't make sense out of it, my stomach was turning around, my head was too big for my body, blood rushing, my heart. I remember I called the church. Mom was right there—service had just let out, and everyone was standing around. Eating cake.

(*laughs to himself, no irony*) I don't know what I said. I have no idea. Some Mother's Day gift, huh? Very meaningful. Afterwards was strange. There was nothing to do when we got back. Mom dropped me off at Grandma's. Everyone was crying. Then I snuck out and walked around. My heart... (*puzzled, tapping his chest*) I walked around looking. But I couldn't find any evidence that there ever was an accident. They clean these things up quick, I guess. Then, after a bit, I saw a rumple of paper. It was an empty carton of milk half coming out of a wet paper bag.

And then, suddenly, I can picture the whole thing: Frank walks out of the convenience store. He doesn't see the truck because he's just so pleased with himself for buying this special stuff: milk, the simple basic goodness of life. With the little money he has, he's bought some milk. For his mother. (*laughs to himself*) Take a little, put a little back, you know? He reaches the intersection, looks both ways, but with the milk so close in his arms, he doesn't see the truck as anything harmful. He steps into the street. His heart is so full of that private goodness. I can see the carton of milk in the brown paper bag, lifted into the air. Hey diddle diddle. Flying twenty feet. Landing on the asphalt. Breaking open. Pwooshhhhh. Leaking out. Ba-dip, ba-dip. Staying there untouched until I found it.

MIKE (*cont'd*)

Like it was a holy relic. Nobody dared to touch it, as if they knew it had hidden meaning for me alone. And they were right. I looked closer and I saw an ad on the back of the carton. It said: "Have you seen me?" and there was a photo of a little kid. Have you seen me? And I thought, "Milk. How appropriate." I stood there looking and looking at that milk carton. It was like the whole universe opened up at the sight of it, like the picture of the kid was just a small part of the endless significance that milk carton had in store for me. (*pause*) If my heart had burst at that moment, I wouldn't have known it, so that's probably when it happened.

The single toll of a church bell.

BEV moves to MIKE, touches his head.

BEV

(*coddling, holding his head*) Ah Michael... My sweet boy. (*pause*) Mike.

MIKE

Yeah.

BEV

Your brother Frank.

MIKE

Gone.

BEV

Mike, he's still alive.

MIKE

(*screaming, for the first time*) To you, maybe!

BEV

(*sighs*) Well, it is a nice story.

MIKE

(*clucks loudly from the side of his mouth, about 20 times*)

BEV

(*eyes closed*) What are you trying to say?

MIKE

Ah well.

Inexplicably, from on high:

Voice of KYLE

Hey.

BEV

What was that?

MIKE

I don't know. It's stopped. Was that a voice on high?

BEV

It sounded like a voice on high.

MIKE

Could have been the neighbor kids. On high.

Voice of KYLE

Hey. How's it goin'?

BEV

Wait. Is that --

MIKE

I think it is.

Voice of KYLE

Ha! Of course, you slobs. Who else?

BEV

Kyle!

MIKE

You crazy nut, what are you doing? That's not the usual way to come into somebody's house!

Voice of KYLE

Just checkin up on you two couch potatas. Ha! Mr. and Mrs. Good Neighbor. You two oughtta get out more often.

MIKE

Easy for you to say.

BEV

Kyle, where are you? Do you love me?

Voice of KYLE
You know me, Bev, sex maniac. Ha!

BEV
Kyle, take me with you!

Voice of KYLE
Buddy, I'm takin your wife on a candy run. OK?

MIKE
I guess.

Voice of KYLE
You comin?

MIKE
(used to the routine) Nah.

Voice of KYLE
Cool.

*Poised above MIKE at the sofa, BEV suddenly
slumps over in religious ecstasy.*

MIKE
Kyle. I know you're still here.

Voice of KYLE
Dude, you can still turn this thing around.

MIKE
It's coming around pretty soon anyway. Just watch.

Voice of KYLE
Ah well. Later.

BLACKOUT.

Scene 9: FOURTH OF JULY

MIKE and BEV are now both seated on the couch, watching TV, which plays a patriotic melody. Both have pistols pointed at each other. BEV's tummy is noticeably bigger.

BEV

I should really shoot. Before you do.

MIKE

I'm in no rush.

BEV

No, I could never accuse you of that.

From OFF., the sudden bang of a firecracker. Both jump, startled.

BEV

Was that me?

MIKE

Wasn't me.

BEV and MIKE

(together, smiling) Firecracker.

BEV

Well, see? I could shoot you down right now and everybody would think it was just a big firecracker going off. I don't know why I haven't shot you already. Or you me. It's just a matter of time. What's yours, a .38?

MIKE

I'm not sure. I don't even know if it's loaded.

BEV looks into the barrel.

BEV

Seems to be loaded.

MIKE

(surprised) With a bullet?

BEV

Looks like a Smartie.

MIKE

Ha! That would be just like me!

*From OFF., the sudden bang of a firecracker.
Both jump, startled.*

MIKE

(nonchalant, peering into her gun barrel) Yours?

BEV

(quickly, confidently) Oh, it's loaded.

MIKE

Too bad. We're getting along so well right now.

BEV

Sometimes it isn't until you have a gun pointed at your head that you start figuring out what's important.

MIKE

And sometimes not even then.

BEV

Oh Mike.

*From OFF., the sudden bang of a firecracker.
Both jump, startled.*

MIKE

Well, I couldn't shoot you anyway. You're pregnant.

BEV

I don't know. Maybe I'm just fat and grumpy.

*MIKE stares at her. He pulls the trigger.
Click. The hammer falls on an empty
chamber.*

MIKE

Ah well.

*From OFF., the sudden bang of a firecracker.
Both jump, startled.*

BEV

Those kids really oughtta stop setting those things off.

MIKE

You can't really stop 'em.

BEV

Well, it's making me jumpy.

MIKE

Nobody ever stopped me. And one time I held onto a firecracker a fraction of a second too long and it exploded right at my fingertips I love you BLAMMO! And then I lost the sense of touch in those fingers for a long time. They were all tingly at first, sharp and piercing, but soon I couldn't feel anything except a certain reflective vagueness. Ha ha. I thought I knew those fingers so well, but now they're like crispy chicken.

BEV

Did you say something earlier?

MIKE

(watching TV) Huh?

BEV

I thought you said something back there. Something meaningful.

MIKE

I don't remember anything like that.

BEV

I thought I heard something meaningful.

MIKE

Probably just some squirrels. Being meaningful.

Pause. They wait, look at one another, around the room, then up.

BEV

(pause) What do you think, should I shoot?

MIKE

He'll probably be here soon.

BEV

I don't know if I can wait that long.

MIKE

I don't know how else it's ever gonna happen.

BEV

(pause) How long, you think?

MIKE

When the spirit moves him, I guess.

BEV

Yeah, well, he's late.

From above, the long whistle of an incoming rocket, like the shriek of a falling bomb.

BEV

Oh wait, here he comes.

*The whistle grows louder and deeper. At the point of excruciation, the lights suddenly
BLACK OUT.*

BEV

Just watch.

SOUND: distant report of fireworks from the TV set. Brief flashes of red, white, and blue light illuminate the couple.

BEV and MIKE no longer point guns at each other. They may even be holding hands.

Scene 10: LABOR DAY

Dim light of dawn. MIKE and BEV are lying together on the couch. The TV is on, flickering unobtrusively.

The sound of the TV fades up: the monitor is replaying BEV's first lines from this play; they have, in fact, been recorded from this very performance.

Somewhere around BEV's second paragraph, KYLE enters, silently, from the back of the house (audience). He is dressed completely in white: a MILKMAN.

He gains the stage and looks at the couple.

MILKMAN

I am the milkman. And I don't really exist now. My like will never be seen again. But I bring the milk to him. I bring the milk to her. I work the holidays too. People still need milk.

I stop by the alley, step up to the back porch. I see these two entangled. Inextricable. They are matted, like turf. Her leg over his ribs, his hand on her belly, his turned head buried under her arm, her fingers at his face, his mouth at her ear.

Dawn filters through spaces in the drawn blinds, coating them like frost. There is a time in the early morning when this lasts forever. This is when I bring the milk.

Oh this is love, sure. This is youth, sure. This is ordinary, sure as the day is long. And this does go on forever. Just watch. *(pause)* See? It goes on and on.

Pause. The TV is replaying MIKE's earlier lines now -- we hear "Ha, that crazy nut," and LIGHTS begin to fade out as TV SOUND rises.

MILKMAN

Just watch.

Lights FADE OUT. Sound FADE OUT.

CURTAIN.