

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

ACT I

SCENE 1:

All of the action takes place in the Davis' nicely appointed living room containing a couch and coffee table off center towards stage right plus a sofa and other chairs towards stage left. The entrance door is Up Stage Left. Up stage right is the dining area with a table and chairs and a buffet. All the other areas lead off the living room to a kitchen up stage right and a hallway to bedrooms at up stage left. Along stage left wall is a bar and adjoining it a curtained window. The place is messy. Empty beer bottles, glasses. Clothes tossed here and there. Yesterday's newspaper scattered about. Just plain messy. HARRY DAVIS enters from the hallway. He looks awful. A mess. He's dragging. He's had a rough night. He crosses to the entrance door, opens it, looks for a newspaper. It isn't there. Crosses to the kitchen door and disappears within it. KAREN, enters from the hallway. She is bright and cheery, and is wearing a bra and panties.

KAREN

Harry!

(A few BEATS.)

HARRY!

HARRY appears at the kitchen door wearing an apron.

HARRY

What do you need?

KAREN

I lost an earring.

She starts searching the chair for her earring.

HARRY

Can't help you. I'm making coffee.

HARRY disappears back into the kitchen and in a moment returns.

Karen, go get dressed.

KAREN

What's wrong? I am dressed.

HARRY

Like that? What if some one comes?

KAREN

You never said any one was coming. It's Sunday.

HARRY

What if they do? It wouldn't be right to see you like that.

KAREN

Why? Don't you think I look pretty?

HARRY

That isn't what I mean. You're beautiful but ...

KAREN

Then what's the problem? I feel comfortable here with you. Harry, how long have we been going together?

HARRY

Almost four months ... but I wouldn't say we were "going together." More like dating once in a while.

KAREN

You've never brought me to your place before. We always end up at my apartment. I think after last night we could say we were going together.

HARRY

If it makes you happy.

KAREN

So why are you so worried if someone drops in? Just introduce me as your girlfriend. That's all.

HARRY

That's it exactly. Someone might show up any minute ... my housekeeper.

KAREN

On Sunday?

HARRY

Her day off is Saturday and she comes back Sunday. But maybe my mother ... or my kid.

KAREN

You told me your mother lives in Florida and you're boy's has his own place. I stay at your place one night and you're trying to get rid of me already?

HARRY

No, of course not. I don't know ... It's just the way I am.

KAREN picks up her jeans from a chair and wiggles into them.

KAREN

Wow! And here I thought you were open-minded.

HARRY

I am ... at night. During the day I revert to my other life.

KAREN

You're a dentist. What other life can you have?

HARRY

I'm a worrier.

KAREN

This is Saturday, Harry. You're not working today.

(KAREN snuggles up to him and pecks him on the cheek. Then picks up her blouse and puts it on.)

Harry, you're weird.

HARRY

I just don't want anyone to feel uncomfortable.

KAREN

How sweet of you ... and I understand. You were that way last night.

HARRY stops on the way to the kitchen.

HARRY

I was?

KAREN

You were.

HARRY

Oh....

HARRY exits to the kitchen.

KAREN

I think you're shy, Harry. I never would have believed it ... not after last night. I've got to find that earring. I can't go around wearing just one.

HARRY O.S.

Don't worry. If it's here I'll find it ... another time.

KAREN gets on all fours to look for her shoes.

KAREN

That was a lot fun last night.

HARRY returns with a tray and two cups of coffee which he places on the coffee table. He stops for a moment to admire KAREN's derriere.

HARRY

I'm not so sure this morning.

KAREN

You're kidding. That singer at the club and those people at our table. Believe me, it was fun. You're a great host, Harry. It was nice of you to invite them over.

HARRY

It won't seem so good when I get my credit card bill. My head hurts already. Ooohh... My head ...

KAREN

Do you want me to get something for you? An aspirin or maybe an egg with some Worstershire sauce. That always works. It's what we used to use at college. Late night party ... early morning yaahs ... an egg and Worstershire ..

HARRY

Don't, please. I'm very unstable inside.

KAREN

Wasn't that artist funny? I thought I'd pee in my pants when he told that story about the German and the Russian. 'I'm not counting chickens. I'm counting eggs.'

A SOUND is heard against the door. HARRY crosses to it, opens it to retrieve the newspaper and crosses back to the couch. He tosses it on the coffee table.

HARRY

Finally! Nine-thirty?

KAREN glances at the newspaper while using her compact to apply make-up.

KAREN

You've got to find the earring. It's an expensive set.

HARRY

(HARRY glances at his watch.)

I will, don't worry. That kid is never on time. The paper is supposed to be here by seven.

KAREN

Maybe he partied last night also.

HARRY

I'm the one who partied.

(HARRY feels his forehead)

Ohhh ...

KAREN

(Reading from the paper.)

Can you imagine that? The government is going to let them drill for oil in Alaska. That's awful. The hallowed ground of Alaska. Untouched, virgin land. They'll kill all the polar bears and the ... meese.

HARRY

What meese? What are you talking about?

KAREN

You know, those things with antlers ... mooses. They've already had one major disaster up there with that oil ship ... now this. You know, I saw a TV documentary recently where the polar bear population has been reduced almost in half over the last ten years because of things like oil drilling and people. They'll destroy everything up there. All the natural resources ...

HARRY

I don't think it'll be everything. Just a few holes here and there.

KAREN

You've got to be kidding. A few holes? They're going to lay miles of huge pipes over snow that's been untouched for centuries ... eons...

HARRY

Have some coffee.

KAREN

You can't be so cavalier about polar bears. They'll be gone before you know it.

HARRY

Then we'll go to the zoo.

KAREN continues to look around for her earring.

KAREN

Harry, here we have a national disaster looming over our heads and you can't be serious. I thought you cared about the environment and animals. When we were in bed last night you told me you cared. You promised to become a vegetarian.

HARRY

I will, I will, but not right this minute. I've got other things on my mind.

KAREN

What can be more important than the environment and the survival of our flora and fauna? I can't find it.

HARRY

What?

KAREN

My earring.

HARRY

I'll call you if I find it.

KAREN

The world depends on it. In fact, the world depends on people like us to help it survive.

HARRY

Boy my head is really banging. I don't know if I can take today. I hope Conk gets here.

KAREN

Who's Conk?

HARRY

I told you -- my house keeper

KAREN

Oh ... what can she do for you that I can't.?

HARRY.

She can make something that will kill every feeling in my body.

KAREN

That's what that egg and Worchestershire does. I told you.

(Slaps the paper.)

Look at this.

HARRY

Not so loud.

KAREN

Are we going to let these politicians do what they want? I think not. We've got to stop them. It's important. No! It's imperative! It's a national crisis!

HARRY

We're going to have a crisis here if you don't get going.

KAREN

Be serious, Harry. Our future, my kids' future depends on it.

HARRY

I couldn't agree with you more. I promise you we'll go into all the flora and fauna you want ... not now ... later ...

(A sudden afterthought.)

Kids? You never said you had kids. How many do you have?

KAREN

Not mine. I don't have any. I'm not married. Everybody else's kids. The kids I'll have in the future. A figure of speech.

HARRY

Oh.

KAREN

And remember eating. It's all part and parcel of the same thing. You can't eat meat. No chicken ... nothing that's alive. Vegetables – eggplant, squash, rice beans, pumpkin ... all of those wonderful vegetables. And fruits. That's what you eat.

HARRY

I read somewhere that plants have feelings too.

HARRY hands KAREN her jacket, which she slips on as he gets her to the door. She puts her back against it to the door.

KAREN

They don't mind it. Fruit gives you vitamins you can't find anywhere else. Especially the one's with deep colors ... reds ... deep greens ... The environment and being a vegetarian go hand-in-hand. You've got to tell all of your patients. Promise?

HARRY

Yes, yes, I promise.

KAREN hugs HARRY.

KAREN

I knew you'd understand but you're such a worrier, Harry. Maybe that's what I like about you. You care.

HARRY

I do? I wasn't aware of that.

KAREN

There's a great group coming into the Kong Club tonight I'd like to see.

HARRY

(Without conviction.)

Sure. Sounds great.

The kitchen door opens and JULIA stands there in all of her glory - red and green streaked hair. Rings through her ears and nostrils. Ruby red, lipstick framed with black. A punk rocker.

JULIA

Hi.

HARRY

Oh, hi Julia. How you doing?

JULIA

Okay. Sorry. I didn't know you were busy.

HARRY

Ah .. Julia this is a friend of mine ... KAREN.

JULIA

Hi ...

KAREN

Nice to meet you.

(To HARRY)

You know if JD is back yet?

HARRY

Did you try his cell phone?

JULIA

No ... just wanted to see his new bike. I thought maybe he'd come by to show you.

HARRY

His new bike. Another one? He's got two. How many more does he need?

JULIA

I don't know. Ask him. I guess Conk's not here.

HARRY

You guessed right.

JULIA

Okay. Just tell her I said hello.

HARRY

Everything all right? Anything you need?

JULIA

I'm cool. See you ... later.

HARRY

Sure ... I'll let her know you came by.

JULIA exits. SOUND of back door in kitchen closing

KAREN

Boy, Harry. I didn't know you were into young girls.

HARRY

Don't be silly. She's my housekeeper's granddaughter. She's like a daughter to me. Grew up here with my son. Her parents spilt and Conk ended up taking care of her.

KAREN

No kidding. That hopped up kid?

HARRY

She's not hopped up. She's perfectly normal. She's just going through a phase.

KAREN

That's a hell of a phase. What's next? Moon landings?

HARRY

You know how kids are. She's trying to be an actress and JD ... he loves those damn motorcycles. I hate those things. I've never forgotten what my own father said to me when I was a kid and wanted one of those things. He said ... I ain't ridin' nothin' I have to hold up to get on. That's pretty much how I feel about it.

KAREN

I guess your son doesn't mind holding his up. I'm glad you're not the motorcycle type, Harry.

HARRY

Me too.

KAREN

I rode one once. It was pretty scary.

The back door is HEARD banging shut.

HARRY

Listen, you better take off. I have to get organized.

KAREN

Am I going to see you tonight.

HARRY

I'll call you.

HARRY hustles KAREN to the door

CONK enters

CONK

Hi, Doc.

HARRY

Oh ... hi Conk. You're back.

CONK

I'm glad you can tell.

(CONK peers at HARRY)

You don't look too good..

KAREN

Hi. I'm KAREN.

CONK

Sure. I'm Griselda.

KAREN

No kidding? Great name. I just met your daughter.

CONK

My daughter? You being funny or ...?

HARRY

You just missed her.

CONK

I didn't miss anything.

HARRY hustles KAREN to the door.

HARRY

Call me later. We'll talk then.

KAREN

(To CONK)

Nice meeting you

(KAREN kisses HARRY on the cheek.)

G'bye, Daddy.

KAREN exits.

CONK

(Shocked)

Daddy? My God you didn't ...

HARRY

No, no, no. She's just being affectionate.

CONK

Then how about Grandpa? More like it don't you think?

HARRY

Please, I don't need any of that.

CONK

You ought to be ashamed of yourself carrying on with someone as young as that.

HARRY

What young? She's a lovely, mature woman ... over twenty-one.

CONK

So's my granddaughter.

HARRY

What do you take me for?

CONK

A fifty-year-old man ... twice her age.

HARRY

I'm only forty-eight. And you know it. Come on, get with the times, Conk. The world's changed. Age isn't important anymore. It has no place in a relationship among adults. It what's inside, in here that counts.

Compatibility ... how well you enjoy life together. That's what matters. Besides she said she's twenty-seven ... almost twenty-eight.

CONK

Huh ... Well, for your sake I hope you believe all that real strong. You better be careful.

HARRY

Why do you say that?

CONK

No reason. Just that you might need Viagra and an attorney before you know it.

CONK crosses to the kitchen.

HARRY

You know, even after almost twenty years I sometimes get the feeling I don't know you. Right now you're being just plain old-fashioned. Catch up to the rest of the world, Conk.

CONK

That's what Julia keeps telling me.

HARRY

Well, she's right. That ought to tell you something.

CONK

Yeah ... everybody's going nuts.

HARRY

She hit you up again?

CONK

No, for once she came by to tell me she had a job.

HARRY

No kidding. That's good.

CONK

Tell me about it. A waitress.

HARRY

That's better than nothing. She's a smart girl. She'll pull it together.

CONK

Yeah ... when she's my age.

There's a bang on the door . CONK crosses to open it revealing JD wearing biker's clothes, carrying a helmet and a back pack.

JD ...!

JD

Hi ya, CONK. I couldn't find my keys.

JD enters - drops his back pack against the couch.

CONK

That's nothing new. My goodness. You look like a man from outer space.

JD

I feel like one. Been riding for three hours.

CONK

You poor thing.

CONK gives him a hug.

HARRY rushes to him and they hug warmly.

HARRY

Look at you. All duded up?

JD

Hi, Dad. How's it going?

CONK is about to close the door when JD stops her.

No ... hold it ... there's some one else ...

JD opens the door wider to reveal VALERIE, wearing a biker's helmet and dragging a back pack behind her. JD takes the bag and tosses it next to his. VALERIE removes her helmet to reveal a lovely, but much older woman.