

NESTING

ACT I

SCENE 1:

Blake house. Evening.

This a warm living room with a den area up stage light containing shelves loaded with books, a desk, computer, and papers. All very neat. He is highly organized. The living room contains a buffet at stage rear. On this buffet is a phone, glasses and bottles of wine and whiskey and glasses. At stage right doors to kitchen and at stage left blind hallway to the bedrooms. A couch sits slight off stage right center with a coffee table in front. At stage left, off the kitchen door is a dining table.

LOU

I'll do what ever you want, Harry. But it's a hell of a good job they're offering you ... and a great deal of money to toss aside.

HARRY

Don't you think the two hundred and fifty thousand should do me?

LOU

Sure. For now. Remember, the Comden is just a one time award.

LEE

With a lot of prestige, too. The school should give him a nice raise. Prestige and all that.

LOU

Probably.

HARRY

Oh, please, Lee.

LOU

It'll help bring some donations and maybe an endowment. The University will up the ante for Harry but it won't be anywhere near what he'd get from the drug companies.

NINA

Perhaps ... but then I wouldn't have Lee to play with. And she wants to stay here and go shopping with me.

HARRY

It's only money Lou. I'm doing all right here.

LOU

Aside from the prestige it confers on you ... I'll agree a quarter of a million isn't a bad stipend. Fact is, it's one of the better ones.

NINA

The Noble is next.

HARRY

No way. Not in Microbiology. I'm pleased with what I've got.

LOU

(To NINA)

Come on, Honey. I've got to be up early.

(To HARRY)

If you want to talk some more let me know. There's still time.

HARRY

I've made my mind up.

LOU

Okay. Goodnight, Lee. As usual that was a great dinner. Malaysian ... how do you do it?

They all cross to the door as

LEE

Spices and the herbs. I've amassed a collection of them. Every time I go to New York, I pick some up. They have so many and it depends on the recipe.

NINA

Well, I still don't know how you do it.

LEE

Very carefully. Goodnight.

They all laugh as NINA and she embrace.
HARRY and LOU shake hands.

NINA

We'll talk tomorrow.

LOU and NINA exit.

HARRY

Are you happy now?

LEE begins to clean up the table dishes

LEE

Why shouldn't I be? As long as you are.

HARRY

I was tempted for a moment ... it would have changed our lives.

LEE

I sometimes think we need a change. But if you're happy ..

HARRY

I'm comfortable here.

HARRY crosses to the buffet and pours a drink

LEE

You've got an early meeting with the Dean.

HARRY thinks a moment - but continues pouring.

HARRY

I'm fine. The same old nonsense.

LEE

Maybe so but you've still got to be your best. No hangovers.

HARRY

You know what that kid said? I made passionate love to her at two in the afternoon. Imagine that ... two in the afternoon. Sounds like the title of a play ... Two In The Afternoon. Stupid, you know. Just plain dumb. She doesn't even know I'm a late evening type.

LEE

I'm not exactly aware of that either.

HARRY

What's that supposed to mean?

LEE

Nothing. Just kidding.

HARRY crosses to the exit as LEE starts to gather the empty glasses.

STAGE DIMS TO BLACK

SCENE 2:

LIGHTS COME UP DOWN STAGE RIGHT

Next morning.

HARRY and the DEAN carry chairs in and sit as SUSAN and ANN, each bring a chair, place them down. SUSAN with a pad and pencil, taking notes while ANN stands, waiting.

DEAN

Sit down Miss ... ahh ...

SUSAN

Delaney. Ann Delaney.

ANN sits facing the DEAN

DEAN

Yes, Ann. Please ... sit.

(BEAT)

You know, you've leveled some very serious charges against Dr. Wallman. What we want to do here now is to understand exactly what happened. Get all of the facts. Miss Stewart will take notes. Do you understand, Ann?

ANN

Yes, sir.

DEAN

Good. Very good. Now I have here a copy of the letter you sent me and in it you make some very damaging accusations. You know that accusing someone of Dr. Wallman's stature of this kind of thing could well destroy an outstanding career. Are you aware of that?

ANN

Yes, but what about me? My career?

DEAN

What career would that be that you're talking about?

ANN

My college career. By not passing me ... by failing me I have to spend another semester here and my folks won't take kindly to that.

DEAN

I see.

ANN

I doubt if you do.

DEAN

I'll overlook that remark, Miss Delaney. Now, tell me exactly what happened.

ANN

Well ... I ... ahh ... I ahh went up to Him ... Dr. Wellman ... and told him I didn't understand how this particular thing worked. You know ... how you joined the two genes together.

DEAN

Did he explain it?

ANN

He's always been so nice. He asked me to come into his office.

DEAN

And ... did you?

ANN

Not really ... he stopped in the doorway and said I was very pretty and smart and he would help me.

DEAN

Then you didn't go into his office?

ANN

No ... that's what I'm saying. He stopped in the doorway and said he would help me but I had to help him.

DEAN

He did?

ANN

Yes ... more or less ... he took my hand and pressed it against himself and said he'd help me if I helped him.

DEAN

He took your hand, you say and placed it ...

ANN

He did ... there ... down there ... but then I pulled my hand away. I said all I wanted was help. In fact I went to his office several times pleading for help and you know what he said each time? Dig it out yourself. Then you'll always know it. What kind of help is that? I needed him to give me answers to problems when I needed it ... how all this happened.

DEAN

And this time, did he help you with answers?

ANN

No ... he just laughed and said the answers were in the book if I studied ... if I dug them out.

DEAN

Did you dig it out? Did you study ... look for the methods and answers?

ANN

There wasn't enough time to do all of that. I have other classes, the sorority, the squad. How am I supposed to do all of that the day before the test?

DEAN

Then how could you spend time in the afternoon with Dr. Wallman if you had so much to do?

ANN

He was always nice to me. I told him I cared.

DEAN

I had Miss Stewart check your letter against your schedule. The time you claimed to be with Dr. Wallman, you were out on the football field practicing with your cheering squad. How do you account for that, Miss Delaney?

ANN

(Tears begin to roll out.)

That's not true. I wanted him to ...

DEAN

(Hesitates)

To what, Miss Delaney?

ANN

(Cries - between sniffles)

I wanted him to care for me. To help me because he cared. I hated him when he didn't ... I hated him.

DEAN

(Gently)

Then the incident you claimed happened didn't, in fact, happen. Did it Ann?

ANN

(Shakes her head between sobs.)

Yes ... No ... no ... I wanted him to care for me ... no ... no ... he didn't ... I hate him ... I hate him ...

DEAN

Thank you Miss Delaney.

ANN stands and exits. The DEAN stands
as HARRY enters

HARRY

Do I have to add anything to that?

DEAN

No. But you do have to be more careful, Harry. Kids
nowadays tend to get desperate. The competition is fierce.

STAGE DIMS TO BLACK

SCENE 3:

Later that morning.

The entrance door opens and HARRY
enters. It's cold outside. He tosses
his jacket on a chair and crosses to
the buffet and pours himself a drink.)

HARRY

I'm home!

A few sips and LEE enters from the
kitchen.

Damn cold out there.

LEE

Hi.

She crosses to HARRY and gives him a
welcome peck.

Brrr ... you feel cold.

HARRY

Give me a minute or two ... a little of the red ... and I'll
be a roaring fire.

LEE

Promises. Always promises.

HARRY

Once in a while you do collect.

LEE

Yes, I do ... and aren't you the lucky one. Now tell me.
What happened?

Sits with his drink. She nestles up to
him

HARRY

If I didn't have you and this place to come home to, I don't know. I'd probably give it all up.

LEE

That sounds ominous. I thought you said you had a pleasant day.

HARRY

I did.

LEE

For God's sake, tell me.

HARRY

It's what I told you. Lies. All lies. She came in sassy, ready to destroy me. Claimed I was in the process of seducing her. Can you imagine that? Seducing her right there ... in the office doorway after everyone had left ... but that she broke away from me and ran out.

LEE

Oh, my God. It isn't true ...

HARRY

You should know better than that. Why would it be? Nothing happened. I did nothing.

LEE

It was her word against yours.

HARRY

Not quite. She came apart in a few moments. Started sobbing about how terrible I was for giving her a failing grade. She was getting at me for that.

LEE

Then you didn't ... ?

HARRY

Of course not.

LEE

Why do these things always happen? You seem to attract this kind of behavior.

HARRY

Ask some of the other instructors. I'm not alone. The kids come in angry over failing at something ... a test or a lab experiment ... and they want to place the blame at my feet. It's always my fault that they screwed up. I didn't teach it properly. They never think in terms of ... that they didn't learn ... they didn't listen ... they didn't care. Oh no.

(MORE)

HARRY (CONT'D)

Blame the instructor ... the messenger. It's as old as ancient Greek writings. It's easier ... helps to unload ... expiates all of their guilt.

(BEAT)

Kill the messenger.

LEE

You know Harry, you can't stand in front of a class that has young women and act like you're in love with each and every one of them. You can't do it.

HARRY

I'm there to teach and they're there to listen and learn. I can't help how people respond. I'm not there as a therapist.

LEE

Perhaps not, but you do enjoy the theatre of it all. I've watched you and how you play your audience

HARRY

Audience? Please, let's at least be on the same page. They're students. Young minds who are there to learn.

LEE

So you say. What did the Dean have to say?

HARRY

Why do you do that? You make a remark that's loaded with all kinds of accusations but you never finish your thought. I hate that.

LEE

Don't be silly. It was meaningless. What did he say?

HARRY

Just patted me on the shoulder and the usual. Apologized for letting this get as far as it did. His assistant should have checked it out and handled it. Congrats ... we're looking forward to many wonderful years, etcetera, etcetera ... They're all a bunch of buggers. I felt like telling him how stupid he was for letting it get this far. Not his assistant. Him!

The Dean! But bureaucracy. No different than outside. Perhaps Lou was right. Maybe the drug company was a better idea.

LEE

You've made our bed Harry. Let's enjoy it.

HARRY

You're right, you're right.

LEE

Why don't I make you some lunch. You must be famished by now.

HARRY

Kind of ... but something light. I still have one class this afternoon.

LEE exits to the kitchen while HARRY crosses to his desk to gather some files for his briefcase. A few beats. The front door bell RINGS. He pays no attention. It RINGS again.

HARRY (CONT'D)

(Shouts)

Lee! The door!

Comes out of the kitchen just before he finishes

LEE

I've got it.

LEE crosses to open the door

Oh, my God! June ...!

JUNE enters to be hugged by LEE. JUNE carries a back pack and a hand duffel bag. Behind her, hesitating, is TOM, also carrying a back pack

JUNE

Hi, mom.

LEE

How'd you get here? Why didn't you call?

HARRY crosses to greet JUNE and embrace her.

HARRY

Hi, Baby? I had no idea you were coming home. No one told me.

JUNE

Well, here we are. Hi, Dad. Remember Tom?

HARRY

I can't say that I do but come in, come in. Friend from your trip?

They both enter and place their bags down. JUNE plops down on the couch