

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.)

(KARIN, enters from the hallway. She is bright and cheery, and is wearing a bra and panties.

KARIN

Harry!

(A few beats.)

HARRY!

HARRY

(HARRY appears at the kitchen door wearing an apron.)

What do you need?

KARIN

I lost an earring.

(She starts searching the chair for her erring.)

HARRY

Can't help. I'm making coffee.

(He disappears back into the kitchen and in a moment returns.)

Karen, go get dressed.

KARIN

What's wrong? I am dressed.

HARRY

Like that? What if some one comes?

KARIN

You never said anyone was coming.

HARRY

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

KARIN

Why? Don't you think I look pretty?

HARRY

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

KARIN

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

HARRY

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

KARIN

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.

KARIN

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.

KARIN

On Saturday?

HARRY

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

KARIN

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.

KARIN

(She picks up her jeans from a chair and wiggles into them.)

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

HARRY

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

KARIN

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

HARRY

I'm a worrier.

KARIN

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

(She 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.

KARIN

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

HARRY

(Stops on the way to the kitchen.)

I was?

KARIN

You were.

HARRY

Oh....

(He exits to the kitchen.)

KARIN

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.

KARIN

(Gets on all fours to look for her shoes.)

That was a lot fun last night.

HARRY

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

I'm not so sure this morning.

KARIN

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 ...

KARIN

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.

KARIN

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?

KARIN

(KARIN glances at the newspaper while using her compact to apply make-up.)

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

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.

KARIN

Maybe he partied last night also.

HARRY

I'm the one who partied.

(Feels his forehead)

Ohhh ...

KARIN

(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.

KARIN

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.

KARIN

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.

KARIN

(Continues looking around for her earring.)

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.

KARIN

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

HARRY

What?

KARIN

My earring.

HARRY

I'll call you if I find it.

KARIN

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.

KARIN

Who's Conk?

HARRY

I told you -- my house keeper

KARIN

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

HARRY.

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

KARIN

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

(Slaps the paper.)

Look at this.

HARRY

Not so loud.

KARIN

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?

KARIN

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.

KARIN

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 KARIN her jacket, which she slips on as he gets her to the door. She puts her back against it to the door.)

KARIN

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.

KARIN

(She hugs HARRY.)

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 hard rock sight to behold.)

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 ... Karin.

JULIA

Hi ...

KAREIN

Nice to meet you.

JULIA

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.

(JULIA exits. SOUND of back door in kitchen closing)

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

HARRY
Don't be silly.

KARIN
I'm not. That's not right.

HARRY
She's my housekeeper's granddaughter.

KARIN
No kidding. That hopped up kid?

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

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

(The back door is HEARD banging shut.)

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

(CONK enters)

CONK
Hi, Doc.

HARRY
Hello, Conk. You're back.

CONK
Looks like you need one of my specials.

KARIN
Hi. I'm Karin.

CONK
Sure. I'm Griselda.

KARIN
No kidding? Great name.

HARRY
(HARRY manages to get KARIN out.)
Call me later. We'll talk then.

KARIN
(To CONK.)
Nice meeting you.
(Kisses HARRY on the cheek.)
G'bye, Daddy.
(She 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.