

Walls of Glass

a play by Stanley Rutherford

You are welcome to download this play and use it for readings, audition pieces, scene study, etc. This play is protected by copyright, however, and if you are interested in producing it, please first obtain permission from the playwright.

© copyright
by stanley rutherford
box 50
camp meeker, ca, 95419
707-888-2816
stanley@stanleyrutherford.com

The characters

Multi-racial casting requested

- Alexa: Female, late forties/early fifties. An extravagant extrovert, Alexa wears stylish black clothing (very Donna Karan) and black high-heeled shoes with ankle-straps and peek-a-boo openings at the toes. Something of a post-modern Auntie Mame she has a predatory appetite for attractive, younger women and men.
- Raul: Male, early-to-mid fifties, Alexa's husband. A more cautious, gentle introvert, Raul wears stylish black clothing (very Giorgio Armani), and has partially graying black wavy hair and dark liquid eyes. He's devoted to Alexa, continuously seeks to be the man he thinks she wants him to be, and usually falls short.
- Serena: Female, twenties/early thirties, very attractive. A design consultant, Serena wears stylish black clothing (very Dolce & Gabbana) and black high-heeled shoes with ankle-straps and peek-a-boo openings at the toes. Quite naïve, neurotic, and curiously conventional, Serena is perpetually overwhelmed by the demands of design and love and the complexity of modern metropolitan living.
- Mario: Male, mid-thirties, very attractive. A design consultant, Mario wears stylish black clothing (very Hugo Boss). A guy's kind of guy, he operates successfully (but perhaps rather uncomfortably) in the world of design, often finding himself to be the client's figurative, if not literal, whore.
- Dr. Bentwood Female, sixties/seventies, an "environmental therapist," who wears serviceable black clothing and sensible shoes (very Soviet Union). Mysterious and loony with a quirky Russian accent, she's a loose cannon of cosmological and spiritual (mis)information.

The setting

A full-floor condominium on the 29th floor of a new 50 story, glass-sided high-rise. The space has not been built out: it's clean, open, expansive, beautiful— a window (a scrim) stage right, a window/scrim across the back, a window/scrim stage left. Throughout the play the light behind the window/scrim evolves in an evocative display of color and light, as appropriate. Although unstated, Manhattan is the play's obvious location.

Act I, scene one

Alexa and Raul stand downstage, facing the downstage "window," surrounded by the completely empty space of their floor-through condominium on the 29th floor of a just completed, sleekly modernist building. The walls are exclusively glass, broken only by the structural grid of the building. Outside the window-walls, we see the luminous white/blue/golden light of spring-like sunny day.

Alexa: Space.

Raul: Serenity.

Alexa: Light.

Raul: Our dream.

Alexa: The 29th floor.

Raul: Changing light through the day, sun east, sun overhead, sun west...

Alexa: We are in our prime.

Raul: We are at the apex.

Alexa: This is our opportunity, the era we will call our own.

Raul: I don't envy the people who had early success.

Alexa: They live in sorrow.

Raul: Their adventure is over...

Alexa: **[Indicating]** ...the sweep of eastern sky, the water, the park...

Raul: ...the roadways, uptown, downtown...

Alexa: ...the cool gray progression of towers....

Raul: ...receding grids of steel and glass.

Beat.

Alexa: Why are cities gray?

Raul: Marrakech is white, Istanbul is white.

Alexa: Our cities are always gray.

Raul: Bologna is red and Rome, St. Petersburg, Renaissance pinks and greens...

Alexa: ...dark gray, medium gray, steel blue gray...

Raul: Cities formed around burial grounds, holy sites, places where rituals were performed, sacrifices made...

Alexa: ...the avenues of expectations...

Raul: ...and tribes gradually formed settlements...

Alexa: ...the streets of humiliation and shame...

Raul: ...a holy site at the center.

Beat.

Alexa: **[Turning, studying the interior space, indicating]** An island.

Raul: Exactly.

Alexa: A cool wide surface.

Raul: Clean, open.

Alexa: A sink.

Raul: For the vegetables.

Alexa: The washing of hands... **[Indicating]** The stove here, the refrigerator here, a side-by-side, refrigerator right, freezer left, no icemaker in the door.

Raul: We agree on so many things.

Alexa: The colors will be bold.

Raul: Let's not rush.

Alexa: A bold contrast to the cityscape of gray.

Raul: Color can wait.

Alexa: Color is integral.

Raul: The island, the counters, the side-by-side, refrigerator right, freezer left...

Alexa: Things are different now.

Raul: People forget.

Alexa: There were the forties and then there were the fifties.

Raul: The sixties, the seventies.

Alexa: The issues were different, the context was different.

Raul: So many of the people in the fifties were alcoholics...

Alexa: ...drank all day, smoke and drank...

Raul: ...all day long...

Alexa: ...and the kids came home from school and watched TV...

Raul: ...the poor dumb husbands came home and drank and smoked...

Alexa: ...and this went on year after year and then the kids left home...

Raul: ...and the husbands started fucking their secretaries...

Alexa: ...and the women just got older and drank and smoked until they died.

Long beat

Raul: I wouldn't want a higher floor.

Alexa: Twenty-nine is perfect...

Raul: I don't want to be too high...

Alexa: ...above the noise, above the clutter...

Raul: ...the clamor, the push-shove-push...

Alexa: My mother was a masochist.

Raul: A lot of people are masochists.

Alexa: Masochism has always been fashionable.

Raul: Cities emerged from the gathering together of masochists.

Alexa: So many young people now are doing the most awful things to themselves.

Raul: Dreadful.

Alexa: Piercing, branding, scaring.

Raul: Desperation.

Alexa: It's not that they're better looking than we were...

Raul: ...masochistic desperation...

Alexa: No glamour.

Raul: They make fun of that now.

Alexa: The rules have changed, the styles contorted.

Raul: History has not been kind.

Alexa: What is love?

Raul: The stories have been cannibalized...

Alexa: ...bastardized...

Raul: ...the text altered...

Alexa: ...misinterpreted...

Raul: ...twisted to suit the current ideology...

Alexa: And there are these daytime talk shows and day after day these people have big problems, big husband problems, big girl friend problems, big popularity problems, big wardrobe problems, big acne problems, big what-kind-of-career-do-they-want problems, and you'd think that it was first time that anybody had ever had these problems.

Raul: I had acne.

Alexa: I had acne.

Raul: Hideous, awful, debilitating.

Alexa: I stayed home day after day...

Raul: ...night after night...

Alexa: ...staring at my acne...

Raul: People who don't have acne don't understand people who have acne.

Alexa: We share so many things.

Raul: Not that we don't have problems.

Alexa: Of course we have problems.

Raul: Communication problems, not insurmountable communication problems...

Alexa: We've tried.

Raul: Exactly.

Alexa: The dialogue.

Raul: The workshops.

Alexa: Building the trust.

Raul: You have to keep working at it.

Alexa: It's a process.

Raul: The challenge of intimacy...

Alexa: **[Indicating]** The stove here, the refrigerator here, a side-by-side, refrigerator right, freezer left, no icemaker in the door.

Raul: Do you still love me?

Alexa: Of course.

Raul: I just wanted to know if you still loved me.

Alexa: Of course.

Raul: Can you say it? Can you say that you love me?

Alexa: I love you.

Raul: Thank you...I need reassurance.

Alexa: We will make love in the space on the floor in the dark with the lights from the windows like a thousand lanterns, the stars...

Raul: Clean, free, no boundaries, we fly...

Alexa: We will wash the greens in the secondary sink...

Raul: ...in the island...

Alexa: The primary sink, the dishes, the secondary sink, the greens, the washing of hands...

Raul: ...convenience...

Alexa: ...efficiency...

Raul: I want there to be art.

Alexa: The entire room is art, the whole space is art.

Raul: Graphic art, paintings, sculpture...

Alexa: I love art.

Raul: I need art.

Alexa: Wake to art, fall asleep to art.

Raul: Eat to art.

Alexa: Make love to art.

Raul: I've always wanted to have sculpture.

Alexa: You have me. Who needs sculpture?

There's a moment of erotic looks, a slight move toward each other, then...

Blackout

Act I, scene two

Alexa and Raul and Serena stand (or sit) downstage. There are now three sleek modernist chairs, a small modernist mobile bar, modernist glasses, modernist bottles of wine.

Raul: We didn't want to have things built out before we moved in.

Alexa: We wanted to live in the space for a while...

Serena: **[Looking around]** Lovely, absolutely lovely...

Alexa: ...feel the space, experience the space...

Serena: **[Nodding]** Visualize the possibilities.

Raul: For years we've dreamed of a refuge.

Alexa: A sanctuary.

Raul: But nothing too...

Alexa: ...ostentatious.

Serena: I have clients who want these show places.

Alexa: Oh, my God...

Serena: Palaces of consumption.

Raul: Absolutely not.

Alexa: You come highly recommended.

Raul: The Gartley-Carters said you were...

Serena: They were wonderful to work with.

Alexa: Couldn't say enough good things.

Alexa; For years we lived in cramped darkness.

Raul: This is a different dimension for us.

Alexa: A transformation mid-life.

Raul: I'm feeling very good about this.

Alexa: I am too.

Serena: I'm not here to impose any ideas, but to facilitate.

Alexa: We want to start with the kitchen... **[indicating]** The stove here, the refrigerator here.

Raul: We want to get away from anything too...

Alexa: Predictable.

Raul: ...but nothing too...

Alexa: Extreme.

Serena: Granite is something that's not....

Alexa: It's predictable.

Raul: Nothing too nostalgic.

Alexa: No stainless steel, everybody has stainless steel.

Serena: I don't like stainless steel.

Alexa: ...stainless steel this, stainless steel that, predictable, predictable, predictable...

Raul: The city emerged from the union of male-dominated Paleolithic hunting groups and female-dominated Neolithic settlers...

Alexa: Raul is very sensitive.

Raul: The Paleolithic male element gradually prevailing over the Neolithic female element...

Alexa: He has a strong feminine side and an equally potent masculine side.

Raul: ...the male abstractions and symbolism, the straight line, the rectangle, the phallic towers, becoming the language of the new metropolis.

Alexa: We want to challenge that.

Raul: Emphasize a more feminized solution, overcome the dichotomy, transcend the duality...

Alexa: Raul is not threatened by female energy, female strength, female dominance...

Raul: Would you care for a beverage, Serena?

Serena: I don't think, I'd...

Alexa: **[To Raul]** Darling, open the Chardonnay... **[to Serena]** We got a case of the most lovely...

Raul: Napa Valley, a private label... **[he starts opening the bottle]**

Alexa: ...a former client.

Raul: I think we're going to have fun working together.

Alexa: I do too.

Serena: It *should* be fun...

Raul: I'm feeling awfully good about this.

Serena: I like to get to know my clients as friends....

Alexa: Trust is so important....

Serena: ...their tastes, their temperaments...

Alexa: We're trying to open up our lives to new friends...

Serena: ...a creative partnership...

Alexa: ...exciting people, interesting people.

Raul: **[Serving Serena]** I hope you like this...

Serena: Oh, I'm sure...

Raul: ...a little peach, a little almond, a touch of oak...

There's an anticipatory beat as Serena takes a sip, Alexa and Raul watching her expectantly.

Serena: Oh, this is lovely...

Alexa: **[Taking a glass]** Thank you, darling.

Raul: ...subtle, yet crisp, a delicate bouquet.

Alexa: I think you're very attractive, Serena.

Serena: **[Hesitates]** Thank you.

Raul: Really very attractive.

Serena: **[Hesitates]** You're both...very attractive too...

Alexa: We like to work with attractive people. Not that we don't like "unattractive" people.

Raul: We like all kinds of people.

Alexa: It's just that attractive people are more...fun.

Raul: We've always been so busy.

Alexa: We have suffered.

Raul: We have worked.

Alexa: ...sacrificed...

Raul: ...delayed gratification over the years...

Alexa: Immigrant families.

Raul: They suffered.

Alexa: They worked.

Raul: Sacrificed to put us through school.

Alexa; **[Tearing up]** Everything for us, nothing for them.

Serena: Oh, I know.

Alexa: We want to *enjoy* things now.

Serena: Our generation is reaping the rewards.

Raul: We want to experience some of the pleasures.

Serena: You should.

Alexa: We should.

Serena: Your parents would want you to, it's for them as well as for you.

Raul: **[Studying the area of the island]** I don't think tile would work at all.

Alexa: No tile...stuff gets into the grout.

Serena: I would never recommend...

Raul: The Gartley-Carters have tile.

Serena: I warned them.

Alexa: Heartbreaking.

Raul: Filth in the grout.

Serena: I told them, I told them...

Alexa: She's anorexic, it's awful...

Serena: Really?

Raul: Lovely people...

Alexa: ...lives on celery sticks and unbuttered toast and they thought that if they fixed up the kitchen....

Raul: ...made things nice...

Alexa: ...she'd be more motivated to eat.

Raul: But the tile...

Alexa: So many women have these disorders, eat too much...

Serena: ... eat too little...

Alexa: ...and all those hydrogenated fats.

Raul: It's sad.

Alexa: Tragic.

Serena: Women, I think...

Alexa: Please don't categorize.

Raul: We don't categorize.

Alexa: It's all right to say "some women" or "a lot of women"...

Raul: ...but not "women" categorically.

Alexa: We don't say "men," we don't say "women," we don't say "Jews", we don't say "African-Americans,"

Raul: We say *some* men, *some* women, *some* Jews, *some* African Americans.

Alexa: Individuals, not categories... I'm Alexa, he's Raul, you're Serena.

Alexa and Raul watch Serena lovingly as she takes a sip of wine

Alexa: **[Studying Serena]** Really very attractive...

Raul: Lovely eyes, lovely lips.

Alexa: You have the a marvelously "open" face...

Raul: ...a generous face.

Alexa: Love is an outwardly projecting vector.

Raul: Desire is an outwardly projecting vector.

Alexa: I love...it moves from me to the object, always outward.

Raul: I desire...it moves from me to the object, always outward.

Alexa: I love, I desire. I am fulfilled.

They both focus intensely on Serena.

Serena: **[After an awkward pause]** D...do you cook? I mean, daily? For entertaining?

Raul: We love to cook.

Alexa: Pesto, chicken cacciatore, risotto Milanese, lasagna with a Bolognese...

Raul: We've had to learn.

Alexa: We've done it together/

Raul: Started out with Julia and Craig and Fanny, things from "Gourmet."

Alexa: Some of my mother's recipes.

Raul: Alexa is the chef, I'm the sous-chef.

Alexa: Raul does the vegetables, the side dish...

Raul: ...mince the garlic, chop the parsley...

Alexa: I'm in charge of the main course...

Raul: ...grate the cheese, stir the polenta...

Alexa; ...the salmon, the chicken, the pasta, the poached trout...

Raul: We've discovered tongs.

Alexa: We didn't know about tongs.

Raul: We've had to learn about the appropriate implements.

Alexa: Tongs for the pasta, tongs for the vegetables...

Raul: We used to use forks...

Alexa: ...turning the fish, the potatoes...

Raul: Tongs have changed our life.

Alexa: **[To Serena, as she places her hand on Serena's knee]** Would you care for some more Chardonnay?

Blackout

Act I, scene three

Raul, Alexa, and Dr. Bentwood sit down stage, drinking wine. Stage right is a large futon on a low platform.

Raul: We've been having sort of...

Alexa: An uneasiness.

Raul: An anxiety.

Bentwood: I don't do "arrangement."

Raul: We thought if we could find someone...

Alexa: The Gartley-Carters said you'd been so helpful.

Bentwood: I don't do "design."

Raul: There's nothing wrong, exactly...

Alexa: **[To Raul]** What did they call it?

Bentwood: Alignment... to help you *adjust* to your new environment, the relationship between you and the space and how you move in the space.

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** Would you like some cheese?

Raul: The Gartley-Carters went through a rough patch when they remodeled too.

Alexa: We've been getting this wonderful Vermont cheddar. **[Bentwood takes some]**

Raul: She was having headaches.

Alexa: A nunnery makes it. **[She gives some to Raul]**

Raul: He was having those little temper tantrums.

Alexa: We haven't been sleeping well.

Raul: I've been hearing things, feeling things...

Bentwood: I can help you define your relationship with the space and become emotionally and spiritually *aligned* with the space, so you can feel the freedom to *be* in the space.

Raul: It's a new building...

Alexa: We're the first people to live here...

Bentwood: **[Indicating out the window]** People living on horizontal planes, plane upon plane, rising vertically, story upon story, life upon life...

Raul: **[Looking out the window]** Not until the twentieth century...

Bentwood: ...*of course* you feel confused...

Raul: ...the steel, the engineering, the imagination...

Bentwood; ...*of course* you feel anxiety... **[Indicating]** The lines of force are vertical, the planes of compassion are horizontal.

Alexa: **[To Raul]** This is so helpful.

Raul: **[Trying to understand]** The...the *floor* is a plane of compassion.

Bentwood: Exactly.

Alexa: **[Nodding]** You can feel that...compassion, yes...

Raul: **[Thinking]** And the vertical lines?

Bentwood: The lines of force.

Raul: They're...?

Bentwood: The lines of force rise to the heavens to converge with...**[trying to solicit the answer from Raul]**

Raul: **[Thinking, then...]** God.

Bentwood: Let's not say "God"

Alexa: I wouldn't say "God"

Bentwood: Not that there isn't a god...

Alexa: Of course not.

Raul: There's a higher...*being*.

Bentwood: I wouldn't call it a "being" exactly...

Raul: A spirit.

Bentwood: I wouldn't say "spirit."

Alexa: "Spirit's" wrong.

Bentwood: The vertical lines are parallel and yet they rise and converge at infinity...

Raul: Yes, yes...

Bentwood: It's a paradox...

Raul: Yes...

Bentwood: It's the point where we merge with the...the...the...**[trying to solicit the answer from Alexa]**

Alexa: Mystery.

Bentwood: Exactly. ...

Alexa: We converge with the mystery.

Raul: Yes, yes...

Bentwood: We *become* the mystery.

Raul: Yes, yes, yes...

Alexa: This is so exciting.

Raul: We *are* the mystery.

Alexa: My undergraduate experience was so limited, so English Lit, there was never any sort of...*cosmological*...I mean, Milton, Wordsworth, but there was never any...*framework*...any *structure* to hang on to, connect with, just words and rhythms and metaphor...

Bentwood: Beware of metaphor.

Alexa: I wanted something that *explained*.

Bentwood: Metaphor is evil.

Alexa: I never liked metaphor.

Bentwood: We need to purge our lives of metaphor.

Alexa: Metaphor has always made me nervous.

Bentwood: Where are the spiders?

Alexa: **[Looking around]** I don't...

Bentwood: Why aren't there any spiders?

Alexa: **[To Raul]** Have you seen any spiders?

Bentwood: Spiders are the eyes of god.

Raul: **[To Alexa]** You'd think there'd *be* some spiders...

Bentwood: They witness our existence, confirm who we are, see us naked, exposed, the fears, the lies, the desires.

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** Darling, have another cheese, a little more Chardonnay? **[She pours more Chardonnay]**

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** It's very confusing....

Alexa: This is so different for us...

Bentwood: **[Eating the cheese]** This has such a lovely creamy texture...

Raul: We struggled for years and then Alexa's Aunt Athelia died and left her....

Alexa: No one knew Aunt Athelia had a dime.

Raul: Savings bonds.

Alexa: Thousands of savings bonds...**[referring to the cheese]** Isn't this marvelous?

Raul: We don't want to make a "mistake".

Alexa; It's stressful.

Raul: We never had money to spend.

Alexa: We don't really know how to spend it.

Bentwood: You need to breathe.

Raul: We don't really need to work...

Alexa: ...but we want to work, we have "careers"...

Raul: I mean, accounting isn't...

Alexa: We want to stay "involved."

Bentwood: You need to breathe.

Raul: Accounting has given me a "focus" ...

Bentwood: You must breathe together.

Raul: And Alexa enjoys public relations, she's very *good* at public relations...

Bentwood: Breathing will help you...breathe in.... breathe out...**[she starts inhaling/exhaling deeply...**

Pause, as Raul and Alexa engage in a synchronized series of deep inhales and exhales, which Bentwood "directs" with her hands like a conductor, then...

Alexa: **[Suddenly starts crying]** You don't know the awful childhood, moved from place to place, made a friend, lost a friend... **[crying]** I don't *deserve* to live in such a beautiful place.

Raul: We never expected...

Alexa: We didn't *earn* the right to be here...

Raul: **[To Alexa]** Now, darling...

Alexa: We're imposters...

Raul: **[To Bentwood, holding Alexa's hand]** She is Isis, I am Osiris, we are husband/wife, brother/sister, lovers, friends...

Alexa: We have a very passionate relationship.

Raul: A very loving relationship.

Alexa: A very desirous relationship.

Raul: We've wandered together through the wilderness of ambition and desire...

Bentwood: In our work one often feels a rush of emotion...

Alexa: I would die for Raul, I would kill for Raul...

Bentwood: ... painful new raw emotions...

Raul: **[To Alexa]** I need, I love, I desire...

Bentwood: ...an opening of the kundalini...

Alexa: I am ravenous...

Raul: I need you, I love you...

Alexa: I want to devour you...

Raul: I want to be dominated...

Alexa: ...tied...

Raul: ...captured...

Alexa: ...penetrated...

Raul: ...annihilated...

Bentwood: **[Sharply]** Silence!

Long beat

Bentwood: **[As everyone listens]** I'm feeling a presence...**[longer beat as they all listen]** I can't quite tell who the presence is, what the presence....

The shadow of a woman appears behind the scrim at the back of the stage. Periodically throughout the play, Dr. Bentwood and Raul experience presences. On these occasions, behind the rear scrim, shadow presences appear, dimly lit and enact what is being described. These shadow

presences are portrayed by the actors who play Serena and Mario, and appear only in scenes in which the characters of Serena and Mario are not present.

Raul: I feel it, I feel it...

Bentwood: Someone is with us.

Raul: Ever since we moved in...

Alexa: There's no one living above us, the floors haven't been built out...

Bentwood: **[Sharply]** Quiet!

Long beat, as they all listen. The shadow woman walks around, and then the shadow of a man appears, he pauses, and then walks toward the woman.

Alexa: **[Softly to Bentwood]** There are tenants on some of the lower floors...

Raul: **[Softly]** They haven't been able to sell all of the...

Alexa: The economy.

Raul: There's an Asian couple...

Alexa: It's like living on an island...

Raul: You never see anyone in the elevators.

Bentwood: **[Hand up, sharply]** Quiet!

They all listen.

Bentwood: **[Softly]** It's moving, there's more than one.

Raul: Yes ...

Bentwood: Around the room...

Raul: Yes, yes...

Bentwood: There's a woman ...and there's a man...

Raul: I've been hearing...at night...footsteps...

Bentwood: Have they lost something? Are they looking for something?

Alexa: The building creaks, the steel...

Raul: I can't sleep, it's awful...

Alexa: It's a very unsettling environment...

Bentwood: **[Listening]** Have they just died, or are they about to be reborn?

Raul: Poltergeists?

Alexa: The whistling of the wind?

Raul: And the vertical lines rise and maybe they don't converge any more, maybe they just continue forever, no spiders, no god...

Alexa: ...sort like living on a ship, floating in the air....

Bentwood: Breathe in **[they all inhale, then...]** Breathe out **[they all exhale, then...]**

Blackout

Act I, Scene 4

Raul and Mario are standing downstage, looking out the front "window." Alexa and Serena are seated, drinking wine. A fabulous array of sushi is laid out on the low table in front of them.

Mario: **[Facing out, studying the window, the structure]** The curtain wall is interesting...the aluminum structural elements have been integrated with the glass...

Raul: ...a strong geometric quality...

Mario: ...each section secured to the steel skeleton...

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Darling, have some raw fish.

Serena: **[Taking a sushi]** These are so fabulous.

Mario: The horizontal members joined to the steel verticals, a flexibility so that the structure will bend with the winds...

Raul: You can feel it at night, a groaning sound.

Mario: Buildings are alive...

Raul: Haunted.

Mario: ...their own personalities, temperaments...

Alexa: **[Offering sushi to Mario]** Darling, have one of these marvelous little himachis... We found the most wonderful sushi place down the street.

Raul: We've become addicts.

Serena: I love raw fish.

Mario: I love raw fish.

Alexa: Sushi in the morning, sashimi in the afternoon...

Serena: I live for raw fish.

Alexa: ... ebis, amaebis, sabas, hamachis, maguros, unagis. ikuras... **[She pops a sushi into her mouth]**

Raul: **[To Mario]** A little more Chardonnay? **[He refills Mario's glass]**

Serena: **[To Mario]** Raul and Alexa are just so much fun... very sophisticated...

Raul: Serena, dear? **[Offering wine]**

Serena: **[To Raul]** Of course, thank you... **[then to Mario]** Very advanced in their thinking and tastes.

Raul: **[As he pours]** A little peach, a little almond ...

Mario: They couldn't build things like this before the mid-nineteenth century...

Raul: The steel.

Mario: Electricity, elevators.

Serena: **[To Alexa]** I thought inviting Mario to join us...

Alexa: **[To Mario]** We're so glad you were available.

Serena: ...would add a certain... *male* perspective...

Alexa; I love men... **[to Mario]** Darling, have a little unagi...

Serene: Mario and I worked together with the Gartley-Carters.

Alexa: **[Delighted]** Really?!

Mario: I did the walls.

Serena: He did the walls.

Alexa: **[Delighted]** Oh, my dear...

Raul: I love the walls.

Alexa: That fabulous blood red.

Mario: They went through absolute hell dealing with the color issues.

Serena: It can be very stressful.

Alexa: **[To Raul, as she studies the space]** Maybe we *should* consider a strong color.

Raul: Darling, we decided to wait.

Alexa: Darling, color is integral.

Raul: But I think we want something more...

Alexa: I *think* in color, I *conceptualize* in color...

Raul: We're not talking about *not having* color...

Mario: I just love working with clients like you.

Serena: **[To Mario]** I told you you'd like them.

Mario: People who aren't afraid to explore...It can be so difficult for us.

Serena: You have no idea.

Mario: You want to please, you want to help...

Serena: But with judgment.

Mario: It's a balancing act.

Serena: The pressure.

Alexa: It must be awful.

Mario: There's so much pressure now.

Serena: You have no idea.

Mario: We're a service industry.

Alexa: **[Sympathetically]** Oh, my dear....

Mario: The first thing that suffers.

Alexa: Everyone struggles so now.

Raul: Just look at the people in the streets.

Serena: That's it.

Mario: There's a fear.

Serena: It *is* fear.

Alexa: The little people, I don't how they...

Raul: Well, *all* of us... It's not just a class thing.

Serena: It's everyone.

Mario: And you give yourself over completely...

Serena: ...night and day, the phone calls, the anxieties...

Mario: You're the decorator, the therapist, the mediator...I love what I do, helping people shape their environment, design their life...

Serena: **[Arms out to Raul/Alexa]** And the people, I love the people, I adore the people...

Mario: Wonderful people.

Serena: ...getting to know them, discovering what they like, who they *are*...

Alexa: **[To Mario, referring to Serena]** Isn't she just marvelous...we think Serena's the loveliest thing...

Raul: **[To Mario]** Would you care for some more Chardonnay? **[He starts pouring]**

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Come here, darling, and kiss me...

Serena: **[Giggling, to Mario, as she crosses to Alexa]** Alexa and Raul are just so sweet. **[She and Alexa do a bunch of little smacky kisses, then...]**

Alexa: We've been having the *best* time.

Raul: **[To Serena]** Don't I get a kiss?

Serena: **[Crossing to Raul, giggling]** Demanding, but so *simpatico*...**[she and Raul do a bunch of little smacky kisses, then....]**

Alexa: **[To Mario]** You're lovely too.

Mario: **[Laughs/embarrassed]**

Alexa: Really, darling... **[To Raul]** Don't you think he's attractive?

Raul: Very attractive.

Alexa; Beautiful eyes.

Serena: **[To Mario]** I knew they'd like you.

Alexa: **[To Mario]** Raul and I enjoy so much working with younger people...

Raul: **[Studying Mario]** Sensitive, yet manly.

Alexa: ...the virility of spirit, the muscularity of youth.

Serena: **[To Mario]** I told you they were fun.

Raul: **[To Mario]** Do you know Pompeii?

Mario: P...P...Pompeii?

Alexa: *The* Pompeii.

Raul: The ruins, Vesuvius...

Mario: I...I...I love Pompeii...

Alexa: We adore Pompeii...

Raul: It was a spiritual awakening for us.

Alexa: The House of the Tragic Poet?

Serena: Isn't that the most wonderful....

Raul: We want to create a feeling like that.

Serena: Really!

Raul: The effect of that.

Alexa: The spirit.

Raul: The singularity.

Mario: It's one of the great houses.

Serena: The colors.

Mario: The proportions.

Alexa: The mosaic in the entryway.

Serena: The dog.

Raul: We love the dog...

Serena: The trachinium, the atrium, the effluvium...

Alexa: And then you enter the trablinium...

Serena: The frescoes!

Alexa: The frescoes!

Raul: The frescoes!

Mario: The frescoes!

Serena: The colors!

Alexa: My God, my God, my God.

Raul: Yes, yes, yes.

Alexa: Blues, greens, magnificent reds, heartbreaking, captivating, terrifying...

Raul: The cities of the empire were laid out on a grid, borrowed from the Greeks, a central forum with a temple and a palace...

Alexa: ...the lines of force are vertical...

Raul: ...all based on the rectangle, with the walled perimeter...

Alexa: ...the planes of compassion are horizontal...

Raul: ...the king/god protected by the walls, the city's identity preserved by the us/them...

Alexa: The inner/the outer...

Raul: The civilized...

Alexa: The philistine...

Raul: **[Indicating]** Here we have walls of glass...

Alexa: **[Indicating the space]** This is our city...

Raul: **[Indicating the glass]** This is our wall...

Alexa: We are the monarchs, the gods...

Raul: This is our kingdom....

Alexa: ...our empire...

Mario: **[Indicating out the window]** The early twentieth-century stone, that lovely deco...

Serena: ...that fabulous gothic....

Mario: ...the row of 30's brick...

Serena: ...an amazing diversity of forms...

Alexa: ...everyone in their little box, framed in their little window...

Mario: ...the fabulous grid of the streets, the varying grids of the buildings....

Raul: ...the avenues running north and south...

Mario: ... streets running east and west....

Raul: ...the great gash of the diagonal cutting across the grid...

Alexa: **[Holding a sushi up high]** The sleek cold silkiness of the fish, set off by the sweetness of the rice...

Raul: The city is made of walls of glass....

Alexa: ...the sharp bite of the wasabi, the salt of the soy, an erotic ecstasy sliding slowly down your throat. **[She swallows it]**

Raul: ...and women walk the streets in high-heeled shoes, with ankle straps and peek-a-boo openings at the toes.

Blackout

Act I, Scene 5

Alexa is standing downstage, looking out the front "window." Raul is lying on the futon, troubled, not feeling well. It's night, reflected lights, the beam of a gorgeous moon. Behind the rear scrim, the shadow couple reflects Raul's descriptions

Raul: **[Troubled]** You'd think you'd see people in the elevator. I don't see people in the elevator. It's always just us in the elevator.

Alexa: Darling, did you take your antidepressant?

Raul: You'd think you'd occasionally see someone.

Alexa: Antidepressants work only if you take them.

Raul: I'm having sort of a...migraine sort of...sharp pain behind the eyes, the nausea ...

Alexa: Darling, come here, it's a beautiful night.

Raul: Do you hear something, darling?

Alexa: There's a gorgeous moon.

Raul: I seem to be hearing something, sensing something....

Alexa: **[Indicating]** A million little lives right here in front of us, shades open, shades closed, eating, sleeping, striving...

Raul: There's sort of a...

Alexa: **[Turning to him]** We must never have walls, never have curtains.

Raul: **[Listening]** ...noise, like footsteps, it sounds like footsteps....

Alexa: I want to be exposed...

Raul: **[Still listening]** ...a woman's footsteps, a man's footsteps...

Alexa: ...exposed to the world, exposed to each other...

Raul: ... I heard them again last night...

Alexa: ...completely vulnerable...

Raul: ...I was trying to sleep, it was silent, terribly silent and then the footsteps, coming closer, and then they were next to us, with us, becoming us, in bed with us, another man, another woman...Do you think you could hold me?

Alexa: Darling...

Raul: It was an awful day, darling, an awful night, and then an awful day... Meetings from nine, with numbers, an entire day of numbers, rows and columns of numbers, footnotes of numbers, five-year projections, cost-modeling scenarios, budget analyses.... I hate numbers, I can't bear numbers, and I needed to go to the bathroom and you can't go to the bathroom because everybody would *know* you were going to the bathroom and none of them has to go to the bathroom... In the corporate world today you are not allowed to pee...no one pees...you're not supposed to take the time to pee, you're not even supposed to have a bladder.

Alexa: I really think you should try Celexa, I like Celexa... no distortion, no dry mouth...Prozac was awful, Zoloft was worse, Paxil made me gain weight...

Raul: Do you think we've taken on too much?

Alexa: Welbutrin gave me lock jaw, Effexor made me nauseous

Raul: I worry that maybe we've taken on too much...

Alexa: We were miserable, darling, we don't have to be miserable any more...

Raul: Numbers all day long, footsteps at night.

Alexa: Come here, darling, let me hold you.

Raul: What if I get laid off?

Alexa: You're not going to get laid off...let me hold you.

Raul: Robertson got laid off, Miss Chang got laid off, and they were numbers people, I'm not a numbers person and the whole world now is numbers that's the only thing that matters, this binary business, codes, programs, applications... I'm too old, Alexa, too too old.

Alexa: Darling, it doesn't make any difference if you get laid off, we have money now.

Raul: It's your money, darling, it's not my money.

Alexa: It's *our* money.

Raul: I'm getting a gut.

Alexa: Darling, let me hold you.

Raul: I don't want a gut.

Alexa: Come here. **[She opens her arms to him]**

Raul: I don't want a double chin.

Raul gets up slowly, and starts to cross to the downstage “window” where Alexa is standing, she’s holding her hand out to him, but as he gets closer, he stops...

Alexa: Darling, come here.

Raul: **[Hesitating]** I don’t like to get quite that close to the window.

Alexa: Darling...

Raul: **[Hesitating]** I have sort of a...it’s .a height thing...you know, a...a... discomfort...

Alexa: There’s a window here, darling.

Raul: Yes...yes...

Alexa: It’s beautiful.

Raul: I see it all very nicely from...would you care for a beverage?

Alexa: Please come here.

Raul: I think I’ll have a little of this new Syrah. **[He starts to turn away]**

Alexa: Come look at the moon, darling, clouds drifting across the sky, it’s heaven, darling, absolute heaven.

Raul: **[Edging toward the window, but then...]** I get this sort of...it’s a very uncomfortable tingling in my, my...t-t-testicles...it’s a very uncomfortable...**[Beat, then listening]** Darling, I think the space is haunted, I think there are...

Alexa: Darling, come here...

Raul: ...sort of an echo, a feeling, a sense of something, almost a palpable...

Alexa: **[Holding out her hands to him]** When we love, we have to trust.

Raul: When we love, we give each other space to be who we are as individuals...

Alexa: When we love, we share...

Raul: ...allow each other to explore his own story.

Alexa: We’re creating a new story, darling, a beautiful new story...

Raul: ...your story, my story...

Alexa: ...the old stories have been told and retold ...

Raul: Sometimes I think I don’t have a story...

Alexa: ...but altered with every telling...

Raul: ...everyone else has a story...

Alexa: ...distorted...

Raul: ...but I don't really have a story ...

Alexa: ...the original meanings are lost...

Raul: My mother would tell us her story, her father, the Castilian...the ship, the fish, she and her mother cleaning the fish, taking them to market, the long days, the songs, the nights, the war, her father's death...

Alexa: Darling, the past is irrelevant, we've discarded the past.

Raul: I don't deserve you.

Alexa: The rules have changed, the realities are different.

Raul: There aren't any texts, are there?

Alexa: We have to write our own texts, create our own stories, new stories...

Raul: They're not writing texts any more, it's all numbers...

Alexa: **[Looking out, indicating]** Look, there's a lovely couple over there...see them...

Raul: Languages are disappearing, words are disappearing...

Alexa; ... they dance late in the evening, turn down the lights and they dance wrapped in each other's arms... do you remember when we used to dance? **[She starts to dance; the shadow couple is dancing slowly]**

Raul: **[Looking out, but still standing back from the window]** New cities are built on top of older cities, the old buildings decay and are destroyed and the new buildings are built on top of them, and every city is a graveyard of the past, old civilizations covered over by new civilizations...

Alexa: **[As she dances]** We need to dance, darling, we need to move...

Raul: ...this building was built on top of the 20th century, which was built on top of the 19th, the 18th

Alexa: **[Still dancing/moving]** ...the relationship of the foot and the head and the torso and the hand and the heart all moving together...

Raul: You deserve someone better than me...

Alexa: **[Still dancing/moving]** We can move now, darling, we have the space to move and rejoice...

Raul: I must be a huge disappointment...the space is awfully big, don't you think?

Alexa: **[Still dancing/moving]** If we move we fill up the space, if we dance we *become* the space

Raul: **[Holding his head]** ...sort of a spinning, not a good feeling...

Alexa: **[Dancing]** Looking for the light, reaching for the light...

Raul: There was the volcano....

Alexa: **[Indicating out the window]** The light is out here, darling...

Raul: ...and then it erupted...

Alexa: ...the sky, the moon, the stars...

Raul: ...rivers of lava, plumes of smoke, and the ash covered the city, the tragic poet trapped in his beautiful home ... Do you still love me?

Alexa: Of course.

Raul: I just wanted to know if you still loved me.

Alexa: Of course.

Raul: Can you say it? Can you say that you love me?

Alexa: I love you, darling, I love you... we've realized our dream.

Raul: We used to have something to work for...

Alexa: ...this is what we wanted.

Raul: ...there was a goal.

Alexa: **[Looking around]** Beautiful open space and light, like walking on the clouds in the heavens.

Raul: What do you do when you've reached your goal, did anyone ever think about that? You finally reach it and then there you are, and then what are you supposed to do? Do you know? What are we supposed to do now?

Blackout

End of Act I

Act II, Scene 1

In the center there is an array of columns, Pompeii red—six or seven full height, the others chopped off, aged damaged ruins. A Roman sofa sits mid-stage.

Raul, Serena, and Mario are studying at the arrangement, the positioning of the columns, wine glasses in hand, adjusting their stance like museum-goers. Alexa is reclining on the Roman sofa, in the throes of a menopausal headache, fanning herself with a large fan.

Raul: Yes, yes, yes...

Mario: We thought that if we laid out the peristyle...

Raul: Yes.

Mario: ...we could experience the peristyle, the feel of the peristyle...

Serena: ...play with the ideas, the proportions...

Mario: ...make adjustments...

Serena: ...and then move outward...

Mario: **[Indicating areas]** ...the trichinium, the atrium, the tablinium...

Serena: Everything's fluid.

Long beat as they study the pillars, then...

Serena: There's such a beautiful tranquility about the classical structures.

Raul: Yes, yes...

Mario: And the color...

Raul: It's fabulous...

Alexa: I told you.

Serena: Brilliant.

Alexa: I *knew* the color...

Raul: I was wrong, I was wrong, I was wrong.

Alexa: I *understand* color.

Serena: Red is classic.

Mario: Red is the new black.

Raul: I was wrong, I was wrong, I was wrong.

Long beat as they study the pillars, then...

Alexa: **[Troubled]** I don't know that a...peristyle...

Mario: It's not that you *need* a peristyle...

Serena: You don't do anything really in a peristyle...

Mario: It's a reflective space.

Alexa: We don't care about function.

Raul: We despise function.

Alexa: **[Derisively]** Little rooms defined by little functions.

Raul: We hate rooms.

Beat.

Alexa: **[Troubled]** Don't you think it's a little too...

Raul: ...classical.

Alexa: Exactly.

Raul: We *wanted* classical.

Alexa: But not...*too* classical.

Raul: We wanted to reflect the *spirit* of the poet's house...

Alexa: It feels claustrophobic...

Serena: **[Indicating]** Maybe if there were a bit more of an opening right there...

Raul: Yes, yes...

Mario: We can do that...

Serena: More of an "invitation"...

Mario: Everything's moveable... **[to Raul]** Can you help here?

Mario and Raul together move one of the pillars outward a few feet, then stand back to look.

Serena: A little more to the right I think...

Alexa: More to the right... **[Mario and Raul move the pillar a bit to the right]**

Serena: **[Studying it]** A little more forward.

Alexa: A little forward. **[Mario and Raul move the pillar a bit forward]**

Serena: Simple adjustments can completely transform...

Alexa: **[Indicating another pillar]** And if that one were a little more...

Serena: To the left and back a bit.

Alexa: Yes...yes...yes.

Mario and Raul move the pillar to the left and back a bit. They stand back to study the arrangement.

Alexa: **[Studying the new arrangement]** I don't know...

Raul: **[Pacing within the columns]** The poet paced within the peristyle...

Alexa: Darling....

Raul: ...trying to find his words, create his images ...

Alexa: Darling, if you don't mind...

Raul: ...surrounded by the city, the empire, the history of conquest...

Alexa: Darling, please, shut up.

Raul: I was just trying to recreate the...

Alexa: I have a headache now.

Serena: It's awfully difficult.

Raul: **[To Alexa]** Darling, we talked about...

Alexa: **[Holding her head]** *Please*, darling.

Serena: **[Beat, then to Raul, comforting]** We love to be challenged...

Mario: Intellectually.

Serena: It's so rare when we're challenged intellectually.

Raul: The stress has been...

Serena: Of course...

Raul: We've quit our jobs, we thought that...

Serena: Work is so stressful...

Alexa: It feels like a mausoleum.

Raul: Darling....

Alexa: I'm not ready for a mausoleum.

Raul: But you wanted a peristyle....

Alexa: *You* wanted a peristyle.

Raul: I'm not trying to...

Alexa: Attack me! Offend me! Defy me!

Raul: Really, Alexa,

Alexa: **[Shouting]** I don't want a peristyle!

Raul: But, darling...

Alexa: **[Shouting]** I don't want a tablinium!

Beat, as Raul turns away fuming.

Serena: Why don't we come back at a better...

Alexa: **[To Serena]** You don't love me either.

Serena: But, darling, I *do* I love you.

Mario: I love you too.

Alexa: No one understands.

Serena: I think you've handling this marvelously...it takes a great deal of patience...

Mario: **[To Alexa]** You are one of the most beautiful women I have ever met, your mind, your sensitivities...

Serena: ...your insights...

Mario: ...brilliant insights, beautiful eyes...

Alexa: **[Pouting]** I don't like columns.

Mario: I don't either.

Serena: They're awfully clichéd.

Mario: Would you like a little back rub?

Serena: **[To Raul]** Trying to make decisions can raise all sorts of issues...

Mario: Let me just rub you a little, rub your neck, your shoulders...

Mario starts massaging Alexa's back

Serena: **[Softly to Raul]** She'll be fine...

Mario: ...all these feelings coming up, it's beautiful how can express...

Serena: So many clients don't have feelings...

Mario: We just love working with you....

Serena: They have ideologies, but no feelings...

Mario: You have exquisite feelings...

Alexa: **[Pouting]** I don't want to actualize...I don't see why I have to actualize.

Mario: **[Still massaging her]** Just relax, feel the warmth...

Alexa: I want to dream.

Mario: ...let the images dissolve, the thoughts evaporate...

Serena kneels and starts massaging Alexa's feet.

Serena: **[Kneeling, massaging Alexa's feet]** You have such beautiful feet.

Mario: ...feel the warm light enfold....

Serena: ...lovely, elegant feet...

Mario: ...all the anxieties lifting...

A pause as Mario and Serena operate on Alexa...Mario's hands move toward Alexa's breasts, Serena works her way up Alexa's ankle and leg...during which Raul moves downstage, isolating himself, and the lights slowly dim on Alexa/Mario/Serena, rising on Raul.

Raul: **[Downstage, staring out a window]** We started the day in Amalfi and drove up the winding coastal road...we'd never been able to travel, could never afford to... and then Alexa came into the money, and ...we'd always had a passionate relationship, no children, we didn't want children, a very sexual relationship, and as the years went by...you know... it's not quite...it...it changes...somehow there's not quite the...intensity, the urgency...but there...it was... passionate...again...the turquoise-blue water, the sun, making love, morning, night, breakfasts on the deck overlooking the sea...

And Alexa was looking magnificent that day, beautiful, happier than I'd ever seen her, and we drove up the winding coastal road, the hot, hot, burning sun, thousands of years of dust, and then the amazement of arriving at Pompeii, where we walked along the stone-paved roads, hand in hand, the colonnades still standing, what had once been shops, no roofs, ruins of walls, columns... walking in the footsteps where people had walked centuries before... **[trails off, beat]**

At some point we entered a doorway... not knowing what it was...we weren't prepared...up to that point it had been red earth, dust-covered terra cotta, and all of a sudden we walked into the doorway of the house and there on the floor was the mosaic of the black and white snarling dog, and remnants of color in the dark enclosed space, pale mustard walls, fragments of decoration... and then we passed through the small hallway that entered into the atrium that was open above to the sky, sunlight filling the space, a remarkable serenity, a refuge...and we walked in further, through the peristyle, the columns, the central courtyard...
[Turning, calling softly to Alexa] Do you remember that day, darling, do you remember the love we felt that day, love for each other, love for being alive?
[then turning back to the audience] Then the frescoes, all of a sudden through the door you see color, muted remnants of greens, rich reds, the geometric patterns in the tablinium, a gorgeous, gorgeous moment of... recognition...we knew this man...we knew him...we'd been there before...we both knew what this man felt, we knew how this man lived and I started to say, and Alexa nodded, and I didn't have to say, and she started to say, and I nodded...it was a feeling of...intimacy that was...was....**[Turning, calling softly to Alexa]** Do you remember, darling, do you remember that moment inside the house ...**[trails off, a long beat, then turning to the audience]** I always pretend I'm someone else when I make love to her...I always pretend that, that I'm... another man, not me, I was never...I wanted to...I've never thought that I was...exciting enough, and I wanted her to want me, desire me...and I fantasize that I'm a...a stranger...a more handsome, stronger man, a more confident man ... **[trails off, a long beat, then...]**

They found an imprint of his arm, his hand, reaching out...buried in ash, that's how it happened, the whole city covered in mountains of ash, and everyone died, their bodies buried in ash...and they made a plaster casting of his arm, his hand reaching out...seeking...and it's there...in his house...lying at the spot where he died, and we stood there for a long time...**[beat]**...and it was like...his hand was our hand, and his life was our life, and his death was our death, and...and somehow that made us feel so very...very... very...*alive*. **[He pauses, and turns back and watches as Mario and Serena make love to Alexa. There's a slow fade to...**

Blackout

Act II, Scene 2

Alexa, Raul, and Dr. Bentwood are seated downstage. The columns have all been toppled and are lying in random piles around the space.

Alexa: **[Sniveling, to Raul]** You don't love me.

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** I would die for her, I have died for her... She is Isis, I am Osiris.

Alexa; **[To Bentwood]** He doesn't love me.

Raul: **[To Alexa]** All I've ever wanted is to be is who you want me to be, and I've tried, I've tried, I've failed, I know I've failed.

Alexa: You annoy me.

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** She doesn't want me.

Alexa: I love you but you annoy me.

Raul: **[To Alexa]** I want to merge and unite, create our own destiny, planes of compassion, lines of force....

Alexa: I want to hear music, I can't hear music.

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** We wanted to have a sound system.

Alexa: But we can't decide on a sound system.

Raul: We wanted to have a kitchen...

Alexa: **[Tearfully]** The island, the counters, the side-by-side...

Raul: We were happy when we cooked together.

Alexa: We loved to cook together. **[they join hands]**

Raul: **[Tearfully]** But we can't decide on a kitchen....

Alexa: All we do now is take-out

Raul: ...marble, granite, laminates ...

Alexa: **[Tearfully, their hands clutching]** We wanted to create something beautiful...

Raul: But we're aliens, we don't *belong* here.

Alexa: We've lost our identities here.

Raul: We don't know who we are here.

Alexa: Menopause is hell...

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** She's been having...

Alexa: Hot flashes...

Raul: It's been....

Alexa: ...can't sleep, always irritable...

Raul: ...mood shifts, very severe....

Bentwood: **[To Alexa]** It's a beautiful part of the cycle of life, my dear...

Raul: ...a terrible suffering....

Bentwood: ...part of the marvelous degeneration that forms the central plot line of our lives.

Alexa; **[Sniveling]** We thought that money would make things easier.

Raul: Money *does* make things easier...

Alexa: *Some* things easier...

Raul: ...but you have to *do* things with it ...

Alexa: You have to *actualize*.

Raul: We don't know *how* to actualize...

Alexa: We've always had to *temporize*.

Bentwood: Change is always difficult.

Raul: **[To Alexa]** I have become an animal, you have made me an animal...

Bentwood: So many times in the therapeutic relationship...

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** I was a human being until I met her and then she turned me into an animal.

Bentwood: I see clients who are clinging, yet resisting...

Raul: ...a wounded animal...

Bentwood: ...circling around each other...

Raul: ...a wounded, tormented, tortured, heartbroken, *dying* animal.

Bentwood: But with you there has been growth...real growth...

Alexa: It's very painful.

Raul: There have been problems.

Alexa: People have been moving out of the building, people who hadn't even moved in.

Raul: They buy, they sell.

Alexa: They never move in.

Raul: Second thoughts.

Alexa: Fear.

Raul: The building groans in the night, groans in the day.

Alexa: Our floor is a so-called "designated area of refuge."

Raul: In the event of an emergency, people above us are supposed to come here...

Alexa: ...there are designated floors...

Raul: We're supposed to have resources....

Alexa: ...food, water, first aid supplies...

Raul: But they haven't given us resources.

Alexa: **[Indicating]** People are moving out of the building across the street too.

Raul: War was the natural outgrowth of the creation of the city...

Alexa: And they're moving out of the building over there **[indicating]**.

Raul:the need to protect the polis, defend the civilization, protect the king/god/culture in order to survive...

Alexa: You can't tell who the enemy is now.

Raul: You used to know.

Alexa: You don't know now.

Raul: Everybody's the enemy.

Alexa: The power went out the other day.

Raul: The elevator wouldn't work.

Alexa: There was no one to call, twenty-ninth floor and the elevator doesn't work.

Raul: We have to pay a maintenance fee, you realize...

Alexa: Absolutely outrageous...

Raul: And *no* maintenance...and all of a sudden this foreign couple...

Alexa: Pakistanis...

Raul: ...came through the door...

Alexa: No knock, no call...

Raul: ...the door opens, and in come the Pakistanis...

Alexa: Looking for the "designated area of refuge."

Raul: We didn't know what do to.

Alexa: I offered them some Chardonnay.

Raul: They didn't speak English.

Alexa: I had some Brie.

Raul: Very awkward.

Alexa: Hideously awkward.

Raul: And finally we all decided to walk down to the ground floor.

Alexa: All twenty-nine floors...

Raul: ...to find out what was going on, and then we found a dead man...

Alexa: A dead man.

Raul: In the lobby.

Alexa: But no maintenance.

Raul: It's global.

Alexa: So we called the police.

Raul: And they came.

Alexa: But they couldn't fix the elevator either...

Raul: ...and nobody knew who the dead man was.

Alexa: This is the way it is now.

Raul: Death is anonymous.

Alexa: Life is anonymous.

Raul: We're simple people.

Alexa: I was a carhop...

Raul: Trusting people...

Alexa: My father owned a drive-in restaurant and in the summers during high school I worked as a carhop...

Raul: Beautiful, young, ripe...

Alexa: ...small town, knew all the faces...

Raul: ... summertime smiles, furtive sex...

Alexa: Raul drove in one day in a black Buick convertible.

Raul: I was older.

Alexa: I knew it was love.

Raul: We discussed Stendahl...

Alexa: ...a moment of crystallization.

Raul: Elvis was singing "Love Me Tender"

Alexa: The attraction was...

Raul: Immediate.

Alexa: Powerful.

Raul: My heart was pounding...

Alexa: ...a beautiful, sleek, black, four-hole, Buick Roadmaster V-8...

Raul: We thought we'd be happy...

Alexa: Raul's been having....

Raul: ...it's not that we're *not* happy...

Alexa: ...performance difficulties...

Raul: Darling...

Alexa: Erectile difficulties.

Raul: For god's sake.

Alexa: Ever since we moved in....

Bentwood: **[To Raul]** It's a beautiful part of the cycle of...

Raul: **[Indicating]** All these windows, we're just so exposed... I'm not used to being an exhibitionist.

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** He doesn't love me.

Raul: For god's sake...

Alexa: **[To Raul]** You used to have constant erections, beautiful magnifi...

Raul: Darling...

Bentwood: **[To Raul]** ...all part of the marvelous degeneration....

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** She went on a rampage, a hideous drunken tantrum, screaming, crying, pushing columns over, yelling, cursing...accusing me of...

Alexa: I did not accuse you...

Raul: ...of trying to brainwash her.

Alexa: I did not say brainwash.

Raul: You said brainwash.

Alexa; It's *my* money, let's not forget that...

Raul: That's the point isn't it.

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** He thinks he can manipulate me.

Raul: I have *never* manipulated you in my entire life, I *can't* manipulate, I don't know *how* to manipulate, and you *want* me to manipulate, you *want* me to dominate, and I can't dominate, I can't control... I'm...I'm....I'm....passive.

Alexa: **[Beat, then calmly indicating out the window]** The man over there has phenomenal erections...

Raul: For god's sake...

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** There's a young couple across the street.

Raul: He's in his twenties, for god's sake...

Alexa: A beautiful young couple...

Raul: We can see them, they can see us, everybody can see everybody...

Alexa: **[Looking out the window]** Every night they make love.

Raul: There's no privacy any more, everything's on display...

Alexa: **[Transfixed watching the couple through the window]** A slow gentle love.

The shadow presences appear behind the scrim and act out what Alexa is describing.

Raul: ...people watching us over there, people watching us over there.... ghost people wandering around, invading our space, taking over our lives...

Alexa: ...a tender, forgiving love...

Raul: I can sense them, I can feel them

Alexa: **[Looking out at the couple, transfixed]** ...and she takes off her scarf...

Raul: ...at night, in our bed, another couple, a younger man, a younger woman...

Bentwood: There are presences that we create...

Alexa: **[Looking out at the couple, transfixed]** ...and he takes off his tie...

Raul: ... images of our younger selves...

Bentwood: ...fragments of ourselves that we can't escape...

Raul: ... following us, tormenting us, haunting us...

Alexa: ...and she starts to take of her blouse...

Raul: ... shadows in a candlelit room...

Alexa: ...and he stops her and they kiss...

Raul: ...shadows that converge and change form, touching each other, merging with each other...

Alexa: **[Facing the window, as she cups her breasts with her hands]** I want to give myself to you...

Raul: ...the odor of sexual heat...

Alexa; **[Moving toward the window]** Take my breast **[She exposes the tip of a breast to the window]** Love me, take me, devour me, destroy me...

Raul: ...the smell of the juices, the odor of lust, the moist fervid delicious stench and slime of desire...

Blackout

Act II, Scene 3

Mario and Serena with Alexa, stage left, Raul stands removed. Columns are arranged in row and divide the space in half, downstage to upstage—Alexa's side, Raul's side.

Serena: Designing a space together can....

Mario: Everything comes to the surface, all of your feelings, the essence of who you are....

Alexa: **[Indicating, stage right, stage left]** I'm going to live on the East side, Raul on the West.

Raul: A separation.

Alexa: We're individuating.

Raul: We've become too enmeshed.

Alexa: I am moving into a more...

Raul: Voyeuristic...

Alexa: **[To Raul]** Please don't finish my sentences...

Raul: **[To Alexa]** You've been finishing mine for years.

Alexa: **[To Mario/Serena]** He used to be so docile, and now he's...

Raul: I'm an introvert, she's an extrovert.

Alexa: Don't categorize me.

Raul: ...a voyeuristic, exhibitionistic extrovert.

Alexa: Thank you.

Raul: **[To Mario/Serena]** She's been exhibiting herself to the neighbors, they've been exhibiting themselves to her.

Alexa: What could be more neighborly?

Raul: We're feeling isolated.

Alexa: Hermetically sealed.

Raul: Trapped in a glass box, thousands of feet in the air.

Alexa: We've thought about selling, but you can't sell...

Raul: ...no market, no one wants to buy...

Alexa: Foreigners are invading the building...

Raul: Some sort of tribe is camping out on the fourth floor.

Mario: It's happening all over town.

Raul: The colonized are colonizing the colonizers.

Alexa: All their belongings wrapped in rugs.

Raul: The oppressed cultures are taking over the dominant culture.

Mario: There are the squatting cultures and there are the sitting cultures.

Serena: **[Nodding]** Pillow people and chair people.

Raul: These were pillow people.

Mario: Squatting is in, sitting is out.

Serena: I love pillows

Mario: You're a squatter.

Alexa: *I'm a squatter.*

Raul: **[Shaking his head]** I don't think my back...

Alexa: **[Visualizing]** Maybe I should just do pillows.

Serena: I want you to be happy.

Alexa: Piles of pillows...

Serena: **[Standing, very upset, near tears]** I want you to have a beautiful environment so you can have a beautiful life.

Mario: It's very important to us.

Serena: I want you to have security and peace and a beautiful bamboo floor, and custom-made area rugs, and furniture arranged in casual-yet-stimulating conversational "groupings." **[She starts sobbing]**

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Darling...

Mario: **[To Alexa/Raul]** Your life becomes our life...

Serena: **[To Mario, crying]** I just want them to be happy.

Mario: It's very emotional, a transference sort of...

Serena: We look up to you, we admire you.

Mario: We've grown very close to you.

Serena: I feel like I *am* you.

Mario: ...an occupational hazard...

Serena: *Your* feelings, *your* desires....

Mario: ...identification with the client...

Serena: ... *your* visions.

Alexa: We feel very close to you too.

Raul: Yes, yes...

Alexa: We identify with you too.

Raul: Younger versions of ourselves, finding your way.

Alexa: We want *you* to be happy.

Raul We wouldn't want do anything to upset...

Serena: **[To Alexa]** I want to love, I don't know that I can.

Mario: We've been having a...

Serena: I want to be vulnerable, but I...

Mario: We'd been involved before...

Serena: I feel closed and I want to respond...

Mario: It wasn't serious, really, but...

Alexa: **[Nodding/understanding]** ...sexual.

Mario: Very sexual.

Alexa: Powerful.

Serena: Very powerful.... He's very...

Alexa: Skilled.

Serena: I'm very...

Alexa: Sensitive.

Mario: And the other night we left together, and I asked her if she'd like a drink and...

Serena: Isn't he attractive?

Alexa: Awfully attractive.

Mario: One thing led to another...

Raul: **[Pouring]** A little more Cabernet?

Serena: We're both having a hard time financially.

Alexa: Oh, my dear...

Mario: You're our only clients at the moment, the economy...

Alexa: If you need any help, we'd be happy ...

Mario: With interior design it's feast or famine.

Serena: **[Crying again]** I lost my apartment...

Mario: She's been staying with me, but my landlord...

Serena: **[Crying]** We're both going to end up on the street

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Darling, darling, darling...

Raul: I'm sure Alexa and I...

Alexa: Darling, Raul and I don't have any family...

Raul: We've always been alone.

Alexa: Too alone.

Raul: Never had close friends, intimate friends...

Alexa: You could live here if you'd like.

Raul: Well...

Alexa: We'd love that!

Raul: Alexa, darling...

Alexa: Create a separate area for both of you, an area for me, an area for Raul....it'll be fun, come on...

Raul: Alexa, I don't think...

Serena: **[Beat, then shaking her head]** We couldn't possibly.

Mario: **[Shaking his head]** Really that's so...

Alexa: **[To Raul]** At least for a while until they can get back on their feet.

Serena: You're really such lovely people.

Mario: Generous lovely people.

Serena: Beautiful people.

Raul: We've enjoyed so much...

Serena: We don't deserve you.

Raul: You give us a certain vitality.

Alexa: We need your stimulation

Raul: **[To Alexa]** Couldn't we just put them on sort of a...retainer?

Alexa: We'll all spend more time together, sort of "adopt" each other, gain an intimacy.
[Mario and Serena are quite uneasy]

Raul: Darling, perhaps they'd rather...

Alexa: **[Suddenly energized]** I'm going to do pillows, piles of pillows, a labyrinth of pillows.

Raul: **[Resigned, sarcastically]** I'm going to do chairs.

Alexa: ...mounds of pillows with pathways...

Raul: A history of chairs.

Alexa: Your space, our space...

Raul: Egyptian chairs, Roman chairs...

Alexa: ...all of us living together...

Raul: ...sitting, squatting...

Alexa: ...meeting at the center to cook, to dine...

Serena: **[Backing away]** I really don't think...

Mario: It's awfully nice of you, but...

Raul: **[To Alexa]** Darling, they don't want...

Alexa: **[Leading Serena to the front window, excitedly]** You can see the whole world from here, everyone living in a glass tower, vertical colonies of people, every window a different story, absolutely magnificent.

Raul: Happiness, sadness...

Alexa: Life, death...

Raul: An old woman shot herself over there the other day. **[He indicates]**

Alexa: Blew her brains out.

Raul: We were sitting right here.

Alexa: Pointed the gun to her head.

Raul: It was sunset.

Alexa: Blood, brains everywhere.

Raul: We had just opened a bottle Chardonnay, a little paté, it was remarkably silent...

Raul: ...the glow of red light washing through the windows...

Alexa: We were both looking down...

Raul: ...looking at her....

Alexa: ...an old lady sitting looking at the setting sun...

Raul: ...she seemed so content...

Alexa: ...little half smile on her face, turned up to the sun...

Raul: ...and then she placed the gun to her head...

Long beat, as they all stare out the window, then...

Blackout

Act II, scene 4

The pillars have been regrouped further upstage, arranged in a rectangle, a large piece of colorful, tribal fabric draped across the top to form a tent-like shelter, within which is a primitive grill, on which Alexa is toasting Thai chicken weenies. Outside the tent, there's a display of chairs and an array of pillows. The fabrics are colorful, indigenous weavings and batiks.

Alexa, Raul, Mario, Serena, and Dr. Bentwood are moving chairs around, arranging, rearranging them. There's an air of celebration, wine-drinking, delight at the new décor.

Bentwood: By moving a chair we can realign the energy of the space. **[She moves a chair]**
Whether we're entertaining, contemplating, each movement is a new realignment, a new way of seeing and thinking, the perspective changes with the light and the occasion. **[She moves a chair]**

Alexa: When we talk we can place the chairs close together. **[She does so]**

Raul: When we want to be alone, we can move a chair to the other side. **[He does so]**

Mario: Or recline on a pillow. **[He does so]**

Serena: **[Picking up a pillow, moving it]** We can move a pillow and change the dynamic of the conversation.

Alexa: We can move a pillow and carry it as an offering of peace. **[She offers Raul a pillow]**

Mario: We can place the pillows in a circle to create a context of engagement. **[He arranges pillows]**

Bentwood: There's a musicality.

Serena: An interweaving of rhythmic structures, colors, movement.

Mario: The impromptu nature of life.

Alexa: I love impromptu.

Raul: We wanted impromptu.

Bentwood: We're so structured.

Alexa: Too structured.

Serena: Victims of our own habits and culture.

Mario: We're addicts.

Serena: Addicts of habits.

Bentwood: We can raise a chair over our head **[she does so]** and establish a new frame of reference.

Mario: We can stand on chair **[he does so]** and inaugurate a new way of being.

Serena: We can stand on a chair **[she does so]** and expand our horizons.

Raul: We can raise a pillow over our head **[he does so]** and create theater.

Alexa: We can raise a platter of Thai chicken weenies over our head **[she does so]** and create a party.

Everyone claps and cheers.

Raul: We're simple people.

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** Thai chicken weenies, no nitrites?

Raul: Humble people.

Alexa: ...a touch of cumin, a hint of turmeric. **[She offers them around]**

Raul: We were going to have an island, a Viking range, a SubZero fridge...

Alexa: **[Offering]** Thai chicken weenie?

Raul: But we're not Viking people.

Mario: Of course not.

Alexa: We're not SubZero people.

Serena: Of course not.

Raul: So we decided...

Alexa: This is the point.

Raul: We couldn't decide.

Alexa: We didn't *want* to decide.

Raul: This is the point.

Alexa: We want primitive.

Raul: Elemental.

Alexa: We don't really want a Viking range.

Raul: We only *thought* we wanted a Viking range, *dream* about a Viking range...

Alexa: Not have.

Raul: "Have" is so overrated.

Alexa: "Have" is the end of all possibility.

Serena: **[To Bentwood, taking Alexa's hand]** Alexa and Raul are so enlightened

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** Isn't she lovely? **[She and Serena kiss]**

Raul: **[To Bentwood]** Serena and Mario are staying with us for a while.

Alexa: We've been having so much fun.

Mario: We're going through a bit of a tough stretch.

Serena: We've had to rely on our dear friends.

Alexa: It only makes sense.

Raul: All this space.

Alexa: Gathering together our tribe, our own little sanctuary in the sky.

Bentwood: **[Understandingly]** Everywhere outside it's desperation and need.

Serena: Chaos and death.

Mario: Mothers, babies, starving, wandering the streets.

Bentwood: People building fires on the street corners, a vast migration of the homeless.

Raul: We're developing new strategies to survive.

Mario: Raul and I go out together to find provisions.

Raul: Hunting, gathering.

Alexa: Serena and I have been bartering with a tribe of Hutus in the building next door.

Serena: Most of the textiles **[indicating]** are from the Third World.

Bentwood: This is now the Fourth World, a new paradigm.

Mario: The modern, the primitive.

Bentwood: An amalgam.

Alexa: Marvelously creative.

Serena: Requiring new solutions.

Mario: Indigenous treatments in modernist containers.

Alexa: Batik is so chic.

Raul: **[Offering]** A little more Chardonnay?

Bentwood: I've been having financial difficulties also.

Alexa: Oh, my dear.

Bentwood: And my health...

Alexa: I'm so sorry.

Bentwood: The stress of change, the anxiety of the unknown...

Raul: Everyone's suffering.

Bentwood: ... the packs of dogs, the gangs, the garbage, the corpses of birds, the rats.

Alexa: It's global.

Mario: You always think that your life is going to get better.

Serena: I was going to have a baby, but I don't want a baby.

Alexa: There are too many babies.

Mario: We'd buy our own place, build a business...

Serena: I *hate* the rats.

Bentwood: Everything's out of alignment, the rivers of the world are running together, the currents are changing course, and there's a sciatic something shooting up my leg, up my back, up my neck, nerves screaming, especially at night.

Mario: It wasn't supposed to end up this way.

Bentwood: Joy is in the small of the back.

Raul: You get older and everything starts falling apart.

Serena: **[Starting to cry]** I feel like I don't exist, I don't want to exist.

Bentwood: The lumbar is joy.

Raul: I have constant headaches, nausea, malaise.

Serena: I never existed, I never had chance to exist.

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Darling,

Raul: I can't sleep.

Bentwood: **[To Alexa/Raul]** I was wondering if I could move in too. I wouldn't be any trouble.

Mario: I always wanted a tree house.

Raul: Does anyone remember sleep?

Mario: I'd be happy living in a tree house.

Bentwood: I'm really very tidy, very compact.

Serena: I hate décor, I always thought I loved décor, but I hate it, I hate it, I hate it...**[she breaks down sobbing]**

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Darling, darling, darling..

Mario: **[To Raul]** She says she wants me and then she backs away...

Alexa: **[To Serena]** You're beautiful, darling....

Mario: **[To Alexa]** I try to be understanding...

Alexa: **[To Mario]** You're beautiful too.

Mario: **[To Serena]** Maybe we could move to Costa Rica, live in the sun...

Serena: **[To Mario, angrily]** You just want my body.

Alexa: Everything's going to be all right.

Serena: **[To Alexa, angrily]** *You* just want my body.

Mario: ...find a little bungalow, grow bougainvillea...**[he's holding back tears]**

Alexa: **[To Serena]** Darling, we're here to help you, we want anything you want,

Bentwood: **[Demonstrating/helping the others to transcend]** The head is floating...

Alexa: **[To Mario]** We want you to love us.

Bentwood: The neck is lengthening...

Alexa: **[To Bentwood]** We need you to love us.

Bentwood: Joy is in the small of the back...

Alexa: Joy is in the small of the back.

Bentwood; The lumbar is joy.

Alexa: The lumbar is joy.

Raul: The lumbar is joy.

Bentwood: The head is floating.

Raul/Alexa/
Mario: The head is floating.

Bentwood: I am not my head.

Raul/Alexa/
Mario: I am not my head.

Bentwood: I am the small of my back.

Raul/Alexa/
Mario: I am the small of my back. **[Serena is mouthing the words]**

Bentwood: Joy is the small of my back.

Raul/Alexa
Mario: Joy is the small of my back. **[Serena mouths/almost vocalizes the words]**

Bentwood: I am joy.

Raul: I am joy.

Alexa: I am joy.

Mario: I am joy.

Serena: **[Sobbing]** I am joy.

Blackout

Act II, Scene 5

Nighttime, rain running down the windows, a rumble of distant thunder, candles lit, no power, no heat.

Raul is lying on the futon upstage, curled up in fetal position.

Alexa is standing downstage at the front window, smoking a joint, looking out.

Behind the scrim, the shadow couple stands motionless, holding hands, their backs to the audience.

Alexa: It had been a convent...

...14th century, thick white stone walls, stone floors, silent hallways, air that carried the scent of a thousand years.

She inhales on the joint, holds it for a bit, then exhales.

Perched on a cliff, hanging magically over the luminous blue turquoise blue sea...we'd never seen water like that, sun like that...

And our room, whitewashed, virginal, shuttered widows cut through the foot-thick walls, opening out onto the eternal sweep of the sea...

And at night, we made love.

She inhales on the joint, holds it for a bit, then exhales.

Then afterwards, we lay quietly...

...my hand reaching over in the dark to his...

...his hand reaching over to mine...

...touching each other, listening to the sea crashing against the rocks below.

She inhales on the joint, holds it for a bit, then exhales.

There's a flash of lighting, followed by a roll of thunder.

We drove the next day to the time-scrubbed ruins, narrow streets, the bathhouse, the granary, the apothecary, houses of merchants, traders, the tragic poet...

And we walked slowly, holding hands, practically the only people there that day...

...alone together in a beautiful old world, a once-alive, now dead world..

...and for those moments we were exactly who were when we met...

... young... innocent... in love... alive.

There's a flash of lighting, followed by a roll of thunder. Alexa takes another hit of the joint, as Raul slowly rises from the futon, stretches, and slowly moves toward her.

Raul: Darling...I'm having a sort of...I don't know...sort of a strange...

A big smashing flash of lighting!

Alexa: Wow!

The roll of thunder.

Raul: It's going to be bad... they said it was going to be bad...

A flash of lighting!

Alexa: **[Offering him the joint]** Darling, have a little hit.

Raul: Darling, I don't think...

A flash of lightning!

Alexa: Wow!

The roll of thunder.

Raul: I don't think I should smoke, when...

Alexa: Come on, you like it when you...

Raul: It's just that...no, no, really...I...I...I

But then he takes the joint and takes a deep hit.

A flash of lightening, a roll of thunder, the rain comes down the windows more heavily.

Pause, as Raul takes another hit, holds it, then exhales, pauses for a bit.

Raul: There's never going to be a moment of perfection.

Alexa: **[Looking out the window]** Poor little people.

Raul: That's where we go wrong thinking that there's going to be a moment of perfection.

Alexa: **[Indicating out the front window]** Look at poor little people.

Raul: Darling, they depress me...

Alexa: Their candles, their little oils lamps.

Raul: I'm having sort of a...queasy feeling...

Alexa: ...lighting their little candles, staring out their little windows,

Raul: ...like the floor is moving...

Alexa: ...no power, can't watch TV, no little glow of electric blue light. **[Then turning to him]** You are such a beautiful man...

Raul: Do you feel kind of queasy?

Alexa: ...a beautiful passionate sensitive sensual man...

A flash of lightning!

Raul: Darling, I worry about your standing so...

The roll of thunder.

Raul: Darling, please get away from the window, please...

Alexa: Darling, hold me...

A barrage of lightening/thunder

Raul: **[Terrified]** Maybe we should get out of here...

Alexa: **[Trying to lead him to the window]** Come, darling, it's fabulous...

Raul: **[Resisting]** The whole building's like a lightning rod, one strike and ...

Alexa: It's beautiful, come here...

Raul: There's sort of a swaying...

Alexa: Let me hold you.

Raul: ...swaying, groaning, severe structural stress...

Alexa: Do you remember Pompeii, darling, that day, our love, the feeling we had of... ?

A really, horrendous barrage of lightning/thunder...

Raul: **[Terrified]** I...I... think we should ... evacuate... there's no power, no lights, no ventilation system which means there's no air, it's just a matter of time before...

Alexa: Darling, come here... hold me....come here, I want you to be with me, please...

She holds out her hand to him, urging him toward her, he edges toward her, then stops, she urges, he edges toward her, then stops, she urges, and slowly he edges baby step by baby step, then...

Raul: **[Pulling away]** How did we get here, darling? How did we...I don't understand....

Alexa: We don't need other people, darling we have each other.

Raul: This was all a mistake, a terrible mistake, we should never, never...

Alexa: We wanted excitement, they were young, they were beautiful...

Raul: ...we wanted to *be* them, be attractive *like* them...

Alexa: ...recapture the excitement we felt when we were young.

Raul: I think we're really very nice people,

Alexa: We're marvelous people.

Raul: Very generous people.

Alexa: They needed us, we didn't need them.

Raul: We should have bought in the country...We could have had grass, trees, perennials...

Alexa: **[Derisively]** Costa Rica.

Raul: I've always wanted perennials.

Alexa: Darling, hold me.

Another wild flash of lightning/thunder!

Raul: We'll get the flashlight, we'll take the stairs...

Alexa: Hold me, please,

Raul: We're going to suffocate...

Alexa: Please hold me.

Raul: ...there isn't any air, there never has been any air, it's *not* air, it's something they re-circulate through every floor that they *call* air, and there aren't any spiders, there never have been any spiders, there never will be any spiders because spiders know there's nothing to breathe, there's nowhere to spin, you can't be a spider on the twenty-ninth floor.

Alexa: **[Running her hands over him]** Darling, let's make love.

Raul: **[Resisting]** Darling...

Alexa: I need you,

Raul: I need you too, but...

Alexa: I need to know that you still desire me.

Raul: I do, I do, I do.

Alexa; I need reassurance.

They kiss passionately. Behind the scrim, the shadow couple mirrors their actions.

Raul: **[Very aroused]** I think I might be having a heart attack.

Alexa: Darling, strip me, tear off my clothes...

Raul: **[Breathlessly]** I'm having sharp pains, darling.... an awful constriction...

They kiss passionately.

Alexa: **[Running their hands over each other]** When we make love we are anonymous.

Raul: When we make love we are blind.

Alexa: When we make love we are spirits without any names.

Raul: When we make love we're transported to another dimension.

Alexa: Planes of compassion, lines of force.

Raul: Your story, my story...

Alexa; Our story...

They kiss again passionately, but then...

Raul: **[Pulling away]** There's someone here, darling, I can tell, there's someone with us.

Behind the scrim, the shadow presences slowly start to undress each other.

Alexa: Darling...

Raul: I can feel them, I can hear them...

Alexa: It's just you and me, darling.

Raul: It feels sort of like...

Alexa: ...echoes of our past....

Raul: Are they our ghosts?

Alexa: ...shadows of ourselves when we were young ...

Raul: ...our ghosts, waiting for us to die, waiting to take over and move in...

There's a pause as Raul, back turned to the audience, watches the shadow couple. Alexa stares ahead looking out the front window.

Alexa: We walked, we held hands, we entered the House of the Tragic Poet, and back in the shadows, we kissed...

The shadow couple kisses.

Alexa: And then we kissed some more...

The shadow couple kisses some more.

Alexa: And slowly, lovingly, like a ceremony, we stripping naked...

[beat] ...and lay together on the stone ground...

[beat] ...and made the most beautiful love.

There's a pause, as behind the scrim, the shadow couple continues their love-making, as the light slowly fades on them.

Raul: **[A pause as Raul turns and stares out the front window]** Do you think they'll walk here some day?

Alexa: I miss our old life...

Raul: Tourists wandering through the ruins...

Alexa: ... the old apartment, the old neighborhood...

Raul: ...deserted streets, skeletons of steel, fractured, twisted, fallen...

Alexa: ...the dogs, the Korean market...

Raul: ...plaster castings of corpses, hands outstretched, reaching, begging...

Alexa: **[Beat, then crying]** I liked our old kitchen...

Raul: **[Starting to cry]** I miss accounting. ...

Alexa: ...the little nook with the stools, the sunlight through the window...

Raul: **[Crying]** ...the asparagus fern...

Alexa: ...the spiders.

Raul: The Buick Roadmaster convertible.

Alexa: I loved the Buick Roadmaster convertible.

Raul: Sleek, black, silver/chrome trim.

Alexa: Young, free, our whole lives ahead of us.

Pause, as they hold each other and stare out the front window.

Alexa: When we die we will die together...

Raul: Cities formed around burial grounds, holy sites...

Alexa: ...wrapped in each other's arms....

Raul: ...places where rituals were performed, sacrifices made...

Alexa: **[Indicating]** ...the cool gray progression of towers....

Raul: ...receding grids of steel and glass...

Alexa: ...the avenues of expectations

Raul: ...the streets of humiliation and shame.

Alexa: We are at the apex.

Raul: We are in our prime.

Alexa: We are joy.

There's a huge flash of lighting/ roar of thunder.

Raul: **[Beat]** Darling...I...I...I think I may have... w...w...wet my pants.

Blackout

End of play