

Admirer

FEMALE ADMIRER. I heard that he comes here. Is that true? I mean is that really true?

(She notices PICASSO.)

OH MY GOD! Oh my God. You. May I approach? May I really approach?

(She walks toward him.)

I can't believe it. What is it like to be you? I mean what is it really like? ...

(Looking into his face, her demeanor changes.)

Wait a minute, you're not Schmendiman!

(Suddenly bored, she walks toward the door, exits.)

PICASSO. *(Exasperated.)* Well, another typical night!

(He wanders over and stands staring at the painting. He becomes lost in it. GASTON re-enters.)

GASTON. I learned something here tonight.

FREDDY. What's that, Gaston?

GASTON. You take a couple of geniuses, put them in a room together and... Gee Willikers.

FREDDY. Boy, you really know how to turn a phrase.

GASTON. What I mean is, these two guys are smart. That's what it must take to be a genius. Brains. An incredible amount of brains.

(Entering with fanfare, from the toilet door, the VISITOR, a Singer From The Fifties, age twenty-five. He wears blue suede shoes and has jet-black hair. He shakes stardust off his shoulders, looks around curiously. Everyone eyes him as he goes up to the bar, looks at the Matisse painting, wanders away, swirls his hips at GASTON, finds that funny, sits down.)

Don't tell me you're a genius too.

VISITOR. Shucks no.

GERMAINE. Something to drink?

VISITOR. Sorry ma'am, don't drink. Do you have a tomato juice? I'm just a country boy.

(GERMAINE collapses, then gets up.)

FREDDY. Tomato juice. You want something in that?

VISITOR. Like what?

FREDDY. Well, like vodka.

VISITOR. *(Giggles.)* You're kiddin'!

(GERMAINE goes weak in the knees again, gets up.)

By the way, watch the shoes.

FREDDY. What brings you here?

VISITOR. Well, I kinda like surprising people, you know, poppin' up where you're least expected. So I thought I'd do a little time travelin'. Try another time zone.

GASTON. Put some vodka in it.

(The VISITOR looks around at the group in the bar.)

VISITOR. You seem like some pretty nice folks.

GERMAINE. How dare you. This is Paris.

FREDDY. *(Offended.)* What do you mean, pretty nice folks?

VISITOR. Well, you know, friendly, good natured. Accepting of strangers.

GASTON. Why would I change now?

VISITOR. Well, where I come from that's what people are like.

GERMAINE. Where are you from?

VISITOR. Memphis.

FREDDY. Memphis, Egypt?

VISITOR. No sir. Memphis is in America.

(“Oh.” Silence. FREDDY starts polishing the bar. GERMAINE starts cleaning glasses. GASTON takes a long swing.)

Countess

(to PICASSO.)

GERMAINE. You've got the perfect and oldest pick-up line: "I'd like to draw you."

PICASSO. That's outrageous.

GERMAINE. Maybe it's unconscious. I just think that somewhere way back you realized you weren't maybe the handsomest things around and decided to go a different route.

EINSTEIN. I'm disgusted!

(A woman enters, glasses, braving, well-dressed, long red hair.)

Countess!

COUNTESS. Albert!

EINSTEIN. Did you go to the Bar Rouge?

COUNTESS. Of course not, that's where you said we'd meet.

EINSTEIN. Oh how stupid of me, of course you'd come here.
COUNTESS. Now what was that you were saying about it being impossible to distinguish motion produced by an outside gravitational force.

EINSTEIN. (To the room.) God she's sexy! ...

(They start to leave. **EINSTEIN** speaks to the **COUNTESS**.)

...it's impossible to distinguish you know, two bodies unified...in a field...

(**FREDDIE** taps the bill on the counter. The **COUNTESS** pays. **EINSTEIN** is a little embarrassed, but not enough to stop her.)

(He turns to the room, suddenly wearing *rhapsodia*.)

Although we may never meet again, like the roots of the sequoia grabbing deep in the earth, the ideas we have said here tonight will lace themselves irrevocably through the century.

PICASSO. (Grand.) This is the night the earth fell quiet and listened to a conversation!

EINSTEIN. (The same.) O Lapin Agile!

PICASSO. Picasso, Einstein, Picasso, Einstein. My only regret is that we'll be in different volumes in the encyclopedia.

EINSTEIN. But there'll be no Schmandman to come between us.

(**EINSTEIN** exits.)

PICASSO. I envy him.

FREDDY. Why's that?

PICASSO. In science, there's no reason to ever get cynical.

FREDDY. Why would an artist get cynical?

PICASSO. I think it's called marketing.

FREDDY. I've got to run next door and catch Antoine before he leaves town without paying his bar tab.

(To audience.)

I might be gone a longer amount of time than you'd think it would take a person to run next door and catch Antoine before he leaves town without paying his bar tab, but in theatre, it's okay.

(And he exits. **GASTON** re-enters.)

PICASSO. Gaston, don't you have to pee?

GASTON. Not at all!

(Realizes.)

Oh, there it is.

(On his way out, to **FREDDY**.)

What are you putting in your drinks? Liquid?

(He turns and exits. **PICASSO** walks over to **GERMAINE** and they kiss...you can tell it's not the first time. They break.)

PICASSO. Tasty. Quite tasty.

GERMAINE. What was I? Dessert?

PICASSO. What do you mean?

GERMAINE. I mean how many meals have you had today?

EINSTEIN. And how will you change the century?

SCHMENDIMAN. With my invention.

PICASSO. What is your invention?

SCHMENDIMAN. It's an inflexible and very brittle building material.

EINSTEIN. Oh? What's it made from?

SCHMENDIMAN. And I'll tell you what it's made from: equal parts of asbestos, kitten paws, and radium. The only problem with it is that building considerations only allow it to be used in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and the island of Krakatoa, East of Java. But still! That's a big market! So everyone have a drink...!

FREDDY. On you?

SCHMENDIMAN. Uh...no. Just have a drink and remember my name: Schmendiman.

(They all say "Schmendiman" rather lamely.)

You see there's a distinction between talent and genius. Talent is the ability to say things well, but genius is the ability to, well, say things! Talent sells a million in a year, but genius, sells five thousand a year for two hundred years!

(To EINSTEIN.)

Can you compute that or am I movin' too fast for you?

(To the room.) You have to work to have talent. But genius comes gift-wrapped in a blue box from Tiffany's!

GASTON. Picasso, Einstein and Schmendiman. Somehow it doesn't have a ring.

SCHMENDIMAN. Which one's Picasso?

(GASTON points.)

I've heard of you...nice work. If you like blue.

Come to think of it, it's about time for a Spaniard again... I mean it's been a long time since "Yell-ath-kweth" ...I'm just needin' ye! You would be interested in my process. Creation is easy! Just follow the path of least resistance. You're supposed to paint butcha feel

Schmendiman

like dancin'? DANCE! You're supposed to write butcha feel like singin'? SING! That's what I did. Remember, the shortest distance between two points is a foot and a half. No pun intended.

FREDDY. No pun achieved.

SCHMENDIMAN. I struggled to be a writer but my heart told me to invent a very brittle and inflexible building material, which by the way is called "Schmendimite." And I did! That's why I know my place in history is secure... I followed my heart. Next bar!

(Goes toward the door, speaks like a cheerleader.)

Schmenda... Schmenda... Men Men Men! Wait! I just had another idea! A tall pointy cap for dunce!

(Snaps his fingers. He exits.)

GASTON. What the hell was that?

FREDDY. I admire his confidence. And nothing else.

EINSTEIN. Here's the way I look at it. We're not so much going to change the century, as bend it. Let's say Picasso here is a genius. The century is just flying along in space and it whizzes by Picasso here and it picks up speed and it flings itself off in a new direction. Like a comet veering left at the sun. The century is just zigzagging along, bending and curving, influenced by the powerful gravity of people like Picasso. But the century itself, because we're in it, appears to be heading straight.

GASTON. How can something be curved but appear to be straight? Come on, buddy.

EINSTEIN. *(Sarcastic.)* Gee, I never thought of that. I guess you're right. HOW ABOUT THE HORIZON YOU NITWIT?

GASTON. Are you trying to get my goat?

EINSTEIN. No, I'm just trying to explain something. You'll be happy to know that not only is the horizon something that appears to be straight but is actually curved, but so is space in general.

*(The VISITOR thinks, steps back, then gestures toward the painting. Effect: The painting changes into the full-size, eight-foot square painting of Picasso's "Les Demoiselle D'Avignon."** PICASSO and the VISITOR stare at the painting in wonder. No one else, of course, sees it. PICASSO turns away from the painting, entranced.)

PICASSO. *(To himself.)* I could dream it forever and still not do it, but when the time comes for it to be done God I want to be ready for it, to be ready for the moment of convergence between the thing done and the doing of it, between the thing to be made and its maker. At that moment I am speaking for everyone; I am dreaming for the billions yet to come, I am taking the part of us that cannot be understood by God and letting it bleed from the wrist onto the canvas. And it can only be made because I have felt these things: my love, my lust, my greed, my happiness.

(Turns to the bar.)

So this is what it's like.

GERMAINE. What?

PICASSO. To be there at the moment.

GASTON. What moment?

PICASSO. The moment I leave blue behind. I'd like some wine.

GERMAINE. Any special color?

PICASSO. *(He looks back at the painting.)* Rosé.

(To the VISITOR.)

My name is Picasso. Are you an artist?

VISITOR. I had my moment.

Visitor

PICASSO. What kind of moment?

VISITOR. I had my moment of...perfection.

PICASSO. I know the feeling. I just had it over there.

VISITOR. It's a good feeling.

PICASSO. Yes it is.

VISITOR. I think not many people have it.

PICASSO. No, no they don't.

VISITOR. Hard to know when it's happening, till it's over.

PICASSO. Don't tell anyone that; better to let them think you always knew.

VISITOR. Yes sir.

PICASSO. Don't let anyone in on the fact that we can't help it. We're like the chickens that cross the road. We do it and we don't know why.

VISITOR. Yes sir.

PICASSO. And remember, in a sense, we are both exalted, because we are originals.

VISITOR. Well, that's a pretty bold statement, Mr. Picasso, considering we both took ideas from the art of the Negro.

(Magic music. The set pulls away, revealing a backdrop of stars in the sky. The painting is still visible. EINSTEIN pops out of his chair, looking up.)

Whoa!

EINSTEIN. Did you see that?

VISITOR. The roof is gone.

EINSTEIN. The stars have come out.

PICASSO. Millions and millions of stars.

EINSTEIN. You're way low.

VISITOR. It's night. I didn't know it was night, you know, the time traveling thing. I arrive, I don't know if it's lunch or dinner or what. I've put on eighteen pounds. Hoping to take it off when I go back.

*A license to produce *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* does not include a license for the use of Picasso's "Les Demoiselle D'Avignon." Licensees will need to acquire rights for usage of "Les Demoiselle D'Avignon" on their own.