

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE

It is late September, about 5:30 in the evening. The interior of Jerry and Ginny's apartment in the East Village. There is a couch in the middle of the room; a couple of folding chairs piled in the corner; a small coffee table; an old TV (the older the better) pushed out of the way in a corner; possibly a couple of posters on the walls. Upstage Center is the kitchen area. A small refrigerator can be seen. ~~Far to left of center, a bathtub and a rather high-looking sink (plumbing fixtures included) are also visible.~~ Further Upstage Left is the entrance to the apartment. ~~Upstage Right is the bedroom area; bunkbeds are seen through the doorway. There can also be a cupboard off area for changing clothes.~~ Downstage Right is Jerry's locker. Downstage Left is an old upstater rest chair. ~~Upstage Left is a door open and closed.~~ Jerry enters. He has a traveling bag over his shoulder. He is carrying an 8x10 glossy of himself. There are a few moments of indecisive action. At last, he sits on the couch, stares at his picture and tears it up.

JERRY. What next?

STEVE. (He has been hiding behind the sofa. Quietly, he appears. He is wearing a gorilla mask and a brown derby. Jerry has not seen him.) Excuse me, do you know what time it is?

JERRY. Holy shit!

STEVE. Wait. Before you say anything. I've got something wonderful to tell you! (He removes mask as he speaks.)

JERRY. WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY APARTMENT?! You trying to give me a heart attack or something?!

STEVE. Oh, it's OK, Ginny let me in. She went to pick up her dress at the cleaners. How'd the audition go?

JERRY. What are you doing in my apartment, Steve?!

STEVE. You weren't right for the part, were you?

JERRY. Never mind! (Jerry moves to kitchen area.)

STEVE. Jerry, it doesn't matter! Wait till you hear what—

STEVE. May I make an observation? Do you know why you have so much trouble at auditions? It's because you're tense. It's very hard to feel at ease in the presence of someone who's unnaturally tense. Do you know what your body says to the average person? It says: Tension. Do you realize what that—

JERRY. Why don't you ever listen to me?

STEVE. Because I'm your friend. What's the matter? Did your boss give you more static about taking off to go to auditions?

JERRY. Can't you see I've got a lot on my mind? And it's more than just an audition or a job that's bothering me?

STEVE. Of course I can see that. I'm not insensitive. Will you just let me tell you what I've been trying to tell you?

JERRY. Would you like a beer?

STEVE. Sure. Fine. *(Jerry gets the beer, hands one to Steve.)* Thanks. OK. Are you ready for this? You know that girl with the red hair who comes in the book store where I work? Miriam? Well, she knows I'm a writer, and she said she didn't know why she never thought of it before, but this morning she tells me if I ever come up with an outline for a situation comedy pilot, she has got contacts with Norman Lear and can get him to read it! Do you believe this?! Norman Lear?! Producer of *All in the Family*, *Mary Hartman*, *Mary Hartman*, right? OK. Now. By a strange coincidence, what do you suppose I have been working on in secret for the past two months? A completely original TV series in which— now, hold on to your seat!—I have modelled the central character on you. I even gave him your name! His name is Jerry! One day it just comes to me: a situation comedy about a group of people who are members of the very first TV generation, born and raised during the dawn of the Atomic Age, whose lives have gone nowhere, whose dreams have been shattered, who see themselves as hopeless failures, or, at best, historical curiosities, and who do not have the slightest idea what to do about it! I mean: I firmly believe the time is ripe for something like this: it cannot miss! Do you see what I'm getting at? You'll never have to work in an office again. When the show is picked up, guess who I'm going to recommend for the part? There will be no way they can turn you down! Well? What do you think? *(Pause.)*

JERRY. Steve, I hate to tell you this.

STEVE. Tell me what?

JERRY. You're fantasizing again.

STEVE. No, no, no! I'm not fantasizing again. You're wrong!

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What I'm writing now is the cumulative result of everything that has happened to me in the last ten years: this is it! I know it! OK. OK, so maybe it sounds a little pretentious, but I'm convinced that I have finally achieved some form of maturity as an artist.

JERRY. *(Holding up gorilla mask.)* Maturity, Steve?

STEVE. Don't you appreciate what I'm trying to do for you? I was trying to cheer you up. I thought it would make you laugh!

JERRY. It was a great success, Steve. Thank you.

STEVE. *(Taking mask quickly.)* Hey, don't tell me you don't remember this? I found it in a box in my closet last week. You used to have one, too. Don't you remember in grammar school we used to watch the Ernie Kovacs Show over at Bobby's house, and there was this routine called The Nairobi Trio with these guys in gorilla suits, so the three of us went out and bought these masks and we used to get all dressed up every—

JERRY. Steve, we're almost 30 years old!

STEVE. So what!

JERRY. You know why I feel sorry for you?

STEVE. You know I do. *(Pause.)* It's been 15 years since Ambrose died, but to me he was always more than just a parakeet.

JERRY. Because you're silly! Let's face it, you are a silly man. There's no other word for it. I, on the other hand, am a stupid man. But you know what? I would rather be a stupid man than a silly man, because a stupid man at least tries, a stupid man cares, a stupid man, in his own stupid way, has integrity! Not like a silly man! How can a silly man care about anything, or have integrity.

—OF—

STEVE. Don't stop now. This is much better than the speech about the soup.

JERRY. Goddammit, Steve! Does it amuse you to watch my mind

turning into a piece of Swiss cheese? Well, does it? *(Pause.)*

~~The director is wearing his office hat. She is wearing a dress on a hanger.~~

~~CHERRY: Hello, hello, hello, hello, hello, hello.~~

~~STEVE: Hi, Jimmy.~~

~~GANNY: (To Jerry.) Hi, like my hair? Mr. Norris let me have the~~

~~afternoon off so I could go have it done. How was the audition?~~

~~(Pause.) You weren't right for the part, were you? What did the~~

~~director say? I bet he said you gave the best audition he saw all~~

~~week.~~

JERRY. He said this character in the play needed to convince the

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END