

entering

Virginia /
James / Gus

VIRGINIA. Is there a can in here? That fucking Shirley MacLaine's had me in a corner telling me who she was in her previous lives until I thought I would burst.

JAMES. Through there. You were wonderful tonight, just wonderful. I'm just telling the Coast.

VIRGINIA. You got the coast on there? Give me that mother! *(She takes the receiver.)* Hello, California. This is Virginia Noyes. I'm back on Broadway, I'm feeling fabulous and you can all go fuck yourself. *(She hands the phone back to James.)* Am I going to regret that?

JAMES. Only if you're going back to California.

VIRGINIA. After tonight? No way! They can stick my Oscar up their collective ass! This one's back where she belongs. *(She exits into bathroom.)*

JAMES. Virginia Noyes, looking like a Robert Rauschenberg, and feeling no pain. Washed up at 97. It's a cruel business, this. *(He remembers Gus' warning.)* Oh my God! Miss Noyes! Miss Noyes!

VIRGINIA. *(Off.)* Hold your horses! I just sat down!

JAMES. Be careful of that dog in there.

VIRGINIA. *(Off.)* What?

JAMES. There's a dog in there with you.

VIRGINIA. *(Off.)* What dog?

JAMES. A vicious dog. Miss Noyes?

VIRGINIA. *(Off.)* Is that what that is? *(She laughs.)*

JAMES. *(Back into phone.)* Listen, what were our ratings like this week? That's not good, I don't like that, Sue, I don't like that at all. I told them not to put us in that time slot. I can't compete with dolphins. *Designing Women* I can handle, but I draw the line at fish. They can't cancel us. I'll kill myself. Tell ABC I'll kill myself. Besides, I'm having a swimming pool moved. Don't they know what that costs? Please, Sue, I don't need the stress. I'm here to celebrate the opening of my best friend's play. I'll be back late tomorrow. We'll schmooze. Yes, mother. Yes, yes, yes. Big kisses. Ciao. *(He hangs up. Gus enters struggling with a fur coat of exaggerated length.)* Don't tell me. Let me guess. Tommy Tune, right?

GUS. I beg your pardon sir?

JAMES. Gus, if you want to be in the theatre, you've got to learn to stop calling everyone "sir." It makes them feel old.

GUS. Yes, sir.

JAMES. We like "darling" or "honey" or "angel" or "pussycat" or "cupcake" or "love" or "lamb" or "petal." Well, you get the drift.

GUS. Thank you, darling.

JAMES. You're welcome. (I think I've made a terrible mistake!)

GUS. Mrs. Budder just got back from the hospital.

JAMES. Where is she, the dear?

GUS. She'll be right up. She asked you to wait for her.

JAMES. Up here? What for? I'm missing the party. (*Virginia comes out of the bathroom.*)

VIRGINIA. You know, there is a dog in there when you get right up close to it.

JAMES. What did you think it was?

VIRGINIA. My agent.

GUS. You let her go in there?

JAMES. Miss Noyes is a law unto herself, Gus. (*Virginia sits and starts going through her purse.*)

VIRGINIA. It's straight city down there. My agent said "Ginny, don't let anyone see you doing that. You're not in Hollywood. That's Helen Hayes over there." I said, "Honey, I don't give a flying fuck if it's Gabby Hayes. I am going to get a little buzz on." I have been straight since the first day of rehearsal. School is out. Let's see, what have we got here? Grass, Thai stick, hash, coke, ludes, uppers, downers, saccharine (this stuff'll kill you), Vitamin E, Revlon Lip gloss, Tiger Balm. (*To James.*) You want a hit?

JAMES. No thank you. I had some at home.

VIRGINIA. You?

GUS. I'll just say no, ma'am. I gotta stay on the ball. Thanks anyway. (*He goes.*)

VIRGINIA. He's kind of cute for a Hitler Youth.

JAMES. He didn't have a clue who I was and he wants to be an actor!

VIRGINIA. Who are you?

JAMES. I'm James Wicker.

VIRGINIA. Right.

JAMES. We did a film together.

VIRGINIA. Which one?

JAMES. *Red Dawn*.

VIRGINIA. Was I in that? I'm sure it'll come back. Did you ever have your own hair?

JAMES. No, that's Dyan Cannon. We're often mistaken.

VIRGINIA. I'm sorry. James Wicker! Of course! Hello again. I love your work. I love it, I love it.

JAMES. Thank you.

VIRGINIA. When I forget someone, I really forget someone. How the hell are you? You look marvelous.

JAMES. I came in on the Red Eye.

VIRGINIA. When they sent me Peter's play, they told me you were doing Jack's part.

JAMES. There was some talk about it, they wanted me desperately, as a matter of fact, but with my series ...

VIRGINIA. You got a series?

JAMES. For five years now.

VIRGINIA. I'm sorry. I do a lot of self-destructive things but I draw the line at television. I don't watch it and I won't do it.

JAMES. I just take the money and run.

VIRGINIA. Yeah. But are you happy?

JAMES. Relatively. Are you?

VIRGINIA. Fan-fucking-tastic. Living in L.A., you forget what being on a real stage is like. Two planks and a passion!

JAMES. We have theatre in L.A. I just did *Little Foxes* with the "Golden Girls."

VIRGINIA. That isn't theatre; that's a hiatus.

JAMES. Speak for yourself.

VIRGINIA. My only mistake was going out there in the first place. They made me an offer I couldn't refuse.

JAMES. I know. They make us all an offer we can't refuse: money.

VIRGINIA. It's not just that. I wanted to see myself forty feet tall.

JAMES. It's either that or 18 inches small.

VIRGINIA. I wanted to see what they'd do with my tits.

JAMES. I wouldn't let them go near mine.

VIRGINIA. I don't see the crime in that.

JAMES. It's the American Dream.

VIRGINIA. I see the asshole but I don't see the crime. Thank god for this play! I was flying out there tonight. It felt wonderful. Don't you miss all this?

JAMES. No way.

VIRGINIA. Aw, c'mon.

JAMES. Wild horses couldn't get me up there again. I'm too old, too rich, and too nervous.

VIRGINIA. You don't know what you're missing.

JAMES. Neither will you till that first cold rainy night in March when you can't get a taxi cab after two performances.

VIRGINIA. No way. Well, my loins are girded. Come on, I'll buy you a drink.

JAMES. I'd love to but I'm waiting for our hostess. Would you tell her I'm up here? If Liza starts to sing, I'll come down.

VIRGINIA. If Carol Channing starts to sing, I'll come up.
(Virginia goes. James looks at his watch.)

JAMES. Oh my God. It must be getting time for the first reviews. *(He turns on the television with the remote control module.)* Oh God, I dread this. They're gonna crucify him. *(The door is flung open. Frank Finger is seen at the top of the stairs. He yells to people off at the bottom of the stairs.)*

FRANK. I don't wanna hear! I don't wanna know. *(He comes into the room and slams the door behind him.)* It's a zoo down there. Kiss, kiss, kiss. Darling, darling, darling. Phony, phony, phony. Puke, puke, puke.

JAMES. Hi.

FRANK. Fuck you, too. What are you looking at?

JAMES. I'm James Wicker. I know what you mean. Opening nights are dreadful. Do you know who's reviewing for Channel 5 now?

FRANK. Some idiot. Do we have to have that thing on? Reviews are killing the theatre.