

RAZ'R T'NGO

A play in one act

Written By

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RAZ'R T'NGO

A sharp, brilliant saxophone cuts through the darkness. A single, cool blue spotlight illuminates the SAXIST at the back of the auditorium. The Saxist is a slender, supple woman in stiletto heels wearing a skintight, white dress with long, ravenous hair. Moving toward the stage, the rift quickly builds into a sensuous, intoxicating melody. As she reaches the stage, neon flashes light a free-standing fire escape upstage. Fog fills the stage and swirls up the stairwell. The music becomes more rhythmic as the Saxist climbs the fire escape to the first platform. Building to a crescendo, she suddenly stops as a butterfly knife lands center stage in a pool of white light.

A FORM enters from stage left. He is covered completely in a shiny reflective material. No features can be made out. Lights from four spotlights bounce off him every time he moves. Using two sai, he works through a very graceful and powerful routine. He reaches center stage and removes the knife with an exaggerated flair. The Saxist plays a quick, shrill phrase. A challenge. Form answers back with a series of short, precise moves. Saxist answers back with a more intense and complex response. Form mimics the Saxist and augments his response. This continues as the two try to out do each other. After Form completes a rather intricate series of steps, we hear glass shatter. Saxist retreats to the back of the fire escape as Form moves extreme down stage right and sits yoga style.

Lights come up as the glass breaks. A waist high bar stool sits center stage surrounded by three bar stools. The right and left sides of the stage are bordered by 8 full length free-standing mirrors, four on each side. A wet bar sits stage right of the fire escape just in front of the first down stage mirror. Several wine glasses and a knife set sits on the counter top.

BERT: (*yelling, offstage*) What was that all about? I don't believe this. What's gotten into you? Hey! Wait a minute. Hey! Talk to me about this.

NINA: (*entering*) You talk, I'm leaving.

BERT: (*entering behind her, he is carrying a bottle of wine and fresh cut roses which he sets on the table*) Hold on just a second. Where are you going? I am not letting you leave without an explanation.

NINA: Do you have a finger?

BERT: (*puzzled*) Yeah.

NINA: Do you know how to use it?

BERT: (*still confused*) Huh?

NINA: (*grabbing his hand and showing him his finger*) See this? If you put a quarter in a phone, it's completely capable of pushing the right buttons, provided you haven't forgotten them. You do remember what a phone looks like? Telephones. Reach out and touch someone. (*collecting her coat and purse*)

BERT: Yeah, I know what a phone looks like.

NINA: Good. (*She exits. Bert leans against the bar table, looking bemused. We hear Nina's heels click into the distance, stop and return. She throws her coat down on the table.*) I am not leaving. I live here. You get out.

BERT: Get out what?

NINA: Get out now!

BERT: Come on, Nina. So I'm late. I'm sorry.

NINA: Late tonight or late last night? It amazes me how you could possibly ever be late, the way you drive. Anyway, that's beside the point. I want you to leave. (*Bert sits*) Why do you do that?

BERT: Do what?

NINA: Why do you always do exactly what I ask you not to?

BERT: (*coy*) You seem to like it sometimes.

NINA: Don't start with me! Not today. Not now. Not ever. I want you out of this apartment right now. (*pause*) I am serious.

BERT: Nina, this is silly.

NINA: Silly. You think this is silly? I'll tell you what's silly. Four thousand dollars to fill my bath tub with earthworms is silly. And what do we have to show for it? The world's largest bait shop. In my bathroom. Two days you said. Two days were all you were going to need, they'd be gone, and you'd turn this incredible profit. It's been almost a week, Bert.

BERT: I know, I know. Keno's coming over to get them this weekend.

NINA: This weekend! Don't even mention this weekend. Damn it, Bert. How long have we been planning this weekend? Suddenly another one of your hair-brained schemes becomes so important you can't free up two days for your girl friend? Am I asking too much here?

BERT: I'm sorry about this weekend.

NINA: I said not to mention this weekend.

BERT: Okay, okay. Just calm down for a second.

NINA: Calm down? Calm Down! I can't bathe, Bert. Do how have any idea what that's like? Do you? Do you know what that does to a person? I have to go next door to old man Henderson's to take a shower. And I can't begin to describe what a wonderful experience that is. He drools when I walk down the hall. It's a sterling endorsement for his pacemaker that he can survive the thought of me naked in the same apartment. He probably has a stethoscope glued to the wall when we make love.

BERT: I hope he gets an earful.

NINA: (*ignoring him*) It's Wednesday Bert. The weekend is still three days away.

BERT: Two.

NINA: What?

BERT: Two. Two days. The weekend starts officially on Friday. Thursday, Friday. Two.

NINA: Don't start that shit with me Bert. What am I supposed to do in the meantime?

BERT: I said I'd take care of them, okay. (*pulls a bar stool up to her*) Here, relax. Sit down for a second.

NINA: Don't tell me to sit down. I don't want to sit down. I'm upset. I don't feel like sitting down. (*She sits*) I want the Bert Neland Gourmet Earthworm Emporium out of my bathroom!

BERT: Okay, I'll get rid of them right now, if that's what you want.

NINA: And do what with them, Bert? Take them back to your place? But, no, you don't have a tub, do you? There's another miracle of modern technology. The sonic shower. You're going to change the way America thinks about getting clean. We're going to scour you clean with waves of harmless sound. No more mess! No more fuss! No mold, mildew or wet, soggy towels. Oh, don't worry that it vibrates the nails out of the walls and the tile off the floor. It's progress.

BERT: So it's got some bugs that need to be worked out.

NINA: If you call having your own personal earthquake every time you take a shower a "bug". And what about that scam this summer, the TTD...tele...tela... transthing.

BERT: (*getting edgy*) Teledyne Transmitter.

NINA: That's right, and now what's this new thing Keno was telling me about? Something about fire extinguishers.

BERT: (*getting hot*) It's a fire protection solvent. It fireproofs things. Keeps them from catching on fire.

NINA: Maybe you should try some on yourself.

BERT: Was I on a coffee break when they made the "Rail-on-Bert" Day announcement or did a bug the size of Nebraska just crawl up your ass? So I've tried some things that didn't quite pan out. You're pissed because I didn't call last night. I'm sorry. Okay? It was late when I got in. I knew you had to be at the hospital early and I didn't want to wake you.

NINA: Concern? For me?

BERT: This is getting ridiculous. Can we do this later? We're going to be late for dinner.

NINA: Why is it when something is important to you, it's a National Emergency, but when it's important to me, it's dinner time.

BERT: Excuse me? I'm not sure, but I believe the last national emergency we had was when a certain person, who, for the sake of posterity shall remain nameless, threw a conniption fit, not to mention a perfectly good cat out the window, simply because he was relieving tension on a recent issue of the Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy.

NINA: It had an article that was pivotal to my research!

BERT: Fine. Just don't yell at me because I'm trying to maintain an environmental safe house for healthy invertebrates and you're playing Holy Hand Grenade with the house pets!

NINA: He landed on his feet!

BERT: On the hood of a passing Ford Ranger. It's a miracle the thing can still walk!

NINA: That still doesn't excuse opening the earthworm farm in my bathroom.

BERT: Fine.

NINA: Don't take that tone with me.

BERT: (*in exasperation*) Whatever.

NINA: I cannot believe this.

BERT: What?

NINA: You really don't know, do you? You don't have a clue.

BERT: Why don't you just cut to the chase and tell me. What is going on here? I'm not the one lobbing vases at the front door. I'm not the one so flustered and high strung I forgot where I live. I got tied up in traffic. You know what traffic looks like. (*beat*) Keno told me Warner isn't going to option the script because it's not "commercial" enough. One of the P.A.'s showed up with a viral infection and whales all over the set, which we had to shut down early because Harvey the Wolverine decided to make Spam out of his trainer's arm and Stallone shot another arrow through a \$10,000 lens. (*beat*) I just want a nice, quiet dinner, maybe a movie, some wine by the fireplace. I'm a little late, no later than usual, and you're lit up like Joan of Arc on a Christmas tree!

NINA: All right, lover. Since you obviously haven't been keeping tabs on current events let's see if I can bring that steel trap mind of yours up to speed. I'll even draw you a road map so you don't get lost. Watch my lips, okay? (*over emphasizing*) I have had it!

BERT: Is this another "what are you going to do with your life, Bert Neland" inquisitions? Cause if it is, I don't need it. What do you want from me? I'm not in a profession where I can just take my resume, walk into some office and get picked up for 50K working 9 to 5. I've got to beat sidewalks. I pound on doors, live in dark, smoky rooms with burnt out slobs, run errands out to the middle of nowhere. I work 16 hour days. I have dues to pay.

(*beat*) What do you have? A "practice". Practice? Come on Nina, why is it called a "practice"? Huh? What are you "practicing" for? When does it get to be the "real" thing for you? "Practice" seems to say it's okay to make mistakes. "Oops" sorry 'bout that. It's just my "practice." When do you put it all on the line? When does it really start to matter for you? I grind reality between my teeth everyday and I handle that responsibility pretty well. I know what I have to do.

NINA: Do you? You may feed on reality all right, but you don't relate to it very well. You don't have the stomach for it. When was the last time you finished something you started? (*Her tone softens*) How many screen plays and story outlines do you have filed away in that computer? You've always got something new cooking while the old pots either boil over or burn dry. You never put a period on anything. You've got the talent, Bert. But you've got to take some risks.

BERT: (*pulls a knife out of the block and plays with it*) Risk doesn't pay the electric bills or put bread on the table.

NINA: Have you ever had to face anything that might cost you something? Or are you more afraid of failure? Is that why you never finish anything? You can't fail with me, Bert. I'm not interested solely in what you do. I'm in love with who you are. (*beat*) Or at least I thought I was.

BERT: What are you trying to say?

NINA: Depth. Depth. You have no depth. You're shallow, Bert. (*pause*) God, you don't know how hard this is. I didn't want to have to do this, but I just can't go on like this. If you had a deep thought I'm scared you'd drown in it. You just don't know how to open up to anything or anyone with true substance. You're fun, Bert, but being with you is like a constant diet of cotton candy. It tastes sweet but it's all fluff with nothing to sink your teeth into. What are you so afraid of?

BERT: (*pointing with knife*) I don't know. You're the psychologist. You're so smart, you've got it all figured out. You tell me.

NINA: You're afraid to commit. To me. To anything. Commitment isn't even in your vocabulary except as a spectator sport.

BERT: What is that supposed to mean?

NINA: Don't try to change the subject. You're terrified to take a risk, because if you slip up, fail or get cut, you just might bleed. Then we'd know you were human after all.

BERT: Oh good. You figured that one out all by yourself, did you, Counselor. What do you want? A merit badge? Give the lady a merit badge. What's next, Miss Eagle Scout?

NINA: *(beat)* Girls don't become Eagle scouts.

BERT: Huh? What is that...? *(beat)* Do you always have to be so semantically correct. Just the right word in just the right way at just the right time? You and this perfection thing. Do you ever make a mistake?

NINA: Right there.

BERT: What?

NINA: Right there. You just did it. Right then. Did you see what you just did? *(pause)* No, of course not, because that's what you're all about isn't it? *(beat)* Oh no. Don't tell me. You really don't see it, do you? You don't even know you're doing it. You've been doing it for so long it just comes naturally. *(He is still lost)* Do you need a schematic, here? Look around you. This is what I'm talking about. We're right in the middle of something, getting close to your personal space and you change the subject.

BERT: *(toying with knife)* Shit! Holy shit. I just cut myself. *(Holds his hand out to Nina who looks a bit confused)*

NINA: What?

BERT: I just cut myself with this knife. How the...?

NINA: *(cutting him off)* Well, that's what you get for playing with sharp objects *(takes the knife from his hand, replaces it in block and hands him a bar towel)* Here.

BERT: *(extended pause)* Okay, when?

NINA: When what?

BERT: When was I shallow? I am not shallow.

NINA: A thimble has more depth, Bert. I've never seen you cry or get really upset. You never talk about how you feel. Everything about you is so superficial.

BERT: I may not throw vases and cats and I may not be grammatically correct all the time. I may not even get upset when you think I'm supposed to. I may not be this great emotional well you're looking for, but I have depth. I laugh and I cry.

NINA: All you ever do is laugh, that's the point. Ho Ho the clown doesn't laugh as much. Make sure all the pieces are in just the right place. You're so calculated. Everything fits perfectly into Bert's ordered little world.

You never just react. Oh sure, you can be spontaneous, as long as it's planned spontaneity. You're like a little boy that was told to grow up and be strong. Eat all your vegetables, make lots of money, but don't cry. I need more than that.

BERT: React? React! You want to see me react. You want some real emotions. I'll give you emotion! (*throws wine glass*) There.

With this, Bert launches into an emotional tantrum culminating in the stabbing and breaking of one of the bar stools.

BERT: Was that spontaneous enough for you?

NINA: (*opening the bottle of wine*) Well, it certainly fits the bill for wanton destruction. I hope you feel better. Ever notice how feelings aren't very logical? (beat) That must be it. I'd never noticed the points on your ears before. You must think you'll die if you express or acknowledge emotion.

BERT: You know me better than that.

NINA: Do I? Do I really know you? I don't know the first thing about you. I don't know who you are or what you're about. Nothing.

BERT: I don't hide anything. I am as up front and honest as they come. I don't rag on you when you're always at the hospital late or go into a panic because the aquarium temperature isn't quite optimum. So I'm not as intense as you are. I'm solid. I may not always be immediately at hand, but you know I'm there for you. You know how busy I am. I've got a lot going.

NINA: What about me, Bert? How important am I to you? Would I even be here if the right project came along? How long before the new wears off, you lose interest, and I'm left here alone with a bleeding heart and a tub full of earthworms. How can you expect me to love you, to know you, when you don't even know yourself?

BERT: What do you want from me? Tell me. Just tell me.

NINA: (*studying him carefully*) I want to see your other side. I want to know the real you.

BERT: This is me. This is the real me.

NINA: Then if this is all there is, I'm leaving.

BERT: (*desperate*) Wait. Hold on. Just let me say one thing, okay? All right.. Just listen to me for a second. (*She stops*)

NINA: Go ahead, what is it? *(beat)* Come on, dazzle me *(Long pregnant pause. He realizes he has nothing to say.)* Get out.

BERT: Nina, I'm sorry. I really am sorry.

NINA: *(bitter)* Well, that pretty much just fixes everything now, doesn't it? You could probably cut me and the wound would heal right up. I'm sorry won't change anything. *(beat)* You never call. You're never there. When was the last time you asked me how my day went, or went out to a nice restaurant or a walk in the park? When was the last time you just held me? When was the last time we danced?

BERT: We've never danced.

NINA: My point exactly. *(long pause)* I just want to know, what do you want out of this?

BERT: I don't know. *(catching himself)* I mean I know, but I'm not sure. I mean...I don't want to lose you. I've had a shitty day. I'm starving. I've got reservations at Chez Lui, it's someplace nice. Here's got a chance to go out to dinner. That's what you want, isn't it? *(pause)* Nina. I even stopped off and picked up a bottle of wine. I had a vase for the roses until you plastered it across the front door. Can we please work this out over dinner?

NINA: There you go again. Eat now, talk later and skirt around the issue. *(She slithers up to him and pats his stomach)* Satisfy the hunger monster so we can come home later, turn the lights down, put on some soft music, and satisfy that other little monster. *(Nina moves her hand down to knead his crotch. As he starts to respond, she shoves him away)* That's all I'm good for, isn't it? That's what you're really afraid of losing. Nina, the love machine. Gotta satisfy the primal urge. Keep her laughing, keep her happy. But don't get too close, that way we won't ever have to worry about Nina's needs, will we?

BERT: That's not true.

NINA: It is true, you just can't admit it.

BERT: It is not.

NINA: It is too.

BERT: Is not.

NINA: Is too.

BERT: Not.

NINA: Too.

BERT: Nina!

NINA: Enough what?

BERT: Huh?

NINA: What do you mean enough. You started it.

BERT: Enough? I didn't say "E-nuff" I said "Nee-na".

NINA: Oh.

BERT: I hate it when we fight like this.

NINA: We are not fighting: I am yelling and you're being a...a...(trying to find the right word)...a...wienie by not fighting back.

BERT: (trying not to laugh) a weenie?

NINA: (Impact begins to hit her) Yes. (pause) a weenie. A spineless, little weenie. (He moves to comfort her as she lightly pounds on his chest, laughing and crying) Why do you always do this to me? You make me crazy.

BERT: I'm truly sorry. I didn't mean to upset you.

He gently kisses her forehead, slowly moving down her face. He caresses her hair, tilting her chin up. Their lips play lightly on each other as the lights dim and the Saxist begins a light, easy ballad.

BERT: Sometimes I don't know what to say. I'm a film maker. I think in visual images. I just want you to be happy. (He begins to lightly kiss her on the forehead) Hmm. You smell nice. I just like to hold you. Let the world rip on by. Just let the light twinkle off of your eyes. Say. Has anyone ever told you...

BERT AND NINA: (It is a joke between them)...that you have the most beautiful eyes.

He pulls her close again and they begin to dance slowly. The sax begins to build when their eyes lock momentarily and they kiss fully on the lips. Cautiously at first and then passionately. The music becomes more sultry as Bert spins Nina around and begins kissing her on the neck and sliding his hands across her hips and up to fondle her breasts. The music and the seduction quickly reach a near frenzy. Nina reaches behind her to massage his crotch. Suddenly, as the music climaxes, she clamps down, digging her nails into Bert's privates. Bert gasps and clutches Nina's wrist.

NINA: (*very coolly*) Not this time, lover. You're not going to dance around the issue again. Sweet talk and wine. A kiss and a roll in the hay. Not today. No seducing me away from the subject. You don't walk away from this one.

BERT: (*in obvious pain*) Nina. God, Nina, let go. Please.

NINA: Now that I've got your undivided attention. Welcome to the real world, Bert Neland. We're going to play in reality now. (*FORM stands to his feet, stretching and begins to move stealthily around the perimeter*) Real reality, Bert. My reality. Where we live and breathe. Not your little play fantasy dreamland. Hard, cold, painful reality. I want you to taste it. (*bites his lip savagely and releases him. Bert drops to the floor, gasping*) You see, I want you. The real you, if there is one. Naked, right here and now in front of me. Without the protection of your ingenious walls and mirrors.

BERT: I don't understand.

NINA: Really? I just want to know one thing. Have you ever seen yourself in the mirror? Ever danced with that other side? Ever wonder what it's like to face your true self? Come on, lover, let's dance.

Nina leads Bert through a quick, terse tango. She stops him in front of the nearest upstage mirror. Form stands behind it.

NINA: Look, Bert. Look at it. I want you to see yourself. I want you to see what you refuse to see.

Nina spins Bert around to face the mirror. He stares at his reflection in the mirror which is, but isn't quite him. The reflection is darker, more malevolent, with an evil gleam in his eye. Bert's hand moves to his lips. Form mirrors Bert's motion and grins. Bert reaches out to touch the reflection. The mirror parts and Form steps through and grabs Bert by his jacket lapels. The stage is filled with a harsh, white light. Form pulls Bert into a quick peck on the lips before throwing him across the room. Before Bert can recover, Form whips him through a violent mockery of the same steps he danced with Nina. Bert is a stunned, rag doll in Form's hands. He spins Bert back into Nina's arms. The lights dim. She dips him and snaps him back up.

NINA: How's that, lover? *(kisses him violently pulling his tongue out with her teeth)* What's up? Cat got your tongue? You should be more careful. Some cats have claws. *(She rakes her nails across his face, drawing blood. Bert starts to talk but only chokes)*

BERT: Nina. Nina, please.

NINA: Go ahead. Say something brittle and cute. Make me laugh. *(snatches several roses from the table)* Bring me wine and roses. *(slaps him hard across the face with the roses)* What is it with these fucking flowers? You think you make everything okay by bringing me roses? Gloss over a year of your shit with twenty bucks worth of pretty plants? Come on, please, put a band aid on my bleeding heart. Charm me. *(She lets him drop)* You kill me. Every minute with you I die that much more. You break what's left of my heart. Did you know that? Do you know what really hurts? You're so busy being busy you don't even notice. There's a tragic irony. You're so distant from the whole thing you don't even realize the damage you do. Do you ever stop to think about the people around you? Not just me, but anyone? Why do you think we're called human "beings"? Being. You can say that, can't you? "Being" At least I think you're a human being. You sure smell like one. "Being?" No, I guess not. You're too busy "doing". Bert Neland, the Human Doing.

BERT: *(still confused)* Nina, what's going on? Why? What are you...?

NINA: Still don't get it, darling? Well then, let's dance some more.

The music increases in tempo. She dances with him briefly before sending him to Form who continues to pulverize him, making sure he sees his reflection in the mirrors. The harsh light returns as Form and Bert make contact. Nina pours herself a glass of wine while casually watching the melee'. Form rakes Bert's legs out from under him. He falls hard at Nina's feet. The lights dim again. She leans down, pulls him to her and licks the blood from his mouth.

NINA: You can bleed. How does it feel, lover, to dance with yourself? To actually have to face that part of you that you've tried for so long to keep hidden. Not a pretty sight, is it? Thirsty? Here, have some wine. *(She forces him to chug the wine and tosses the glass over her shoulder where it shatters)*

BERT: Nina?

NINA: Yes, love.

BERT: I didn't realize. I'm sorry Nina. I'm so sorry. I love you.

NINA: Love? You don't know the first thing about love. Damn you, Bert Neland. Love isn't that thing in your pants. Love isn't a pretty feeling where everything's perfect. Love isn't dinner and a movie once a week. Love is risk. It's a commitment. It's taking a chance with the ugly part of someone else's soul. Love is about pain, getting hurt and sticking with it. Love is not quitting. You haven't even started yet.

Nina traces the inside of Bert's thigh with her shoe stopping with her toe pointed at his groin. She suddenly slams her foot down between his legs.

NINA: You let me hope. You've manipulated me, given me just enough to keep going. I kept telling myself maybe someday you'd change. You'd open up. Who gave you the right to come in and mess up my life? I was doing fine without you. I don't know if I hate myself more for letting you do this to me or you for doing it. Bert, I love you, or at least I thought it was love. I don't know anymore. But I can't keep going on like this. *(long pause)* What do you want from me? Tell me. Go ahead. Tell me another lie. I want to hear it from your lying, slimy lips. Come on! Tell me! And don't look at me with that pathetic whipped puppy look. It's your demon, go and love it.

Nina turns her back on Bert as Form yanks him to his feet. There is no dance. The music is harsh, violent and short. The lights flash intense, strobe-like. Bert flows more readily with the abuse, realizing with painful certainty he must come to terms with this twisted inner part of himself. A shrill kick turn catches him off guard, full in the chest and sends him sprawling into Nina. She stumbles across the stage and cuts herself on a shard of broken wine glass. The strobe stops.

NINA: *(breaking character)* Son of a...

BERT: *(moving over to Nina)* We never talk anymore.

NINA: My God, I don't believe it. Look at this.

BERT: *(unsure of what comes next)* I didn't know. I had...

NINA: I just sliced my hand wide open. *(picking up a piece of the glass)*

BERT: *(trying to recover)* Nina, I'm sorry, I...

NINA: Dammit *(using the actor's real name)* _____, I'm serious. This is "real" glass.

BERT: *(stunned)* Nina, uh...*(recovering)* Of course it's real glass. It'll be all right honey, just let me--

NINA: *(cutting him off)* Forget Nina. This is serious. Get me a bandage or something I'm bleeding all over the place.

BERT: What?

NINA: Look at this. Dammit, we're not supposed to use real glass. This isn't the candy crystal stuff we used in rehearsal. Shit.

BERT: *(picking up a piece of the glass)* How bad is it?

NINA: It's pretty bad.

BERT: Deep *(mimicking her)* huh. Gotta lot of depth. You know, depth? *(Nina glares at him.)*

CLETUS: *(entering with towel)* What's the matter? What is going on? Is everyone okay? *(to Nina)* Are you all right?

NINA: All right.. You call this all right?

CLETUS: Let me see it. How bad is it?

BERT: Cletus, what are you doing, man? This isn't funny. That's real glass. "Real" glass.

CLETUS: *(down playing)* I know. I know. We ran out of the fake crystal.

BERT: I don't think it's too cool having real glass out here, man. And what's up with using "real" knives? I sliced my hand earlier. You know how much people get thrown around out here. The roses are bad enough. Somebody could've got hurt.

NINA: Someone did get hurt.

BERT: I mean, bad, though.

NINA: Still not "real" enough for you. So you put real glass and real knives out here without telling us. I don't believe it. Dammit, Cletus. We've gone from Hell to breakfast for you, and that's still not enough. You gotta keep shoving that envelope, don't you? *(shoves the shard of glass in his face)* I'll give you something you can shove.

CLETUS: *(cutting her off, indicating the audience)* Hey. *(under his breath)* We can discuss this later. Later, okay? Right now, let's get this bandaged and be smart.

NINA: Hey, nothing. How much more "real" do you want this? We've been mindless puppets for you. Little toy soldiers so you can get off playing God. Always just a bit more real. It's never enough. You want more, more, more. You've manipulated us, sucked our brains dry, jerked us around and wrecked our personal lives. For what? So you can have your "reality"? You want reality. (*Slaps him hard*) How's that for reality? (*Storms off*)

BERT: Wow. Voodoo.

The Saxist starts to play. The Director cuts her off with a glance. Cast slowly, stunned, begins to leave stage.

CLETUS: Sorry about that ladies and gentlemen. We'll take a few minutes and get ready for the next performance. Thank you for your patience.

LADY IN AUDIENCE: What the hell? That sucks. (*calling after him*) Wait a minute. Hey. Come back here. Hey you, director.

CLETUS: Yes?

LADY: What is this shit? That was the lamest, chicken shit, major cop out, no guts, head-up-the-ass excuse for an ending I've ever seen.

CLETUS: Ma'am, I'm terribly sorry, but due to circumstances beyond my control...

LADY: Don't feed me that garbage. I wanna see the end of the play.

CLETUS: Ma'am, that was the end of the play. It's over.

LADY: Yeah, right. (*Cletus turns to exit*) Hey, pal, I'm still talking to you. You're telling me that's the way it ends?

CLETUS: I think that was pretty clear. Now, if you'll excuse me...(*He turns to leave*)

LADY: (*cutting him off again*) Excuse you? Gimme a break. How stupid do you think we are? You expect us to believe she got cut on some "real" glass, stormed out and it's over?

CLETUS: Sometimes accidents do happen.

LADY: Bullshit. She's an actress, right? The show must go on and all that crap. Well I don't buy it. You're the director, aren't you? You directed it, right?

CLETUS: Yes, ma'am, I directed it and it's over. If you'd like to debate some of the finer points of theatrical playwrighting I'd be more than happy to discuss it with you after the show.

LADY: I didn't come to debate. I just want my money's worth. I wanna see the rest of the damn play.

CLETUS: Ma'am, if you'd like your money back--

LADY: (*cutting him off*) I didn't say I wanted my money back. I said I wanted my moneys' worth. You're gonna tell me, that's it? That's the way it's supposed to end?

CLETUS: That's it. That's the way it's supposed to end.

LADY: What a crock of shit. That's no way to end a play. What happened to those people?

CLETUS: I don't know what happens. That's the way it ends.

LADY: You sonnuva bitch. We get close to seeing these people deal with some real issues, and you pull the plug. I've seen relationships like that. But I can't believe it just ends that way. Say you're sorry 'cause it was too real or wasn't real enough. Just play theater, poke fun at reality, wipe your hands. That's a load of shit. You don't have the guts to deal with "real" stuff. Real things end. You can't just walk off the stage. You can't cop out of real life, it keeps going. You suck.

CLETUS: What's the matter, lady? Somebody didn't flash "THE END" up on the screen so you'd know it was safe to go to the bathroom. You want real people dealing with real stuff. Well you got it lady. They don't always ride off into the sunset to live happily ever after. It doesn't work that way. This is real. This is exactly real and it happens like this more often than not. So you didn't get what you want. That's life, lady.

The Saxist slowly begins to play as the lights fade.