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ALL THE BROTHERS WERE GAY

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ALL THE BROTHERS WERE GAY

Characters

- Boris Kanefsky** 36 years old; professor emeritus of American literature at Valiant Christian University; dedicated to dramatic literature; dedicated to the school and its student body and above all dedicated to his brilliant career.
- Alexis Kanefsky** Boris Kanefsky's kid brother; 29 years old; artistic; impoverished; with considerable charm and good looks, qualities which he tries to use to his advantage
- Ryan Kanefsky** 33 years old; the middle brother; tough, smart and sexy. He is a former All State quarterback, former All State point guard and former Orange Bowl and Kalamazoo junior tennis champion. He is presently the tennis coach and basketball coach at Valiant Christian University.
- Tina Kelly** 30 years old; an attractive intellectual artistic director of the prestigious Manhattan Workshop Theatre
- Pablo Gomez** a large, menacing Latino hit man

The setting is the home of the Kanefsky brothers; a comfortable upper middle house in the Dallas suburb of Valiant, Texas. The study, living room, front door and front lawn are visible.

The time is the present; a Friday evening in April.

Act One

Scene 1. The time is late on a Sunday afternoon in March. The setting is the home of the Kanefsky brothers in Valiant, Texas; a high-end suburb of Dallas. Boris is 36 years old, a Professor Emeritus in the Dramatic Literature Department at Valiant Christian University. His younger brother, Ryan is 33 years old, and the basketball coach at Valiant Christian. He is wearing a VTU tee shirt. there is a partial view of the hallway and the front door. The lights come up in the dining room where the table is set for a small dinner party.

BORIS

Ryan ...?

RYAN (*imitating his brother's voice*)

Boris ...?

BORIS

Well

RYAN

Well what?

BORIS (*slightly impatient*)

Whenever you're ready! I'd like you to proof read my translation.

RYAN

I already proof read it. How many times do you want me to go over it? Come on, it's kind of late in the day for that. Your friend is coming over within the hour.

BORIS

Just a quick look-see.

RYAN

Forget it! You should have hired someone a long time ago. You should have hired a book editor or one of those – what do you call them – dramaturgs? Drama-*turds*? That's who you needed to proof read your translation! Hey, you're your own best editor. You don't need a basketball coach.

BORIS

Editors were expensive. So were dramaturgs.

RYAN

Bull shit! The school pays for it. Besides, you're your own best editor.

BORIS

Come on, Ryan. You know how important this dinner is to me. Do you have something better to do?

RYAN

What do you think I've been doing all afternoon? There's a coq au vin (coke oh *van*) ready and waiting.

BORIS

And I appreciate what you're doing for my dinner guests.

RYAN

Our dinner guests! *Our* dinner guests! Tina Kelly has nothing to do with me. This Jean Marie de la Mer has nothing to do with me. They have everything to do with you.

BORIS

Please take a look at my translation. One more time! Please!

RYAN

Okay. Give it here.

BORIS (*handing the script to Ryan*)

Thank you.

RYAN

You're amazing. You really are amazing. And did you call Mom? Fort Worth is just around the corner. You could drive over there for a few minutes. You could have taken her to the twelve o'clock mass.

BORIS

I'll call her after dinner; after our guests leaves

RYAN

She'll be asleep by that time.

BORIS

Then I'll call her tomorrow when I come home from school. Now would you please read?

RYAN

And how about Dad? Dallas is just around the other corner. Go for it! Go for the Big D. That's "Big D" for Daddy. Ask his forgiveness. He's always in a forgiving mood after 12 o'clock mass. He's very proud of you. He still loves you. He wants to forgive you.

BORIS

For what? And why would this Sunday be any different from any other Sunday?

RYAN

Because I spoke to him this morning. He may feel about me the way he feels about you but Daddy loves hoops. He loves basketball. He loves that I've been a jock all my life and Daddy loves to talk about me. I could be a member of the Ku Klux Klan. I could be a mass murderer. But I'm a winning coach. I've been a winning player and a winning coach all my life. He's proud of the job I've been doing. Come on! Talk basketball to him. Yeah, turn yourself into a Hoops-Meister. He'll see that as a sea change. He'll see you as a changed man.

BORIS

He's never read any of my anthologies. He's never read any of my published work.

RYAN

Neither have I but I still love you. I'm still proud of you.

BORIS

Read CURTAIN UP. That's my new anthology It's the history of the Off-Off-Broadway movement in the 20th century.

RYAN

The title's all wrong.

BORIS

What's wrong with my title?

RYAN

Hey, I've been to New York. I've seen lots of show in the West Village; in the East Village, in Chelsea. All the little theaters. None of them had a curtain.

BORIS

Well ... it's a metaphorical title.

RYAN

Come on, Boris. Call it CURTAIN DOWN.

BORIS

You see what I mean/ I can always depend on you.

RYAN

And send it to Daddy. Better yet, hand deliver it. Dallas isn't that far away. He's in a "proud Poppa" mood. He's in a forgiving mood. And do you know?

BORIS

No. Why?

RYAN

Boris ... Boris baby ... do you know what month this is?

BORIS

March. So what?

RYAN

Ever hear of March Madness?

BORIS

Vaguely.

RYAN

You are amazing. If there was a play called THE IDES OF MARCH, you'd do 58 minutes on the author, the original Broadway cast, the plot line and the dramatic event.

BORIS (*thinking for a moment*)

Oh God. You're right. March Madness! The Valiant Christians are in the finals.

RYAN

And who are we playing in the finals?

BORIS

Let me think. Give me a minute.

RYAN (*looking at his watch*)

The game clock is ticking: 59 – 58 - 57

BORIS

TCU! Texas Christian!

RYAN

Very good! So where do you think I was this morning? Where do you think I was this afternoon?

BORIS

Marching in the St. Patrick's Day parade?

RYAN

I had a date with 12 young basketball players. We're playing tomorrow night. You can watch the game on television or – God forbid – you can come to the game as my guest.

BORIS

Twelve young players in shorts. That's your fantasy, isn't it?

RYAN

That's a lousy remark. Screw you, bro! I'm a one man-man and you damn well know it. My basketball players – my team – is as important to me as your essays, your articles, your published work is to you. You never come to my home games. You never ask how my team is doing. On the other hand, I read every fucking word you write and I give you the benefit of my criticism.

BORIS

Which I appreciate no end. Which is why I want you to read what I'm going to talk about with my dinner guests.

RYAN

Your "dinner guests?" *Our* "dinner guests". I did the cooking.

BORIS

For which I'm grateful. But why this rebellious attitude? Why this sudden sibling rivalry? Why this change of heart?

(Ryan goes quickly to the kitchen, takes a gun from one of the drawers, returns to the living room and aims the gun at Boris.)

BORIS *(contd)*

I'm not going to argue with a gold medal winner until you get rid of that pistol. Don't point that thing at me. *(smiling)* "Pistol Packing Mama." Very cute; very cute. Is this part of your March Madness? Opening Night jitters?

RYAN

Hey, I may be gay but in all other respects, I'm your typical Texan. I keep a gun in my car, in the glove department and I keep a gun at home. You know why? It's like a baby blanket. It's like my old teddy bear.

BORIS

You shouldn't play around with guns. Is it loaded?

RYAN

What's the point of having a gun if it's not loaded? And you know damn well when I'm nervous about a big game coming up, I like to practice another sport. Would you prefer that I practice with my bow and arrow?

BORIS

Well, you know what they say in the theatre: if you show a gun in the first act, you damn well better use it in the second act.

RYAN

This is America. There are no second acts.

BORIS

Very cute! Now please put that thing away. *(Ryan returns quickly to the kitchen and puts the gun back in the drawer)*

RYAN

It's not a thing. Do I refer to your lectures as things?

BORIS

You know how much I value your honesty. That's what makes you a champion coach. You tell it straight – you should pardon the expression.

RYAN

Okay. Okay. Go ahead. How can I argue with a Professor Emeritus, especially a sulking Professor Emeritus?

BORIS

I'm not sulking. Besides, my students consider me a charming, even colorful professor.

RYAN

Why do I feel you're going to give me an "F" in the course?

BORIS

Older brothers have that effect on their siblings. No matter how old you get, I'm still going to be the older brother.

RYAN

And you're still full of shit. You're constantly criticizing – evaluating – judging ...

BORIS

That's who I am. That's what I am.

RYAN

Senor Perfecto! So how come you're not married?

BORIS

How come *you're* not married?

RYAN

Is this a competition?

BORIS

Damn right! That's what brothers do.

RYAN

Okay; okay. So -- I'm not married only because I haven't found the right guy.

BORIS

That's also my story.

RYAN

In your case, that's not a story. That's an alibi.

BORIS

So why are we having this discussion right now? Because you're always tense before "the big game." And in your case, every game is "the big game." And with your March madness, there's going to be an ambulette waiting outside the gym, waiting to talk you to the emergency ward.

RYAN

And there's an ambulette outside the door if your dinner guests don't show up!

BORIS

Okay; next time. I'll hire a secretary. I'll find a sexy English major who can take dictation and be my very own dramaturg; that's d-r-a-m-a-t-u-r-g.

RYAN

See/ You need someone to check your spelling. Find someone who's on a par with you intellectually; someone who's mature emotionally. And I almost forgot to mention that four-letter word

BORIS

Don't be gross.

RYAN

I was thinking of another four-letter word. I use it when I'm coaching the tennis team.

BORIS

Ryan, don't go down that path.

RYAN (*remembering*)

Sorry! You're right. Sorry. Hey, speaking -- or rather -- not speaking of love, I met a very nice lawyer last Friday.

BORIS

What kind of law does he practice?

RYAN

He's a public defender; a defense lawyer! His name is Chad.

BORIS

Chad? Then he must be from Los Angeles.

RYAN

Good guess! He was born in L. A. But he moved to Texas – like any right-thinking American. His name is Chad Zabriskie. He's coming here tomorrow for the game. And then he'll be staying over. So be nice to him. Okay? So -- refresh my distracted mind. Tell me again: who I have to be nice to - tonight?

BORIS (*slowly; carefully*)

Our two dinner guests. Count 'em: two! There's Tina Kelly. She's the artistic director of The Manhattan Project Theatre Company. She's excited about my translation of this French play, THE COUNTERFEITER. That's the English title. And our other dinner guest is the playwright: Jean Marie de la Mer.

BORIS

Never heard of him.

BORIS

Nobody in America ever heard of him. But one of my colleagues at the Sorbonne sent me his very first play, LE FAUX-MONNAYEUR (*le foe mo na yeur*). That's French for THE COUNTERFEITER.

RYAN

Your field is American Dramatic Literature. What's this guy got to do with American Drama?

BORIS

De La Mer is his pen name. He writes in French for French-speaking countries. His real name is Henry Seaman.

BORIS)

De la Mer is constantly denying his American roots; ergo, he is constantly denying himself. He is controlled by conflicting emotions, which shows up in his major works, such as QU'EST QUE C'EST QUE CI QUE CEST QUE CA? He's an angry author which accounts for both his failures and his successes and it's only because of his prodigious work ethic and his maniacal talent that he has managed to achieve critical success without ever making a public appearance, a personal appearance ... until now!"

RYAN

He's coming out of hiding?

BORIS

I just got a letter from him – from the Ivory Coast. Look at the letter. He claims that he writes with a goose quill.

RYAN

There must be a lot of naked geese honking away on the Ivory Coast.

BORIS

Fact is, it's theatrical; it's fun and hey, he's an original. And are you ready for this? (*reading*) "Mon cher maître ... " (*to RYAN*) That's me. (*reading*) "Je vous en prie ..."

RYAN

Where are the sub-titles? My French is pretty wobbly but your accent is pretty lousy.

BORIS

I've had numerous Frenchmen and French women tell me I have a beautiful accent.

RYAN

That was part of their "Make America Taste Again" campaign. Flattery and lies. That's how their Beaujolais wine became popular.

BORIS

Nonsense!

RYAN

The French also thought Jerry Lewis was a great comedian.

BORIS

That was another generation; an older generation.

RYAN

Oh, Jesus! Now you're been embraced by the youth of France? God save us all.

BORIS

Ryan dear, please save your marginal comments for our dinner guests.

BORIS (*contd*)

Listen to what Jean De la Mer wrote to me (*reading*) “Cher Maitre ...” Cher Maitre. That’s me. Dear Master or Dear Teacher: I have decided to come out of hiding, to throw off the mask of the hermit, the recluse. I am coming to America, to the great state of Texas, to the village of Valiant. I was honored by your critique of my work. Only George Bernard Shaw and Henry James could have been on the same page with you. I look forward to meeting you. Bien a toi (*bee an ah twah*). Jean.” How about them apples? And ... and ... he approved my translation, which Tina Kelly also approved. So -- he’s going to meet Tina Kelly tonight. I hope he gets here in time for dinner.

RYAN

I have to hand it to you, bro. That’s good work. Congratulations! I’m really happy for you

BORIS

I never thought this would happen. And it’s happening so fast. Jean de la Mer is an enigma within an enigma. He is both cutting edge and retro; supremely American yet at the same time, a Gaelic conundrum.

RYAN

I couldn’t have said it better myself. And I didn’t. Hey - maybe he’ll turn out to be the man of your dreams. Do you have a picture of him?

BORIS

I went on line to see what he looks like. Nothing. Nada. For all I know, he looks like THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME. For all I know, he’s straight. But who cares? I’ve read all of his work and it’s only amazing that no one in this country ever heard of him but that’s only because he’s never been produced here; not on Broadway, not off Broadway, not even here in Dallas. I would have thought that the Margo Jones Theater would have grabbed him. They grabbed Tennessee Williams. But hey, that was almost a century ago. (*beat*) Well, not quite! So ... you have *your* March Madness; I’ll have *mine*!

RYAN

It’s almost six o’clock. Cocktail time. How about a martini? Huh? Another martini for Mother Cabrini!

BORIS

I’m no Mother Cabrini. And don’t you dare make fun of any woman who wears basic black, with or without pearls. So -- make me a martini. Extra dry!

(Ryan prepares a drink for his brother.)

RYAN

Listen, you're a one drink Martini man so please sip it. Take it slow.

BORIS

I just want a few sips to steady my nerves.

RYAN

With a name like Jean-Marie, you'll have a couple of martinis and start calling him "Mary."

BORIS

You know something, "bro"? You're being downright insulting and I don't like it one bit. I'm getting ready for an important dinner with two important people and you're sounding like a bitchy drag queen. *(a long pause as Ryan walks away)*

RYAN

That was my insecurity showing.

BORIS

A former Olympic champion is insecure?

RYAN

My job is insecure. My job is on the line. And don't ask me why.

BORIS

Why?

RYAN

One of the players from last year's team did an interview with the Dallas Morning News. He said that I used to hang out in the locker room after a game and that sometimes I took a shower - a long, extended shower - with the players. And that I hung out in the showers after most of the players had left.

BORIS

Did you?

RYAN

You know me. I always believed that cleanliness was next to godliness. Isn't that what Mom used to tell us?

BORIS

And Daddy used to tell us that homosexuality was a sin. That was always in his Sunday sermons.

RYAN

He was speaking to me. No kidding. He was looking at me when he spoke.

BORIS

He was talking to the congregation.

RYAN

He knew. He saw me.

BORIS

What do you mean, "He saw me?"

RYAN

Years ago –when I was a freshman at Valiant Christian, I came back to the house late one night when the folks were supposed to be with Aunt Helen and Uncle Albert down in Corpus Christi. At least I *thought* they were down in Corpus. And I was with someone - I was drunk with someone - someone who had just picked me up in a gay bar; the one and only gay bar in Valiant.

BORIS

That would have been The Monkey Bar. Right?

RYAN

You got it. Anyway, we weren't even in the house. We were on the front porch.

BORIS

You guys had to be stoned.

RYAN

You got that right. So anyway, it turned out that for whatever reason – I don't remember what – along came Mom and Dad and Aunt Helen and Uncle Albert.

BORIS

What did they say/ What did they do?

RYAN

Aunt Helen and Uncle Albert made a U-turn, mumbled something and walked back to their car.

BORIS

Then what?

RYAN

I think Mom said something like. "Well, boys will be boys." Then Daddy grabbed her and pulled her into the house. And that was it. He never said another word to me. Never. And then they split. Not right away but soon after. He never came to my high school graduation.

BORIS

I always wondered about that. I was there and I was really proud of you. Mom came. And when I asked her about Dad, she just shrugged her shoulders and gave me that Kanefsky half-smile.

RYAN

He never came to any of my games, not in high school, not in college. Do you know I was the winningest coach in Valhalla Christian history! I still am.

BORIS

I know. You never stop telling me. *(beat)* Come on, bro! That's a joke.

RYAN

I know; I know. And - and dad would see me in church. He'd see me with Mom. But he barely spoke to her.

BORIS

So how come you never told me this before?

RYAN

We were always brothers but we were never friends. Not really. And we were never roommates. When Stan and I broke up, I was devastated. Maybe I took him for granted? What do you think?

BORIS

How would I know? I hardly knew him. I hardly knew you. Come on, bro; it's not like we ever "double dated." It's not like we were close. Some brothers are like that. You had your lovers. I had mine.

RYAN

I thought the only thing I had left was my starting five. Yeah, and every year or two, a new starting five. Yeah, that and Stan. "Stan the Man."

BORIS

Have another drink.

RYAN

Good idea. And then I have to see how my roast is doing.

BORIS

I'm sure it's doing a lot better than you ... and a lot better than me.

(Boris puts down his glass and gets up. He begins pacing back and forth, deep in thought.)

RYAN

Stop pacing. You're just giddy because your favorite French playwright is coming to America – packed in ice.

(Sound cue: the chimes of the front door)

BORIS

Jean-Marie de la Mer! Yes! Jean-Marie de la Mer! *(his best accent)* Superb! How do I look?

RYAN

Dashing! Devastating! *(beat)* Drunk!

BORIS

Seriously!

RYAN

You look great, babe! Just stay cool. I'll get the door.

BORIS

Thank you. I'm going to the bathroom to throw up. (*shouting as he leaves*) No more martinis!

(*RYAN goes toward the front door.*)

(While Boris composes himself, RYAN goes to the front door, opens it and there is Alexis Kanefsky, the "long lost" and the youngest of the Kanefsky brothers. He is movie star handsome, 29 years old, with an artistic flair and a charming manner which he uses to the point of manipulation. A large suitcase is at his feet. He sees RYAN and flashes a big smile.)

ALEXIS

You must be Ryan.

RYAN

And who must you be?

ALEXIS

Doesn't Boris have any pictures of me?

RYAN

Okay, you just dropped two names. How about dropping your own?

ALEXIS

Hostile! Definitely hostile! But that's cool. A perfect stranger shows up at your doorstep, unannounced. But hey maybe I'm not a perfect stranger?

RYAN

But hey maybe you are?

ALEXIS

You're right. I'm not perfect.

RYAN

Jesus Christ! It's six o'clock on a Sunday evening. We're just sitting down to dinner. And we have a big day tomorrow. So cut the crap – stop smiling – and kindly identify yourself.

ALEXIS

Take a wild guess.

RYAN

I don't take wild guesses. So -- if you're selling something. Wait a minute. You must be ...you have to be - Jean Marie de la Mer. How's my accent?

ALEXIS

Pas mal (*pah mal*). Not bad. (*beat*) Terrible!

BORIS (*shouting*)

What are you doing out there? Invite him in?

RYAN (*shouting*)

It's some guy selling something.

ALEXIS

I'm selling myself. Ryan, don't you remember your long-lost brother? Don't you have my baby pictures? I haven't changed that much. And don't you and Boris have those underground movies of mine when I was voted Miss Demeanor of Valiant Christian High School? Ryan, where have you been? Where has Big Brother Boris been? I was the Valiant of Valiant Christian High. Screw my "nom de plume (*nom da ploom*). I'm Alexis Kanefsky. Have I changed that much? Okay; I've changed inside – but not outside. I'm still the same beautiful boy -- just older and wiser.

RYAN

I need a drink. March Madness has taken over the Kanefsky household.

ALEXIS

My dear, dear Ryan. Jean Marie de la Mer has arrived.

RYAN (*also shouting*)

Boris, hop on your scooter and come out. Come out; come out -- wherever you are.

ALEXIS (*to Ryan*)

Big Bro came out a long time ago. He was the first Kanefsky to come out.

(Boris appears in the hallway, still clutching his martini. For a moment, he and Alexis can only stare at each other.)

ALEXIS

Ta-da! Surprise!

BORIS

Right!

(While ALEXIS is exuding charm, he is also sizing up Boris and Ryan.)

ALEXIS

Try to contain yourself. Haven't you ever seen a French playwright before? Moi, je suis (*sweet*) Jean Marie de la Mer.

BORIS (*finally*)

How do you know Jean Marie?

ALEXIS

No, no, no. You're not listening. Moi! (*Mwa*) Je suis (*sweet*) Jean Marie.

BORIS

My French is rusty. Speak English.

ALEXIS

How about embracing your long-lost brother? How about a couple of fraternal kisses; one on each cheek?

BORIS

I'm impressed that you know who Jean Marie is and your impersonation would be welcome except for the fact that the real Jean Marie is coming here for dinner.

ALEXIS

I am the real Jean Marie.

BORIS

You've always been good at impersonations. You're probably the most famous drag queen in Dallas-Fort Worth. Why not show up here as Madonna? Barbra Streisand? Maia Callas?

ALEXIS

I never liked the way they dressed.

RYAN

Well, I'm with you on that one.

ALEXIS

Ryan, it's good to see you. Still coaching?

RYAN

Still coaching after all these years. And I just moved in with our big brother. So -- this looks like a family reunion.

ALEXIS

So how about a hug? It's been a long, long time. I must warn you that I've had some heart problems and I don't want any alarms to go off.

BORIS

You've always been good at setting off your own alarms.

(Alexis embraces Ryan but Boris remains at a distance.)

ALEXIS *(to Boris)*

Do you notice how men hug? Do you notice that they lean into one another – from the chest up! God forbid that their crotches touch. And then they pat each other's pat very quickly. And then they withdraw.

RYAN

Why don't we all go into the living room?

BORIS

Huh? Oh yeah, sure. I'll get you a drink.

RYAN

I'll get him a drink. (to ALEXIS) Are you a martini drinker, like your brother?

ALEXIS

I'm a non-drinker.

RYAN

Oh, yeah - the heart thing?

ALEXIS

Huh? Oh yeah, “the heart thing.”

BORIS

You’re too young to have a heart problem.

ALEXIS

Boris, I haven’t seen you in ages. The kind of life I’ve been living, I feel like an old man.

BORIS

You don’t look like an old man. You look good – but then – you always looked good.

(ALEXIS takes a phone out of his pocket and points it at Boris.)

ALEXIS

As do you! Now let’s have a big smile for the camera! Say testicles.

BORIS

I will not say testicles.

(ALEXIS takes a picture of Boris and then points his camera at RYAN.)

RYAN *(without prompting)*

Testicles!

ALEXIS

Now let’s get the two of you together. *(A reluctant Boris and a smiling RYAN pose together)*

Big smile!

BORIS

Are you through with your photo op? I’m ready for a drink.

ALEXIS *(to RYAN)*

When our brother gave up drinking ...

RYAN

That had to be a long time ago. He’s resumed drinking.

ALEXIS

In moderation, I hope.

BORIS

I'm touched by your concern.

ALEXIS *(to RYAN)*

Every time we'd go to a restaurant, he'd tell the waiter, "I do not drink alcohol."

BORIS

Don't start.

ALEXIS

You don't think those waiters really cared, do you? *(to RYAN)* One time we were in a California supermarket and I was looking for the local wines. Boris corners a clerk – a very young clerk – and says, "I don't drink alcohol." The clerk tried to escape – like he didn't need a confessional in the middle of the afternoon - but Boris insists on telling the kid his life story. Anyway; a glass of water would be fine.

RYAN *(leaving)*

That's easy.

ALEXIS

Hey, I'm an easy guy.

(RYAN goes into the kitchen.)

BORIS

To a fault!

ALEXIS *(looking around)*

Very nice! Obviously, Valiant Christian is treating you well.

BORIS

And vice versa! They're getting a lot of mileage out of my reputation. And speaking of reputations, yours is pretty lousy. To what do I owe this surprise visit?

BORIS (*contd*)

How did you find out about my dinner guest? Wait a minute! I get it. You must know Jean Marie. Sure! Any guy named Marie has to be a friend of yours.

ALEXIS

Keep talking and I'll really get pissed off. I know you've always had a tough time listening to me but please try to listen without interrupting. Number one. You don't know me; not anymore. You knew me as the quintessential drag queen. Also, horror of horrors, I was a Valiant Christian drop-out which probably makes me a candidate for excommunication. But then I got into drugs and drug dealing which led to a prison sentence – which got me reading every book in the prison library - which led to a bona fide miracle: discovering the works of Jean Marie de la Mer.

BORIS

In a prison library? Were they in the original French or were they translated from the French?

ALEXIS

They were translations from the original. Listen, I don't know how his "Complete Plays" got into a Texas prison library but what the hell what the hell what the hell. They were there and I was there. Jean Marie is no longer there. He's no longer anywhere. And now I'm here.

RYAN

What do you mean: "He's no longer anywhere?"

ALEXIS

He was gay. He wrote gay plays. He played around. He got A.I.D.S. He passed away. He apparently didn't leave a will. He probably never made any money from his plays. End of story. End of his story. Beginning of my story.

RYAN

Boris, what do you call a guy who steals other people's plays?

BORIS

A crook.

ALEXIS

Fuck you. Fuck you both. I went through a lot of trouble to get here.

BORIS

What? Did you bust out of prison?

ALEXIS

Something like that.

BORIS

What's something like that?

ALEXIS

You wouldn't understand. Go bury your head in your books. I was looking forward to a family reunion. I knew Dad wouldn't see me. I knew that Mom wouldn't understand me which was the same as not seeing me. But I figured: two gay guys who just happened to be my brothers! Two guys who grew up gay in a Christian community. Chris! Even our priests were gay. I should have gone straight – you should pardon the expression – straight to the confessional box.

BORIS

You stole a man's work. You stole his plays. You even stole his person, his being, his soul. That's almost a joke if it wasn't so unfunny.

BRIAN

What do you mean?

BORIS

One of Jean Marie de la Mer's greatest work was THE COUNTERFEITERS. Our long, lost brother here committed plagiarism. Hey Alexis, do you know the meaning of that word? Or maybe your prison library didn't have a dictionary.

(Alexis walks away)

ALEXIS

I thought you guys would be glad to see me.

BORIS

You walk away from your family. You disappear for ten, eleven years. No phone calls. No e-mails. No nothing. And then you show up. Yeah, you show up as someone else, someone whose work you plagiarized.

RYAN

There's something missing here. There's a connection missing here. Alex

ALEXIS

Alexis.

RYAN

Or would you rather we call you Jean Marie?

ALEXIS

That's just my stage name.

BORIS

"And all the world's a stage. "And all the world's *your* stage. And we're just the players in your play. Right?

RYAN

Only we don't know the plot. Like ...how does our kid brother know that you're working on a project with Jean Marie what's his name? If Jean Marie is dead, who are you corresponding with? Who's living in the apartment of the late Jean Marie? How about it, Alexis?

(Alexis walks to the far end of the living room.)

ALEXIS

Okay. I confess. There was no prison library except magazines and newspapers.

RYAN

Don't stop now.

ALEXIS

I had a cell mate. His name was Maurice Bernard.

BORIS

Holy shit! That's the guy I was corresponding with. He's supposed to be Jean Marie's lawyer.

ALEXIS

Maurice and I were lovers. We were living together for years on The Right Bank.

RYAN

I'd say you were living on the wrong bank.

ALEXIS

One day, Maurice had to go out of town. I had nothing to do, nothing better to do so I went into his office and started reading his correspondence; his letters, his emails. And what a surprise when I saw that my big brother and my boyfriend were corresponding. They were doing a business deal.

RYAN

How did that make you feel? (*Alexis walks away.*) How did that make you feel?

ALEXIS

It made me feel like a loser. Yeah, Maurice is a successful lawyer and you, Boris; you're a successful professor ... and I was someone's lover, someone's boy toy. I was still a drag queen. I was also a retired drug dealer with a price on his head. There's still a price on my head. I felt like I wanted to go to the top of the Eifel Tower ... and jump.

BORIS

Our father had a mantra. He used to say, "if at first you don't succeed, try, try, again."

ALEXIS

That's cruel.

BORIS

You think that's cruel? I'm expecting an important dinner guest. Tina Kelly. She wants to bring THE COUNTERFEITER to a major Broadway house. She'll be here within the hour. So how do I introduce you: as Jean Marie de la Mer or as Alexis Kanefsky?

ALEXIS

I'd like to ...,

BORIS

That was a rhetorical question. You're going to be your own true, wonderful self: Alexis Kanefsky. There's no way in the world you're going to fuck up. You're going to be the charming Alexis. You can even be the seductive Alexis. You're very good at being those things.

ALEXIS (*to Boris*)

You must think I'm a dummy. Yes? No? What about you, coach? What do you think? You've been out in the world longer than our professor. You don't know me but ... do I make the team? Am I on the starting five? The starting three? Hey, I've done time. I worked with big time drug dealers. I did my drag queen act all over the country. All over other countries. Do I come off the bench? Am I the sixth man? I think that I'm the guy that you want to go to in when the game is winding down. And the game is winding down. Tina Kelly will be here any minute now. What do you say, guys? Are you going to give me the ball?

RYAN

That's a good impersonation of a jock.

ALEXIS

That's not an impersonation.

BORIS

You're a good actor. But once a drag queen; always a drag queen.

ALEXIS

You think so? You really think so? Boris, my boy, have you ever lived anywhere other than here? Other than Dallas / Fort Worth?

BORIS

I go to Chicago every year. Chicago has excellent theater companies. I go to London every other year. They have the best actors in the world. Oh yes, and of course I get up to New York. Good theater off Broadway. Surprisingly good theater off Broadway,

ALEXIS

Ever been to Paris? Ever been to the Right Bank? That's where Maurice Bernard lives. That's where I live. We have a great big apartment on the Place des Vosges. It's a neighborhood all to itself. Every apartment looks out to a little park. Quite lovely.

BORIS

Ryan and I are happy for you/ We'll be happier for you when you go back to the Right Bank.

ALEXIS

You'll be happier for me when I morph into Jean Marie de la Mer. I know all his plays. His oeuvre is my oeuvre. I'm fluent in the French language. Best of all, I know how to keep my mouth shut. Maurice was my "maître." He kept telling me, "Less is more." He kept saying, "You don't have to perform. You don't have to be charming. You don't have to seduce." And he said the one thing that made me fall in love with him – and it wasn't even about sex. He told me time after time after time, "*You're* the professor emeritus. Your brother is smart. But you - you are wise." So -- when Tina Kelly gets here, I'll be Jean Genet, Jean Giradoux, Andre Gide all rolled into one – with maybe a soupçon of Maurice Chevalier. Ca va? Ca va!

BORIS

Maurice taught you well. So ... you're Jean Marie de la Mer; also known as Alexis Kanefsky. Maybe your next play should be "The Brothers Kanefsky."

ALEXIS

Let's wait and see how this one turns out. Hey Boris, I'm sorry I missed your wedding.

BORIS

You're so fucking cavalier. You were supposed to be my Best Man.

RYAN (*to Alexis*)

You also missed mine. Where were you? And why didn't you call?

BORIS (*to RYAN*)

Alexis never calls – as you may have gathered from this unannounced visit.

ALEXIS

I announced my visit as Jean Marie. Hey come on guys, I wanted to surprise you. And I'm delighted that Ryan turned up.

RYAN

I didn't just turn up. I'm living here now. The Kanefsky motto is: "Lose a husband; gain a brother." But why didn't you come to my wedding or Boris' wedding? He actually got a mention in the New York Times. I got a mention in the Dallas Morning News!

ALEXIS

My subscription ran out when I went to jail. And when I met Maurice, I moved to Paris.

BORIS

What a touching love story!

ALEXIS

Not totally a love story. My drug dealers were after for me.

BORIS

Why?

ALEXIS

They thought I was getting greedy. I tried to explain that I was just taking my percentage. They didn't agree. So – when I moved in with Maurice, I changed my family name to my pen name. It was a lot more comfortable. It was also a lot safer. Don't you boys like my new name?

BORIS

Just as long as you act like your new name. Believability is the soul of acting.

ALEXIS

You guys remember my drag queen shows. I was totally believable.

BORIS

Dad thought you were too believable. Of course, Mom loved and adored you. You were the daughter she never had.

ALEXIS

So why this third degree? I thought we'd have a family reunion. Instead, I'm being grilled like I'm some kind of security risk.

BORIS

That's because you *are* some kind of security risk. Ryan, this prodigal brother of ours pulled some stunts you wouldn't believe. One summer, when you were already coaching, I got this surprise invitation from my favorite high school teacher: Peter Parnell. He was the one who introduced me to the wonderful world of dramatic literature.

RYAN

You mean: plays!

BORIS

I mean dramatic literature. He also introduced me to a lot more. I was a 16 years old virgin and Peter Parnell was gorgeous. But he was not only the man of my dreams. He was the all-knowing Wikipedia of my dreams. He edited the definitive collection of world drama and not just the famous plays. He knew all the obscure plays from every country in the world. By the time I received my doctorate, our relationship had become platonic but we still kept in touch.

RYAN

Peter Parnell. You never talked about him before.

BORIS

Do you talk about the men in your life? Not the one-night stands but the one and only; “the “man who got away.”

ALEXIS

How about the man you wanted to get away?

BORIS

You just sounded like Jean Marie.

RYAN

So – what’s the point of this Peter Parnell story?

BORIS

Anyway, it was the middle of a hot as hell summer and he invited me and young Alexis to spend the day at his country home. He wanted to meet my kid brother whom he had heard so much about. And of course, he wanted to find out what my plans were because he was thrilled that I wanted to teach dramatic literature.

ALEXIS

I’ll take it from there. It took us forever to get there because my car kept over-heating and breaking down and ...

BORIS

You didn't have a car. We took my car.

ALEXIS

Anyway, we get there and we get shown around and there's this monster of a swimming pool. I'm ready to jump in but first we have to greet the host and his mother and his grandmother. Nice ladies, all three of them. I was dying from the heat and I just wanted to get to the pool and jump in.

BORIS

I will never forgive you for what you did.

ALEXIS

I jumped into the pool. What was the big deal?

BORIS

The big deal was that you walked across the lawn to the edge of the pool, took off all your clothes and jumped right in. Peter was rightly pissed off and ordered you out of the pool and out of his house. And that was the last time I ever saw him.

ALEXIS

Personally, I thought he over-reacted.

BORIS

I understand. Millions wouldn't ... but I understand

RYAN (*going to the kitchen*)

I want to see how the chicken is doing.

BORIS

I'm sure it's doing a lot better than me.

(*Ryan starts to leave*)

BORIS

So -- where've you really been? Aside from prison and Paris.

ALEXIS

Well, for openers, I've been part of the Witness Protection Program.

BORIS (*shouting to Ryan*)

Hey Brian, I'll have a refill.

RYAN (*to Alexis*)

No kidding? Were you some kind of a snitch?

ALEXIS

I was with some Colombian drug dealers but I was actually working undercover for the DEA. That's the Drug Enforcement Administration.

RYAN

We watch television. We know about the DEA.

BORIS

When did you acquire a background in law enforcement?

ALEXIS

Do I detect a note of sarcasm in your voice?

BORIS

What were you: some kind of a cop? I mean, how did you go from "College Drop-out" to the criminal justice system?

ALEXIS

That's privileged information. It's also confidential and classified. I was down in Colombia three years ago. Do you know Medellin?

RYAN

Sure. Lots of big-time drug dealers down there! It's a dangerous place.

ALEXIS

It's pretty quiet now but it used to be like ... like the Wild West. Yeah.

RYAN

You could have gotten yourself killed.

ALEXIS

Ryan, if you're worried about getting yourself killed; you shouldn't be in law enforcement.

BORIS

Did you rehearse that line? (*Alexis paces around the room.*)

RYAN

Are you all right?

ALEXIS

My partner and I infiltrated this gang of Colombian drug dealers. We worked undercover for almost six months, getting tons of information. When some of the top guys relocated to Miami, we went with them. We had no choice. They insisted! We were invaluable to them. Long story short: our cover got blown and my partner got killed. I managed to escape. For the last four years, I've been in Paris— that's Paris, France -- with a new identity and a new life. So here I am. Jean Marie De La Mer: playwright extraordinaire – a votre service (*ser veese*).

BORIS

Does that mean we're in danger?

ALEXIS

The bad guys were extradited. They're in Colombian jails.

BORIS

Is that like Mexican jails?

ALEXIS

Hey, would I put my family in harm's way?

BORIS

The story of your life!

ALEXIS

The story of my *young* life! I'm going on thirty.

BORIS

It's not about age.

ALEXIS

Well, I didn't settle for cushy academia. I was out there in the streets. Now I want to start a new life, starting with my brothers.

RYAN

What about your lover? What about this Maurice Bernard? What about Paris?

ALEXIS

Maurice and I will always have Paris ... even if I'm living in Valiant, Texas.

BORIS (*interrupting*)

Do you have any money?

ALEXIS

There wasn't much money from the Witness Protection Program. I went through all of it.

BORIS

You must have made *some* money with the DEA.

ALEXIS

The DEA wasn't about money. They saved my life. You can't put a price tag on that.

RYAN

I'll bet *you* could.

ALEXIS

Wait till your friend gets here. You'll see the new me. You'll see Jean Marie. You'll thank me for my help. No kidding! I've turned over a new leaf.

BORIS

Meanwhile, you can take your duffel bag, your backpack and your new leaf downstairs. There's a laundry room, a toilet and a guest room.

ALEXIS

I hope you'll see me as more than a guest.

BORIS

Let's see how dinner goes.

(ALEXIS hugs RYAN and Boris; then gathers his bags and exits quickly.)

RYAN

So – what do you think?

BORIS

I'd like to turn that new leaf over and see what's on the other side. He's a hustler – a con artist.

BORIS

And please don't tell me you believe that story about working undercover for the DEA and that business about the Witness Protection Program. His whole life has been a protection program.

RYAN

He's still our brother. And he's asking us for help.

BORIS

Fine - and I'm going to ask the Drug Enforcement Administration for a little help: like telling me if Alexis worked for them.

RYAN

If he worked undercover, they're not going to tell you.

BORIS

If he was on their payroll, they can tell me. For God's sake, I'm his brother.

RYAN

That's right! You're his brother!

BORIS

What does that mean?

RYAN

He's reaching out to you.

BORIS

Yeah, sure and I'm reaching out for a martini; extra dry; no olives, no onions; no vermouth.

RYAN

And no gin.

BORIS

Don't lecture me on having another drink. *(He goes toward the kitchen with his martini glass.)*

RYAN

And don't leave the room when I'm talking to you.

BORIS

The martini won't come to me so I'm going to it.

RYAN

Boris, instead of having another drink, go downstairs and talk to your brother.

BORIS

He had four years to talk to *me*.

RYAN

He's family – which means he's less than perfect. Come on, Boris, who's your family? You don't talk to our mom and dad. There's just you and me – and Alex makes three – or his pen name makes three. For God's sake, if you can make allowance for Jean Marie de la Mer, you can show a little flexibility toward your own brother. We really don't know the first thing about him.

BORIS

I know the first thing about him; also, the second, third and fourth things about him. You want a quick course on Alexis “Drop The pants” Kanefsky? Let me count the ways.

RYAN

Go downstairs and give him a hand. I’ll go ahead with dinner.

BORIS

Tina is late. I think maybe we should go to the hotel and pick her up. I’m going to call her. And why don’t you come along?

RYAN (*calling out*)

Good idea. Let’s get going!

(Ryan and Boris exit quickly.)

BLACKOUT

Scene 2. The lights come up in the dining room. The time is 6 PM. Alexis Kanefsky, now dressed as Jean Marie de la Mer, in a sports jacket and a dress shirt open at the neck, enters and looks around. He speaks with a moderate, mellifluous French accent.

ALEXIS

Anybody home? Boris? Ryan? Hello!

(He walks around the table, inspecting everything like a grand chef. Then he goes to a small table, takes some “munchies” and pops them into his mouth.)

ALEXIS (*with the French accent*)

Delicieux (day lee see yure)! Monsieur Kanefsky! Are you there? Are you here?

(Sound cue: chimes of the front door.)

(ALEXIS goes to the front door, opens it and there is Tina Kelly. She is 30 years old, pretty, petite and wearing large horn-rimmed glasses.)

ALEXIS (*smiling*)

Good evening. You must be Tina Kelly.

TINA

Good evening. You must be Jean Marie de Mer.

ALEXIS

I could be Boris Kanefsky.

TINA (*not moving*)

Not with that accent.

ALEXIS

Do you speak French?

TINA (*still at the door*)

I speak high school French. Badly.

(Alexis steps aside, makes a grand gesture and "ushers" Tina into the dining room.)

ALEXIS

May I take your coat.

TINA

S'il vous plait.

ALEXIS

That is okay. You do not have to speak in the French language. I can speak in the English language.

(Alexis takes Tina's coat, goes to the hallway, puts her coat in the closet and quickly returns.)

ALEXIS (*contd*)

May I get you something to drink? I cannot vouch for the wine but it's worth a try. N'est ce pas?

TINA

You're very kind but no thanks. You should be the host.

ALEXIS

I would love to be the host ... for you. *(He takes out his phone camera and points it at Tina)*
Smile! Say "fromage."

TINA *(smiling)*

Fromage! So -- where is Boris?

ALEXIS

I'm not my brother's keeper. Oops! *(pointing his phone camera)* Smile! Say "Tina."

TINA

Tina. *(He takes several pictures of her)* I was expecting someone completely different. Someone more serious; someone not quite as charming as you seem to be.

ALEXIS

What you see is what you get.

TINA

I'm not sure I want to get what I see.

(He tries to kiss her on both cheeks but has to settle for her extended hand shake.)

ALEXIS *(contd)*

Two kisses – dos besos – is a sign of respect. In Barcelona, a woman is insulted if the man tries to shake her hand.

TINA

We're not in Barcelona.

ALEXIS

So - you're the dinner guest from New York, New York. *(She nods)* My people tell me that you're the artistic director of the famous Manhattan Project Theatre? Do you also make bombs?

TINA

We made a few ... early on.

ALEXIS

I know about bombs. I've made a few.

TINA

That's hard to believe. Tell me more.

ALEXIS

It's a long story.

TINA

I like long stories – if they're well written.

ALEXIS

How about "well told?"

TINA

Absolutely! Save it for tonight – for dinner. And Boris told me that you'll be speaking to his students.

ALEXIS

I don't think so. I am not very good with public speaking ... or public anything.

TINA

I find that hard to believe.

ALEXIS

Well, perhaps with small groups. Like with family groups.

TINA

Speaking of family groups, what do you suppose happened to "The Brothers Kanefsky"?

ALEXIS

They were going to your hotel to pick you up. Didn't they call you?

TINA

No – and I never got a message at the hotel.

ALEXIS

Where are you staying?

TINA

The Hotel Valiant. It's a nice little hotel. And they got me a car service to come here.

ALEXIS

I know the Hotel Valiant. It never used to be "a nice little hotel." But it used to be a convenient hotel.

TINA

Then you've been here before.

ALEXIS (*thinking fast*)

A long time ago. It had nothing to do with the Kanefsky family. Quelle coincidence (Kel coe an see *dahnce*), n'est ce pas (*ness pah*)? I mean, some coincidence, huh?

TINA

So what brought you all the way from Paris to an upscale suburb of Dallas?

ALEXIS

It had nothing to do with the theater. I was actually working for the government. I mean, I was working for your government. It was undercover work. A covert international operation.

TINA

So why do you bring it up?

ALEXIS

I wanted to give you a straight answer.

TINA

If you're a spy, you should give me a devious answer, like the name of a front organization, like a magazine or a newspaper.

ALEXIS

That was a long time ago.

TINA

That sounds like the CIA. But people who work for the CIA never say they work for the CIA. . But I should mind my own business. Right?

ALEXIS

You should have a drink.

TINA

(reaching for her phone camera.)

Can I take a picture of *you*? A little selfie?

ALEXIS

I don't like having my picture taken. I am – how you say, camera shy. Perhaps that is why I am a playwright and not an actor.

TINA

Oh, I don't know. I think you could be a very good actor. But not to worry. I was just having a little fun with you. I didn't realize you were so thin-skinned.

ALEXIS (composing himself)

It's been a stressful time. I'm under a lot of pressure.

TINA

Sorry! Are you still with the government?

ALEXIS

I'm on a leave of absence.

TINA

Which office? I'm not trying to grill you. I'm just asking.

ALEXIS

Why do you ask?

TINA

I have a friend in the New York office of the Drug Enforcement Agency. He spends half the year in Colombia. He says the per diem is great.

ALEXIS

What is “per diem?”

TINA

You worked for the government and you didn’t know about per diem? That’s the extra money you get in addition to your salary – like hotel expenses and all that.

ALEXIS

I was not in that game for the money. I thought I was a patriot. I stayed in many hotels, many places. But that was in my – how you say – my “flaming youth.” But now the flames have died out. I am living in Paris. I am happy in Paris. Now how about a drink? I’m having one.

TINA

Make it a white wine.

ALEXIS

I’ll make it two.

(ALEXIS goes into the kitchen. Tina remains in the dining room, looking at pictures on the walls.)

TINA *(calling out)*

So how long are you going to be here?

ALEXIS *(from the kitchen)*

I don’t know. But I’m looking forward to meeting Boris and his brother. What is his name?

TINA

Ryan! Boris tells me that Ryan is pretty good with firearms. I’m told that everybody in Texas has a gun, even women and girls.

(Alexis returns with a bottle of wine and two glasses. With a theatrical flair, he pours the wine and hands a glass to Tina.)

ALEXIS (toasting)

Well, here's to the tough young ladies! Santé (san *tay*)!

TINA

If you're going to be living here, I'd be happy to put you on our mailing list.

ALEXIS

What are you selling?

TINA

God! You really are defensive.

ALEXIS

I don't want to be on anybody's mailing list – starting with your FBI and your Internal Revenue Service. I am told their fingers are everywhere; everywhere in the world.

TINA

You know our country well. My Manhattan Project is a small but influential off-Broadway theatre company. We do high end productions; really exciting plays. And - of course - we're a non-profit company. That means "not for profit."

ALEXIS

Not for profit? That's shocking. How can your company exist if it's not for profit?

TINA

We have a very good accountant.

ALEXIS

I do not understand. Money matters are a foreign language to me.

TINA

Your English is very good. And the English language is a difficult language to learn ... especially for those who were born here. (*beat*) I was making a joke.

ALEXIS

Have you read the English language version of my play?

TINA

I read Boris' translation. Did you read his translation?

ALEXIS

Of course. And I approved it.

TINA

Good for you! Yes, we're opening the new season with it.

ALEXIS

I read it in the original.

TINA

I should hope so. I also hope you'll be here for the Opening.

ALEXIS

That's uncertain.

TINA

Why?

ALEXIS

Some crazy cowboy ... or some crazy cow girl ... might shoot me.

TINA

Who would want to shoot such a charming, attractive artist?

ALEXIS

They would not be shooting me for my art. Of course, some of your theater critics might want to do that. But no, it would not be a theater critic.

TINA (*intrigued*)

Then who would it be? (*beat*) Oh, I know! Some drug gang from Colombia. Right?

ALEXIS

The gang could be from anywhere. Honduras ... Guatemala ... Mexico ...? How's your drink?

TINA (*stepping back from him*)

I think I'll call Boris. I'm worried about him.

(*Sound cue: the front door opening*)

(*Enter Ryan and Boris.*)

TINA (*contd*)

I was just about to call you. Are you okay?

BORIS

We were caught in traffic. We have a new Expressway! They put up two more lanes so now they have *twice* as much traffic. It's one of the great mysteries of engineering. (*He kisses Tina*) How're you doing? Getting to know our French playwright?

TINA

He should write a play about himself.

ALEXIS

I did. That's the play you're going to produce. What is your expression: "What you see is what you get!" Well, what you guys read is what you *got*!

TINA

So -- *you're* "THE COUNTERFEITER?"

ALEXIS

C'est moi!

BORIS

Jean Marie, you're clutching my manuscript. What do you think? Really!

ALEXIS (*handing him the manuscript*)

I read it in Paris. I approved it in Paris. I love it.

TINA

But did you like it?

RYAN (*to Boris*)

Maybe Jean Marie doesn't want to be put on the spot?

ALEXIS

I've been put on the spot before – in worse situations.

TINA

He worked undercover for the DEA. (*to Alexis*) And I insist you should write a play about your experiences.

ALEXIS

I don't want to write about it; I want to forget about it.

BORIS (*to Alexis*)

Come on, Jean Marie? What did you think? What did you really think?

ALEXIS

What does it matter what I think?

RYAN

You're the playwright, aren't you? (*beat*) Aren't you?

ALEXIS

A writer is often the worst judge of his own work.

RYAN

If you were a basketball player, you'd be judged by your performance.

ALEXIS

I'm not a performer. And God knows I'm not a basketball player.

TINA

I love your play. I'm producing your play. When we go into rehearsal, I hope you'll be in New York. This is not a movie where the screenwriter is an unwelcomed guest – where he's actually not even invited. This is your play, Jean Marie. I want you in town for the rehearsals. The director and the actors want you in town for the rehearsals.

ALEXIS

Will I get a per diem?

(Jean Marie's remark breaks a tense situation. Everyone laughs.)

RYAN *(to Jean Marie)*

What does a Frenchman know about per diems?

ALEXIS *(bowing to Tina)*

I'm a fast learner.

BORIS

I'll vouch for that.

TINA

Boris, you have to go back to the title of the play. It's called "The Counterfeiter" because the hero isn't really French. He's masquerading as a Frenchman. He's an American, masquerading as a French playwright.

RYAN

Why the masquerade?

TINA

It's make-believe. Lots of people play make-believe...for lots of reasons, like if they're unhappy with their real life; they escape into a fantasy world.

RYAN

That could be dangerous.

TINA

Yes! That's what the play is about.

ALEXIS

Ever meet a counterfeiter? A counterfeiter is a forger. He's proud of his work. He even thinks he's better than the original artist. And he hates everyone – everyone in the whole universe – because nobody appreciates his greatness.

BORIS

Like you?

ALEXIS

Huh?

BORIS

Maybe you're a counterfeiter? Maybe you're a con artist?

RYAN

Boris, come on! Please! Let's all sit down at the table. In honor of our Parisian playwright, the first course will be a Vichyssoise; a cold potato soup with leaks, bay leaf, chicken stock, butter and heavy cream. A perfect recipe for a heart attack.

TINA

And you're a basketball coach? You should be chef; a French chef. You should come to New York. We need a good French restaurant which means we need a good chef. What are doing in Valiant, Texas?

RYAN

Okay, Tina. My cover is exposed. I'm a butch basketball coach in the sports world but I'm a closet chef. Creating great dinners in a four-star restaurant is my true passion, my true love.

ALEXIS

See? Ryan understands my play. He's a counterfeit coach. Thank you, sir.

TINA

Thank you, coach Kanefsky. You understand Jean Marie's play perfectly.

ALEXIS

You're both right. The counterfeit thing is a con job. He passes a phony oil painting in the style of Andy Warhol, which would be easy to do; easy to copy because Warhol copied himself. He gets away with it once; maybe twice. Or maybe he never gets caught.

BORIS *(to Alexis)*

But eventually he gets caught.

ALEXIS

Me? Are you talking about me?

BORIS

No. I mean, eventually *one* gets caught.

(ALEXIS begins taking pictures of everyone with his little phone camera.)

ALEXIS

Big smile! Big, big smile! You know what's missing from my play?

TINA

Tell me, please! I've already sunk a ton of money into it.

ALEXIS

Why is the hero a counterfeiter? Why can't he live a straight life?

RYAN

Maybe because he's gay? Maybe he's old school gay? Maybe he's Pre-Stonewall gay?

BORIS

Then he'd be a very, very old man.

ALEXIS

Or a very, very young man.

BORIS

Well, Monsieur de la Mer, if you yourself are the embodiment of your play, one thing we know for sure is your talent for being the center of attention at a dinner party. So – how about it? How about you? You're doing a heck of a good job presenting yourself as a man of mystery.

ALEXIS

Hey, maybe I'm not Jean Marie de la Mer? Maybe I'm your long-lost brother?

(There is a moment of silence)

(Sound cue: the front doorbell)

RYAN

Right on cue. Boris, that must be either the *real* Jean Marie de la Mer or our long-lost brother!

(There is an apprehensive look on Alexis' face)

ALEXIS

Don't count on it.

(ALEXIS starts to leave – not for the front door but to the kitchen.)

RYAN

Aren't you going to answer the door?

BORIS

It's a set up! He got someone to ring the bell. I love it! Street theatre comes to Valiant, Texas.

(Sound cue: an insistent ringing of the front door chimes)

ALEXIS

Ryan, wait a few seconds before you answer the door. I'm out of here; the back way out of here!

(Alexis exits. At the same time, RYAN goes to the front door and opens it. A large, hulking man, Pablo Gomez, is standing there.)

RYAN

Yes? Can I help you?

PABLO

I am looking for Mister Kanefsky.

RYAN

Who are you?

PABLO

I am a messenger. I have a delivery.

RYAN

It's a common name in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. It's also a common name in Valiant. What's the first name?

(Boris rushes out to greet the stranger.)

BORIS

You must be Jean Marie de la Mer! Welcome to America! Welcome to Valiant.

(Boris tries to embrace Pablo.)

PABLO *(pushing Boris away)*

Don't touch.

(Pablo barges in to the dining room, followed by Boris.)

BORIS

Very good! Very good! You're living up to your reputation. Jean Marie, say hello to my brother. Ryan, this is the famous – or should I say "infamous" Jean Marie de la Mer. And of course, you know our Tina Kelly.

TINA

You're Jean Marie de la Mer? I don't think so.

BORIS

Jean-Marie, please – "S'il vous plait – entrez. Mon maison est votre maison."

PABLO

I don't talk French.

RYAN *(sensing trouble)*

Would you all excuse me?

PABLO
Where are you going?

RYAN
Who wants to know?

PABLO
I'm looking for Alex Kanefsky.

TINA
You look nothing like I imagined.

BORIS
Can we get you something to drink? Some white wine?

PABLO
Hey, why not?

(Boris gets a glass of wine for Pablo.)

TINA
You have a wonderful face; tres ... tres interessant! Why don't you allow yourself to be photographed?

PABLO
Like, "mug shots?"

TINA
That's good. That's funny.

RYAN
Did you bring luggage? A suitcase? An overnight bag?

PABLO
I travel light.

BORIS

But you are going to stay here. We have a room waiting for you.

PABLO

Listen ...

RYAN

We're listening.

PABLO

I'm looking for Alexis Kanefsky. Is that you?

BORIS

Guess!

PABLO

I don't guess. I'm going to ask you one more time: where is Alexis Kanefsky?

RYAN

Boris, answer him *nicely*. And answer him *truthfully*.

(RYAN knows something is wrong here.)

BORIS

I love it. It's like a ... a theme evening. Tina, are you getting all this? This should be the theme for the previews. It should be like a masked ball, a masquerade.

RYAN

Boris, just tell the man who you are.

BORIS

Okay, Jean Marie. I'll tell you who I am if you tell me who you are.

PABLO

I'm Pablo Toledano. Does that ring a bell?

(Pablo takes out a pistol and aims it at Boris' head)

PABLO

Does this ring a bell? Where is the money?

RYAN

Boris, it's a real gun. Tell him who you are.

(Pablo grabs Boris by the neck and throws him against the wall.)

PABLO

Give me the money.

RYAN

Boris, this is not Jean Marie de la Mer.

(Pablo takes aim at Boris.)

PABLO

Where is Alexis? I want Alexis. I want the fucking money!

BORIS *(screaming)*

I'm not Alexis. I'm his brother. I'm his brother.

RYAN

I'm also his brother.

BORIS

We're the brothers Kanefsky. All of us. All of us.

(Blackout)

(End Act One)

Act Two

Scene 1. Continuation of Act One.

RYAN (*to Pablo*)

We're not the only Kanefskys in America.

PABLO

I got my instructions.

RYAN

What's this all about? Who are you? What do you want?

PABLO

Can't tell you!

RYAN

Boris, show him your driver's license. Show him who you are.

(Boris reaches into his back pocket to take out his wallet.)

PABLO

Get your hands out of your pocket.

BORIS

I want to take out my wallet. I want to show you my driver's license.

PABLO

Do it real slow.

(Boris begins to remove his wallet and then take out his driver's license in very slow motion.)

RYAN (*to Boris*)

You can go a little faster than that. Don't take him so literally.

TINA (*to Boris*)

You look like you're some kind of French pantomime artist. Speed it up.

BORIS

Ladies, he's pointing the gun at *me*; not at you. If I go too fast ... (*to Pablo*) Here's my picture. Here's my name. Okay? Do you want to see my social security also?

(Pablo studies the driver's license.)

PABLO

So -- where's Alexis?

BORIS

You should pardon the expression but I'm not my brother's keeper. I haven't seen him for over four years. Six years! Ten years! What's this all about?

PABLO

You haven't seen him?

BORIS

I swear – on my mother's grave.

PABLO

I gotta look around.

RYAN (*quickly*)

Don't wake the baby!

PABLO

I don't wake babies.

RYAN

If you go into the baby's room, she'll start crying – and she'll never stop. I'll go with you. I want to make sure the baby's asleep.

(RYAN and Pablo exit.)

TINA

That was good thinking on RYAN's part.

BORIS

Good thinking would have been if ALEXIS never showed up. Damn him!

(Enter ALEXIS, with several large back packs and another bag slung over his shoulders. He sports a fake beard, a fake moustache and wears a large floppy hat, sunglasses and has a cigarette holder in his mouth. He speaks with a French accent.)

ALEXIS

Ca va? Ca marche (*marsh*)?

BORIS

Shmuck! You can "marche" (*marsh*) right out of here. Get the hell out of here. I mean, now!

ALEXIS

This is how you welcome Jean Marie de la Mer?

BORIS

This is how I welcome the fuck up. There's a Latino hit man going through the house, looking for you, so you better take your phony beard, your phony mustache and your phony accent and move your "derriere."

ALEXIS

A Latino hit man? How quaint! It is to laugh. Hah hah!

BORIS

He's got a big gun with a big silencer so I think maybe he's got the last laugh. ALEXIS, I'm not joking.

ALEXIS

But I am not this ... how you say ... ALEXIS.

TINA (*to ALEXIS*)

Stop it! Your brother is serious.

ALEXIS (*dropping the accent*)

My brother came out the womb serious.

BORIS

Cut the crap and get lost. This is not the best time to tell you that I love you but in spite of everything, in spite of ... *yourself*, I do love you; I do care for you. Now please take off that ridiculous costume and get your ass out of here.

ALEXIS

Boris, it's worth everything just to hear you say what you just said. Thank you.

BORIS

Okay, okay, now that we've had our testimonials, get out of here.

ALEXIS

No. I've lived my life on the run – running away from the folks, running away from you, even running away from my lover, Maurice Bernard. Oh yeah, I might have been able to save him but I wasn't going to play the dead hero. When the gang caught him, I knew that my ass was on the line. Hell, I even ran away from the Witness Protection Program. I'm not running away anymore.

TINA

Why is this guy after you?

BORIS

Did you take his money?

ALEXIS

You'd never believe my story.

BORIS

Try me.

(*RYAN re-enters the room, followed by Pablo.*)

ALEXIS (*French accent*)

Bon soir! Bonne soiree! What's happening, baby?

PABLO

Who the fuck are you?

ALEXIS

Who am I? Qui est moi? That is a good existential question.

PABLO

I said, "Who the *fuck* are you?"

ALEXIS

The question is: who are *you* – and what do you want?

PABLO

My associates want their money.

ALEXIS

And what does that have to do with this ... Alexis Kanefsky?

PABLO

He ripped us off.

ALEXIS (*to Boris*)

Que'est ce que c'est what means, "ripped us off?"

BORIS

Stole. Apparently, my brother – with all his other accomplishments – is also a crook, a thief (*getting worked up*) ... and the most irresponsible human being on the face of the earth.

PABLO (*to Boris*)

Hey, don't get bent out of shape. I'm with you on that.

ALEXIS (*to Pablo*)

Alors! I will give you your money. I – Jan Marie de la Mer, will personally give your money to save the honor of the Kanefsky family.

PABLO

It's a lot of money.

ALEXIS

I will give it to you. Then I will find this ... Alexis Kanefsky ... and take care of him. I will make sure that he will repay me. *(He hands Pablo a slip of paper)* Write down the figure – the amount of money – that your people require. Do I make myself clear?

PABLO

Are you some kind of money bags?

ALEXIS

Please! I am here for an important meeting with these people. I do not have time to discuss my personal fortune.

(Pablo writes some numbers on the slip of paper, then returns the paper to ALEXIS, who studies it.)

ALEXIS *(contd)*

Hmmm. Will you take a check?

PABLO

Cash!

ALEXIS

I would recommend taking a check.

PABLO

Cash!

ALEXIS

Francs? French francs?

PABLO

American dollars.

ALEXIS

Wait right here. I shall return in a few moments...with your cash.

PABLO

How do I know you're not going to the cops?

ALEXIS

Do you want your money?

PABLO

I'm going with you.

ALEXIS

I work alone.

PABLO

Well now you got company.

ALEXIS

I don't want you to see where I have the money.

PABLO

Oh, yeah? Well, it's my money.

ALEXIS

Not all of it. You will have the money that belongs to your people ... and no more. I am, how you say, a bank. The money that is yours, you will get. No more; no less. I'll be back in two minutes.

PABLO

Oh, yeah? Well, if I don't see you in two minutes, and if I see one cop in three minutes, there's going to be a lot of blood around here in four minutes.

ALEXIS

Bon d'accord (*da kod*); okay!

PABLO

You got two minutes – or your friends here are dead meat!

BORIS (*to Alexis*)

Did you hear that? Dead meat!

(ALEXIS exits quickly)

PABLO

Is that guy straight?

RYAN

He aint gay ... if you know what I mean.

PABLO

I *don't* know what you mean.

TINA

He's French. They all talk funny.

PABLO

I mean, does he have the bucks?

TINA

He has major bucks. He is supporting all of us.

PABLO

What for? Can't you get a job?

TINA

I have a theatre.

PABLO

No kidding? You know, I do a little acting.

TINA

How nice for you. Where do you do your “little acting”?

PABLO

I shouldn't be telling you.

TINA

Oh, please! You are a wonderful type: very macho, very handsome. Guapo (*gua po*)!
Handsome. Very handsome!

PABLO

Get out of here.

RYAN (*moving toward him*)

Oh, no, my friend is right. You could play a Latino lover...with a gun. May I see your gun?

PABLO

Back off! You can see it from where you are.

RYAN

Interesting!

PABLO

You know guns?

RYAN

A little!

PABLO

Well, you don't want to fool around with this one. It could go off.

RYAN

But that's the whole point of it. It's supposed to go off.

PABLO

If your friend aint back in one minute, it'll go off. So back off.

TINA
So where do you do your acting?

PABLO
Do you know Miami?

TINA
I love Miami.

PABLO
It's community theatre stuff. You know community theatre?

TINA
Some of the best acting I've ever seen has been in community theatres.

PABLO
No kidding?

TINA
I'd love to see you perform.

PABLO
Do you know a show called GUYS AND DOLLS?

TINA
You played the leading role; the male lead; the very masculine lead.

PABLO
No way! Get out of here! I just do small parts.

TINA
There are no small parts; only small salaries.

PABLO
Huh?

BORIS
So what's the story with my brother?

PABLO
It's a long story.

BORIS
Was he part of your gang?

PABLO
Who says I'm with a gang?

BORIS
I'd like to know. I'd like to help him.

PABLO
I'm not supposed to talk about it.

TINA
We could listen to you all night.

PABLO
I gotta go back to Miami.

(ALEXIS returns with a suitcase.)

ALEXIS
Here you go, my friend. Do you want to count it?

(Pablo opens the bag and looks in.)

PABLO
It better all be here.

ALEXIS

It is, my friend, it is. Believe me; I do not want any harm to come to my friends.

PABLO

So how come you got all this money with you? Huh? Nobody walks around with this kind of money. Huh? Where'd you get it?

ALEXIS

Very well! I confess. It was given to me by this Alexis Kanefsky.

PABLO

So why didn't he show his face?

ALEXIS

He said you were going to kill him.

PABLO

This is true.

ALEXIS

So ... have we concluded our business?

PABLO

I gotta count the money.

ALEXIS

You insult me. Take the money, go to your car – I assume that big black car out front, the one that looks like a hearse, is yours – and count the money. I assure you it is all there. I want no harm to come to my friends. So do not come back here.

(Pablo starts to leave.)

PABLO *(to Tina)*

Hey, you want to go out some time?

TINA

When I'm in Miami, I'll call you. Do you have a business card?

PABLO

I was thinking more like – tonight; like now.

TINA

I have a meeting – like now.

PABLO (*to Tina*)

You got a business card?

TINA

I'm fresh out. Sorry.

PABLO

You know, I don't have to do this for a living. It's just that I got a brother

BORIS

We all have our brothers. I know what you mean.

(Pablo exits.)

ALEXIS (*to Boris*)

How do you know what he means? Anyway ... he should have taken my check.

BORIS

Why?

ALEXIS

The check is real. The money is fake!

BORIS

Jesus Christ! What if he finds out it's fake?

ALEXIS

Don't worry. I only work with A-list counterfeiters.

BORIS

I'll bet.

ALEXIS

What does that mean?

BORIS

Look at you: the phony beard, the phony moustache, the phony accent. I can't believe that guy didn't see right through you.

(ALEXIS removes his beard and moustache)

RYAN

I thought it was a good makeup job. And I loved the accent. Very sexy!

BORIS

It was a horrible accent.

TINA

I agree with Ryan. I also loved the accent and the costume and the makeup.

BORIS

Well, you ladies don't know my brother like I do.

ALEXIS

Ah, so you know me?

BORIS

You're a hustler. And what was that about you having real money in a checking account? I thought you were broke?

ALEXIS

I *am* broke. I had to steal forty bucks from you – but don't worry, I'll pay you back.

BORIS

I gave you some money and then you steal some more? You're incorrigible.

ALEXIS

I'll write you a check.

BORIS

Why not write yourself a check?

ALEXIS

Because the money's in a Swiss bank! I don't want to go through the hassle of wire transfers and all that, not until I'm settled in.

BORIS

You've never settled in and you're never going to settle in so please spare me the bullshit.

RYAN

ALEXIS, where did the counterfeit money come from?

ALEXIS

Originally, It came from Pablo's brother.

RYAN

And where did the real money come from – what you have in that Swiss bank?

ALEXIS

That's also from his brother, Esteban.

RYAN

So how did *you* get the money?

ALEXIS

The brothers had a falling out.

BORIS

That sounds familiar.

ALEXIS

I was the go between. As far as I was concerned, it was all funny money, monopoly money, nothing I was ever going to touch. And then they killed my husband. So –before I got my ass out of there, I took the real money from Esteban *and* the fake money from Pablo – and I left clues that each one stole from the other.

BORIS

But in reality – reality – you stole from them. Like you stole from me and like you stole from Tina. And like you stole from Jean Marie de la Mer.

ALEXIS

Ladies and gentlemen, Jean Marie de la Mer is my pen name. *Moi, je suis Jean Marie de la Mer.*

RYAN

That's like a kid stepping onto a basketball court and into a professional game. His only previous experience is a couple of years playing in school yards. And wham bam, he scores 60 points and shuts down the guys on the other team. That's fantasy basketball.

BORIS

Good analogy. *(to Alexis, waving the script)* And you're a fantasy playwright. Now tell us; tell all of us: who wrote this wonderful play?

ALEXIS

Me.

BORIS

Prove it.

ALEXIS

Ryan was too young to go my drag shows but you came to them. You came to all of them. You saw me perform. But you had to know that I wrote the shows that I performed. *(He reaches into one of his bags and pulls out a couple of playbills.)* Go ahead, bro. Read the cover.

BORIS *(reading)*

"DRAG QUEENS ON PARADE" – a one man show – book by Alexis Kanefsky; words and music by Alexis Kanefsky – directed and choreographed by Alexis Kanefsky ... " Okay? Okay! I rest my case.

TINA

You must come to New York. Broadway needs you. I need you.

ALEXIS

Thanks - but no thanks. We have a bigger problem. When Esteban and Pablo find out the money is fake, they'll come back here!

TINA

Let's call the police.

ALEXIS

They'll implicate me. They'll implicate all three of us.

RYAN (*to Alexis*)

So -- your friends will come back. You won't be here. But we'll be here. What happens to us?

ALEXIS

I'll take care of everything.

BORIS

You've already taken care of everything.

ALEXIS

I know; I'm a comfort.

RYAN

Are we we having dinner? I went to great lengths to prepare this me.

TINA

I think I'd better go back to New York, New York. Boris, would you please take me back to my hotel?

RYAN

And I've got a big game tomorrow. I think maybe we should all go to your hotel.

TINA

Alexis, you must come to New York for your own good and for everybody's good. Say goodbye to Paris. Say goodbye to Valiant, Texas. Say goodbye to your brothers. Say goodbye to Alexis Kanefsky. You're the star that you always wanted to be. You are Jean Marie de la Mer.

BORIS

Alex – or Jean Marie – or whatever the hell your name is: did you really worked undercover for the DEA? Ryan, our brother actually did something. All those stories he told weren't just stories? Everything he talked about was true. I'm nonplussed.

RYAN

You're what? I don't know about "nonplussed" but you're going to be a minus. You're going to be a nonentity. That Pablo guy put a gun to your face and now he's coming back here with his brother. And I've got a feeling the brother never did any community theater.

(Sound cue: front door chimes)

(RYAN leaps up and hurries to the kitchen. At the same time, ALEXIS goes to the front door. Pablo enters. He grabs ALEXIS is and pushes him back into the living room.)

PABLO

Long time no see, stranger!

ALEXIS

Not long enough.

PABLO

Okay, funny man, you and me, we're going for a ride.

ALEXIS

Where's Esteban?

PABLO

He's driving.

ALEXIS

Are you coming with us?

PABLO

Sure!

ALEXIS

It'll be a little crowded with all of us in the front seat.

PABLO

Don't worry, mi amigo. I'll be in the back seat.

ALEXIS (*backing away*)

Yeah, sure! I feel better already.

(*RYAN re-enters the living room. He is wearing an apron.*)

RYAN (*to Pablo*)

Hi, there, stranger! What seems to be the problem?

PABLO

Your friend here gave me phony money. So -- me and him, we're going for a ride.

RYAN

If he goes for a ride, we *all* go for a ride.

BORIS

RYAN, what are you doing?

RYAN

We live as a family. We die as a family. Isn't that right, Pablo? You believe in "la familia," don't you?

PABLO

What are you talking about?

RYAN

If somebody threatened your brother, wouldn't you stand up for him?

PABLO

No way!

ALEXIS (*to Boris*)

I'd stand up for my brother.

BORIS

Me, too.

TINA

Pablo, I am not part of this family. I am not part of any family. I am married to the theater.

PABLO

That's a big family.

TINA

I'm glad you understand.

PABLO

You can sit in the back seat with me.

RYAN

I have the real money.

BORIS

RYAN ...

PABLO

Okay, where's the real money?

RYAN

In the basement!

PABLO

Okay, everybody: we go to the basement.

BORIS

RYAN, do you know what you're doing?

ALEXIS

Shut up, Boris. He knows what he's doing.

BORIS

He's got a gun.

PABLO

Yeah, I got a gun.

RYAN

Pablo, may I see the gun?

PABLO

What? Are you kidding? Let's go. Everybody, let's go! Vamonos (va mo nos).

RYAN

Pablo, take the bullets out. I want to inspect the gun.

PABLO

Are you crazy? Let's go to the basement.

RYAN

Come on, let me see it. You can use your other gun while I'm inspecting this one.

PABLO

What other gun? This is my gun – right here – in my hand.

RYAN

The handle of your other gun is sticking out of your belt, pointing at your big fat ass. you. But if you want to be hard-headed about it, let's go.

BORIS

Wait a second! Ryan, you're being very brave – and very foolish.

ALEXIS

My brother is right. I don't often say that but, in this case, he's right.

PABLO

Don't talk about brothers. I know about brothers.

ALEXIS

What do you know? You tried to kill your brother.

PABLO

I didn't kill him. He's in the car. He is waiting for us. He is waiting for the money.

ALEXIS

In a situation like this, he would not be waiting in the car. He would not be trusting you with the money. He would not be foolish; like the last time.

PABLO

The last time, he cheated me ... like you cheated me.

ALEXIS

It was an honest misunderstanding. Esteban is a good guy. He just couldn't tell the difference between what was real and what was counterfeit.

PABLO

He knows the difference.

ALEXIS

No, he doesn't.

PABLO

Don't mess with my head! Don't mess with my head!

ALEXIS

He's your brother. We only have one brother in life and we should cherish that person.

PABLO

Cherish my ass! I got lots of brothers. They're all scum bags.

ALEXIS

I never think of Esteban as a prophylactic. I think that basically – drug dealing aside – he’s a decent human being who accidentally fell into a life of crime.

PABLO

He didn’t fall; he flew! Yeah, he flew like a bird. And then he died like a pigeon.

ALEXIS

He died? He was killed? *(beat)* You killed your own brother? *(beat)* I mourn his passing.

PABLO

If you don’t get moving, you’re gonna mourn your *own* passing. *(shouting)* Okay, everybody: to the basement. *(to Tina)* You, too, lady!

TINA

I have nothing to do with this.

PABLO *(without emotion)*

Do you want to die?

(Tina rushes to stand alongside RYAN, ALEXIS and BORIS.)

RYAN

Okay, everybody, follow me!

(RYAN leads everybody out of the room)

(Sound cue: a pistol shot, followed by another pistol shot, followed by yet another pistol shot)

(Light change)

Scene 2. Moments later. Tina enters the room and pours herself a drink. Then RYAN enters the room and also pours herself a drink. They sit and sip their drinks in silence. Finally, Boris enters the room.)

I'm having a vodka martini.

BORIS

You don't drink vodka martinis.

RYAN

I do now.

BORIS

(He goes to the kitchen, gets a bottle of vodka from the freezer and returns to the living room where he pours vodka into a glass.)

Where's ALEXIS?

TINA

He's taking care of business.

BORIS

Why don't you help him?

RYAN

I offered to help him but he said the whole thing was his responsibility.

BORIS

TINA (going to the basement)
I'm going to help him.

I wanted to help but he pushed me away. Told me to heat up the chicken. *(to Tina)* Don't go down to the basement. *(Tina continues walking away)* Why are you going downstairs?

RYAN

He's talent.

TINA

He's what?

RYAN

TINA

He's a one of a kind: playwright and performer. He's ... Jean Marie de la Mer. *(She exits)*

BORIS *(to RYAN)*

You were magnificent. *(raising his glass)* RYAN the magnificent!

RYAN

Please ...

BORIS

You were heroic.

RYAN

It was self-defense. Hey, they may be a while. Let's have the potato soup before it gets warm

BORIS

Huh?

RYAN

It's supposed to be served cold.

BORIS

Hey, you're almost as funny as our kid brother.

RYAN

He aint no kid.

(Tina returns to the dining room)

TINA

He sent me back upstairs. He didn't want me around while he's disposing of the body. He's taking the body to the garbage dump.

RYAN

I hope he puts it in the right section. There's plastic; there's glass, there's ...

TINA

There'll be a new section: human waste. *(to RYAN)* You okay?

RYAN

What else could I do? It was either him or us.

BORIS

If ALEXIS hadn't shown up, none of this would have happened.

RYAN

He was in trouble. Where was he supposed to go?

BORIS

He should have stayed in the Witness Protection Program.

RYAN

What about the "Family Protection Program?"

(Boris continues to drink)

RYAN *(contd)*

What about the family? Huh?

(Sound cue: the front door chimes)

(For a moment, RYAN, Boris and Tina are frozen. Then Tina gets up.)

TINA

I'll get it.

RYAN

I'll get it.

TINA

You've done enough.

(Tina goes to the front door)

BORIS

Maybe ALEXIS needs money for the garbage dump?

RYAN

You're not funny.

(Tina rushes back in, pausing at the entranceway)

TINA *(announcing)*

Ladies and gentlemen Jean Marie De La Mer!

(Boris and RYAN stand ... as the lights fade to black)

End of Play

