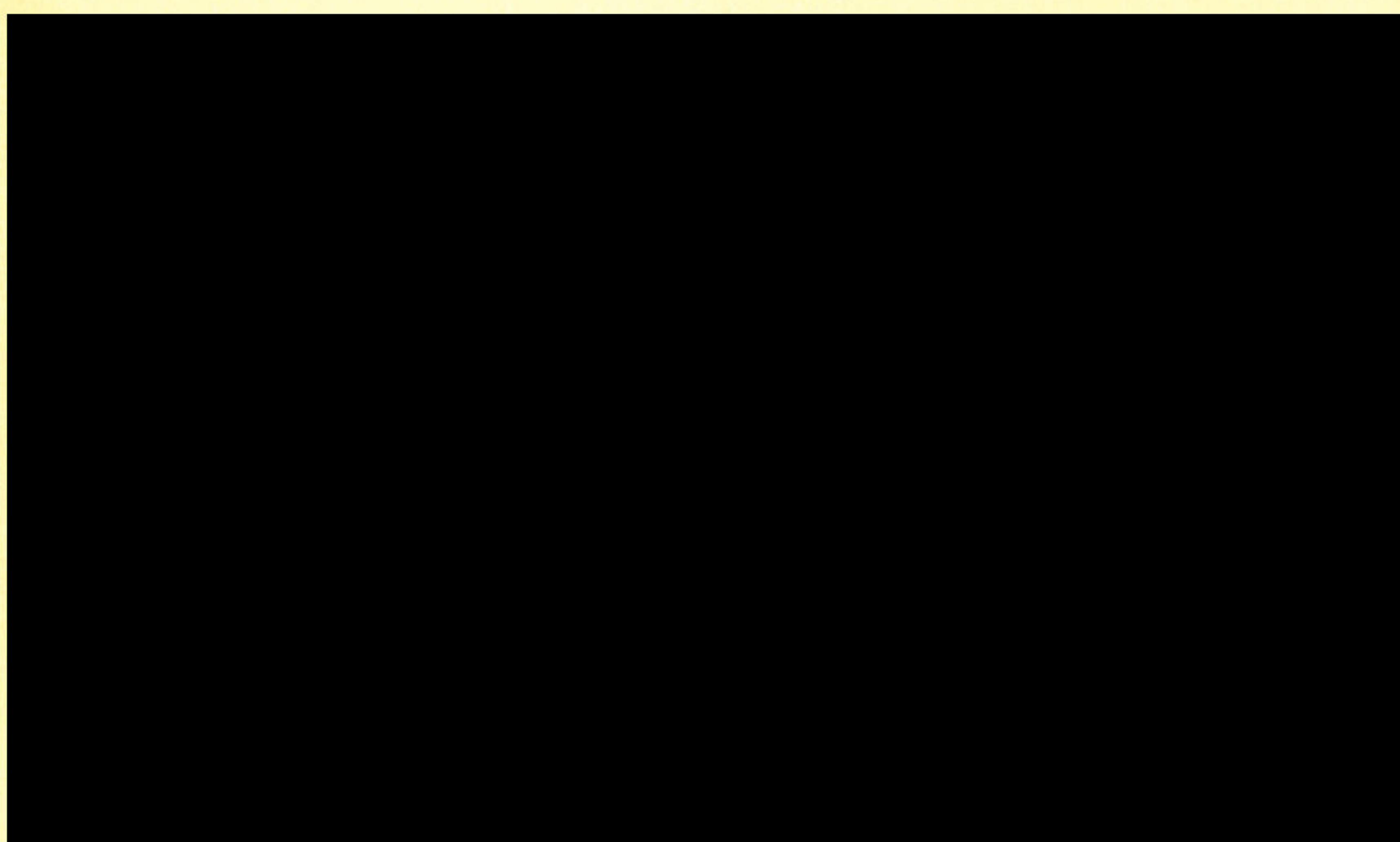


California Suite

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

by Neil Simon



For GCSE Drama, Component 2, 2024

SAMUEL FRENCH

California Suite' by Neil Simon

SECOND KEY EXTRACT STUDIES
GCSE Drama, Cohort 2024, Group 2, Group
Scene for
4 actors

'California Suite' by Neil Simon
(1977)

SCENE THREE: Visitors from Chicago

It is a Sunday afternoon, about four o'clock—the Fourth of July, as a matter of fact. Both rooms are bright and sunny.

START
OF
EXTRACT
THREE

The front door opens, and MORT and BETH HOLLENDER enter. They are in tennis clothes, a bit sweaty. MORT carries two tennis rackets and a can of balls—but mostly he carries BETH. She has her arm around his shoulder; he has his arm around her waist. She is hobbling on one foot and in enormous pain—she has obviously injured her ankle or foot.

MORT Easy . . . Easy, now . . .

BETH Slowly . . . Go slowly . . . Please go slowly.

MORT I'm going as slow as I can.

BETH Then go slower . . . Mort, I'm slipping!

MORT I got you.

BETH I'm slipping, I'm telling you! Put down the tennis balls—who needs used tennis balls? I got a broken foot.

MORT (He drops the balls from his left hand, which was around her waist) It's not broken. If it was broken, you couldn't step down on it.

BETH I can't step down on it. I'm telling you, it feels broken. It's my foot, isn't it? Put me down in here.

MORT Which chair would you like?

90.

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BETH (Sarcastic) The one in my bedroom at home.
You want to get it for me?

MORT What are you getting upset for?

BETH Because you ask me such stupid questions.
The sofa, all right? (He heads her for the nearest chair)
Easy...

MORT (Tries to ease her into the chair) I'm trying...

BETH Put the goddamn rackets down!

MORT Sorry! I'm sorry.
(He drops the rackets, still holding her in a half stand-
ing-half sitting position)

BETH (She lowers herself into the chair) Oh, shit... Oh
shit shit shit shit!

MORT (Nods sympathetically) It really hurts, heh?

BETH When have you heard me say shit five times?

MORT Let me try to get a doctor.

BETH First get me some aspirins.

MORT How many do you want?

BETH Forty!
(MORT starts for the bathroom)

MORT The thing that kills me is that they saw your
shoelaces were untied. That's why they kept lob-
bing over your head.

BETH Look at that ankle puff up. It's the size of a

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grapefruit. I'll have to wear your shoes on the plane tomorrow.

MORT (*In the bathroom*) And they just kept lobbing the ball over your head—lob lob lob, the sons-of-bitches.

BETH When I fell, I heard something go snap. I said to myself, "Please God, let it be my brassiere."

MORT (*Comes out with water and aspirins*) That wasn't tennis out there, that was war! They only hit it to you when the sun was in your eyes, and they only hit it to me when my shorts were slipping down.

BETH Will you get the doctor?

MORT (*Angry and frustrated*) Who? I don't know any doctors in Los Angeles.

BETH Look in the Yellow Pages under orthopedic.

MORT ~~On Sunday? July Fourth? You expect a doctor to make a house call on Sunday July Fourth?~~

BETH ~~Mort, it's getting excruciating.~~ If you can't get a doctor, call a druggist . . . I'll take a laundry man, a delivery boy, just get somebody, please!

MORT (*Thumbs through the phone book with irritation*) ~~Lob lob lob, dirty sons-of-bitches . . .~~ (*He stops at a page, runs his finger down it*) All right, here's the orthopedics . . . Abel, Abernathy, Abromowitz, Barnard, Benson, Berkowitz . . . Pick one.

BETH None of them sound good.

ACT TWO

MORT ~~What do you mean, they don't sound good?~~
~~They're just names . . .~~ You want them to come over
and audition for you?

BETH ~~Nothing strikes me . . .~~ Keep reading.

MORT ~~Block, Brewster, Brunckhorst . . .~~

BETH No. I don't want Brunckhorst.

MORT What's wrong with Brunckhorst?

BETH He sounds like a horse doctor. ~~Get me some-~~
~~body with a soft name.~~

MORT This is crazy. I'll call the hotel. They must
~~know a doctor.~~
(He picks up the phone)

BETH Quick, cover the phone, here comes another
obscenity!

MORT (Into the phone) Can I have the front desk,
please?

BETH Oh, shitty shit!

MORT . . . No, operator. That was my wife . . . Hello?
. . . This is Mr. Hollender in 203 . . . My wife just
had an accident on the tennis court. She thinks
her foot might be broken. Can you possibly get
us a doctor? . . . Would you? . . . Oh, thank you
very much. (He hangs up) He'll have someone
call.

BETH You should have told them what kind of a doc-

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tor. This is Beverly Hills. They'll probably send a psychiatrist.

MORT (*Picks up the phone again*) Room service, please. (*To BETH*) He's not gonna get away with this. I'm gonna play him singles someday. I don't know how, but somewhere I'm gonna find a solid steel ball. And on the first serve, I'll break his back, the bastard. (*Into the phone*) Hello? . . . Yes. This is Mr. Hollender in 203 . . . I would like three buckets of ice cubes, please . . . No, no glasses, just the ice cubes.

BETH And a Monte Cristo sandwich.

MORT Are you serious?

BETH I didn't break my stomach, just my foot. I'm hungry. I want a Monte Cristo sandwich.

MORT (*Into the phone*) Hello? . . . Three buckets of ice cubes and a Monte Cristo sandwich. (*He hangs up*) Do you know what the odds must be in Las Vegas for an order like that? (*The phone rings*) Hello? (*Suddenly his tone turns icy*) Yes . . . Yes . . . How is she? . . . How do you think she is?

BETH Who is it?

MORT (*With his hand over the mouthpiece*) It's them—the "Lobbers" (*Into the phone*) . . . Her foot may be broken, that's how she is . . . It's the size of a coconut . . . What can you do? (*He turns to BETH*) They want to know what they can do . . . (*Back into the phone*) I'll tell you what you can do—

ACT TWO

BETH Morty, don't—

MORT I want you to go to the pro shop and buy two cans of Wilson yellow tennis balls, charge them to me, and shove them up your respective asses.
(He slams the receiver down)

BETH Are you crazy? Those are our best friends.

MORT I said I'd pay for the balls, didn't I?

BETH The four of us never should have taken a vacation together . . . ~~There was trouble from the first day. When he showed up at the airport and said he'd forgotten his credit cards, I knew we were in for it.~~

MORT I will *never* travel with them again. *Eight* pieces of luggage for two skinny people? What have they got in there?

BETH Where?

MORT In the luggage.

BETH Her make-up. Every new perfume that comes out, she's got it—"Babe," "Charlie," "Harold," "Milton," whatever. . . . (There is a knock on the door)
~~No wonder I slipped and fell—the court was covered with all her goddamn skin cream and lotion.~~
(He opens the door. STU and GERT FRANKLYN stand there. She is in a white tennis dress; he is in a yellow warm-up suit. Each carries a racket. GERT also has a bottle of skin lotion. STU has a can of tennis balls)

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GERT My God, what happened? We thought it was just a sprain. Is it very painful? *(Goes to touch it)* Oh, my poor baby.

BETH Don't do that! I yell shit when you do that!

STU *(Holds up a can of balls; to MORT)* Here! This is the can you told me to buy . . . You want me to take the balls out first? *(MORT turns away from him in anger. To MORT)* Have you called a doctor? *(No response; to BETH)* Has he called a doctor?

BETH Yes.

~~STU Is he a good man?~~

~~BETH The hotel is sending somebody.~~

GERT *(To MORT)* Shouldn't she have ice on that leg, Mort? *(He won't answer)* Mort? . . . Should we get some ice?

STU *(To MORT)* Gert's talking to you. What the hell's wrong with you?

MORT *(Turns, hands on hips, takes a deep breath)* I'm sorry, Stu. I'm very upset. ~~Beth's foot may be broken—my temper got the best of me. I ordered some ice, okay?~~

STU I understand.

MORT It's been a rough three weeks. ~~After a while, you start to get on each other's nerves, you know?~~

STU Sure.

MORT I mean, four people taking a vacation together can get very testy. You can only do it with your best friends . . . And you and Gert are our best friends. GERT: Christ, we don't have better friends than you . . . (STU nods) . . . because if we did—I would have told you to shove a steel RACKET up your ass!

GERT Oh, my God!

STU What are you, crazy? What are you blaming us for? It wasn't *our* fault.

MORT Lob lob lob wasn't your fault? The woman stood there defenseless with her laces open, and would you hit the ball to me? Oh, no. You hit it over a crippled woman's head.

STU ~~She wasn't crippled until she fell.~~

BETH (*Closes her eyes in pain*) Could you all please do this in the bedroom. I need this room to yell in . . . Oh . . . defecation!

STU (*Starts towards BETH*) Can I look at it?

MORT (*To STU*) You touch her foot, and they ship you back to Chicago on Air Freight.

STU (*Backs away*) Don't threaten me. I've taken enough crap from you these last few weeks—don't you threaten me.

MORT Ohh, it's coming out now. Now we're all gonna hear about it, right? It started the night we got the room with the view in Honolulu, and you

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~~got the toilet that kept backing up . . . Only I didn't
book the rooms, smart ass~~

STU Watch it, Morty, I don't like being called smart
ass.

GERT Stop it, both of you! Somebody go get a cold
towel until the ice gets here. (Neither man moves)
Look at them. Look how they just stand there.

BETH (To GERT) You smell wonderful. What are you
wearing?

GERT It's called "After Tennis." I just bought it
. . . I'll get you the towel myself.
(She goes into the bathroom)

STU That woman should be lying flat on her back
with her foot up in the air. Let's get her into bed.

MORT I don't need your goddamn advice. Don't start
telling me what to do for her. (To BETH) Come on,
honey. Let's get you flat on your back with your foot
up in the air.

BETH Let him help you, Morty, you can't do it alone.
(STU rushes over and throws her other arm around his
neck)

STU All right, honey, just put all your weight on us.
Here we go. One-two-three . . .
(STU and MORT pull in opposite directions)

BETH Oh, Jesus! Oh, Jesus, that hurts.

STU Don't step down on it.

ACT TWO

BETH Not my leg. My arms. You're pulling my arms apart.

MORT (Yells) Let go of her arm, you shmuck!

STU (To MORT) It's your fault. You're going the wrong way.

MORT You giving me directions again? Last time you gave me directions, we missed San Francisco.

BETH Can I make a suggestion? Can we talk about all this after the amputation?

MORT (As they make headway towards the door) I got you, honey, don't worry. (Yells out) Where's the cold towel, for chrissakes?

STU Don't yell at my wife while I'm carrying your wife.

GERT (From the bathroom) Oh, God, no!

STU What?

MORT What is it? What happened?

GERT (Coming out) I broke a bottle of perfume. I'm awfully sorry.

(They all bump into the door frame)

BETH My "Bal de Versailles"? My duty-free ninety-dollar "Bal de Versailles"? (The men get in her way as all three try to get through the connecting door) Let me through! I'm the important one.

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MORT ~~Of all the stupid-ass-breaking perfume bot-~~
~~les.~~

STU It was an accident, for chrissakes! She didn't do
it on purpose.

*(In his anger he lets BETH go. She grapples with the
wall)*

MORT That's right. So far we got two accidents and
two not-on-purposes. And my wife's got a broken
foot and a beautiful-smelling bathroom.

STU We'll pay for the perfume. I owe you ninety
dollars, all right?

BETH ~~Can we do the accounting from the bed?~~ Just
get me on the bed, please.

(They resume carrying her to the bed)

GERT Beth, be careful when you walk in the bath-
room. There's broken glass on the floor.

BETH I'm glad you told me. I was going to walk in
there a lot today.

*(GERT goes back into the bathroom for the cold towel.
They are near the bed with BETH)*

MORT All right, let's get her down gently.

BETH Yes. Please do it gently.

GERT *(From inside the bathroom)* Dammit to hell!
(She comes out holding her finger in a face towel)
Have you got a Band-Aid? I cut my finger on the
glass.

ACT TWO

STU (*Concerned*) How did you do that?

GERT Mort, I'm sorry, I know you're busy now. Do you have some Band-Aids and iodine?

MORT In a minute, Gert. Let's take one casualty at a time.

(GERT goes back into the bathroom)

STU (~~At the bed; to MORT~~) All right, which way are we going to go?

MORT ~~North by northeast. What do you mean, which way are we gonna go?~~

STU ~~Frontwards or backwards?~~

BETH ~~Whichever one you do, don't surprise me. Tell me first.~~

MORT ~~Backwards. Let's put her down backwards.~~
(~~MORT and STU turn around with BETH so that they all have their backs to the bed~~)

STU All right, when I say three, we sit on the bed. Ready, now: One . . . two . . .

BETH Me too?

STU Certainly you too! Who do you think we're doing it for?

MORT (*To STU*) That's right, yell at her. Why don't you push her?

STU Can we get this over with? . . . Ready, now: One . . . two . . .

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(We suddenly hear a thud from the bathroom and GERT yells out)

GERT OH, SHIT!
(They all freeze)

STU *What? What is it? What happened?*
(GERT comes out of the bathroom staggering, holding the back of her head)

GERT My head . . . I banged my head on the medicine cabinet . . . I think I'm gonna pass out . . . Yes, I am . . .

(And so she does, falling to the floor)

STU Gert! GERT!

BETH First me, then Gert! I was first!

STU One . . . two . . . three! *(The three of them fall backwards onto the bed in their attempt to sit. BETH screams out in pain. Then STU gets up and rushes around to GERT on the floor as MORT attempts to straighten BETH out on the bed)*

STU *(Picking up GERT's head)* She's out like a light! Get me a cold wet towel—hurry!

(GERT moans, opens her eyes)

GERT Ohhhh . . . Stu . . . Did I pass out?

STU Just for a second, hon. Where is it? Where did you hit it?

GERT I had my head down in the sink. I was trying to rush with the towel, and I stood up too quickly . . . I think it's a concussion.

ACT TWO

STU (*Turns on MORT*) You see what you did! You got her so crazy, the woman's got a concussion.

MORT ~~You're gonna blame me because your wife doesn't know how to get up from a sink?~~

GERT (*Feels the back of her head with her hand, then looks at it*) It's bleeding. My head is bleeding.

STU No, that's your finger. Your finger is bleeding onto your head. (*To MORT*) Will you get me a wet towel, for chrissakes!

(*MORT rushes into the bathroom*)

BETH (*Lying flat on the bed*) She should have a doctor. Mort, give her our doctor . . . Get her Brunkhorst.

GERT (*Still flat on the floor*) I feel nauseated. I think I'm going to throw up. Help me to the bathroom.

STU I don't think so, honey. I don't think you should be moved.

(*MORT comes out of the bathroom with two wet towels. He is limping*)

MORT (*Hands STU a towel*) Here! A piece of glass went through my goddamn sneakers—I hope you're satisfied. (*He crosses to BETH and puts the wet towel on her ankle*) Does that hurt?

BETH No, because it's on the wrong ankle.

(*He changes it to the other ankle. She winces in pain*)

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GERT Help me up. The floor is cold. I feel chilly.

STU (*To MORT*) Give me a hand. Let's put her on the bed.

GERT I bled on the carpet. I got blood on the carpet, Stu.

STU I'm paying for it, don't worry about it. (*MORT comes around to GERT's feet*) All right, grab her feet—and don't lift until I tell you.

MORT (*Bending down to get her feet*) Jesus, it's like *Guadalcanal* in here.

STU All right, one . . . two . . . three, *lift!* (*They both lift her up and start to carry her towards the bed*) Easy, easy! All right, put her down gently.

(*They put her down on the bed, jostling BETH in the process*)

MORT *Goddamnedest vacation I ever took in my life.*

STU (*Angrily to MORT, taking out his wallet*) All right, let's settle our accounts, I want to get outta here!

MORT Forget it. I don't want your money. *Keep your lousy money.* (*He limps towards the chair*) I think it went right into the bone.

STU I'm paying for everything, you understand? I want an itemized list: the perfume, the blood on the carpet, the tennis balls I'm shoving up my ass—*everything!* And then I want a receipt for my taxes.

ACT TWO

(He takes out a check and starts to write). What's today's date, bastard?

MORT Hey, hey. Calm down. Take it easy. Let's not get our noses out of joint.

STU You call this a vacation? I had a better vacation when I had my hernia operation . . . I'm sick of your face. I'm sick of your twelve-cent cigars. After three weeks, my clothes smell like they've been in a humidifier. I'm sick of your breakfasts. I'm sick of your lightly buttered rye toast and eggs over lightly every goddamned morning. Would it kill you to have a waffle once in a while? One stinkin' little waffle for my sake?

MORT What are you, crazy? We got two invalids in bed and you're talking about waffles?

STU We did everything you wanted. You made all the decisions. You took *all* the pictures. I didn't get to take *one* picture with my own camera. You picked all the restaurants—~~nine Japanese restaurants in three weeks. I am nauseated at the sight of watching you eat tempura with your shoes off. I am bored following your wife into every chatska store on the West Coast looking for Mexican bracelets~~

MORT Hey, hey, wait a minute. Your wife bought too. What about a pair of African earrings that hang down to her navel?

STU A year I planned for this vacation. You know what I got to show for it? Two purple Hawaiian

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shirts for my kids that you picked out. Even Hawaiians wouldn't wear them. One entire morning wasted in Honolulu while five Chinese tailors measured you for a thirty-nine-dollar Hong Kong suit that fell apart in the box. I spent half an afternoon on Fisherman's Wharf watching a near-sighted eighty-four-year-old artist sketching a charcoal portrait of you that looks like Charles Laughton. I've had enough! I want to go home! I'm a nervous wreck . . . I need a vacation.

MORT Come on, Buddy, I'll get you a drink. How about a nice Planter's Punch?

STU Please! Don't order another Planter's Punch. I'll go crazy if I have to watch you trying to get the cherry out with your straw. Don't do that to me, Mort.

MORT I won't. I won't play with my cherry again, I promise. Why don't we just shake hands and forget everything?

GERT Shake his hand, Stu. Please
(Leans over on BETH)

BETH You're on my leg—

GERT Sorry. I'm sorry.

MORT (Yells at GERT) Watch what you're doing, you idiot!

STU (Gets up, slightly crazed) Take that back! I want an apology. Either you apologize to my wife for calling

ACT TWO

her an idiot . . . (Picks up tennis racket) . . . or I'll take this tennis racket and *backband* you to death!

MORT (Backs away) All right, don't threaten me . . . I got a little bit more meat on me. Never threaten somebody who's got more meat on them.

GERT He's right, Stu. Look how much meat he's got on him.

STU (Through crazed, gritted teeth) Apologize! I want a nice apology and I want a smile on your face. You got five seconds . . .

MORT (Backing away around chairs) Don't do this, Stu . . . Don't get physical with me. If you attack, I'll counterattack.

STU One . . .

BETH Don't fight! Please don't fight!

STU Two . . .

BETH Someone'll get hurt and fall on me.

STU Three . . .

MORT (Still backing away) I'll punch you with my fist, Stu.

STU Four . . .

MORT I'm talking about a closed hard fist, no open hands.

STU Are you going to apologize before I say five?

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MORT Say it! Say it! You afraid to say it? I'll say it for you. Five! FIVE! I said it, all right? FIVE!

STU I'll say it myself, goddamn you! FIVE!
(And STU lunges out at MORT, who is too quick and strong for him. MORT grabs STU around the head and neck and has him in a hammerlock hold)

MORT (Squeezing his neck) Drop it! Drop the racket!

STU (A squeaky, airless voice) Nemmer . . . nemmer . . .

MORT I'll turn you blue! Tell me what shade of blue you like, light or dark?

STU (Flailing his arms helplessly) . . . kill you! I'll kill you!

GERT (Starting to get out of bed) Leave him alone! Please . . .

BETH (Grabs her to restrain her) Let them kill each other, we have to take care of ourselves . . .

(The two women tussle on the bed as MORT heads towards the living room with STU's head clamped under his arm)

MORT You want to play? All right, let's play in the bathroom. I'll show you a nice little game in the bathroom called "Kill your friend."

(And the two of them scuffle into the bathroom; now they are both out of view. GERT and BETH stop struggling)

GERT (Crying) He'll kill him! I'll be on the plane with a dead husband, God help me!

ACT TWO

BETH I have to go to the john. Get them out of there, I have to go in!

(Suddenly we hear a tremendous crash, the breaking of glass and an awful moan. GERT whimpers apprehensively . . . The bathroom door opens and MORT comes out staggering, holding his groin)

MORT (Hoarsely) He kicked me . . . Oh, God, what a place he kicked me . . .

(He doubles over and sits on the edge of the bed, still holding his groin. STU comes out with a wet towel over his mouth)

STU (Mumbles) Get a dentist! Look up a dentist, I'm gonna lose some teeth.

BETH Are you two through in there? I have to go in.

~~GERT (To STU) Let me see. What did he do to you?~~

~~STU It's swelling up. Jesus, my lip is blowing up like a balloon.~~

~~BETH Ice is coming. I got enough for all of us.~~

~~MORT (Still holding, still doubled up) I haven't been kiked there since I played football . . . and then I was wearing protection.~~

~~BETH Is anyone going to help me into the bathroom?~~

GERT I don't believe what's going on here . . . It's like a John Wayne movie.

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STU (*Starts to cry*) Jesus . . .

MORT What are you crying about? If I could lift my leg, I'd kick you in the same place.

STU (*Stands up, fists poised*) You want more? Come on. Come on, all of youse. I'll take you all on!

GERT Are you crazy? Stop it! Stop it! Everybody—
JUST STOP IT!

(GERT falls back on the chair, and MORT falls on top of her. STU falls on the bed, right on BETH's bad leg. BETH pounds her fist on the bed. There is a long silence . . . a very long silence as all four lie there quietly in pain. Then the sobbing subsides, and we just hear them sigh and breathe)

MORT What was that doctor's name? I think maybe we should all see him.

BETH Did he kick you hard, Mort?

MORT Listen, where he kicked me, even easy would hurt.

STU (*On the floor*) I still have a few good teeth left. I'll bite your goddamn leg off unless you apologize to Gert for calling her a moron.

MORT (*On the floor, facing away from him*) I didn't call her a moron. I called her an idiot. (Suddenly STU lets out a war cry and lunges for MORT's leg. He grabs it and bites into his calf. MORT screams in pain) Oh, Jesus! Oh, God, get him off me.

(STU holds on tenaciously)

ACT TWO

GERT (Screams) Stu, you'll hurt yourself. He's as hard as a rock.

(MORT starts to pull STU off him)

MORT You crazy bastard!

(He throws STU to the ground and jumps on top of him, straddling him)

STU (Struggling) Let me go! Let me up, you elephant.

MORT All right, I had enough of you, you skinny little pipsqueak. Don't you ever bite me again. You could give me a blood disease.

STU Gert, hit him! Get a lamp and hit him!

GERT (She tries to swat MORT away with the towel) Don't sit on him, please! Get off him, you fat water tank. Oh, I'm sorry, Beth.

BETH Listen, the truth is the truth.

MORT (To STU) All right. Now, nobody is leaving this room until we all make up with each other. We came here friends and we're leaving friends. Now, tell me we're friends, you bastard!

(He chokes him)

GERT Make up with him, Stu. It's the only chance we have.

STU I make up . . . I surrender and make up.

MORT Not like that. Like you mean it.

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STU ~~I mean it . . . I can't breathe. You're cutting off my air.~~

BETH ~~(Lying down flat on the bed—she can't see them) I don't understand. Why is he cutting off his hair?~~

MORT And tell me you had a good time on our vacation . . . Tell me!

STU I had a good time.

MORT Especially the Japanese restaurants.

STU Especially the goddamned Japanese restaurants. Let me up! My ribs are cracking.

MORT And you want to take another vacation with us next year!

STU Crack my ribs! Crush me! I won't say that!
(The curtain starts to fall)

MORT, BETH and GERT Say it! Say it! Say it!

Curtain **END OF EXTRACT
THREE**