

Wedded Blitz

A Desperate Comedy
About Love, Relationships,
Marriage and Explosives

by

Alan David Perkins

Copyright © 1992,
By Alan D. Perkins
Revisions 3/1/95

Wedded Blitz

JULIA MARTIN - Female, late 30's to early 40's. Attractive, dynamic, caring, analytical and a little pompous.

MIKE PITTS - Male, late 20's to mid 30's. Rugged, unstable, charismatic, passionate, borderline psychotic.

DETECTIVE MARVIN "NASTY" ABERNATHY - Male, mid to late 40's. Insecure, frightened, weak.

ROCKY McCOVEY - Female, mid to late 40's. Harsh, brash, loud, obnoxious, angry.

IRVING BLITSTEIN - Male, Jewish, mid to late 60's. Simple.

JEAN BLITSTEIN - Female, Jewish, mid to late 60's. Equally simple.

SET REQUIREMENTS

The play is set in Julia's UpperEast Side apartment. Center stage is a sofa, chair and other living room-type furniture. Stage left is an archway to the kitchen area. There is a large window up-stage center, beside which sits an upright piano. Up stage right is the front door. The apartment is in immaculate shape, almost to the point of being desolate. All colors are earth tones. Any form of decoration are pictures of landscapes, seashore, forest, mountains, etc. Many book shelves are filled with many books, all of which are of the self-help variety.

There is one recurring special effect whereas pieces of a window frame are "shot" out, as if someone is shooting from the outside.

(Lights up on the apartment of JULIA MARTIN. The song "Chapel of Love" plays. She enters from the kitchen, drinking water from a large plastic tumbler. She moves over to the sofa, sits and dials the phone.)

JULIA

(Into the phone) Hello, may I speak to Bradley Blitstein? Yes, this is she ... well, thank you. Yes, yes ...

(pause as she looks around)

Hello, Bradley. God, I hate being put on hold ... Yes, honey, everything's all set. When are you coming? ... Isn't there any way you can get here sooner? They're YOUR parents... Yes, I understand ... of course I'm nervous. Weren't you nervous when you met MY parents? ... I hope everything goes okay ...

(starts getting a little agitated)

How do you know? How can you be sure? Are YOU here right now? ... Have you checked the reservations? ... That's not what I asked. Have you checked the reservations?! Honestly, Bradley, how do you expect things to work out if you're not going to do your part? ... Yes ... but ... I know your job's important to you. It's important to me, too. Any word on your promotion? ... Well, keep me posted... . Get here as soon as you can. I love you ... come on, you can say it ... why do YOU care what the guys at the office will think ... mmm hmmm. Fine.

(She hangs up with a stern expression on her face. She gets up to clean when the doorbell rings. She opens to door to reveal MIKE, dressed in a large overcoat.)

MIKE

Surprise, surprise.

JULIA

(Shocked) Mike?

MIKE

Ah-HA! She remembers my name.

JULIA

How did you get in ... I mean ... uh ...

MIKE

The doorman remembered me. Either that or it was that bottle of scotch I passed him. What a guy.

JULIA

So ... Mike, how've you ... won't you ...

MIKE

... come in? Don't mind if I do.

(JULIA ushers MIKE to the couch, but he stops only a few steps from the front door. He notices a void and forms a space with his hands apart where the TV used to be.)

MIKE (cont'd)

Hey, where's the TV?

JULIA

I ... uh ... I got rid of it a few months ago. Yeah ... I did.

MIKE

(After a pause of disbelief) Why?

JULIA

I ... uh ... don't have time for it.

MIKE

I like watching TV.

JULIA

I know ... I remember.

MIKE

You should take the time to watch TV. It'll do you good. Puts your thumb on the pulse of mainstream American popular culture. How do you expect to call yourself an artist if you don't have your thumb on the pulse of mainstream American popular culture?

JULIA

Look ... Mike, it's been a ... well ... I haven't seen you in ... uh ...

MIKE

Oh, stop it, will you? That stupid little girl act is so fuckin' annoying.

JULIA

(Trying to pull herself together) What ... uh, what do you want? ... here? ... with me? ...

MIKE

A million dollars and a World Premiere at Carnegie Hall. But right now I'd settle for a little information.

JULIA

Information? Uh, sure. Anything you ...

MIKE

(Interrupting) Over a year you don't see me and all you can do is stammer? What's the matter, do I (up to her face) FRIGHTEN YOU?!

(JULIA lets out a short yelp of fear, then acquires some personal space.)

JULIA

No, no, it's not that ... you just make me, well ...

MIKE

Methinks the woman doth protest too much. Hiding something from your ol' beau? Something you may not want him know about?!

JULIA

Me? There's nothing I'm hiding from you ...
(suddenly angry and confident)

Wait a minute. What am I doing? Why do I care what YOU think?

MIKE

Because you still love me.

JULIA

WHAT?!

MIKE

Admit it.

JULIA

In some way I'll always love you, Mike. You know that.

MIKE

You talk the talk, but you don't walk the walk.

JULIA

(Groans in frustration) Still living in action movie clichés, I see.

MIKE

And you're still criticizing me.

JULIA

Well, face it. There's a lot to criticize.

MIKE

Thank you. Now you know why I dumped you.

JULIA

I don't feel the need to have to deal with YOUR problems all the time, ESPECIALLY when you're an uninvited guest in my apartment ...

MIKE

MY problems? MY problems?! It's YOU who got the problems. YOU'RE the one who kept running away.

JULIA

I never ran away. I had a life.

MIKE

I had a life, too. It's just that mine included you.

JULIA

If I were truly in love with you I would have made more time.

MIKE

No you wouldn't. You're so busy running away from yourself that the only way I could deal with you was to remain flexible. Regrettably, it sometimes came across like I had no life.

JULIA

It's because you didn't.

MIKE

Nothing in my life was so important that I couldn't drop it at a moment's notice. I accepted that you stayed over-booked so you wouldn't have to face up to yourself.

JULIA

That's ridiculous.

MIKE

I never expected you to change. You needed someone like me who would compliment your little neuroses. Nobody else can or would put up with it.

JULIA

You're so misinformed, Mike. Look, please accept that it's over. I'm sorry that I couldn't love you in the way you wanted me to.

MIKE

But you can for "Bradley?"

JULIA

(Suddenly nervous again) Who?

(MIKE pulls a newspaper out of his pocket and shows her a circled article.)

MIKE

How long did you think you could keep this from me?

JULIA

Oh my God ...

MIKE

(Reads from newspaper) "Dr. Henry and Louise Martin of Greenwich, Connecticut, announce the engagement of their daughter, Julia Anne Martin ... ," that's you, I presume, " ... to Mr. Bradley Aaron Blitstein, son of Irving and Jean Blitstein of Great Neck, Long Island ... " blah, blah, blah.

JULIA

I can explain ...

MIKE

What's to explain, Julia? Huh? What is there, REALLY, to explain? It appears that "Bradley" here can give you something I can't. Is that right?

JULIA

(Confident again) As a matter of fact, he can.

MIKE

Oh, really? Can he communicate his feelings like I can? Can he stimulate your mind like I can? Can he change his plans at a moments notice like I can? Can he ... excite you -- make your blood boil like I can? Can he get you to do the endless sneeze like ... ?

JULIA

(Interrupting) Oh, Mike - Mike - Mike ... you're so confused.

MIKE

Me? No. Not any more. I'm the most un-confused person on this planet.

JULIA

We've been through this a hundred times already.

MIKE

Just tell me that you love me and not him.

JULIA

My feelings for you have nothing to do with this. I told you when we got involved that I have certain non-negotiables.

MIKE

You mean materialistic crap.

JULIA

It's not crap! I have every right to deserve these things. Can you supply a down-payment on a house? No. Can you support a family? No. I want children, Mike. Can you support a wife and children? You can't even support yourself.

MIKE

I have trouble with this one. You're concerned if I can support a family when you make enough to support THREE families!

JULIA

Things cost money, Mike. You may be able to live on twenty thousand dollars a year, but I can't. I don't expect you to have champagne taste, but I can't deal with Kool-Aid.

MIKE

I pay my bills.

JULIA

Barely.

MIKE

Hell, YOU'VE had your lean years. Just a few years ago you were temping and doing part-time waitressing.

JULIA

But I grew out of it. I wouldn't accept it.

MIKE

Yeah. And it was real handy having Mommy and Daddy around to bail you out whenever your stomach started growling.

JULIA

That was a cheap shot. (a beat) Your folks still don't talk to you?

MIKE

Not even when it's my dime. I don't think they even know I'm alive. They don't understand the pain. You do.

JULIA

I also know that you allow yourself to get into these positions.

MIKE

You mean in this age of unemployment and economic disaster it's MY fault I can't get a job that pays forty grand a year?

JULIA

Well ... yes.

MIKE

Maybe I like what I do. Maybe, just maybe, it gives me a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. (angrily) Maybe it's enough for me!

JULIA

But it's not enough for me.

MIKE

YOU should complain ...

JULIA

Your income defines your worth. If you're happy washing windows and being worth so little, fine -- but I don't want to have to deal with it.

MIKE

What about vows of poverty?

JULIA

That's for priests and nuns to keep 'em single. It's not what I want out of my life.

MIKE

Oh? And what is ... ?

JULIA

A home. Security. A family. Freedom to pursue things ... like volunteer work ... piano recitals ... community theatre ... long power walks in the country ... craft fairs ... trips to the Berkshires. You can barely afford to ride the subway.

MIKE

So, how much does your "Bradley" make? Take home?

JULIA

More than you'll ever make in your life.

MIKE

Assuming I die when?

JULIA

It's the truth.

MIKE

It's YOUR truth.

JULIA

No, Mike. It's the only truth.

MIKE

(Pause) But I love you. And you love me. Doesn't that account for anything anymore?

JULIA

Oh, Mike ... I can't keep up your pace. After a while all that fun and adventure becomes harder and harder while the need for home and family becomes stronger and stronger. Sure, love accounts for something. But it's not enough. Not anymore.

(Very long pause as MIKE absorbs what JULIA has just said.)

JULIA (cont'd)

Can I get you something?

MIKE

(Deflated) Uh, no. I'm fine.

JULIA

(A bit facetiously) I know. But can I get you something?

MIKE

No thanks.

(A sad pause.)

JULIA

So, what's new?

MIKE

New? Nothing, really.

JULIA

Mike, this is me. No blocking. Now tell me: WHAT - IS - NEW?

MIKE

Well ... a professor at NYU heard one of my compositions and is interested in a commission.

JULIA

Which one did he hear?

MIKE

The Sonata in A for Piano, French Horn and Food Processor.

JULIA

(Placating) Oh, yes. Of course.

MIKE

Hey, you asked.

JULIA

I'm sorry, Mike, but kitchen appliances aren't musical instruments.

MIKE

If you limit yourself, how can you expand creatively? After all, what is art but breaking the rules?

JULIA

Charles Ives, yes. Arnold Shoenberg, yes. Mike Pitts, no.

MIKE

I wish you could believe in me, Julia.

JULIA

I do. It's your music that I don't believe in.

MIKE

My music is what I am. Jules -- how many more awards do I have to win ... how many more raves from critics do I have to earn before you take my music seriously?

JULIA

Michael, it's wonderful that so many people like what you do. Unfortunately, I'm not one of them. Besides, this person at NYU -- how much does he plan on paying you?

MIKE

Does everything have a price tag with you? Hey, Van Gogh died poor. And what about Mozart?

JULIA

Not the best family men or role models.

MIKE

Yeah, but what a legacy.

JULIA

Michael, I don't like seeing you get used. You've got a big heart and you tend to let people take advantage of you.

MIKE

But YOU won't, will you.

JULIA

Of course, honey. I never meant to hurt you.

MIKE

It was inevitable. The pain was always there. When I was with you it went away. When we split up, well, the pain came back, but this time with a vengeance. You couldn't help it.

JULIA

(Lovingly) Poor baby. C'mere.

(JULIA reaches out to MIKE. He politely holds her off.)

MIKE

Dance with me.

JULIA

What?

MIKE

C'mon. Loosen up. Dance with me?

JULIA

Now? I'm sort of ...

(MIKE starts humming "Real Live Girl" from **Little Me**. They start waltzing with MIKE keeping JULIA a few inches from him at all times.)

MIKE

Remember this song?

JULIA

You sang it to me on our first date.

MIKE

(Sings "Real Live Girl")
PARDON ME, MISS
BUT I'VE NEVER DONE THIS
WITH A REAL LIVE GIRL.
STRAYED OFF THE FARM
WITH AN ACTUAL ARMFUL
OF REAL LIVE GIRL.
PARDON ME IF YOUR AFFECTIONATE SQUEEZE
FOGS UP MY GLASSES AND BUCKLES MY KNEES.
I'M SIMPLY DROWNED
BY THE SIGHT AND THE SOUND
AND THE SCENT ...
AND THE FEEL ...
OF A REAL LIVE GIRL.

(JULIA gives MIKE a
thoughtful and tender
kiss.)

JULIA

Why did you come here?

MIKE

Marry me, Julia.

JULIA

I can't.

MIKE

Sure you can.

JULIA

(Becoming irritated) We've been through this.

MIKE

Only you can stop the pain, Julia. We need to be
together. Come away now and marry me.

JULIA

No!

MIKE

I don't want to use force.

JULIA

I won't listen to your irrational romantic babble!

MIKE

You've got to listen to me. You're leaving me
very few choices, Julia.

JULIA

I'm sorry, but I refuse to deal with this any further.

MIKE

Then die.

(MIKE opens his coat to reveal a vest made entirely of packaged plastic explosives. He pulls an electronic detonator out of his pocket.)

JULIA

(Laughs) Very creative. Look, it's been nice seeing you again, but I really have to get ready ...

MIKE

You think this is a fuckin' joke?! This ain't no biological clock, dearie. You think I don't mean it?

JULIA

(Confident) No, Michael Pitts, I don't. I think this is yet another one of your overly dramatic, co-dependent little attention-getting pranks.

MIKE

Co-dependent? Is that one of your New Age, Upper-East Side over-privileged yuppie expressions? Well - "share, care and rebirth" this ...

JULIA

Co-dependency is a compulsion that you suffer from. (goes to book shelf) Here, I have some books on the subject ...

MIKE

Oh, Jesus Christ! You and your fuckin' self-help bullshit. (looks at another book shelf) "How to Get What I Want Out of Life" ... "How to Find a Man to Love" ... "The Instant Millionaire" ... "Creative Visualization" ... "The 30 Minute Manager" ... "The Vegetarian Microwave Cookbook" ... wait a minute, what's this? "Bloom County"?

JULIA

You gave that to me, remember?

MIKE

Of course I remember. Did you read it?

JULIA

Mike, I don't have time for inane drivel.

MIKE

Inane drivel is what life is all about. It's one of the perks we enjoy for the honor of living. I mean -- live without drivel is mere format! Maybe if you lived your life instead of reading about how to do it you wouldn't need this garbage. You see, that's your problem ...

JULIA

(Interrupting) I don't have any problems.

MIKE

You don't? Hmm. Let's have a look. (looks at book shelf again) A big shelf of self-help books. (makes klaxon noises) Red flag! Red flag! Dj'a ever hear the expression "If it ain't broken, don't fix it?"

JULIA

(Exasperated) Okay, okay, you're right.

MIKE

Of course.

JULIA

You're right and I'm wrong. Isn't that the way it always is?

MIKE

I never hesitate to admit my own error.

JULIA

You're right again. You're just Mister Perfect.

MIKE

You, on the other hand, have a three to ninety minute delay before you admit to any error.

JULIA

Okay, so I'm more thick-headed than you.

MIKE

(Facetiously) Wow, that was quick. But don't you see? I can deal with it!

JULIA

Oh, Mike ... sure, you're a lot of fun. But someday I'd outgrow you.

MIKE

When?

JULIA

As soon as iron out a few things ...

MIKE

Oh? And when will THAT be? I can deal with you just as you are - neurotic, over-booked, materialistic and all. How does "Bradley" handle your shortcomings? How does he deal with getting to see you all of ten minutes a week?

JULIA

Bradley loves me for who I am.

MIKE

Oh yeah? I'll bet he can't even tell you he loves you over the phone 'cause he doesn't want the office to hear.

JULIA

You don't know anything.

MIKE

I know that you're coming away with me.

JULIA

No, I'm not.

MIKE

Oh, yes you are. It's either that or they scrape us both off the ceiling.

JULIA

I'm sorry, but I just don't buy this.

MIKE

Are you fuckin' nuts?! I'm wired with enough C4 to take out the whole building! Here, check the connections. (proudly) I didn't spare the detonators either. It's the real McCoy.

JULIA

(Patronizing) I see all that time with the Learning Annex was well spent.

MIKE

Don't you want to inspect the wiring?

JULIA

Mike, you know I'm lost when it comes to that kind of stuff.

MIKE

Oh, I keep forgetting. You're a techno-dunce.

JULIA

A what?

MIKE

A techno-dunce: someone who has no clue about anything technical. You know -- like computers, stereos, televisions, hammer and nails, fire, the wheel ...

JULIA

Then go bother Tom Clancy. You know I've never had to deal with those kind of things.

MIKE

Yeah, right. You'd rather pay some slob a hundred bucks to do what the average guy does every day. Remember how we met?

JULIA

Of course. I hired you to build my shelves.

MIKE

And got paid a slim twenty bucks for it, too. But you know where I learned how to do that? Nowhere. When the only person you can count on is yourself you figure out how to do lots of stuff. Necessity is the mother of invention, ya know.

JULIA

The shelves still need to be leveled.

MIKE

Play your cards wrong and I'll take care of that.
(beat)

So, this "Bradley" ... can he fix things? Can he build things? Can he creatively put two pieces of wood together? -- chop sticks don't count.

JULIA

He can run a huge corporation.

MIKE

Is that what your "Bradley" does?

JULIA

He's a Executive Vice President for Micro-Share Computers.

MIKE

Executive Vice President?! Honey, the only thing "Bradley" runs is his expense account.

JULIA

You don't know anything.

MIKE

I've done my research, thank you. I know that Micro-Share Computers is owned by Pinkas Blitstein. I also know that Pinkas Blitstein has a brother named Irving. Now, correct me if I'm wrong, doesn't Irving have a son named "Bradley?" Sounds like he's making money the old fashioned way -- nepotism.

JULIA

I don't care what it sounds like. At least he gets paid for whatever he does.

MIKE

I'd rather get paid minimum wage for an honest day's work than half-a-mil a year for eatin' lunch, tossin' pencils into the ceiling tiles and for not bein' politically correct with the secretaries.

JULIA

An honest day's work doesn't always put food on the table.

MIKE

No, but an honest day's work gives you a good night's sleep.

JULIA

Ah-HA! That's where you're wrong.

MIKE

Oh, no. We're back to that "income defines your worth" bullshit again.

JULIA

It's not bullshit! In today's society your income defines what you're worth ...

MIKE

... no it doesn't. It defines what you're paid
...

JULIA

... and what you're worth commands respect. If that's the case, Bradley deserves a lot of respect.

MIKE

And I deserve no respect?

JULIA

I've never been able to respect you. I've never been able to respect your lifestyle. I've never been able to respect your income. I've never been able to respect that noise you call "musical compositions."

MIKE

Again, condemning that which you don't understand.

JULIA

And I hope to God I never understand it. For that matter, I pity anyone who DOES understand it. Lord knows I want to respect you, Mike, but you've never presented me with a person I COULD respect.

MIKE

How about now? Don't you respect the explosives?

JULIA

More than I respect your behavior.

MIKE

Then we're back to square one. Marry me or die.

JULIA

I think you have the "til death do you part" thing backwards.

MIKE

Marry me.

JULIA

No.

MIKE

(A beat) I really mean it.

JULIA

And I said "No."

(Doorbell.)

MIKE

Send 'em away.

JULIA

I will do no such thing.

MIKE

Why? Expecting someone?

JULIA

Actually, yes. I'm finally meeting Bradley's parents. We're going out for dinner.

MIKE

Japanese or Indian?

JULIA

Japanese. The Blitsteins don't like Indian.

MIKE

You love Indian.

JULIA

You, too.

(Doorbell.)

JULIA (cont'd)

I have to let them in.

MIKE

Okay. Go. Do. See if I care. There'll just be a bigger mess to clean up when I blow us all to kingdom come.

(JULIA opens the door.

Detective MARVIN

ABERNATHY stands in the doorway. He is rumped and meek-looking.)

JULIA

Hello?

ABERNATHY

Uh ... yes. I'm sorry for the intrusion. May I come in?

MIKE

No.

JULIA

(Adamant - to annoy MIKE) Yes. Please.

(ABERNATHY enters
nervously. MIKE tries to
hide the explosives from
him.)

ABERNATHY

I'm sorry. I don't want to be a bother. I need
to ask you ... uh, excuse me, sir. Are you
alright?

MIKE

I'm fine. Leave me alone.

ABERNATHY

You ... uh, you don't look so good. Here, let me
help you.

(ABERNATHY touches MIKE
on the shoulder. MIKE
turns abruptly to reveal
the explosives.)

MIKE

Leave me the FUCK alone!

ABERNATHY

(Elated) I was RIGHT! I was RIGHT! Talk about
following a hunch! Mister, you're gonna save my
butt! (pulls a walkie-talkie out of his
breast pocket -
into walkie-talkie)
I was right! You guys owe me two hundred bucks!
He's right here with the explosives! But he's got
a hostage ...

(MIKE grabs the walkie-
talkie.)

MIKE

(Into the walkie-talkie) No I don't! Now leave
me alone!

(MIKE throws the radio to
the ground and steps on
it.)

ABERNATHY

Wha'd you go and do that for? That was part of my monthly allotment! I have to account for that!

MIKE

The piece.

ABERNATHY

The what? You shattered it into at least six ...

MIKE

(Interrupting) The piece! The piece! Gimmie your gun!

ABERNATHY

Uh ... gun? What gun? I don't have a ...

(MIKE grabs him, reaches up his leg, pulls a gun out of his ankle holster and looks inside it.)

MIKE

THIS gun ...

(dumps out the bullets)

... now strangely devoid of ammunition.

(tosses the bullets out of the window.)

ABERNATHY

Oh. How did that get there?

MIKE

Alright, asshole ... who are you and what do you want?

(ABERNATHY fumbles through his jacket and pulls out his badge, dropping it a few times as he speaks.)

ABERNATHY

I-I-I'm Detective Marvin Abernathy, NYPD. I've been, uh, following you since you purchased the explosives in Jackson Heights. You're not going to blow me up now, are you?

MIKE

I have no choice.

JULIA

You mean this is all real?

ABERNATHY

Oh, yes. Quite real.

(JULIA proceeds to let out a world-class, grade A, olympic decathlon-caliber scream. Frantically, she runs from corner to corner of her apartment, screaming bloody murder every step of the way. MIKE and ABERNATHY stoically watch. Finally she comes to rest on the sofa.)

MIKE

(Calmly - to ABERNATHY) She's been under a lot of stress lately.

ABERNATHY

I can tell.
(indicates her espresso machine)
Maybe she should stick with decaf.

MIKE

No, this is definitely YOUR fault. Things were going great until YOU showed up.

ABERNATHY

I'm sorry. (to JULIA) I didn't mean to upset you.

JULIA

AREN'T YOU GOING TO ARREST HIM?!!

MIKE

(Exasperated) Oh, JESUS!

(ABERNATHY pulls JULIA aside.)

ABERNATHY

A-a-a-arest him? I don't know if I can right now
...

JULIA

Sure you can. Just take a deep breath (takes a deep breath) and let it out your mouth. Come on, do it with me. Breathe in ...

(ABERNATHY breathes in,
wheezing as he tries.)

ABERNATHY
(Holding his breath) What is this supposed to do?

JULIA
It's supposed to help you to relax. Exhale. (he
does) Now, you are in control. Say it.

ABERNATHY
I'm in control?

JULIA
Good enough. Now (turns him to MIKE) ... do it.

ABERNATHY
(Nervously) You have the right to remain silent.
Anything you say can and will be held against you
in a court of law.
(a beat - to JULIA)
Look, I just don't think this is a good time.

MIKE
Hey, if the mood hits ya ...

JULIA
Go on, finish!

ABERNATHY
Uh, you see, Miss ... uh ...

MIKE
Martin.

ABERNATHY
Marvin.

MIKE
What?

ABERNATHY
Marvin. My name is Marvin Abernathy, not Martin.

JULIA
YOU IDIOT, I'M MARTIN! JULIA MARTIN!!

MIKE
Try to relax, sweetheart.

ABERNATHY

Thank you. Anyway, Miss Martin, it appears that Mr. Pitts here has the advantage.

JULIA

You're a police officer, for God's sake! Arrest him! He wants to kill me!

ABERNATHY

Yes, ma'am. I know. I'm real sorry about that.

MIKE

(Placating) Try to think for a minute, Jules. He can't arrest me right now because I can kill him, too. What we have here is ... uh ... what do you call it, Marv?

ABERNATHY

... a hostage situation ...

MIKE

Thank you. A hostage situation.

(to ABERNATHY)

That's bad, isn't it?

ABERNATHY

I'm afraid it is. Technically we could even make a federal case out of it, what with the kidnap, explosives and all.

MIKE

Hmm. Pity.

JULIA

(Sarcastically) Yes. Pity.

(Phone rings. All look at each other. Phone continues to ring.)

MIKE

I'm not gettin' it.

(JULIA picks up the phone. She primps a little.)

JULIA

(Trying to be pleasant) Hello? (long pause) Detective Abernathy?

ABERNATHY

It's for me.

(he takes the phone)

Abernathy ... hey, Wilson. Yes, it is... Yes, he does... Well, he stepped on my radio ... it's in at least six pieces. Yes, I know I'm responsible for it. I think I can salvage the batteries... . Yeah, he's wearing it like a vest ... I'll expect my money in cash... Waddaya mean on pay day?! A deal's a deal! ... No, just three of us. Look, whatever you do, don't tell the chief ... Oh, hello chief... . yes, everything is under control... . No, we won't need the big guns on this. I can handle it. Not to worry ... No, I really don't need a negotiator ... I know you insist ... Oh, Uncle Bob, not her! Anyone but HER. I told you I don't NEED one, ESPECIALLY ... Uh, NO! I'm sorry. She'll be just fine. Okay... . You WILL keep the media out of this, won't you? ... No, I didn't tell anyone else about it ... they did? ... they are?

(he looks out the window)

Yup, there they are. Boy, those vans are everywhere, aren't they. I'll try not to make too big a mess... Okay, Uncle Bob. See you at dinner. Give my best to Marilyn.

(hangs up)

MIKE

See you at dinner?

JULIA

Uncle Bob?

MIKE

Uncle Bob? Bob? Bob Abernathy? Robert ... CHIEF Robert Abernathy of the famed NYPD?! It's true. It's not what you know; it's WHO you know.

JULIA

Of course.

ABERNATHY

I-I-I-I resent that accusation. I'll have you know I'm a decorated police officer.

JULIA

Really? Did you play a tree in the precinct Christmas pageant?

ABERNATHY

No. Perfect attendance.

(MIKE goes to the window and looks out and waves.)

JULIA

What the hell are you doing?

MIKE

Just waving at the cameras. You know, they're right -- those vans ARE everywhere! Hello! Helloooooo!

JULIA

You're such a child.

MIKE

Come on, it's fun! You'll be on the six o'clock news! Hello, down there! GOD, I love New York.

(ABERNATHY pushes MIKE out of the way of the window and, hence is NOW standing in front of the window.)

ABERNATHY

I don't think that's such a good idea, Mr. Pitts. The guys can be a bit trigger happy.
(waves outside the window)
It's only me, guys!

MIKE

How do you know my name?

(A gunshot. A small piece of the edge of the window frame pings off.)

JULIA

OH MY GOD!!!

ABERNATHY

WHAT ARE YOU IDIOTS DOING?!! (a beat) SAME TO YA, BUDDY!

(ABERNATHY moves away from the window and pulls out a note pad. MIKE goes to the window.)

MIKE

(Makes an obscene hand gesture outside of the window) Yeah, same to ya, buddy ... ! What's the matter with these guys?

ABERNATHY

They owe me money.

(reading)

Michael Herbert Pitts, born December 19th, 1958 in Brockton, Massachusetts. Social Security number 021-48-1859. Graduate of Pepperdine University, May 1980 ... BS degree received in Vocal Music Education and BA degree received in Musical Composition. Winner of six national musical composition competitions, second place in three, third in eight and twenty one honorable mentions.

Currently employed as a window washer. One prior arrest, no convictions.

JULIA

One prior arrest?

ABERNATHY

Yes, ma'am. Mr. Pitts was arrested for Assault and Battery back in '87.

JULIA

This is something I never knew about. Sounds pretty serious. Care to share it with me?

MIKE

Let's just say I was once suspected to be a disgruntled Postal worker.

ABERNATHY

This explains his tendencies to use explosives. Mr. Pitts has held as many as one hundred and twenty five jobs, most lasting less than one month. Mr. Pitts also pays his taxes on time and is a registered voter.

MIKE

Thanks for the history lesson. And please call me "Mike" -- Mr. Pitts is my dad. Mind if I call you "Marv?"

ABERNATHY

As a matter of fact, I do.

JULIA

(Meditating -- desperately affirming to herself, attempting to have it calm her) I am in control.

I am perfectly centered. I am dynamic and attractive. I am whole and complete within myself. I love and appreciate myself just as I am. I am happy in my abundance. I am happy in my abundance.

MIKE

Nice abundance.

JULIA

(Trying not to break the "meditation" mode) I work for it.

ABERNATHY

I've been meaning to join a gym.

MIKE

(Oblivious of ABERNATHY) I work, too. Shame I don't make two hundred bucks an hour like you do.

ABERNATHY

Two hundred bucks an hour?!

MIKE

Sucks, don't it?

ABERNATHY

WHAT, pray tell, pays two hundred bucks an hour?

JULIA

I'm a freelance consultant doing stress management seminars for Fortune 500 companies.

MIKE

She STUMBLED into it. Does it eight hours a day, two days a week.

ABERNATHY

That's thirty-two hundred a week!

MIKE

Some of it on the books.

JULIA

One of my piano students got me an interview ...

MIKE

(Interrupting) She makes fifty bucks an hour teaching piano, too.

JULIA

Thank you for the interruption. One of my piano students got me an interview at Time-Life. That got the ball rolling.

ABERNATHY

That's obscene!

MIKE

Ain't it? So, Aber-nasty is it?

ABERNATHY

Aber-NATHY.

MIKE

Of courTH. Well, all she has to do is say "yeTH" to my offer and all this will be over. Won't that make Uncle Bob juTHT wet his panTH with glee?

ABERNATHY

As a matter of fact, it will. MiTH Martin, say "yeTH" ... uh, "yes" to Mr. Pitts -- Mike, here, and let's put this behind us, shall we? We don't have much time.

JULIA

Who's side are you on?

MIKE

Say "yes," Julia. Stop the pain.

JULIA

You're the only pain that should be stopped. Come on, Detective Abernathy, do something!

ABERNATHY

Don't worry. A hostage negotiator is on the way.

MIKE

Then what the hell are you doing up here?

ABERNATHY

It's out of my hands. Uncle Bob is sending one up. He thinks it's best.

MIKE

Oh, this is just DANDY!

JULIA

Uh, Detective, while we're waiting for your brain to get in gear, can I get you something? Mineral water? Herbal tea?

MIKE

How about some java?

JULIA

That's a joke, right?

ABERNATHY

I could use a Dr. Pepper.

MIKE

Bad call, 'Nasty.

JULIA

(Nagging) Do you know what the sodium content in carbonated soft drinks? Even when they contain sugar substitutes they're still not healthy. I'll bet you eat hamburgers, too.

ABERNATHY

As a matter of fact ...

MIKE

(Interrupting) Quit while you're ahead, 'Nasty.

ABERNATHY

I wish you wouldn't call me that.

MIKE

Hey, if the shit fits ...

(Knock, or more like a pound, on the door. MIKE jumps up and covers his chest.)

JULIA

Relax. It's just the door.

ABERNATHY

(Very anxious) Oh, no. That must be her.

MIKE

Her? Her who?

ABERNATHY

The hostage negotiator.

MIKE

I thought they do this by phone!

ABERNATHY

Tell it to "her."

ROCKY

(Voice from outside as she pounds) Open the goddamn door, you assholes!

JULIA

This is a woman?

ABERNATHY

Only in the most basic sense. I suggest you let her in. I hear she's not at all pleasant when she's angry.

ROCKY

(Getting angrier) Open up or I set the door on fire!

JULIA

No!!

(JULIA rushes to the door. ROCKY stands, squirting lighter fluid on the door.)

JULIA (cont'd)

What the hell are you doing?!

ROCKY

(Enters) I don't believe in empty threats. Pleased ta meet 'cha. Roxanne McCovey. Call me "Rocky" or I'll break your knees. And remember how I feel about empty threats. Hey, Abernathy! I heard a lot about you! Good ta finally meet ya! You got promoted to detective I see. I'll bet you keep yer nose nice 'n brown. (slaps him on the back)

ABERNATHY

I wish you wouldn't do that.

ROCKY

Hey, no problem. You think I LIKE touchin' the likes of you? By the way, a friend o' mine wanted me to give you this.

(ROCKY punches ABERNATHY in the stomach.)

ABERNATHY

What was that for?!

ROCKY

For finkin' on a pal for coopin'. Your Uncle Bob may play that game but it don't sit well with the other cops.

ABERNATHY

I was just doing my duty!

ROCKY

And so was I. Speakin' of which, a few other guys wanted me to give you some messages. If your insurance is good I can give 'em to you now ...

ABERNATHY

Uh ... no, that's okay.

ROCKY

Yeah, I figured. (directed at JULIA) So, this must be the hostage.

JULIA

This must be.

ROCKY

Hmm. Pretty thing, ain't 'cha. (directed at MIKE) And you must be the macho dick-head with his finger on the button.

MIKE

Leave me alone.

ROCKY

With pleasure. But not before you let Abernathy and the special guest hostage go.

MIKE

No can do.

ROCKY

Why the hell not?!

MIKE

Hey, I'm the one with the firepower. Aren't you supposed to ask for my demands?

ROCKY

No-no-no Bozo, WE got the firepower. Have you looked outside lately? You, my dear have "explosives." You've been watchin' too much "Hill Street Blues."

MIKE

You can't push me around. I know my rights.

ROCKY

So do I, and frankly I don't give a fuck. Let's make this easy. I'm contract labor, not hourly.

(ROCKY circles MIKE,
seething. They end up
literally nose-to-nose.)

ROCKY (cont'd)
Hand over the vest.

MIKE
Over my dead body.

ROCKY
I guess that puts us at a stalemate, then.

MIKE
I guess it does.

(They break the nose-to-
nose position.)

ROCKY
(To herself) I guess it does. Hmm. I'm parched.
Got anything to drink, sweetie?

JULIA
Of course. What would you like, mineral water or
herbal tea?

ROCKY
(A beat - To ABERNATHY) Tell me she's kiddin'.

ABERNATHY
I'm afraid not.

ROCKY
Look, sweet-cheeks, if you want my nerves calm for
this I'll need something REAL to drink. You know,
something flammable? Something to kill off a few
brain cells so I can deal with dick-less here.

MIKE
Ever tried nail polish remover?

ROCKY
Be glad I don't take you out right here and now.
If I had a piece, I'd drop you like a bad habit.

JULIA
You're not armed?!

ABERNATHY

Ms. McCovey is an outside contractor highly recommended by the Chief of Police. It's her choice not to carry a weapon. Besides, there are those who feel she can't be trusted with firearms.

ROCKY

Yeah, but YOU are -- and if you had any cohonos we'd all be goin' home right about now. What's the deal, Lucille?

ABERNATHY

The perpetrator relieved me of my weapon.

ROCKY

I'll bet it was easy pickin's, too. Uncle Bob will love reading about it in my report.

ABERNATHY

Rocky! No! You can't!

ROCKY

Oh? And why not? Can I help it that you're the joke of the NYPD?

ABERNATHY

You certainly can! If I blow this I'm back to walking my old beat in Alphabet City. I sucked up to Uncle Bob for too damn long to blow it on this. So, all we have to do is collar this thing, agree on the details, and nobody's the wiser.

ROCKY

How dare you insist I compromise my ethics!

ABERNATHY

I'm desperate, that's how.

ROCKY

(After a beat) Be glad I'm NOT armed. If I was, you'd be the first one down, 'Nasty.

MIKE

Hey, I call him that too!

ROCKY

Yeah. It's regular deja vous. Now, the drink ...

JULIA

Are you sure you should be drinking on the job?

MIKE

Her? Yes. Definitely.

ROCKY

I like your sense of humor, pus-head.

JULIA

So, how do we do this?

ROCKY

Keep yer shirt on, babe. I haven't decided if I should let YOU live. (to MIKE) So, sleaze-ball, lets have a look at the fireworks.

(MIKE opens his coat.
ROCKY examines his "vest" carefully.)

ROCKY (cont'd)

Nice configuration. Not takin' any chances with the detonators.

(a beat as she examines)

Holy shit. Semtex.

ABERNATHY

SEMTEX?!! (takes cover)

MIKE

I'm sure it's at least 40% cotton ...

JULIA

What?

ROCKY

Semtex ... it makes C4 look like flash powder. Czechoslovakian cold war vintage. Major terrorist stuff -- untraceable and almost impossible to get! Where did YOU find it?

MIKE

They told me it was C4 -- made in America!

ABERNATHY

I witnessed the sale of the explosives to Mr. Pitts while in Jackson Heights and I've been following the perpetrator since the alleged purchase.

(Long pause as ROCKY gives ABERNATHY a hateful glare.)

ROCKY

Did I ask you?

ABERNATHY

Uh ... not exactly ...

ROCKY

Speak when you're spoken to, Aber-nasty. That's what Uncle Bob says, isn't it? And why didn't you raid the guys who sold the stuff in the first place?! THEY'RE the one's you're supposed to nail!

ABERNATHY

There really wasn't any reason to pursue the situation. Anyway ... nobody would back me up.

MIKE

Can you blame 'em?

JULIA

Look, is this really the time for this ...

ROCKY

(Interrupting) You in a hurry? (sarcastically) Got some "dinner reservations?"

JULIA

As a matter of fact, I do.

ROCKY

I ain't surprised. I'll bet it's for some lame-o yuppie food like raw fish, too. (to MIKE) So, fuck-wad, this is some major juice. Plannin' to blow up someone?

MIKE

Only if I have to. Like to join us?

ROCKY

Not with only two car payments left. So, what would make a resourceful guy like you do something so potentially messy?

MIKE

Her.

ROCKY

Hmm. Yeah, I can see why you'd wanna blow HER up. But seriously folks! Ba-dum-pum!

MIKE

She ... that woman ... she loves me, and I need her. She's the only one I can talk to -- the only one who can stop the pain. So, since she insists on making the mistake of marrying someone who could NEVER make her as happy as I could, I'm trying a little persuasionary tactics to get her to listen to me.

ABERNATHY

What ever happened to candy, wine and flowers?

JULIA

But I DID listen! You just say what you've said a hundred times. I'm not marrying you and that's final.

MIKE

Julia, please listen ... !

ROCKY

Yeah, listen to the little shit-for-brains.

JULIA

But he's threatening to kill me if I don't marry him! Like now I'll REALLY want to settle down and have kids with HIM ...

ROCKY

(A beat) So? Say "yes" and we can all go home and drink heavily.

JULIA

No! Just LOOK at him!

ROCKY

(Eyes MIKE up and down) Free weights?

MIKE

Some.

ROCKY

Hmm. It shows. (to JULIA) Come on, babe. You could do worse.

JULIA

And I could do better, too.

ROCKY

Oh? Still looking for single, straight and sane in THIS town? Let's take a look at YOU.

(circles)

Are those crows feet I see on your eyes? Shhh! Shhhh! Quiet! Listen carefully ... I hear ... ticking. Correct me if I'm wrong but that's your biological clock running out. Sweetie, if you could do better, you should have done it already.

JULIA

Oh, it's not that! There are plenty of men who'd love to marry me.

ROCKY

Is that a fact? Well, missy, I'd like to thank you. I always wondered who it was.

JULIA

Who what was?

ROCKY

The person the universe revolves around.

(MIKE bursts out laughing.)

ABERNATHY

Please, Mr. Pitts, I wish you wouldn't encourage her.

JULIA

It's true and you know it. I've never had a problem meeting men. But I don't consider myself lucky -- all of them have been losers in one way or another. All my life someone's there's always been in love with me. At this moment alone I have three pending marriage proposals.

ROCKY

I assume one is from the macho-man here.

MIKE

"Mike!" My name is "Mike!" The insults aren't helping the situation any.

ROCKY

Okay, "Mike," if you don't like it, blow us up right now.

(long pause)

Come on, show me you've got a dick.

MIKE

What kind of hostage negotiator are you?

ROCKY

The worst kind -- the kind without a badge who doesn't give a fuck if YOU live or die. Now take that, you needle-dick bug-fucker, and blow yourself up.

ABERNATHY

(To JULIA) You've gotta love her professionalism.

JULIA

You weren't doing any better.

MIKE

Look, don't get me wrong -- I fully plan on using this stuff, but not until I believe she doesn't love me and can live without me.

JULIA

I do love you, Mike, but I can definitely live without you.

ROCKY

These aren't the things to be saying to a man who can take out a building if he sneezes too hard.

JULIA

Face it, Rocky. Mike is ... well, he's sweet and exciting and passionate and very open and caring. But he's not who I want to marry.

ROCKY

Oh, PLEASE!

JULIA

I have certain non-negotiables. Mike doesn't come close to meeting them ...

ROCKY

(Interrupting) Oh, GOD! Lady, do YOU have things BACKWARDS! You can't fit a person into a mold. You gotta find a person you can stomach being in the same room with and work from there -- like my husband before he got killed in the line o' duty. Setting up things like "non-negotiables" is doing nothing but putting the cart before the horse.

JULIA

But I deserve certain things in my life. It's not wrong to demand and expect them.

ROCKY

What things? Money? Position? Power?

JULIA

What's wrong with wanting them?

ROCKY

Nothin', just don't expect someone else to supply you with 'em. Just look at you! How old are you, thirty five? Six?

JULIA

(Hedging) Uh ... yes. Something like that.

MIKE

(Annoyed) FORTY! SHE'S FORTY!

ROCKY

Forty?! Oh, BOY! Tell me, princess, WHEN did you expect Prince Charming to ride in on his white horse and sweep you off your feet, huh? When you were twenty? Twenty five? Thirty? Thirty five?

JULIA

(Hurt) Why are you so hateful?

ROCKY

Hey, I'm on a roll. What about you, 'Nasty. You're single too, ain't 'cha?

ABERNATHY

Uh ... as a matter of fact ...

ROCKY

Yeah, I thought so. How old are you? Roughly? Sixty five? Sixty eight?

ABERNATHY

Forty four.

ROCKY

I knew that. I was only kidding. You LOOK forty four but you act like my grandad. Anyway, when do YOU plan on gettin' married?

ABERNATHY

I'm married to my job. I don't have time for relationships. I can barely deal with having a partner.

ROCKY

(Makes buzzer noise) Annnnnnnzk! Wrong! Jay, give 'em his copy of the home game.

ABERNATHY

Okay, okay ... I don't think I have what most women want.

ROCKY

Right. Most women prefer men with a penis.

(a beat -- MIKE laughs)

I'm sorry, 'Nasty, I didn't mean it. It really ain't your fault. It's this stupid city we live.

People in New York are so wrapped up in bein' crazy and bein' busy every minute of the day that they don't see what's really important in life. It ain't how much money you make or how famous you are or where you spend your summer vacation or who has the most toys when they die. It's who you love, and how much, and how much they love you. It ain't easy, (directed to JULIA) and you CAN'T PUT THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE. There's a lot of give and take. My husband wasn't the most perfect man in the world, Lord knows. He had his faults and I let him know it. I had my faults, too.

JULIA

(Smug) You're kidding.

ROCKY

You listen, missy. I accepted him for who he was and he accepted me for who I was. We loved each other dearly. Christ, that man was a goddamned SAINT ... then he gets blown up with the car durin' a coke probe. Now he's gone, leavin' me with his pension, survivors benefits, insurance policy and two little girls to support with this on-again/off-again piece-o'-shit job. I knew what I had ... before they took it from me. Now I'M out there lookin' with the rest of 'em ... just like you, 'Nasty. And I'll tell ya, it ain't easy. Half the time I forget what I'm even lookin' for. Shit, I went out with this one guy once for about fifteen minutes. All HE wanted was some bimbo who could cook, clean and look good on his arm. He was shoppin' for fuckin' furniture with a twat. You'd like him, sweetheart -- he's just your type. Fuckin' New York - everyone puts up so many goddamn walls. I'll tell ya, meeting people in New York is a contradiction of terms.

JULIA

(Still smug) So I guess that makes you better than us.

ROCKY

I guess it does. I think ol' Mike here's on the same track, too.

MIKE

Wha?

ROCKY

Communication with no expectations. That'll get us home free.

JULIA

I expect those explosives are communicating an awful lot.

ROCKY

Look sweetie, I gotta tell ya' -- right away I don't like you. But, for some unknown reason, dick-less here does. He must accept you for who you are -- Lord knows why ANYONE would. Help me out here, Mike.

MIKE

That's what I've been tryin' to tell you!

JULIA

But we don't have anything in common. I hate everything you like and you hate everything I like. I ... I even hate your views on contemporary music.

ROCKY

What does that have to do with the price of tea in China?

MIKE

(To ROCKY) I'm a composer.

JULIA

In the loosest sense of the word.

ROCKY

Oh, and who are you -- Leonard Bernstein?

JULIA

I'm a very accomplished pianist and teacher.

ROCKY

'Touch you.

MIKE

But at least I HAVE views on contemporary music, weather you agree with them or not. Does "Bradley" have views on contemporary music? Does "Bradley" know ANYTHING about contemporary music?

ROCKY

Since when does a musician become a munitions expert?

ABERNATHY

Musician ... munition ... it almost sounds the same ...

MIKE

Maybe if you're tone-deaf.

ROCKY

'Nasty, if I want any shit outta you I'll squeeze your head.

JULIA

Bradley loves to hear me play.

MIKE

And you take his spittle as appreciation? Does he even know WHAT you're playing? Does he know who the composer is, or the period the piece was composed in, or what the composer was even trying to do? Or ANYTHING?!

JULIA

Okay, okay, so he's not very musical.

MIKE

You used to tell me that music was the most important thing in the world to you.

ROCKY

I think I missed something. Who's this "Bradley?"

ABERNATHY

He's the hostage's intended.

ROCKY

You're real ambitious today, 'Nasty. What happened -- you win the lottery?

JULIA

(To MIKE) It IS important to me, sweetheart. But ... well ... I had to compromise.

MIKE

You sold out.

ROCKY

Point goes to Mike. Keep score, 'Nasty.

ABERNATHY

I wish you wouldn't order me around in front of the perp.

ROCKY

Don't push it, 'Nasty. I've had a bad week.

JULIA

What's selling out? Does an artist compromise his artistic standards by supporting himself by driving a taxi or waiting on tables? Hell no! You do what you have to do so you can do what you want to do.

MIKE

Except in my case, right? I wash windows so I can support my art. But THAT doesn't count, does it.

JULIA

It would if you were creating art.

ROCKY

Children, let's not get into this, shall we?
(pause as she looks around the room)
You know, the second I came in here I noticed something was missing -- and now it hit me. Where's the TV? You got one in the bedroom?

JULIA

No. I don't own one.

ROCKY

Mike, is she nuts?

MIKE

Yes. I accept it.

ROCKY

No TV? No TV? 'Nasty, do you believe this?
Christ, I wanted to watch myself on the news!
(walks to the window and starts waving.)
Hello down there! Everything is fine up here!
I've got everything under control!
(turns to ABERNATHY)
Uncle Bob says "Hi."

JULIA

You have NOTHING under control.

ROCKY

Let's keep that to ourselves, now. Shall we?

ABERNATHY

Uncle Bob is down there?!

(ABERNATHY darts to the window. Sound of distant gunshot. ABERNATHY ducks as a bit of window frame pings off.)

ROCKY

He sure is. And if miss priss-butt had a TV, you'd know that already. You'd also know about the five block cordon, the emergency service teams, armored personnel carriers, the bomb disposal unit and the state-of-the-art robot with a built in shotgun. But, since there's NO TV TO WATCH IT ON ...

JULIA

What is everybody's obsession with television?!

ROCKY

It's fun. You know ... fun? D'ja ever have fun? Think back to when you were a little girl a long, long, loooooong time ago.

JULIA

I have fun, but on my own - outside, not sitting zombie-eyed in front of a box. It just sucks up your free time.

MIKE

Something YOU make sure you have none of.

ROCKY

Christ -- no TV, no booze ... got any food? I could use a bite.

JULIA

I have fresh fruit and some vegetables.

ROCKY

Figures. I could use a burger.

MIKE

Illegal meat reference! Five yard penalty!

JULIA

OH MY GOD! Do you know how disgusting hamburgers are?!

ROCKY

I like hamburgers.

ABERNATHY

Me, too.

MIKE

We could order out.

ROCKY

Hey, I know this place a few blocks from here -- they make this three-quarter pound burger that'll clog your arteries faster than you can say "Lipstein's Wheat Germ and Barley Groat Cereal."

ABERNATHY

Do they deliver?

JULIA

No red meat shall come through that door.

ROCKY

I got news for ya -- burger meat ain't red ... if ya cook it long enough! (laughs)

JULIA

(Irritated) Oh, ha. You're very funny. I'm laughing REAL hard.

ROCKY

Do you even know HOW ta laugh?

ABERNATHY

Uh ... Rocky, I really don't mean to interrupt you ...

ROCKY

Good. Then don't.

ABERNATHY

But, it's just that ... well, the chief and all ...

ROCKY

Whasamatter, 'Nasty, 'fraid I'll blow it for ya with Uncle Bob?

ABERNATHY

As a matter of fact, yes.

ROCKY

Well, so am I. Work with me, okay?

ABERNATHY

You mean it?

ROCKY

Are you insinuating that I don't know what I'm doing?

ABERNATHY

Uh ... no ... I'd never ...

ROCKY

I know. Maybe you should. Look, keep sweetie-pie busy while I talk to the man with the bomb.

ABERNATHY

You mean it?

ROCKY

No, I just felt like giving you a glimmer of hope and then denying you of even the most remote possibility of success or glory. OF COURSE I MEAN IT, YOU SPINELESS WIMP!

ABERNATHY

Oh! Uh ... thank you. You won't regret this.

ROCKY

Famous last words.

ABERNATHY

Uh ... Miss Martin? Could I ... uh ... some tea would be nice.

JULIA

Get it yourself, 'Nasty.

ROCKY

Not a good idea, sweetheart. Last time 'Nasty tried to heat up water he burned down an apartment building.

JULIA

(Moving quickly toward the kitchen area) Lemon Zinger or chrysanthemum?

ABERNATHY

Do you have any Lipton? And PLEASE call me Marvin.

(ABERNATHY and JULIA exit off-stage to the kitchen area.)

MIKE

Why'd you do that?

ROCKY

Do what?

MIKE

You had 'Nasty distract Julia. What do you want?

ROCKY

We have to talk. I mean REALLY talk.

MIKE

Yeah. I figured we'd have to sooner or later.

ROCKY

Look ... Mike ... this is crazy. You can't just wear explosives and threaten people's lives like this. It ain't normal. You can't change a mind manually.

MIKE

Okay, I'll admit that it's a bit extreme. It wasn't my original plan.

ROCKY

You weren't plannin' to off yourself, were ya?

MIKE

Nah. I just wanted something persuasive and affordable. The guys seemed pretty eager to unload the explosives, and they sold it to me for what they were askin' for a gun ... (a beat) I'm gonna do time, aren't I. Best case scenario.

ROCKY

Best case scenario? -- Yes. No way around it.

MIKE

Even if nobody gets hurt?

ROCKY

You don't really wanna blow us up, do you.

MIKE

(Sincerely) No. I guess I don't.

ROCKY

I thought so. Look, Mike, why don't you give me the vest? I'll be in your corner.

MIKE

Why? A few minutes ago you didn't care if I lived or died. You said it yourself.

ROCKY

I fly off the handle sometimes. I don't mean nothin' by it. You know what I mean.

MIKE

I think so. (a beat) You know Rock, I thought you were a real bitch at first.

ROCKY

Good. That's my strategy.

MIKE

But now I'm POSITIVE you're a real bitch.

ROCKY

(Laughs loudly) Come on, Mike. All this dramatics -- it ain't worth it.

MIKE

Y'see, that's the problem. Julia ... she IS worth it.

ROCKY

No, she's not. She's a self-absorbed, materialistic yuppie bitch.

MIKE

You left out her obscene income.

ROCKY

Mikey, you can do better than her.

MIKE

No, I can't.

ROCKY

Yes, you can. You got ... well ... sort of an animal magnetism. You know? You're young, attractive, dynamic, you're in good shape, you got a sense of humor ... hell, if I were ten years younger I'd give you a run for your money.

MIKE

Ten years? That's not so bad. I'd take those odds.

ROCKY

Look, there's plenty of women out there who'd kill to get their claws into you. You're definitely a resourceful ... creative ... passionate ... interesting ... armed psychotic.

MIKE

You left out unstable, undisciplined, childish and moody. If I had money you could count eccentric ...

ROCKY

You never struck me as the type to have low self-esteem.

MIKE

I don't. I'm just being realistic. Face it Rocky, like ol' 'Nasty I'm not exactly what women want.

ROCKY

Hey, Mike, I wouldn't go so far as to ...

MIKE

(Interrupting) I don't make a fortune and I can't offer much except for myself. Julia wasn't the best I could do, she was ALL I could do.

ROCKY

You don't really believe that, do you?

MIKE

I'm afraid I do. (a beat) Y'see, I was a military brat. My dad made sure we moved every couple of months. On the road you tend to grow up pretty quick, especially when your old man hits the bottle on a daily basis. When I was fifteen I helped bury my big sister. Cancer. It was pretty gruesome. After that it was made real clear that I wasn't the son my folks wanted, though they'd never tell me why. I remember every day my dad used to tell me ... he used to say "... when you leave we can resume our normal lives." That sits real nice on a teenager.

ROCKY

Did you? ... leave?

MIKE

Eventually. 'Went to college out west. No big shakes. I liked the beach scene. Majored in Music Composition and Education -- if you can believe it. 'Wound up teaching High School Chorus in Port Jerome, Oregon. I'll tell ya Rocky, teaching is for the birds. So, after driftin' around the country for a few years I settled in Atlanta -- met a nice girl and almost got married. Yeah, it's true! She wasn't much like Julia but I was willing to give it my all. After she saw what I was made of she called it off. That's when I came to New York to try to break into the music world. 'Wound up doin' odd jobs here and there. Y'see, I kinda have this problem with jobs. I take what I can get and it usually don't last too long before I walk or get canned. So, there I was - alone in the big apple with nothin' I could use. Three years later I met Julia.

ROCKY

Please, don't nauseate me with a "love at first sight" story.

MIKE

Don't worry, I won't. I didn't think much of her at first. She was kind of a snob. She hired me to build those book shelves over there. I think she latched on to me first. She kind of liked the age difference -- her being eight years older and all. But we could talk ... boy could we talk. We got into nooks and crannies of each other neither of us thought ever existed. She taught me how to be more responsible and how to put up with an employer ... I taught her how to loosen up and relax. She took me to plays and museums ... I introduced her to boat rides in the park ... Coney Island ... computer games ... fun movies. Buster Keaton. John Belushi. Tex Avery. Bullwinkle. She thought she'd never lower herself to enjoy comedy and wound up lovin' 'it. It became a big challenge with me. She DID draw the line with "Animal House." Her loss. Yeah, we had lots of fun, her and I. Growin' and sharin' -- all that nauseating New Age stuff.

ROCKY

You have my condolences.

MIKE

It was okay, really. But after a while she started gettin' annoyed with the little things -- the way I washed my hair ... the shows I watched on TV. Soon every thing I did got on her nerves. My job. My background. My life. Things that make up who I was. All of a sudden I wasn't what she wanted anymore. I don't know what happened -- I was still the same guy who got her to watch "Ghostbusters" and like it. I had to break it off. It was a big loss ... and a big relief.

I'll tell ya, Rocky, comin' from an unusual background is great fodder for creativity but it sucks when you're tryin' to fit into the world of the living. Sometimes I just wish I was a nobody from Jersey.

ROCKY

I'M from Jersey.

MIKE

Oh? Which exit.

ROCKY

Go on. What's your fixation with Miss America here?

MIKE

You see, Julia ... Julia's the only person I could even talk to without feelin' like I'm from another planet. I don't claim to be better than anybody or worse than anybody -- I'm just different. Sometimes tragically different. Different to the point that I just don't connect with anybody. On the plus side it's opened up my creativity. On the down side it's closed off the capacity for interpersonal relationships. Julia may not be perfect, but it's like we're tuned to the same radio station. We connect. She may not put much stock in it but I ain't about to let it go. I've worked too damn hard for it. Besides, the pain gets unbearable sometimes, ya know?

ROCKY

(Long pause) You know, that's pretty fuckin' pathetic.

MIKE

It's pretty fuckin' true.

ROCKY

I GOTTA get you two kids together.

MIKE

With what, handcuffs?

ROCKY

I know what you're feelin'. I even know about the pain. I get it too and I know what it's like to be rid of it. I also know that nothin' I say or do's gonna change your mind so if I wanna be home in time t'see myself on the evening news I'm gonna have'ta smooth things out between you two.

MIKE

Any ideas on how?

ROCKY

Seriously? Not a one. I'm flyin' by the seat o' my pants.

MIKE

I blame this whole thing on the filofax.

ROCKY

(A take) What?!

MIKE

The filofax -- tool of the devil ... that piece o' shit book sent by Satan himself that gets people all worked up and eventually sucks whatever heart and brain they had left and puts it into "Appointmentland" and banishes their soul to call-waiting oblivion. They should be banned. No, they should be burned at public gatherings.

ROCKY

What about cellular phones?

MIKE

Long distance services?

ROCKY

Car faxes!

MIKE

Pocket pagers!

(ROCKY smiles uncomfortably as she removes a pager from her belt and tosses it away.)

ROCKY

Uh ... decaffeinated espresso!

MIKE

Shiatsu massage!

ROCKY

(Laughs) You know what? You're okay. (pats him on the back - remembers the vest) Misguided but okay.

MIKE

Yeah, but I'm still on my own and I still got the pain. Look, Rock, I got nothing against bein' okay, but that and a token get's you on the subway. I'll tell ya, I'd rather have Julia -- materialistic crap and all -- then go through the rest of my life alone with the pain.

(beat)

How do you cope ... without your husband?

ROCKY

I don't give myself time to let it get to me.
Between two daughters and this "high-pressure"
job, dealing with being alone takes a back seat.

(beat)

The nights sure get lonely. That's when the pain
gets bad.

MIKE

I know what you mean. How do the kids deal with
it?

ROCKY

They ask questions. But in this age of high
divorce rates they fit right in with their
friends. Most of them have only one parent
anyway. But they ask -- politely -- if they'll
ever get a new daddy. Shit, why am I tellin' YOU
this?

MIKE

Because, like it or not, you're a decent person.

ROCKY

Then from one decent person to another ... how
about handing over the vest?

MIKE

You know, I'd be disappointed if you didn't try.

ROCKY

I take it that's a "no."

MIKE

You take it right.

ROCKY

C'mon, Mike. Be a pal.

MIKE

Not yet. We're too close. I'm not outta steam
yet.

ROCKY

Hey, I saw an opening ...

MIKE

(Interrupting) I know. You're doin' your job.

(beat)

How old are they ... your daughters?

ROCKY

What? Oh, here. Look.

(She takes out her wallet
from her purse and shows
him pictures.)

MIKE

Nice kids.

ROCKY

That one's Debbie -- she's six. The little one's
Loretta. She'll be five next month.

MIKE

These are YOURS? They're so cute!

ROCKY

Hey -- watch it, dirt ball.

(JULIA sprints in from
the kitchen.)

JULIA

Pictures! Let me see!

ROCKY

She's loose. 'Nasty, what happened?! I ask you
to do ONE thing and you fuck that up. You're a
fuckin' waste.

ABERNATHY

I'm sorry, I'm sorry!

JULIA

Your daughters. May I see them?

ROCKY

Sure, why not. See what your missin'.

JULIA

(Takes the pictures) Oh, they're so sweet! I
didn't know combat fatigues came in children's
sizes.

ROCKY

Sweet? SWEET?! Okay - cute, maybe; sweet, never.
One breakfast cereal sugar rush and they cease to
be "sweet."

(JULIA starts to flip through the rest of her pictures.)

ROCKY (cont'd)
Hey, I never said you could look at ...

JULIA
(Holds up a picture) Who's this?

(MIKE grabs the picture.
ROCKY nabs all the photos from MIKE and JULIA.)

ROCKY
Gimmie those. This has already gone way too far.

JULIA
Who was that man?

ROCKY
Tony. My husband.

JULIA
Oh. I'm sorry.

MIKE
THAT was your husband?! Before or after he got blown up?

JULIA
Mike!

MIKE
He's kind of a pig, don'cha think?

JULIA
Michael Herbert Pitts! Behave!

MIKE
He was!

JULIA
(Trying to protect ROCKY's feelings) No, he wasn't!

ROCKY
No, he's right. Tony was a pig. A big, nasty, beer-swillin', cigar-chompin', foul-mouthed pig. But he was MY pig.

JULIA

Look, Rocky, I'd never want to pass judgment on you ...

MIKE

But I'm fair game, right?

JULIA

Shut up, Mike. Look, Rocky, not meaning to get too personal, but how on earth could you love a man like that? I mean, look how he's dressed!

ROCKY

Hey, I made him that bowling shirt!

MIKE

Et tu, JulJ?

ROCKY

It's okay, Mike. I think it actually applies. I'll tell ya, princess. You know how I could love a man like Tony? Easy. I chose to.

JULIA

That's the worst case of rationalization I've ever heard of!

ROCKY

Look, you shallow bitch, maybe if you tried to think with your heart instead of your wallet, you'd understand this whole goddamn thing!

MIKE

Did they ever catch 'em?

ROCKY

Catch who?

MIKE

The guys who blew him to bits.

JULIA

Michael, show some compassion.

ROCKY

Hey, it's okay. I know where he's comin' from. If he didn't ask I'd worry. Nah, they never caught 'em. Honestly, I think I'd rest a lot easier if they did. But Semtex is pretty hard to trace. Nobody has a lead.

MIKE

Look, I'm sorry ...

ROCKY

It happened. He's gone. We gotta deal with these thing, ya know?

(The doorbell rings.)

ABERNATHY

(Startled) WHAT'S THAT?!

MIKE

How could anybody be at the door?!
(runs to the window and looks out)
NOTHING could get through the barriers.

ABERNATHY

Some people think a Police line is just a blue saw horse and some yellow tape.

(The bell rings again.
All stare at each other
in horror.)

JULIA

I'll get it.

ROCKY

No you won't. Send 'em away.

MIKE

Amen

JULIA

I will do no such thing!

ABERNATHY

I think it would be best. We can't put anybody else's lives in danger.