

# F2F

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A Play

by

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F2F

MAN - Late 20's to mid-40's. Overweight, slovenly, virtually no social skills.

WOMAN - Late 20's to mid-40's. Angry, quick-witted.

Both characters should be relatively the same age. They can range anywhere from late 20's to late 40's.

The setting is the not-too-distant future; roughly thirty years from now. It is the middle of the night.

The set is the MAN's Manhattan apartment. There should be a door, one or two archways to offstage rooms and one window with a fire escape visible. The apartment is small and VERY cluttered, appearing as though it hasn't been cleaned in about a year. Everything from dirty clothes to food packages are everywhere. Any available surface is taken up with stacks of comic books. Also present is a sofa and a computer station.

The computer station, centrally located and prominently featured, is the only part of the apartment that is immaculately clean.

ACT 1

(MAN's apartment. He paces from his computer to the front door, stopping at each and staring at them intently for a notable length of time -- almost "willing" them to do something. He watches through the peep hole when FINALLY there is a knock on the door. MAN opens the door to reveal WOMAN, dressed in repair-person's clothes, wearing a hard-hat and carrying a large tool box.)

MAN

It's about time.

WOMAN

It's the middle of the night. Don't you people sleep?

MAN

(Rudely walks away) ITT Cable advertises prompt service.

WOMAN

(Enters) I got here when I could.

MAN

My cable's been out for hours.

WOMAN

I was finishing up a call in Brooklyn. Friggin' vandals.

MAN

Couldn't they send another repair-person?

WOMAN

I'm the only one on call on the overnight shift.  
(grimaces)  
WHOA! Did something die in here?

MAN

No.

WOMAN

Frak, what a stench! When was the last time you cleaned this place?!

MAN

What do you mean?

WOMAN

Oh, man!

(wipes her eyes)

This is the LAST time I do the lobster shift.

(holds a handkerchief over her mouth and nose)

MAN

Fix my cable.

WOMAN

You friggin' Netheads are always such charmers. I walk into your apartment and the whip cracks. Whatever happened to hospitality? Maybe I'm hungry. Maybe I'm thirsty. Maybe I've been climbin' the sides of buildings for the past five hours and I'd like to catch my breath!

MAN

Fix my cable now.

WOMAN

Relax! The world won't come to an end.

MAN

Yes it will! I can't do ANYTHING without my cable!

WOMAN

Y'see, that was always my problem with this whole Internet-telephone-television merger. If one service goes out they all go out.

MAN

Do you have to talk? I need my cable fixed and I need it fixed now! Without it I have no computer, no communication, no work, no TV, no nothing.

WOMAN

Alright, alright, step aside. Let me look at the patient. And try not to move around too much. It stirs up the stench.

MAN

There's nothing wrong with my workstation.

WOMAN

I'll be the judge of that.

(WOMAN examines the computer. She starts to move the monitor around and tug on some wires.)

MAN

PLEASE DON'T DO THAT!

WOMAN

Why not?

MAN

Everyone knows that you Blues don't know how to use computers.

WOMAN

Everyone knows that, huh? And where do you hear this stuff, on the Net?

MAN

I hear EVERYTHING on the Net.

WOMAN

Yeah? Well hear this: Don't believe everything you hear. The light sucks in this corner.

MAN

What's wrong with it?

WOMAN

I just said, it sucks. Friggin' Netheads never listen. Well, I got news for you, there's nothing wrong with your workstation.

MAN

I know.

WOMAN

I need to get to your juncture box.

MAN

What does that mean?

WOMAN

It means I need to get to your juncture box ... you know, that little box on the side of the building that connects you to that all-important piece of coax cable sticking out of your wall?

MAN

Is that how it works?

WOMAN

How the frig did you think the signal got into the computer?!

MAN

I don't know ... I never thought about it.

WOMAN

Too bad they found Wi-Fi causes brain cancer. Then again, maybe you're a hold-out.

MAN

Now you think I'm stupid.

WOMAN

(Sarcastically) You? Never.

MAN

Yes, you do. You think I'm stupid. I'm not, you know. I have an I.Q. of 145. It's been tested.

WOMAN

I see you've put it to good use.

MAN

I sure have. I'm a Telecommuter.

WOMAN

Oh really? I would have never guessed.

MAN

I'm sure I make more money than you do.

WOMAN

I'm sure you do.

MAN

Wanna know how much I make?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

Come on. Take a guess.

WOMAN

Please stand still. (reminding) The smell thing ...

MAN

I make a good living.

WOMAN

I'm so glad.

MAN

I'll tell you how much if you want.

WOMAN

Okay Nethead, impress me. What does a fat slob like you make?

MAN

One hundred eighty-five thousand dollars a year.

WOMAN

Yeah, that's about right.

MAN

About right for what?

WOMAN

About right for a Nethead.

MAN

What about you?

WOMAN

None of your business.

MAN

No fair! I told you, now you have to tell me.

WOMAN

Take a hike.

MAN

Come on ...

WOMAN

No!

MAN

Please.

WOMAN

Okay, if you promise not to move I'll tell you and end this particularly inane conversation.

MAN

Okay. (stops moving)

WOMAN  
(Sighs) Forty-two. Forty-two thousand a year.

MAN  
Why do you make forty-two thousand a year?

WOMAN  
Because that's what the job pays.

MAN  
How do you live on that?

WOMAN  
I manage.

(WOMAN moves objects  
around so she can follow  
the cable from behind the  
computer to see where it  
leads.)

MAN  
What are you doing?

WOMAN  
I don't tell you how to do your job, do I?

MAN  
I work for the New York Times.

WOMAN  
I didn't ask and I don't care.

MAN  
I receive transmissions from wire services and reformat  
them to hypertext markup language. You know, like AP  
and UPI ...

WOMAN  
And that pays a buck eighty-five?

MAN  
Why wouldn't it?

WOMAN  
So, who died and left you a cushy job like that?

MAN  
My uncle. He used to be an editor -- back when the  
Times was actually printed on paper.

WOMAN

It's still printed on paper.

MAN

No it's not. They stopped printing it on paper in 2022.

WOMAN

It's still on paper, I tell ya. All us Blues go to the Blue newsstand every morning and get the Blue newspaper printed on Blue paper before we go to our mundane, menial Blue jobs.

MAN

Do you read comic books?

WOMAN

No.

MAN

They're printed on paper.

WOMAN

A hundred eighty thou, huh?

MAN

A hundred eighty-five. I know most Blues don't like comic books. They don't understand them.

WOMAN

Thank you very much. Could you move that chair?

MAN

I have a big collection of comic books. Wanna see 'em?

WOMAN

No. The chair ...

MAN

You'd like them if you'd just read them.

WOMAN

Somehow I doubt that.

MAN

(Starts to move the chair) Do you know how many comic books I have?

WOMAN

Move it slowly. I'm sick to my stomach as it is.

MAN

Guess.

WOMAN

I don't know ... a dead cat?

MAN

What?

WOMAN

I though you wanted me to guess what the smell was.

MAN

Guess how many comic books I have.

WOMAN

Don't know, don't care.

MAN

Come on, guess.

WOMAN

Does this window open?

MAN

Twelve thousand, eight hundred and twenty two.

WOMAN

Your parents must be very proud.

MAN

I read anywhere from ten to twenty five of them a week.

WOMAN

An education well-used, I'm sure.

MAN

One week I read forty-one comic books.

WOMAN

Astounding.

MAN

Every Monday I place my order on the Net; every Wednesday they're at my door.

WOMAN

Will miracles ever cease?

MAN

I keep them in their own room. I have shelves from the floor to the ceiling filled with comic books! Wanna see it?

WOMAN

A veritable tinder box, I'm sure. I'll make a point to smoke a cigarette in there later.

MAN

There's no smoking in here. I'm allergic.

WOMAN

I was just kidding.  
(opens the window and looks out)  
There it is. Hand me my flashlight.

MAN

You can't get it?

WOMAN

(Annoyed, gets a flashlight from her toolbox and looks out of the window with it)  
You know, that's the problem with you Netheads -- you've been cooped up so long that you don't know how to talk to people. Thank God you don't procreate. Then again, I'm sure someone is working on a way to download sperm ...  
(Sees the box)  
There you are, you little devil. Looks like the work of vandals.

MAN

Vandals?! How do you know?

WOMAN

I've done this long enough to recognize their work. They also spray-painted their calling card on the wall beside the box.

MAN

Oh my God! Why would vandals want to hurt me?

WOMAN

I wouldn't take it too personally. They love screwin' with you Netheads. Doesn't matter which one.

MAN

Why?

WOMAN

Oh, I don't know. Maybe because you have all the money and none of the charm?

(beat)

I'm goin' up.

MAN

Up where?

WOMAN

Up the side of the building.

MAN

Spiderman could scale this building in a second.

WOMAN

Good for Spiderman.

(WOMAN grabs a few tools from the toolbox and, along with the flashlight, climbs out the window onto the fire escape and climbs up the ladder.)

MAN

Is it safe?

WOMAN

Do you wanna do it?

MAN

No.

WOMAN

Then what do you care?

(MAN starts to pace again.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

(From outside; very muffled) This should only take a minute!

MAN

What?

WOMAN

And whatever you do, don't turn on the PC!

MAN  
(Didn't quite hear her) Turn on the PC?

WOMAN  
Yeah!

(MAN turns on his PC.  
The lights momentarily  
dim. Sound of an  
electrical "zap" from  
outside.)

WOMAN (cont'd)  
(Screams)

(WOMAN falls hard into  
the fire escape landing.)

MAN  
Well? Is it fixed?  
(beat - no answer)  
Well? Is it fixed?

WOMAN  
Um ... could you give me a hand?

MAN  
Why?

WOMAN  
Because I can't move, that's why.

MAN  
Why not?

WOMAN  
Look Nethead, help me in or I'll make sure your cable  
NEVER works again.

MAN  
Alright, alright ...

(MAN helps WOMAN in from  
the window. She's  
somewhat banged up. She  
also can't walk. MAN is  
very pensive about  
touching WOMAN.)

WOMAN  
Get a better grip. I can't stand up.

MAN

What ... uh ... how ...

WOMAN

(Pulls his arm so it's around her) Like this! Frak, I won't break.

MAN

(Helps her to the sofa) What happened?

WOMAN

(Sits) I got thrown, stupid. Did a number on my leg. Man, what a jolt!

MAN

Did you break it?

WOMAN

I don't think so, but goin' out dancing later is definitely off.

(looks unbelievably at MAN)

Well, are you gonna stand there like a friggin' lump?

MAN

Huh?

WOMAN

Do something!

MAN

Like what?

WOMAN

You can start by getting me some ice.

MAN

Ice?

WOMAN

Yeah, you know -- frozen water?

MAN

Oh!

(MAN runs into the kitchen and returns with two handfuls of ice cubes.)

WOMAN

Can you possibly be that stupid?

MAN  
What?

WOMAN  
Put it in a towel or a plastic bag or something!

MAN  
Huh? Oh!

(MAN runs back to the kitchen and returns with the ice wrapped in a towel.)

MAN (cont'd)  
Like this?

WOMAN  
Peachy.  
(takes the towel)  
Thank you.  
(puts the ice on her knee -- winces)  
Cripes.  
(looks again unbelievably at MAN)  
Isn't there something you should be doing? Like calling a paramedic, maybe?

MAN  
I can't. The cable's down.

WOMAN  
How about using one of your neighbor's computers?

MAN  
You mean like other people in the building?

WOMAN  
No, people in New Jersey.

MAN  
Why would I want to use people in New Jersey's computers?

WOMAN  
Neighbors in the building, stupid! Hunt down a neighbor, use their computer and get me a paramedic!

MAN  
I couldn't do that.

WOMAN  
Why not?

MAN

It's kind of complicated.

WOMAN

Try me.

MAN

Well ... I don't talk to my neighbors.

WOMAN

There's always a first time.

MAN

No. It's out of the question. I leave them alone and they leave me alone. It's in the lease.

WOMAN

You're kidding.

MAN

Nope. The lease is publicly posted on the Net. I could show you if the cable was fixed.

WOMAN

(Unclips a small device from her belt) Damn. My CellCom got fried. Dead as dirt.

MAN

What's that?

WOMAN

It's a CellCom. You know ... mobile phone and E-mail? Everybody's got 'em. Don't you?

MAN

Why would I?

WOMAN

So you can call or E-mail people when you're out of the ... oh, what am I saying. I wonder what happened?

MAN

So? Can you fix it?

WOMAN

Fix it? FIX IT?! Are you NUTS?! First of all, my knee is swelling up like a cantaloupe, so I won't be climbin' ANY ladders anytime soon. And second, your juncture box is french fried! All the contacts melted when that surge went through. You didn't turn on your PC, did you?

MAN

You told me to.

WOMAN

I told you NOT to. Friggin' Netheads never listen.  
Well, that explains a few things.  
(touches the sofa cushions)  
These cushions are sticky.

(MAN sits next to WOMAN  
and watches her. He gets  
uncomfortably close.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Is there something I can help you with?

MAN

No.

WOMAN

Is there some reason you're staring at me?

MAN

You have small [large] breasts.

WOMAN

WHAT?!!

MAN

I didn't notice at first.

WOMAN

If I wasn't in so much pain I'd slap you SO hard ...

MAN

Why?

WOMAN

Because you're rude.

MAN

No I'm not. I'm merely stating a fact. If I were lying I would understand your being upset.

WOMAN

You have a way of asking questions that are, oh, how would you say ... inappropriate?

MAN

Like what?

WOMAN

As a rule, inappropriate subjects include personal things -- sex, income, religion, politics, bodily functions ...

MAN

(Interrupting) Why?

WOMAN

They just do. I don't make the rules. Just try to follow them, will ya?

MAN

Then how will I find out things?

WOMAN

Oh, I don't know! Frak!

(MAN gets up, walks into another room and returns drinking a can of soda.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

NOW what are you doing?

MAN

I was thirsty.

WOMAN

Did you think that maybe I'D be thirsty?

MAN

No. Should I?

WOMAN

Maybe.

MAN

(Offers the can) Want a sip?

WOMAN

Friggin' Nethead.

MAN

So, when will my cable be fixed?

WOMAN

Are all you Netheads this thick?

MAN

You're just jealous.

WOMAN

Of who? You?

MAN

All you Blues are jealous of us.

WOMAN

Is that a fact?

MAN

I don't blame you ... we get the best jobs, we live in the best apartments ... not like you Blues.

WOMAN

It wouldn't be so bad if you actually EARNED the jobs instead of inheriting them.

MAN

What's wrong with that?

WOMAN

Nothing. Nothing at all.

MAN

So, what about my cable?

WOMAN

Frak! I can't fix your cable because I can't walk!

MAN

But ...

WOMAN

But what?!

MAN

But if the cable was fixed I could IM the paramedics.

WOMAN

At last, a grain of humanity.

MAN

Won't someone else pick up the repair signal?

WOMAN

When the cable goes down somewhere the signal goes out until it's received. Then it relays itself off.

MAN

It's not transmitting the repair signal any more?

WOMAN

Nope.

MAN

Does anyone else know you're here?

WOMAN

I'm the only one on call tonight. Face it, with the automatic malfunction transmitters we don't need dispatchers and, frankly, ITT Cable wasn't designed to go down. Having someone cover the overnight shift was supposed to be a breeze. Nobody expected vandalism.

MAN

So, what do we do?

WOMAN

I'll call them in the morning from the hospital and have them dispatch someone else.

MAN

You mean go the entire night without cable?

WOMAN

Yes! What's wrong with you?! Can't you just accept that the cable's down for a few hours and get on with your life?!

MAN

My cable is everything! It's my connection to the world! I don't know if its this way with Blues, but without our Internet connections we have no identity. We can't work, we can't communicate, we can't order food or comic books, we can't confirm dentists appointments, we can't visit museums ... we don't exist.

WOMAN

Can't you think about anyone but yourself?

MAN

I have no reason to think of anyone but myself.

WOMAN

Okay, let's make a deal. I'll help you get your cable fixed and then you help me get a paramedic.

MAN

How?

WOMAN

Let me worry about that. Is it a deal?

MAN

What's the catch.

WOMAN

There is no friggin' catch! I just need your commitment. Say you'll do it -- "yes" or "no."

MAN

Why should I trust you?

WOMAN

I'm a girl of my word.

MAN

How do I know that?

WOMAN

Do you want to help or not?

MAN

What do I need to do?

WOMAN

You need to fix the cable yourself.

MAN

I can't do that.

WOMAN

Sure you can.

MAN

I don't know how.

WOMAN

I'll show you.

MAN

Is it difficult?

WOMAN

I do it every day. Just flex that 145 I.Q.

MAN

(Thinks) Okay. As long as my cable gets fixed. What do I have to do?

WOMAN

How about some water?

MAN

Will water fix the cable?

WOMAN

The water is for me. I want to take an aspirin.

MAN

Oh. You want the water in a glass?

WOMAN

No, I want it in a shoe.

MAN

Blues drink water from shoes?

WOMAN

Hundred eighty-five thou, huh?

MAN

Don't pick on me. I've never had to get anything for anybody before.

WOMAN

Okay, okay. I'm sorry. Please get me a glass of water.

MAN

Okay. (starts to dart off)

WOMAN

Wait! Wait!! Offer me some ice with it.

MAN

It's all on your knee.

WOMAN

Offer it anyway.

MAN

(Confused) Would you like ice with it?

WOMAN

No thank you. (beat) Go!

(MAN starts to go but  
quicky returns,  
frustrated.)

MAN

Why did you have me ask you for ice when you didn't want it?

WOMAN

Because if you're going to fix the cable you have to acquire some simple social skills.

MAN  
Why?

WOMAN  
Just get the water, then I'll tell you.

MAN  
Okay.

(MAN darts off. WOMAN starts pulling objects from out of the sofa. MAN finally returns with a glass of water.)

WOMAN  
Thank you. Do you have any aspirin?

MAN  
I have a prescription. Doctors say you should never give prescription drugs to others.

WOMAN  
No matter. Look in my toolbox. I should have a bottle of something somewhere in there.

(MAN rummages through WOMAN's toolbox. He pulls out a bottle of aspirin.)

MAN  
Hey, these are strong ones.

WOMAN  
Good for headaches caused by dealing with ultra-dense Netheads.

(MAN gives the bottle to WOMAN. She shakes out two tablets.)

WOMAN  
Thanks. Cheers.

(WOMAN downs the glass of water and aspirin and holds the glass at arms length.)

WOMAN (cont'd)  
(After a beat) Well?

MAN

Would you like some ice now?

WOMAN

Good question, bad timing. Take the glass.

MAN

(Takes the glass) Now what?

WOMAN

Wash it.

MAN

No, really.

WOMAN

Yes, really.

MAN

Why?

WOMAN

You're going to have to go out and get something.

MAN

OUT?!!!

WOMAN

Yes, out.

MAN

I don't "do" out.

WOMAN

What?!

MAN

Why can't you go out?

WOMAN

I can't walk. You have to go.

MAN

I can't.

WOMAN

You want your cable fixed?

MAN

I NEED my cable fixed.

WOMAN

Then you'll go out.

MAN

But I can't.

WOMAN

Why the frig not?!

MAN

Because. It's ... there's ... out, huh?

WOMAN

Yes, out. You know, where all the Blues are?

MAN

Isn't there some other way?

WOMAN

Look. We made a deal. The only way I'm leavin' this room is on a stretcher. If you want your cable fixed you'll have to leave the building and venture into the out-of-doors.

MAN

I don't think I can.

WOMAN

Sure you can.

MAN

How do you know?

WOMAN

Millions do it every day.

MAN

That doesn't make it ...

WOMAN

Make it WHAT?!

MAN

Make it ... safe.

WOMAN

And you think this sofa is?

MAN

Will it be safe?

WOMAN

That's up to you.

MAN

And if I don't?

WOMAN

No cable.

MAN

(Sighs, musters courage) Okay. Tell me what I need to do.

WOMAN

That's the ol' Nethead spirit! You're going to need to go out and get a new juncture box.

MAN

Why?

WOMAN

Because we don't carry them on the truck.

MAN

Why?

WOMAN

Because Netheads don't make a habit of frying their friggin' juncture boxes.

MAN

Is that where the boxes are? Outside?

WOMAN

No, I keep them in my armpits.

MAN

No you don't.

WOMAN

145, huh? You'll need to go out and you'll need to deal with a few people. Now, the people you'll see won't like the fact that you're a Nethead, so I need to make sure you're convincing enough to get the job done.

MAN

I have to be a Blue?

WOMAN

Tragic, isn't it?

(adjusts)

Aaaah! Oh! Frak, you did some number on my knee!

MAN

It wasn't my fault.

WOMAN

Yes it was. Look, let's not get into this, okay? Do you have a driver's license?

MAN

Nope.

WOMAN

Have you EVER driven?

MAN

Nope. I've never had the need to.

WOMAN

My truck is downstairs. You'll have to drive it into Queens.

MAN

QUEENS?!

WOMAN

Yes. That's where I live. It's not far, just over the bridge.

MAN

Can't I take a cab?

WOMAN

In case you haven't noticed, it's three thirty in the friggin' morning. Most cabs won't go to Queens this late. And if they did it'd cost you your life's savings.

MAN

What about the subway?

WOMAN

As of January all busses and subways close down at two a.m. You don't get out much, do you.

MAN

No. Not at all. Though I went to the dentist last year. I took a cab. It was in the middle of the day.

WOMAN

Peachy. So, when you get to my place you'll need to find my super and explain to him who you are. If he doesn't trust you he'll have you arrested.

MAN

Why would he do that?

WOMAN

Because you don't live there. Cripes, Nethead, do you have to be so friggin' dense?!

MAN

I don't have to do this, you know.

WOMAN

And I don't have to fix your cable.

MAN

(Beat) What do I do once I'm there?

WOMAN

It's an easy reconnaissance mission. I have a number of re-built juncture boxes in my apartment.

MAN

Why?

WOMAN

Fixing things is sort of a hobby of mine ...

MAN

I collect comic books.

WOMAN

Yes, I know.

MAN

You actually have a hobby where you use your hands?

WOMAN

Sure. Most do.

MAN

I don't. All of the people I know don't.

WOMAN

Why doesn't this surprise me?

MAN

And you rebuild cable juncture boxes?

WOMAN

Sure. Why not. It's constructive and it makes me a few bucks on the side. But considering that the ITT parts department won't be open for another six hours or so, it's our only choice. Just get there, grab one ... grab a couple just to be safe ... and get them back here. Think of it as a video game, or one of your stupid comic book adventures.

MAN

Yeah! Yeah! It's like that time in Mighty Man issue number 105 through 108 -- Mighty Man's one of my favorite comic books. Y'see, Mildred -- she's Mighty Man's girlfriend -- she gets poisoned -- and it's up to Sheldon -- that's Mighty Man's secret identity -- to break into the lab and put together the antidote, because not only is Sheldon a brilliant biochemist, but if he went as Mighty Man it would expose his secret identity. But it was a set-up, y'see? So Sheldon had to rely on his skills as a biochemist to get him out of it! You really should check it out! It's excellent.

WOMAN

I'll put it on my reading list.

MAN

Will this mission pose any danger?

WOMAN

Only if you act like an idiot.

MAN

I don't act like an idiot.

WOMAN

Yes, you do. Now, let's pretend you're driving around.

MAN

Driving? You mean like a car?

WOMAN

Yeah, just like the friggin' Batmobile.

MAN

Oh! Cool! Vroooooom!

(MAN pantomimes he's driving a hot rod.)

WOMAN

IT'S A TRUCK AND YOU'RE IN MANHATTAN!!! IT DOESN'T DO A HUNDRED AND SIXTY ON THE OPEN ROAD!

MAN

The Batmobile does.

WOMAN

Now, you're driving around and you get pulled over.

MAN

What?

WOMAN

Pulled over. Stopped by the police.

MAN

Why would that happen?

WOMAN

Oh, maybe because you're an unlicensed, UNTRAINED driver in an ITT Cable truck and, undoubtedly, acting like an idiot.

MAN

I don't act like an idiot.

WOMAN

Yes, you do. Now you get pulled over ...

MAN

What do I do?

WOMAN

Okay. To put it into your language, let's run a simulation.

(she pantomimes)

You're driving ... you're driving ...

MAN

I still don't know how to drive.

WOMAN

We'll deal.

MAN

How do I know where I'm going?

WOMAN

On-board navigational computer. Just tell it you're going home. It'll guide you.

MAN

Cool.

WOMAN

Anyway, you're driving and you see those flashing blue lights in your rear view mirror.

(MAN looks around  
confused.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

(Points to where the rear view mirror should be)  
There.

MAN

Oh. (looks)

WOMAN

You pull the car over to the side of the road ...  
(pantomimes)  
... the officer comes to your window and you say --

MAN

(Proudly) "Go away. I'm running reconnaissance."

WOMAN

No. Let's try again.  
(pretending to be a police officer)  
Hey, pal, what's the problem?  
(whispers to MAN)  
Say "Did I do something wrong, officer?"

MAN

Did I do something wrong officer?

WOMAN

Very good.

MAN

Can I write that down?

WOMAN

By all means.

(MAN gets up and searches  
for a piece of paper and  
a pen.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Careful! Don't stir up too much of that smell.

MAN

(Finds it) Got it! Now ...  
(writes)  
Did ... I ... do ... something ... wrong ...

WOMAN

Look Nethead, I'd like to get out of here tonight.

MAN

Got it. Then what?

WOMAN

They'll ask to see your license.

MAN

I don't have a license.

WOMAN

I know that. You have to convince the officer to let you go. Now, what do you say?

MAN

I say, "Let me go!"

WOMAN

No. Try again.

MAN

I say, "This is an emergency!"

WOMAN

Better. But they'll ask you what the emergency is. What do you say?

MAN

I tell him my cable is out.

WOMAN

No. Try again.

MAN

I tell him HIS cable is out?

WOMAN

Tell him your wife has gone into labor.

MAN

But I'm not married.

WOMAN

I swear, if my leg wasn't the swelling to the size of a bowling ball I'd kick your ass from here to Staten Island.

MAN

That's police brutality. I know that.

WOMAN

That's me talking, not the cop.

MAN

Why are all Blues so hostile?

WOMAN

It's a result of bathing.

MAN

You don't like me.

WOMAN

What?!

MAN

It's just like Mighty Man and his boss. They don't like each other. I can tell you don't like me.

WOMAN

Look, I'm sure under different circumstances you're a real peach, but right now I'm in serious pain and under a bit of pressure.

MAN

I said the wrong thing.

WOMAN

No, no. Look, let's drop it, okay?

MAN

Do you go out on dates?

WOMAN

Never with the customers.

MAN

No, really. Do you?

WOMAN

Sure. Yeah. Every once-in-a-while.

MAN

What's it like?

WOMAN

From who's standpoint?

MAN

I don't know. Yours, I guess.

WOMAN

It bites. Dating bites, y'know? Each date is like an interview for marriage. Too much pressure.

MAN

Then why do you do it?

WOMAN

(Sighs) Someone's gotta. Lord knows you Netheads won't.

MAN

Do you have any children?

WOMAN

Not yet.

MAN

Do you want children?

WOMAN

Sometimes.

MAN

I want children. I don't think I'll ever have children.

WOMAN

Why not?

MAN

Well ... there are certain steps ... certain procedures ...

WOMAN

Have trouble talking to women?

MAN

Only face-to-face.

WOMAN

You don't seem to be having any trouble talking to me. Wait a minute. Maybe you do.

MAN

It's different. You're a Blue.

WOMAN

And Blues are easier to talk to?

MAN

Yeah ... I mean, no ...

WOMAN

You mean you have no intention of getting it on with a Blue, right?

MAN

You understand, don't you?

WOMAN

I understand perfectly. You're a friggin' asshole.

MAN

I said the wrong thing again.

WOMAN

Yeah, you did. Look, can we get back to getting to Queens? I wanna get out of here as fast as I can.

MAN

I made you uncomfortable.

WOMAN

No shit, Sherlock.

MAN

I'm sorry.

WOMAN

Forget about it.

MAN

Would you like more water?

WOMAN

No, thank you. But thank you for asking. It's a definite improvement. Now, can we get back to the mission?

MAN

Will it make you happier?

WOMAN

Absolutely giddy.

MAN

Okay then. Back to the mission. The cop pulls me over and I tell him my wife is in labor. Why am I going to Queens?

WOMAN

Because you live there.

MAN

But only Blues live in Queens.

WOMAN

Then you have to convince him you're a Blue.

MAN

How do I do that?

WOMAN

By saying as little as possible for starters. Here.

(she hands MAN her hard-hat)

You'll wear this.

(she starts to take off her shirt)

MAN

Holy moly! What are you doing?!

WOMAN

I'm taking off my shirt.

MAN

Oh my God ...

WOMAN

Relax, will ya?

(WOMAN removes her shirt.  
She wears a t-shirt under  
it. She tosses her shirt  
to MAN.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Try it on.

MAN

(Nervous) What?

WOMAN

Wear my shirt. Try it on.

MAN

I think it's too small.

WOMAN

You can thank junk food.

MAN

I'm not fat.

WOMAN

You don't have to button it. Do you have a white t-shirt? A CLEAN white t-shirt?

MAN

I think so.

WOMAN

Good. Put it on.

(MAN darts off. WOMAN shifts the ice pack on her knee, wincing as she does it. MAN returns wearing a slightly dirty white t-shirt.)

MAN

How's this?

WOMAN

It's not very clean.

MAN

Sure it is. I only wore it once since I had my laundry done last.

WOMAN

Ugh. Now put the ITT shirt on over the t-shirt.

(He does.)

MAN

I told you -- it doesn't fit.

WOMAN

It's good enough. And now the hard-hat.

(He puts on the hard-hat.)

MAN

Well?

WOMAN

Not bad. You almost look the part.

MAN

Really?!

(MAN runs off stage.)

WOMAN

Where the frig are you going?!

MAN

(Offstage) I want to look in the mirror.

WOMAN

Well? What do you think?

MAN

(Returns) Cool! This is kind of like a role-playing game!

WOMAN

Good. Then you know that the art of deception involves your making it look like you know exactly what you're doing to the point of boredom. If you overdo the details it'll draw suspicion. Only give information if asked.

MAN

(Thinks) Yeah! Good plan!

WOMAN

Okay, keeping that in mind, let's try it again. We're driving ...

(Both pantomime driving.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

... and a cop pulls you over.  
(doing her "cop" voice)  
Alright Mac, pull over.

MAN

(Reads from his notes) Did I do something wrong officer?

WOMAN

You were driving a bit recklessly up First Avenue.

MAN

I'm sorry, officer, but my wife is in labor and I have to pick her up and take her to the hospital.

WOMAN

Where's your wife?

MAN

In Queens.

WOMAN

What part of Queens.

MAN

Part? (aside) What part do you live in?

WOMAN

Sunnyside.

MAN

Uh, Summerside.

WOMAN

SUNNYside.

MAN

Okay. Sunnyside.

WOMAN

You don't sound too sure.

MAN

No, definitely Sunnyside.

WOMAN

Step out of the car.

MAN

Hey, we didn't go over this.

WOMAN

Let me see your license.

MAN

License?

WOMAN

I'll have to place you under arrest. Your cable won't be fixed and some innocent woman will die from internal bleeding in your apartment because you're a moron!

MAN

But I did what you said!

WOMAN

You have to think on your feet. Life isn't always scripted. You have to be ready.

MAN

So what do I do?

WOMAN

Be believable. Say "My wife is in labor. I have to rush to Sunnyside and pick her up."

MAN

My wife is laboring ...

WOMAN

No. Repeat after me. "My wife is in labor ..."

MAN

My wife is in labor.

WOMAN

Again.

MAN

Again.

WOMAN

(Groans)

MAN

(Groans)

(WOMAN reacts, angrily.)

MAN

What?!

WOMAN

My wife is in labor ... repeat ...

MAN

My wife is in labor ...

WOMAN

I have to rush to Sunnyside and pick her up.

MAN

I have to rush to Sunnyside to pick her up.

WOMAN

My wife is in labor. I have to rush to Sunnyside and pick her up.

WOMAN

Again.

MAN

My wife is in labor. I have to rush to Sunnyside and pick her up.

WOMAN

Now, you have to be believable -- say it like you mean it. You have to submerge yourself in your character. 'Ever take an acting class?

MAN

Why would I want to do that?

WOMAN

Cripes Nethead, did you go to college?

MAN

Of course. NYOU - class of 44.

WOMAN

New York Online University. Figures.

MAN

Everybody goes to college. I'd never have a job if I didn't.

WOMAN

What was your major?

MAN

Math.

WOMAN

That explains it.

MAN

I've written some of my own computer games.

WOMAN

I'm impressed.

MAN

You should be! They're quite good, if I do say so myself. I uploaded one of them onto the Net and got over fifty letters from people who liked it. I also minored in Journalism.

WOMAN

Well, there you go!

MAN

I knew I'd be inheriting the job with the Times, so I figured it couldn't hurt to know about Journalism.

WOMAN

Was it helpful?

MAN

No. I almost failed. They kept wanting me to write things.

WOMAN

Bastards.

MAN

I squeaked by with a 2.02 average in my minor. It was good enough to pass. I figured "what the heck," I had the job waiting for me.

WOMAN

You never took a class just for the fun of it?

MAN

Nope. Never. Well, once. I took a Medieval History class as an elective.

WOMAN

No adult education classes?

MAN

Why? If there's something I want to learn I can get the information off the Net.

WOMAN

Books?

MAN

On the Net. Last week I read *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. What a great book!

WOMAN

I miss the days of the well-rounded education.

MAN

I read about those days. So inefficient. I support the specialized curriculums.

WOMAN

Yeah, but as a result now you won't be able to get your cable fixed and I'm gonna be eaten by your sofa.

MAN

Nothing will happen until I learn how to drive.

WOMAN

You're right.

(thinks)

Hey, ever play one of those driving simulation games?

MAN

Yes! Yes! As a matter of fact I have a great auto racing game! It comes with a steering wheel and pedal and everything! I play this guy from California -- we link up and race each other every Thursday at ten! ... eastern time ...

WOMAN

We'll have to use it to your advantage. Just remember that this is no race. Do you know anything about REAL cars?

MAN

I know there's a steering wheel ... and pedals ... and an on-board navigational computer. I love those.

WOMAN

Oh, geez. Look, the key is to take it slow. You're operating a very big machine. Any foul-ups could kill people -- or dent the truck at which point I'd kill you.

MAN

Okay. I'm ready.

WOMAN

Good. Have a seat.

(WOMAN pats the sofa, MAN quickly sits -- again uncomfortably close to her.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Do you mind?

MAN

Mind what?

WOMAN

You're crowding my space.

MAN

I am?

WOMAN

Move it or lose it.

(MAN moves over a few inches.)

MAN

You're hair smells like flowers.

WOMAN

It's called "Shampoo." You ought to try it sometime.

MAN

Do all Blues smell like flowers from shampoo?

WOMAN

Normally. As a rule we "Blues" tend to bathe regularly.

MAN

I guess you'd have to. You service people F2F.

WOMAN

F2F?

MAN

F2F. Face-to-face. I'm lucky -- I don't have to.

WOMAN

Believe me, we're all lucky for that. Now, take that cup ...

(points)

... and that box ...

(points)

... and lay them down next to each other right there.

(points to the space right in front of him)

They'll be your break pedal and your accelerator pedal.

MAN

Great. Now what?

(WOMAN takes her key ring off her belt and indicates some of the keys.)

WOMAN

This key opens the door. This one unlocks the Club. This barrel key unlocks the shut-off under the steering wheel. Got it?

MAN

Three locks already and we haven't even started the truck!

WOMAN

You can't be too safe. Now, this key goes in the ignition. You know how to turn a car on, don't you?

MAN  
Blow in the tailpipe and tell it how pretty it looks?

WOMAN  
Oh my God -- it has a sense of humor.

MAN  
(Proud of himself) You liked that one, huh?

WOMAN  
It was cute.

MAN  
I have more.

WOMAN  
Don't push it.

MAN  
Okay. I turn the key, the truck starts.

WOMAN  
You don't just turn the key. Give it a little gas ...  
go on ... step on the cup ...

(MAN crunches the cup  
with his left foot.)

WOMAN (cont'd)  
... with the RIGHT foot and give it a LITTLE gas.

(MAN does so.)

WOMAN (cont'd)  
Now. Turn the key all the way until the engine starts.  
Then let go. Do it.

MAN  
Do what?

WOMAN  
Turn the key.

(MAN mimes turning the  
key.)

WOMAN (cont'd)  
(Making engine sounds) Jzh-jzh-jzh-jzh-jzh-jzh-VROOM!!

(MAN lets go of the mimed  
key.)

MAN

Like that?

WOMAN

Good. Now, you won't have to deal with reverse since I'm parked in front of the building. To the right of the steering wheel is the stick. With your foot on the brake ... put your foot on the box ... pull it toward you -- GENTLY -- and click it down to "D."

MAN

Where's "D?"

WOMAN

It'll say "P" for "Park," "R" for "Reverse," "N" for "Neutral" and "D" for "Drive." Doesn't that stupid program of yours have gears?

MAN

The program isn't stupid.

WOMAN

Do it! With me ... watch ...

(They mime shifting to "Drive." MAN watches WOMAN's movements intensely.)

MAN

Okay ...

WOMAN

Now, GENTLY take your foot off the brake and GENTLY depress the accelerator. The cup ...

MAN

Oh. (does so) And that's all there is to it?

WOMAN

No, but it's a start.

MAN

Does the Batmobile work this way?

WOMAN

Please stop mentioning the Batmobile.

MAN

Why? The Batmobile is cool.

WOMAN

Because I'm trying to do this all by myself and you keep bringing up stupid comic books!

MAN

They're not stupid.

WOMAN

All right, they're not stupid. Just work with me on this, okay?

MAN

Remember, I'm the one going on this mission.

WOMAN

Remember who turned on the PC when I said NOT to.

MAN

But I thought you said I should ...

WOMAN

(Interrupting) Just focus on the mission. Now, the truck's got power brakes -- (with venom) just like the Batmobile -- so when you stop you do it GENTLY.

(They mime driving again.)

MAN

Gently.

WOMAN

You might want to start just going north on the Avenue until you get the hang of it.

MAN

Where am I going?

WOMAN

Relax ... before you pull away from the building turn on the on-board navigational computer and tell it you're going home.

MAN

Home. Got it.

WOMAN

Stop at all red lights, drive slowly, and always look around you. And remember, you're not driving the friggin' Batmobile and this isn't a simulator.

MAN

This is LIKE the simulator.

WOMAN

Use it to your advantage. The simulator's all you've got right now.

MAN

It's real good. Did I tell you it came with pedals?

WOMAN

Just take it easy.

MAN

Great.

WOMAN

Now, let's practice taking a turn.

(MAN violently turns the wheel to the left.)

MAN

Vroooooom!

WOMAN

What are you doing?

MAN

Turning?

WOMAN

Do you have to LEAN like that?

MAN

Like what?

WOMAN

(Sighs, very annoyed) When making a turn, turn the wheel SLOWLY ...

(WOMAN mimes turning the wheel. MAN mimics her.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

... and when you've cleared the corner, straighten the wheel out. Straighten ...

(WOMAN straightens her imagined wheel. MAN mimics her.)

MAN

Like this?

WOMAN

Good. Now let's turn right. Turn GENTLY ...  
(mimes)  
... and straighten.  
(mimes)

MAN

Got it.

WOMAN

Now, when you get there, put your foot on the brake and move the stick to "Park." That's at the top.

MAN

Check.

WOMAN

Turn the truck off. You'll only be away from it for a minute so don't worry about all the locks. Lock the door, though. All I need is for some punk to make off with my truck. And if you put one scratch on the finish, so help me I'll see you suffer.

MAN

I'll do my best.

WOMAN

(A little kinder) I'm sure you will. Now, here's the next part of the mission -- assuming you don't get thrown in prison.

MAN

Should I write this down?

WOMAN

Definitely.

(MAN starts writing.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Can't you write any faster?

MAN

I'm not too good at handwriting. I'm a much better typist.

(beat)

Okay. Got it.

WOMAN

The next obstacle is the gate at the entrance of my project. Now, the guards DEFINITELY don't like Netheads and if they suspect they'll never let you in.

MAN

What do I do?

WOMAN

Simple. Just tell them you work for ITT Cable and you're on a call.

MAN

What if they ask for an I.D.?

WOMAN

I'm impressed! That was actually an intelligent question! That 145 I.Q. is definitely showing off. I'll give you my I.D. If Raoul is working tonight he'll let you in if you just have one. If Tony is working he might give you some trouble. Keep your thumb over the picture and hold it up quick ... like this.

(She takes off her I.D. badge and flashes it quickly. Then she tosses it to MAN.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

You do it.

(He does.)

MAN

Like this?

WOMAN

Beautiful. If you get Tony and he nails you, tell him you picked up the wrong I.D. at the Cable office. Be surprised. Or, better yet, be pissed. Say something like ... "Goddammit!"

MAN

Goddammit!

WOMAN

Good. Remember, neither of them like Netheads and they'd love the opportunity to kick your ass.

MAN

You Blues are so violent.

WOMAN

I thought you liked violence. You read all those comic books -- they're pretty violent.

MAN

Yeah, but it's only fantasy. This is real.

WOMAN

Yes, quite real. Now, it's on to obstacle number two. The on-board will take you to my building. Go straight to Apartment 1A and ring the bell. You'll be waking the super, but it's better he know than if you wake him up and wind up in prison. His name is Sergio.

MAN

I have a lot of opportunities to go to prison.

WOMAN

Nobody ventures out this time of the night any more. Just going out for a stroll is grounds for incarceration.

MAN

Okay. I've woken Sergio.

WOMAN

This is where honesty is the best policy, but a better policy is to be as honest as possible without being stupid. Sergio hates Netheads more than Tony and Raoul. First, and this is very important, APOLOGIZE for waking him.

MAN

Why is it important?

WOMAN

Because Netheads never apologize. Tell him you work with me and that I've got my hands in a delicate situation and that you need to get into my apartment to pick up some re-built juncture boxes.

MAN

He'll believe me?

WOMAN

Worse, he'll come with you. Tell him to. Give him the keys and tell him you'd rather wait in the hall while he gets the boxes.

MAN

And he will?

WOMAN

Sure. It makes sense and it's safe. Remember, Sergio is usually armed, so don't let your guard down. Also don't be alarmed if he frisks you.

MAN

Any suggestions?

WOMAN

Say as little as possible. Go to the apartment, let him get as many boxes as he can carry, grab 'em and go. And for God's sake, don't forget to THANK HIM.

MAN

And then come back here.

WOMAN

Just give the navigational computer your address. It'll guide you right here. If you don't screw up the whole mission shouldn't take more than forty-five minutes. If you DO screw up you'll either wind up dead, in prison or wishing you were one of the two.

MAN

(Confident) I'm ready.

WOMAN

You must really want your cable fixed bad.

MAN

Oh yes. I can't live without it.

WOMAN

You're sure about all this?

MAN

I'm sure. I'm a little nervous about the driving part.

WOMAN

Just do the simulator, only slower.

MAN

It'll be a snap.

WOMAN

Pop quiz: Cop pulls you over. You say ...

MAN

Is there some trouble, officer?

WOMAN

He says you were driving recklessly.

MAN

My wife is in labor. I have to rush to Sunnyside and pick her up.

WOMAN

Let's see you flash your I.D.

(MAN flashes the I.D. quickly.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

You ring Sergio's bell. What do you say?

MAN

I'm sorry to wake you, but I work for ITT Cable. My partner needs some of her re-build juncture boxes. I have her keys. Would you please go in and get them for me?

WOMAN

He asks to frisk you. What do you say?

MAN

Uh ... nothing?

WOMAN

Precisely. Okay Nethead, I think you're ready. I wish I could have given you more of a driving lesson.

MAN

Me too. This'll be fun.

WOMAN

You're not afraid?

MAN

Not any more. You're a good teacher.

WOMAN

Good. Get going. The sooner you leave the sooner I can get to the hospital.

MAN

How's your leg?

WOMAN

Thank you for asking. It hurts; it hurts bad. I can't bend my knee. I don't think I'll be going far.

MAN

Can I get you anything before I go?

WOMAN

Two for two. No, no thank you. Just be careful and when in doubt say as little as possible.

MAN

Right. Oh, wait ...

(MAN darts offstage and returns with a stack of comic books. He plops them down on WOMAN's lap.)

MAN (cont'd)

Here.

WOMAN

What are these for?

MAN

To read, of course. They'll keep your mind off things.

WOMAN

Thanks.

MAN

Here I go.

WOMAN

One more thing. C'mere.

(MAN goes to WOMAN's side. She holds out her hand.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Gimmie your hand.

(MAN takes her hand. She shakes it firmly.)

WOMAN (cont'd)

Good luck.

MAN

Thank you.

WOMAN

And wear the hard-hat.

MAN

Okay.

(goes to the door, opens it)

I'm suddenly very scared.

WOMAN

Good. It'll keep you sharp.

MAN

If I don't make it back ...

WOMAN

You'll make it back. Just hurry and, when in doubt ...

MAN

... say as little as possible. I know. Thank you.

(MAN exits.)

Fadeout.

\* END OF ACT I \*