

Pirates!

A New Play by John Fisher

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Pirates!

Characters

DENNIS, a retired professor, sixty

DANNY, his husband, mid-fifties

ABDI, an African pirate, thirty

KORFA, an African pirate, thirty

NEGOTIATOR, an African in the employ of ABDI and KORFA, thirty

RAJAT, an Indian/MOODY, a U. S. State Department Employee/
MEERS, an LGBT activist (These three roles can be played by the same actor.)

CHARLOTTE, Dennis's sister, fifties

Setting: The High Seas; The Coast of a Country in East Africa

Time: Now

The boat: I have never had a boat onstage except in the abstract sense of actors forming the outline of a boat and acting like they were responding to waves, wind, whales, etc. The boat should be left to the director and designer to create. It is important as it represents freedom, escape, a lot of things the characters value as concrete realities. Then of course there's the pirates' boat, which should also be handled... Anyway, all the settings I only mention, I don't detail. How they are handled is up to the design team so long as they have a truth of their own and are not abstracted to the point of losing all sense of reality for the characters. They could be mimed, like my boats of yore, but that would mean a high level of commitment on the part of the actors and director to the reality of the mime. I think it would be nice to have elements, indicators of the boats and other settings but not complete representations – thus a combination of acting and design would create the space. Thus are all characters struggling to control their world, so this makes sense to me. Those are my thoughts.

ACT ONE

(DENNIS and DANNY talk to the audience. DENNIS is sixty, handsome, outdoorsy, trim. DANNY is in his mid-fifties, cute, fun, flamboyant. They kind of look alike, as couples do when they've been together "forever.")

DENNIS

Danny and I met when we were in grad school.

DANNY

He was in grad school, I was his friendly departmental receptionist.

DENNIS

(To DANNY)

Tone it down.

DANNY

(To DENNIS)

Ok, gorgeous.

DENNIS

This is a play about passing; not getting beaten by pirates. You camp it up this early they're not going to believe we survived.

DANNY

Hey, I can pass. I grew up with straight people. I remember how they move.

(DANNY walks about like a "straight person." DENNIS is more amused by DANNY than annoyed.)

DANNY

(To audience)

So anyway, we met years ago.

DENNIS

(To audience)

Thirty years ago.

DANNY

During the Bush Administration.

DENNIS

Daddy Bush.

DANNY

Oh, my God, what a bore he was. Complete yawners!

DENNIS

(To DANNY)

DD.

DANNY

He's why we're in this mess. No one hated us until Bush. No one.

DENNIS

What do you mean by "us"?

DANNY

Americans. Everyone loved American's until George the First.

DENNIS

The Vietnamese? The Russians?

DANNY

I mean in that part of the world.

DENNIS

The Iranians?

DANNY

Oh, well, no one likes Iranians.

DENNIS

Danny!

DANNY

I mean Iranian-Iranians. Not Iranian-Americans. I like all our Iranian-American friends.

DENNIS

Do we have any?

DANNY

Guttu.

DENNIS

He's from Brazil.

DANNY

Look, I'm not stupid.

DENNIS

(To audience)

He always says that when he knows he's just said something stupid and vaguely racist.

DANNY

I know Guttu is from Brazil. I was trying to be funny. My Gawwd!

DENNIS

(To audience)

So, to make a long story interminable: I was retiring.

DANNY

(To audience)

From Physics. He's brilliant.

DENNIS

Danny, don't brag.

DANNY

(To DENNIS)

It's only bragging if it's about myself. (To audience) Dennis worked at a University that shall remain nameless. It's just outside Boston.

DENNIS

Danny.

DANNY

In Cambridge.

DENNIS

Daniel.

DANNY

On Brattle Street. The Kennedys went there. (To DENNIS) Sorry.

DENNIS

(To audience)

And we were going to finally do what we'd always wanted to do.

DANNY

Live in Paris!

DENNIS

No, I mean-

DANNY

Oh, you mean what you've always wanted to do.

DENNIS

Paris was part of it.

DANNY

Since you're the breadwinner.

DENNIS

What's that supposed to mean?

DANNY

Hey, I like being a kept man. It means I'm the pretty one.

DENNIS

I'm pretty.

DANNY

You're handsome. Distinguished. Like Henry Fonda. I'm the Arlene Dahl of the household. The kept blond.

DENNIS

Anyway, I said we'd make it to Paris.

DANNY

(To audience)

He wanted to sail around the world, in a yacht.

DENNIS

And Paris would be part of it.

DANNY

(To DENNIS)

Paris isn't a port. It's not on the ocean. How is Paris part of it?

DENNIS

We would tie up in Le Havre and visit Paris.

DANNY

(To audience)

You see how her brain works. (He makes "cookoo gesture" and mouths "crazy" to the audience.) You know what I'm talking about. (To someone on the audience.) You. He's crazy right? No? (To DENNIS, referring to guy in audience) That guy. I think he's a meth addict.

DENNIS

You think everybody's a meth addict.

DANNY

Aren't they? (He scans the audience looking for "meth addicts.")

DENNIS

Anyway.

DANNY

(To audience)

I'm joking. I loved sailing with Danny. Loved it. He's a great captain, really organized and knowledgeable. I love instruction. That's why I was such a good receptionist all those years. Just tell me what to do and I'll do it with a smile. Live from instruction to instruction. Best Departmental Employee campus wide, three years in a row, I have the certificates.

DENNIS

DD.

DANNY

Yes?

DENNIS

You're coming off as really ditzzy.

DANNY

(Referring to audience)

They love me. They looove me.

DENNIS

(To audience)

He ran that department. He's very good with instructions so long as he can interpret them liberally.

DANNY

You mean make improvements. That's what liberals do – take laws and embellish them.

DENNIS

But he was a great worker. And a great deck hand. And a great crew.

DANNY

So go ahead. Tell them what happened.

DENNIS

So we decided to sail around the world! So far, we've made it to India!

(Music - Abba. The “boat” makes its entrance. DANNY and DENNIS stand beside it. RAJAT, an East Indian man, enters with maps and talks to them.)

RAJAT

(Handing him maps)

Here are maps. You can do this mostly with GPS and your radar but should something go wrong you’ll need to do it point to point.

DENNIS

Yes. Ok.

DANNY

(Pointing to map)

Is this where we’re going?

DENNIS

Uh-huh, the Seychelles. It’s supposed to be beautiful.

RAJAT

It is. Very expensive. If you go ashore.

DENNIS

We sleep on the boat.

RAJAT

Oh, yes, that’s a good solution. Yes, I always recommend not sleeping ashore if you can help it.

DENNIS

Thank you for your help.

DANNY

What about pirates?

RAJAT

Oh, well, not really an issue in that part of the Ocean. They tend to be much farther north.

DANNY

Is it safe?

RAJAT

Yes, if you stick to this course.

Ok. DENNIS

Just try not to get too far north. RAJAT

Ok thanks. DENNIS

RAJAT
Yes, my pleasure. There are always nor'westers though, but you can correct any deviation. Just stick to course. If all else fails, use your motor. The Indian is the calmest Ocean. And the best. In many ways, the best.

(RAJAT exits. DENNIS and DANNY climb on board the boat. DENNIS is whistling "Gilligan's Island" theme.)

I hate it when you do that. DENNIS

DANNY
A THREE HOUR TOUR
A THREE HOUR TOUR.

DENNIS
You think we're not going to find the Seychelles.

DANNY
Hey. We found Hawaii.

DENNIS
Not this again.

DANNY
I mean it was actually Samoa but we found it.

DENNIS
It was not Samoa. We were headed for Oahu and we hit the Big Island. I was just off by two islands.

DANNY
You're a physicist and you didn't trust your devices. I said, "That's Oahu, that's Oahu." And you veered off to the left.

DENNIS
It didn't look like Oahu. It looked like a cloud.

(DANNY whistles “Gilligan’s Island.” DENNIS rolls his eyes. The lights change to indicate the passage of time and they assume their sailing positions. DENNIS is “at the helm.” The boat is rocking as if in a storm. DANNY lies “up front” on the deck doing sit-ups.)

DANNY

(Singing)

*DON'T TELL ME NOT TO LIVE, JUST SIT AND PUTTER
LIFE'S CANDY AND THE SUN'S A BALL OF BUTTER
DON'T BRING AROUND A CLOUD...*

(DANNY loses balance mid-sit-up.)

DANNY

Whoah, now I’m Dean Martin doing sit-ups.

(DENNIS “turns on the motor.”)

DANNY

The motor’s not going to help much in this.

DENNIS

Gives me power to steer mostly.

DANNY

Ok. We really don’t want to head north.

DENNIS

DD, I know.

DANNY

Ok. You’re the captain.

DENNIS

Yes, now make dinner.

DANNY

Aye, aye, Cap.

(They smile and kiss. DANNY “goes below.” Time passes. DENNIS goes below and they sit down to eat. Time passes and they are finished eating.)

DENNIS

That was great, DD.

DANNY

Thank you, sweetie.

DENNIS

You're so creative. A wonderful homemaker.

DANNY

Thank you, handsome. I like making things for you. When I was younger I liked making things for myself, but now I like making things for you. I think that's lovely.

DENNIS

It is. And so healthy.

DANNY

I'm healthy, you're wealthy: a perfect pair.

DENNIS

You're so trim since you started exercising. I'm so proud of you.

DANNY

Yeah, I had to come up with something for my body to do when I stopped drinking. I was losing all the exercise.

(He mimes opening bottle, pouring and drinking as a repetitive motion.)

DENNIS

You never had a drinking problem.

DANNY

No. I had a thinking problem. I didn't like the way I thought when I drank. You can control your thoughts, that's what I discovered.

DENNIS

Your thoughts were never that bad.

DANNY

Not the ones I expressed. Inside of me... I got tired of the disappointment, the bitterness.

DENNIS

DD.

DANNY

Always thought I'd do more with my life than be a friendly departmental receptionist.

DENNIS

What about me?

DANNY

Yes, you're the thing that's kept me going. I'm very proud of you. Of us. And the exercise helps with that, keeps me thinking about the good things.

DENNIS

(Holding up the wine bottle)

You sure you won't have one?

DANNY

No, thanks. Will you miss teaching?

DENNIS

I guess. I'm not sure. I'm not sure it was effective anymore. If my teaching meant anything to the students.

DANNY

Oh it does. You always inspired them.

DENNIS

You think?

DANNY

I know. I remember the power of great teaching. That was you. When I was just out of undergrad, I wanted to write, I wanted to conquer the world with my writing.

DENNIS

How can you conquer the world with writing?

DANNY

I don't know. That's what college did for me, what great teachers did for me; they made me feel anything was possible. In life. But life made me feel nothing was possible, and that anything became nothing.

DENNIS

Pretty depressing.

DANNY

It wasn't though; I had that job in the office, I met you, and you were possible. You were so smart and shy and you did things, you did make things and conquer things. And you liked me. And you were gay, we both were. That was something I never knew was possible. Two gay guys liking each other, one smart, the other clever. I began to believe again.

DENNIS

I liked you, the first day I met you. You were so sweet. “Hi,” you said. “I’m your friendly departmental receptionist.”

DANNY

Yes, I was. Now I’m free. Free with you. I want to do something now, create something. I want to write again. About the possible. Nobody writes about us, about guys like us, a happily married couple, gay, sitting on top of the world. Why isn’t that something someone would like to read?

DENNIS

Then write it.

DANNY

I want to. But even if I don’t, you made me feel special, just you. I didn’t need to be the Tom Clancy of gay life. You made me feel like a prince; if I die now, that’s enough.

(They hug, and then kiss deeply, not sexually but with deep affection. When they come out of it, DENNIS reaches for the wine bottle to refill his glass. DANNY whisks wine bottle away from him.)

DENNIS

Hey.

DANNY

Two’s your limit. You lose your smarts after two.

DENNIS

I don’t need my smarts. I survived thirty years in that departmental hell and the Wild World of Physics, now I can unwind.

DANNY

You can never unwind. And tomorrow you start doing sit-ups with me, keeps us alert.

DENNIS

Ugh, I’ve been alert my whole life, now I want to relax.

DANNY

Relax a little, never too much, always be ready for surprises.

DENNIS

You mean weather, the sea. Can’t out think the sea.

DANNY

You can out think anything if you keep eating, exercise a little, keep your mind active. Body and mind, they’re one.

(DENNIS looks at him, smiles. They kiss again and then they lay down in the cabin wrapped in each other's arms. The seas have calmed. It's dark – moon glow. Thunk!)

DANNY

My god what was that? Sweetie?

DENNIS

Ok, I don't know.

(DENNIS quickly dresses and goes to the cockpit, taking the helm.
DANNY joins him.)

DANNY

Was the hull damaged?

DENNIS

I don't know.

DANNY

Was it a rock?

DENNIS

DD, I don't know. I don't think so.

(DENNIS starts the motor.)

DANNY

Well, what are you doing?

DENNIS

I'm getting away from it.

DANNY

If it was a rock and the hull's damaged maybe we should go towards it. I mean, if we're sinking.

DENNIS

I don't think it was a rock.

DANNY

Why not?

DENNIS

It didn't sound like a rock. It sounded hollow.

Hollow? DANNY

Here. I'm going forward. DENNIS

(Concerned)
Sweetness. DANNY

Just stay here. (Handing him the "tiller") Hold this. Hold us on this course.
(DENNIS moves to the front of the boat.) DENNIS

Be careful. I wish I had some meth. Or a Xanax. Better yet a hundred sit-ups, that would calm me down. What do you see? DANNY

No damage. None. A scrape. DENNIS

What did we hit? DANNY

Something blue. DENNIS

Blue? What's blue? DANNY

Big blue gash on the hull. DENNIS

What do you see? DANNY

Ok. I know what it is. Shit. DENNIS

What? DANNY

Hold on a second. Shit. DENNIS

What is it? DANNY

Floating container. DENNIS

Floating container? DANNY

Container ships dump them. They're usually empty, that's why they float. DENNIS

Why? DANNY

Different reasons. Sometimes in a storm, other times it's just litter. DENNIS

(DENNIS has returned to the cockpit.)

What are you doing? DANNY

I saw others, a bunch actually. We need to steer away from them. (Taking the helm)
Here, you'll have to go forward and keep a lookout. We seem to be in a field of them. DENNIS

Oh, for Christ's sake. DANNY

Just stay forward and keep a sharp lookout. We hit one head on it could tear the hull open. DENNIS

(Going forward)
Why don't we just stay here till morning when we can see them better? DANNY

I don't want one of them hitting us. They're all over the place. DENNIS

Oh, DD. DANNY

DENNIS

What?

DANNY

Well, they're everywhere. Ugh. Yeah, keep going this way. It's all clear ahead. "Hold this course." Little bit to starboard. Yes. Ok. My goodness. What a mess. Litter bugs. It is so sad. Why would anyone do this? DD, why would anyone do this?

DENNIS

Contraband cargo, afraid they'll be searched, who knows?

DANNY

What kind of contraband? Not people. These things aren't full of Laotians, are they? Oh, poor Laotians.

DENNIS

No, heroine, maybe cocaine.

DANNY

Cocaine. I love cocaine.

DENNIS

Yes, Danny.

DANNY

Can we open one up?

DENNIS

It's probably all wet.

DANNY

You can dry cocaine out. It's perfectly good dried out. I used to love cocaine.

DENNIS

I know you did, dear.

DANNY

Well, cocaine's good for a young lady, loosens her inhibitions.

DENNIS

You on cocaine wasn't a pretty site.

DANNY

Oh, you're talking about that Christmas party. Well I was raised very religions, very Catholic. It's in my blood to celebrate the nativity, aggressively.

DENNIS

Can you keep a lookout?

DANNY

I am. I am. Wow they're everywhere, except where we're heading. You're doing great. To think of all this blow just floating. Ooooo... this is so cinematic. Like a short story in *The New Yorker*. "We motored north through a sea of coke." (Pause.) DD?

DENNIS

Yes, dear.

DANNY

What direction are we headed?

DENNIS

North. Due north. (Pause.) I just want to get out of this container field.

(Time passes. It is morning. DENNIS sits in cockpit looking exhausted.
DANNY joins him.)

DANNY

Ok, that's the last one. It was pink.

DENNIS

No way.

DANNY

Bright pink. The gay container. It must have been full of KY and butt plugs.

DENNIS

Danny.

DANNY

Do you know where we are?

DENNIS

Pointed right at Kenya.

DANNY

Oh, glorious.

DENNIS

We hold this course we'll be able to shoot south soon and then...

DANNY

The Seychelles! Partayyy!

DENNIS

You won't begrudge me a few cocktails.

DANNY

Not if it gets you in a dancing mood.

DENNIS

You've never lost it, have you?

DANNY

What?

DENNIS

The stay-up all night dancing thing.

DANNY

(Snuggling DANNY)

The only thing I've lost from it is the "stay up all night drinking and dancing thing."

DENNIS

Don't forget the "stay up all night drinking, dancing, and going home with trade thing."

DANNY

Ooooo, you never forgive a girl anything.

DENNIS

I did, years ago, DD

DANNY

I know you did. Anyway, I never liked that part of it. Way too awkward. I like waking up with someone who doesn't smell funny.

DENNIS

I don't smell funny?

DANNY

Familiar funny. Not funny funny. You're my kind of funny. You're tired.

DENNIS

No. Just exhausted.

DANNY

I'll take the helm.

DENNIS

You just want to blast your music.

DANNY

It's nice not having neighbors.

DENNIS

What about my rest?

DENNIS

You're a coma sleeper. I've tried to wake you with Abba. Impossible.

(DENNIS “goes below” leaving DANNY sitting in the cockpit, at the helm. He has on *ABBA Greatest Hits*, loud, and is singing away: “Fernando” is my favorite but whatever. We hear another boat’s motor, faintly, under the music. But DANNY is oblivious, just puttering along enjoying his Abba. DENNIS is asleep below. We see ABDI and KORFA approach in another boat from the distance. They hold guns. As they get closer, they begin shouting to DANNY. He doesn’t hear them. Soon they are “alongside.” DANNY suddenly sees them. They grab the side of DANNY’s boat.)

DANNY

Oh, my God. Dennis! Sweetie! Oh, my God.

ABDI

Stop!

DANNY

Yes, yes.

ABDI

Stop!

DANNY

Well, I can't stop, it's... Oh, the sail. Oh, my.

(DANNY manipulates a “winch” such that the sail is “lowered” and the boat can stop. ABDI and KORFA “hop on board.” They shove past DANNY and dig through everything, throwing stuff about. The stage is littered.)

DENNIS

(Coming up on deck)

Jesus, Danny.

(KORFA turns on DENNIS and shoves him out of the way. DANNY screams. Blackout.)

(Loud rock music, real thrasher stuff. A beach with two large tents on it, one on either side of the stage such that we can see into them. There is stuff everywhere, chairs, Coca-Cola signs, stereos stacked - the detritus of piracy. DANNY sits with DENNIS in the center of the beach, hands tied behind their backs. KORFA sits beside them holding his gun.)

DENNIS

(In a whisper)

Look, no affection, nothing, ok?

DANNY

(Also in a whisper)

Yeah, I figured. Denny, I am so sorry.

DENNIS

Sorry about what?

DANNY

Abba. Aladdin. Avenue Q. Shit. I shouldn't have had the music so loud.

DENNIS

Danny, shut up about that. It makes no difference.

DANNY

Ok. You're the captain.

DENNIS

Listen to me.

DANNY

I wish I had a cup of coffee. Even tea.

DENNIS

Danny.

DANNY

Is that so much to ask?

DENNIS

Will you listen? All they're after is money.

DANNY

I don't have any money.

Let me worry about that. DENNIS

You have all the money. DANNY

Danny. DENNIS

Sorry. DANNY

If they know about us, what you mean to me, if they figure it out they'll torture one of us to get the other to take action. DENNIS

What action? There's no action. I don't have any money. DANNY

They don't know that. DENNIS

They think we're friends. DANNY

Which is good. They think we're separate, unaffected by each other. We want them to keep thinking that. DENNIS

Why? DANNY

Because right now we're hostages but there's nothing they can hold hostage on us. Nothing. Got it? DENNIS

How am I supposed to provide money? I have none. How am I supposed to... negotiate for myself? DANNY

I'll handle the negotiation. DENNIS

How? DANNY

DENNIS

I'll just handle it. As far as they're concerned you're my broke friend and I am the one with money so I am the one who needs to handle the rescue.

DANNY

They'll torture me?

DENNIS

I was being dramatic.

DANNY

Well don't be. I'm not into any of that S and M stuff, I hate it.

DENNIS

I know.

DANNY

No, you don't. I let you spank me once in while because it's exciting and it's important to bring variety to your sex life.

DENNIS

It is?

DANNY

Yes. And I like being spanked. But I'm not into torture.

DENNIS

I only brought it up-

DANNY

I am not into torture. Those queens who hang out in dungeons, I've never understood any of that.

DENNIS

Danny, I know. No one's going to torture you.

DANNY

Hey, maybe if they thought I was into torture they wouldn't do it.

DENNIS

Danny, don't talk that way.

DANNY

No, I mean if it comes down to that, if they decide to do it and I'm all, "Yeah, bring it on! I love it! Spank away. Spanky spanky. You're the master! Do it Daddy!"

Danny.

DENNIS

Only as a last resort.

DANNY

There won't be any torture. I was being... extreme.

DENNIS

Ok.

DANNY

Just don't let on. Understand?

DENNIS

Yeah. I do like it when you spank me.

DANNY

I don't.

DENNIS

You don't?

DANNY

You know I don't.

DENNIS

I don't know that.

DANNY

I've never spanked you very hard. You must have noticed.

DENNIS

I thought you were just nervous about hurting me.

DANNY

I am. I also don't like to do it.

DENNIS

Oh. Well... It doesn't really hurt.

DANNY

You don't even seem that into it.

DENNIS

DANNY

I just like the sound. And I like to squeal.

DENNIS

Yes, you do like to squeal.

DANNY

You don't think I'm too loud?

DENNIS

Not since we got the house.

DANNY

Oh, I love that about the house. I do feel like I can really squeal. But you're quite right. Message received. No spanking or squealing in Africa. Got it. (A thought.) Oh, my God, my playlist.

DENNIS

What about it?

DANNY

They'll figure out we're gay from my playlist. It's all disco and show tunes.

DENNIS

There's some Led Zeppelin on there. And The Who.

DANNY

God, I can't believe I let you load that shit on my playlist. I feel like you desecrated it.

(DENNIS laughs.)

DENNIS

I'm glad I'm here with you.

DANNY

You are? I'm not. This is terrifying.

DENNIS

I mean, I'm glad you're here and I'm not alone.

DANNY

Chin up, dear.

BOTH

(As if it's a "thing they always say")

Both of them.

(They laugh.)

DANNY

You should say you have a wife.

DENNIS

A wife?

DANNY

Yeah, everyone has a wife. Everyone who's not gay.

DENNIS

That's not true.

DANNY

Oh, yes it is. Most straight men have two or three wives now.

DENNIS

That's ridiculous.

DANNY

Say you're divorced. With two kids. Boys. Skipper and Nantelle.

DENNIS

Skipper? Nantelle? What about you?

DANNY

I'll say I have a wife but she's-

DENNIS

You have a wife!

(DENNIS laughs and laughs at this. DANNY gives him a withering stare.
ABDI enters with gun.)

ABDI

(To DANNY)

You. Ransom.

DANNY

Yes.

DENNIS

We only have cards. No money. Sorry.

ABDI

You'll call someone. On this. Your phone.

(He throws down DENNIS' mobile phone.)

DENNIS

Ok, yes, I'll need some power.

ABDI

Power?

DENNIS

Yes, power.

ABDI

You have no power.

DENNIS

For the phone.

(ABDI hits him.)

DANNY

Stop hitting him! You stop hitting him!

(KORFA gets up and kicks DANNY.)

DANNY

Fine, kick me all you want but don't you hit him. Don't you do that!

DENNIS

Shut up, Danny!

DANNY

No, they can have whatever they want but they're not going to hit you.

DENNIS

Shut up!

(KORFA lifts DANNY up and starts to shove him off stage.)

DANNY

No, I want to stay here. Leave me alone!

(KORFA shoves him offstage. DENNIS looks at ABDI.)

I'll get you power.

ABDI

Where is he going?

DENNIS

To another place.

ABDI

Why?

DENNIS

You're separated.

ABDI

Why? Why are we separated?

DENNIS

So you cannot plot. One mind is weaker than two.

ABDI

Where will he go?

DENNIS

He works on his ransom, you work on yours.

ABDI

He has no ransom. He's broke. He can't help you.

DENNIS

Then you'll have to get money for two. (Looking thorough DENNIS' wallet.) It says here you're a physicist.

ABDI

I was. I'm retired.

DENNIS

Good, then you've saved money. Is he physicist?

ABDI

No. He's just a friend.

DENNIS

You have a wife back home. Children.

ABDI

DENNIS

No. I'm divorced. Two children.

ABDI

Your wife can help with the bank. There is always trouble with the bank.

DENNIS

No, my sister can help. I will call her.

ABDI

You will also try your government. He can try his wife.

DENNIS

First of all he has no family, no wife. And I told you he has no money. I'll handle it for both of us.

ABDI

We'll talk to him.

(A quick shift in location, indicated by lights, to the tent stage left where DANNY is being held. ABDI stands with him.)

DANNY

Yes, that's right. I'm broke.

ABDI

You sail around the world?

DANNY

Yes. I had enough money to do that. When I get back I'll go back to work.

ABDI

You'll call your wife. Ask her to ask her family.

DANNY

My wife?

ABDI

Your wife will be concerned about getting you back to talk to your children.

(Pause.)

DANNY

He told you about my wife?

ABDI

And your children.

DANNY

Well then he must have told you she's a meth addict and I haven't seen her in two years.

ABDI

Then your children can help. They can speak to their grandparents.

DANNY

They're meth addicts as well.

ABDI

The grandparents?

DANNY

No, my children. It's... congenital. Their grandparents are drunks.

(Pause.)

DANNY

Can I talk to him?

ABDI

No.

DANNY

Cause he must have told you I have nothing. Nothing.

ABDI

He said you could get money from your wife and children.

DANNY

He wouldn't say that. You're lying.

ABDI

You don't want to see your children again?

DANNY

I'm not talking about that. You're trying to fuck with me.

(Shift to DENNIS, now in the stage right hut. ABDI stands with him.)

ABDI

We talked about his wife.

(Pause.)

DENNIS

You're trying to confuse us.

ABDI

No confusion. She is a rich meth addict. The children, his children live with their wealthy grandparents because he cannot take care of them.

(Pause.)

DENNIS

You're trying to confuse us. He has no money.

ABDI

What about the rich meth addict?

DENNIS

She might be a meth addict but she's certainly not rich.

ABDI

He said she was rich.

DENNIS

He wouldn't say that.

ABDI

Was he lying when he said that?

DENNIS

No, you are. It doesn't make any sense. Do you know any drug addicts who are rich?

ABDI

Keith Richards.

DENNIS

His wife isn't Keith Richards.

ABDI

What about the rich grand parents?

DENNIS

There are no rich grand parents.

ABDI

Then where do the kids live when the wife is on drugs?

DENNIS

They don't live anywhere.

ABDI

They live in the street?

DENNIS

No. They live nowhere. They don't exist. If you're looking for money from him you're just going to waste your time. There is none.

(Shift to DANNY. He is doing sit-ups with his hands still tied. ABDI enters angry.)

ABDI

Why did you lie?

DANNY

Because I knew you would do this, turn anyone I mentioned into a source for ransom.

ABDI

We're not stupid; if there's money we will find it.

DANNY

There is no money. I have none.

ABDI

We told him he had to get money for both of you. I told him how much. You had better hope he succeeds.

(Shift to DENNIS. He is lying on his side with his eyes closed. ABDI enters and throws down DENNIS' phone.)

ABDI

There's power now.

(He unties DENNIS hands. DENNIS rubs his wrists and picks up phone and calls. CHARLOTTE, his sister, in her early fifties, answers. She is at home in the United States.)

DENNIS

Hi, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Hi Dennis, how are you?

DENNIS

I'm ok... actually, Charlotte, Danny and I were sailing, from India...

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I remember.

DENNIS

And we've been kidnapped.

CHARLOTTE

Kidnapped?

DENNIS

Yes. We're hostages.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, my God, Dennis. Oh, Dennis. Where are you?

DENNIS

We're... we're somewhere in East Africa I think.

CHARLOTTE

East Africa?

DENNIS

I'm not sure where exactly.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Dennis...

DENNIS

Charlie, it's ok... it's really ok.

CHARLOTTE

How's Danny?

DENNIS

He's fine. Scared but fine. They actually haven't done anything to us physically. They've been fine. But Charlotte, they want money. Do you understand?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, yes.

DENNIS

You'll need to talk it over with my bank, ok? I can't access those funds from here, not the way I have it set up. But talk to my bank, take Howard.

CHARLOTTE
Howard? Why Howard?

DENNIS
He's your husband, he-

CHARLOTTE
What's that got to do with it?

DENNIS
He's a broker, Charlotte. He's in securities, he might know of some kind of loan or...

CHARLOTTE
Howard? Howard doesn't know anything. Securities? Howard knows nothing about that. Why do you think we had to go to you for a loan?

DENNIS
Charlie.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, I'm sorry. Oh, my God, Denny. Denny.

DENNIS
Yes, I know Charlie.

CHARLOTTE
I'm so sorry. We'll go together. I'll take Howard. We'll... we'll figure something out. You're right, he might think of something I wouldn't. Sorry.

(Pause.)

CHARLOTTE
How much should we get?

DENNIS
They want a lot.

CHARLOTTE
How much?

DENNIS
Four million dollars.

CHARLOTTE
Four million? Denny...

DENNIS

Just talk to the bank.

(Shift to DANNY and ABDI.)

ABDI

Dennis has talked to his sister. Now you must talk to someone.

DANNY

Believe me, I would if I could. I know no one. My family has no money.

ABDI

He has a sister, you have no one.

DANNY

Nope. No one.

ABDI

Your meth addict wife.

DANNY

That was a lie. There is no meth addict wife.

ABDI

There is a wife?

DANNY

There's no one.

ABDI

(Referring to the contacts on DANNY's phone)

Who are all these people?

DANNY

Friends.

ABDI

They can help you.

DANNY

They can't.

ABDI

(Throwing down phone)

Call one of them.

DANNY

(Picking it up)

Ok.

(He does not make a call but fiddles with his buttons.)

ABDI

Are you deleting... (He grabs the phone away from DANNY.) Why would you want to delete contacts?

DANNY

Fuck you. Leave me alone.

(DANNY spins away from him and immediately starts doing push-ups.
Shift to ABDI and DENNIS.)

ABDI

Your sister hasn't called back.

DENNIS

She's working on it.

ABDI

Doesn't she care for you?

DENNIS

Yes, she'll call back

ABDI

(Handing him his phone)

Call her again. Also call your work place.

DENNIS

I don't even work there anymore.

ABDI

Call them.

DENNIS

(Making a call)

Ok.

ABDI

Your friend started deleting contacts. Why would he do something like that?

DENNIS

I don't know. (He hears something on phone) Voice mail. You want me to leave a message? (He hangs up.)

ABDI

Your friend had your sister's number in his contacts.

DENNIS

We're all friends.

ABDI

Also your mother's. He had it labeled "Mother" also. You have the same mother?

DENNIS

No. We're not brothers.

ABDI

We know that. Keep calling.

(Shift to DANNY, who lays meditatively on his back. KORFA enters with a new man. He is the NEGOTIATOR. He holds a Starbuck's cup.)

NEGOTIATOR

How are you feeling?

DANNY

Who are you?

NEGOTIATOR

Negotiator. I work for these gentleman. They have hired me. I am a professional. They asked me to help. Drink this. It's Starbuck's.

DANNY

No thank you.

NEGOTIATOR

Don't be pigheaded.

DANNY

I'm not. I don't patronize Starbuck's. They exploit workers in third world countries. [Author's Note: Starbuck's can be replaced with a made-up name if there is a legal problem – Sunmuck's?]

NEGOTIATOR

Oh, very good. I like that.

DANNY

You're one of them. You're a pirate.

NEGOTIATOR

No. I am a negotiator. They pay me. I am not a pirate.

DANNY

Well, I'm not helping you.

NEGOTIATOR

No, of course, I'm here to help you. Why would you delete your contacts?

DANNY

Fuck you.

NEGOTIATOR

Please don't swear at me. It's rude.

DANNY

(Politely)

Please leave me alone.

NEGOTIATOR

You only deleted a few contacts before they stopped you. Many were left. They couldn't figure that out. No one's ever done that before. So they asked me. Let's look at the names shall we?

(He kneels down beside DANNY and holds up the phone so he can see it with him as he scrolls through the contacts. DANNY looks away.)

NEGOTIATOR

(Reading contacts)

Robert. Matthew. Michael.

DANNY

They can't help you.

NEGOTIATOR

Mostly men. A lot of men.

DANNY

They still can't help you.

NEGOTIATOR

They were so happy to hear from you.

DANNY

What are you talking about?

NEGOTIATOR

When they answered. They all sounded so happy to hear from you. Before we said a word they expressed their joy. We told them what was happening. Then they yelled at us. All of them.

DANNY

You called them?

NEGOTIATOR

Of course. Many of them. There is a character. On TV. He sounds like your friends. He is on a show called *Will and Grace*. He's not Will, he's Will's friend.

KORFA

Jack.

NEGOTIATOR

Yes, Jack. They all sounded like Jack.

(Shift to DENNIS on phone. ABDI and NEGOTIATOR stand over him.)

DENNIS

(Into phone)

Well, I'm sorry to bother you. No, of course I understand. I'm under a lot of pressure to make things happen. You'll call *The New York Times*? Well, that would be nice. No, I'm sure it might. (He hangs up.) Ok, they all know. The people I call now have already heard. Many of them don't answer.

NEGOTIATOR

You are a rich physicist.

DENNIS

I'm not. I have some money, not a lot.

NEGOTIATOR

You have access to money. You have been on TV. *Nova*. *The Discovery Channel*. We saw. On YouTube.

DENNIS

That doesn't mean I have money.

NEGOTIATOR

You have access to money.

DENNIS

My sister's the only way.

NEGOTIATOR

You must try other people. As insurance. You must try as many people as possible.

DENNIS

What do you recommend? Is there a way of phrasing this that works with people?

NEGOTIATOR

Of course. Tell them they will kill you. Tell them they will kill you soon.

DENNIS

Will they?

NEGOTIATOR

They will probably kill your friend first, of course. We are convinced now that he has no money.

DENNIS

You're a part of this.

NEGOTIATOR

No, I am only the negotiator. Make some more calls.

(DENNIS looks at phone, researching a number. Wind, the stage darkens with impending weather. DENNIS enters a number. MOODY, a State Department man in the Washington, appears on the phone.)

MOODY

How can I help you?

DENNIS

My name's Dr. Dennis Way. I'm being held hostage in East Africa. In a small village on the coast called Balem.

MOODY

How can I help you, Dr. Way?

DENNIS

Well, my relatives want to help me with ransom but they're not being allowed to by my bank which says I am not fit to surrender my banking privileges to them. Because I'm under duress.

MOODY

Have you tried making a direct withdrawal yourself?

DENNIS

Well, a lot of the money is in bonds that I would have to sell. In other words a lot of the decision making would have to be done by someone in person which means I would have to empower someone to go in and take care of it which they're saying I'm not fit to do: empower someone.

MOODY

Can your relatives front the money and you pay them back?

DENNIS

Unfortunately I'm the only one in my family who has access to this kind of money.

MOODY

What about colleagues?

DENNIS

They are understandably reluctant to front the money as they're not convinced that I will get released.

MOODY

Yes, well that's the government's issue with this kind of thing.

DENNIS

I thought the government didn't want to encourage piracy.

MOODY

Well, that's true. But we're also concerned about losing our money. Like everyone else.

DENNIS

Is there anything you can do to help?

MOODY

I'm not sure there is.

(Pause.)

DENNIS

Is there some negotiating you can do, some... card you can play?

MOODY

I'm not sure what you're referring to.

DENNIS

I'm a noted member of my profession, I was on a team that led to the winning of a Nobel Prize for the discovery of a supernova and work in neutrinos.

MOODY

I'm not sure what I can do with that information.

DENNIS

Well, tell me what I should ask you to do because I don't know what my next question or request or whatever should be. Now that I have you on the phone.

MOODY

I'm not sure what to say in response to that request.

(Pause.)

DENNIS

I don't know when I'll be able to talk to you again, if at all. Is there anything you can advise?

MOODY

Are you taking care of yourself?

DENNIS

No. I'm a hostage. People are taking care of me.

MOODY

I mean, you're in the desert. You should stay hydrated, out of the sun... you should make full use of the care you're given to stay healthy.

DENNIS

I shall.

MOODY

Can I reach you at this number?

DENNIS

No. There is a number for a negotiator I can give you.

MOODY

It's not our policy to talk to negotiators. They tend to want money just to have a conversation.

DENNIS

I think they're paid by the kidnappers.

MOODY

That's not our experience. They get money from all parties.

(Pause.)

DENNIS
Can I call you back?

MOODY
Yes, you can call any time.

DENNIS
Thank you.

(Blackout. Tropical storm – a sudden deluge. Night. Shift to DANNY asleep. ABDI enters and nudges him. DANNY sits upright surprised. ABDI sits beside him. Shift to DENNIS, on phone with CHARLOTTE. NEGOTIATOR is nearby. CHARLOTTE is agitated, crying.)

DENNIS
Charlotte, I'm not trying to convince you to take any liability or to take out any loans.

CHARLOTTE
Yes, you are.

DENNIS
No, Charlotte I'm not. I know... I know you can't do that. I do.

CHARLOTTE
Oh, my God, Denny, it sounds like you think...

DENNIS
No, I don't. Charlotte, listen to me, I do not. I know what your circumstances are. I do. I just want you to persuade the bank that I will be released and that I am good for the loan, that I will pay it back. Ok?

CHARLOTTE
They keep asking about a guarantor.

DENNIS
Yes, that's me.

CHARLOTTE
They want it to be Howard.

DENNIS
No, Charlotte...

CHARLOTTE

They want it to be Howard and he keeps telling them it can't be him, but they keep mentioning him...

DENNIS

Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Howard is very nervous.

DENNIS

Charlotte...

CHARLOTTE

He's nervous every time he goes in there that they will initiate an investigation...

DENNIS

Charlotte, they can't do that...

CHARLOTTE

He says if they initiated an investigation of his brokerage work all kinds of things would come out....

DENNIS

Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

About his dealings over the last four years...

DENNIS

Charlotte...

CHARLOTTE

About people he's worked with...

DENNIS

Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Dangerous people...

DENNIS

Charlotte, you should stop saying these things right now. I'm going to keep talking until you stop because they should not be said on the phone.

(Pause.)

DENNIS

Please listen. Howard cannot be the guarantor for one reason and one reason only, they would never guarantee any loan with his name on it. Ok?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, that's true.

DENNIS

So don't let them push you in that direction, just say that to them. Be frank.

CHARLOTTE

He just gets so nervous when he goes in. They make it sound like they're going to investigate him...

DENNIS

No, they can't do that unless he says they can and he's not going to say they can because he's a massive risk. Just tell him to tell them that. It will shut them up.

CHARLOTTE

Ok. He hasn't wanted to because he's afraid it might jeopardize the rescue effort.

DENNIS

Thank him for me. But it's a dead end. Just tell them to look at my records, my history.

CHARLOTTE

They're concerned that you won't get released.

DENNIS

That's for the negotiator to guarantee. Not you guys.

CHARLOTTE

They want the government to guarantee that.

DENNIS

I'm working on that.

CHARLOTTE

Ok.

(Pause.)

DENIIS

How are you? How is the family?

The family? CHARLOTTE

The kids. DENNIS

I don't want to talk about that. CHARLOTTE

Why not? DENNIS

It's not important. CHARLOTTE

DENNIS
It is to me. I'd like to hear it. It would make me feel better. To talk about something... normal.

No. CHARLOTTE

Charlotte please. DENNIS

CHARLOTTE
Ok, Rocky ran away and Candy won't speak to us. Does that cheer you up?

Roger ran away? DENNIS

Yes, a week ago. CHARLOTTE

I'm sorry. DENNIS

It's not the first time. CHARLOTTE

Really? DENNIS

CHARLOTTE
No. Anyway, it might be for the best. If he stayed he'd have had to go to juvey.

Charlotte.

DENNIS

It's complicated. It's a mess.

CHARLOTTE

I'm so sorry.

DENNIS

Let's just get you home. That will make me feel better. Rocky... there's not much I can do for Rocky. Maybe in ten years he won't be so screwed up. Not anytime soon.

CHARLOTTE

I hope he comes back.

DENNIS

That's what Howard says. Which is ironic because those two fight like animals. I really think it's best if he stays away.

CHARLOTTE

But what's he going to do?

DENNIS

I don't know. He'll manage.

CHARLOTTE

Do you know how boys like him manage, Charlotte?

DENNIS

No, do you?

CHARLOTTE

What's that supposed to mean?

DENNIS

Maybe you can tell me how boys like him manage.

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte.

DENNIS

Sorry.

CHARLOTTE

It's all right.

DENNIS

CHARLOTTE

Anyway, that's why I get so frightened about loans and things. I'm afraid we'd lose the house and then... well, I'm afraid we'd lose Candy.

DENIIS

You're not going to lose Candy. She's a good kid.

CHARLOTTE

She's not, Dennis. At least... oh, never mind. She likes the big house, her own entrance. God, I hope she grows out of this; Rocky never did.

DENNIS

She'll be fine, Charlotte. I know her. She's rebellious, moody... but she's good.

CHARLOTTE

Thanks. God this is strange. I feel like you're in Boston and I'm in San Carlos.

DENNIS

You are in San Carlos.

(She laughs.)

CHARLOTTE

You know what I mean.

DENNIS

Balem is sort of suburban like San Carlos.

CHARLOTTE

It is?

DENNIS

Yeah, they have a Starbuck's.

CHARLOTTE

They do?

DENNIS

Well they have a Starbuck's sign. They stole it off a freighter they hijacked.

CHARLOTTE

Do they serve Starbuck's coffee?

DENNIS

I don't know. I think so. I think they hijacked some.

CHARLOTTE

Hey, maybe your gift card will work. The one I gave you for Christmas.

DENNIS

Well...

CHARLOTE

What?

DENNIS

I never told you this but...

CHARLOTTE

What?

DENNIS

Danny didn't approve of that gift.

CHARLOTTE

He didn't?

DENNIS

No, he says Starbuck's exploits workers in third world countries. They don't have a maternity leave clause in their employee manual for LGBT couples.

CHARLOTTE

They don't?

DENNIS

Not in the third world. No.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, for Christ's sake. That's ridiculous. Things like that really piss me off. This is what I don't understand. How does that affect anyone? It's just the kind of thing that is so easy to give to employees and yet they refuse... it's just... niggardly.

DENNIS

Ouch.

CHARLOTTE

Well it is.

DENNIS

That word.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, please.

DENNIS

Not a good word.

CHARLOTTE

It doesn't mean the "n" word.

DENNIS

It does, it's actually derived from the "n" word.

CHARLOTTE

I don't believe that. That's just a lot of PC nonsense. You sound like Candy, when she talks to me.

DENNIS

It's not a good word, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

Ok, but it doesn't make what Starbuck's does any better.

DENNIS

You should say they're just being small-minded or churlish.

CHARLOTTE

Hmmm... No, those words aren't the ones I want. I'll check my thesaurus.

(He laughs, hangs up. In DANNY's tent we see DANNY start to do sit-ups. ABDI watches him. DENNIS's phone rings. DENNIS answers.)

DENNIS

Hello.

(MEERS, an American attorney in Washington, appears.)

MEERS

My name's Sheldon Meers. I'm an attorney in Washington.

DENNIS

Hi.

MEERS

We can help you. We're a gay lobby group. We're trying to tie all this together into one large package. Use it to leverage the government to do some other things since you're getting all this publicity.

(DENNIS hangs up on him. Shift to DANNY. ABDI is just staring at him.
DANNY stops his sit-ups.)

What? DANNY

You are with him? With Dennis? ABDI

Dennis. It's pronounced Dennis. Not Daynis, Daynis sounds like an air freshener. DANNY

You are together? ABDI

With him? DANNY

You are lovers. Partners. Gays. ABDI

Don't be ridiculous. DANNY

You are gay. ABDI

Fuck you. DANNY

(KORFA enters. He starts to remove his belt.)

Are you going to beat it out of me? DANNY

No. ABDI

Beat me because I'm gay? Are you bullies? DANNY

Korfa is not going to beat you. ABDI

(KORFA starts to unzip his pants. Blackout. Monsoon rain, a deluge. Later. Lights up on DANNY lying on the floor shaking. He is covered with blanket. KORFA stands over him, dressed. He leaves. ABDI enters.)

ABDI

He only does that to expedite. He is not that way. He knows if Dennis sees he will move faster.

DANNY

Denny. His name's Denny.

ABDI

Dennis does not move fast enough. This will make him move faster.

DANNY

I won't tell him.

ABDI

He doesn't need to be told. He will see it. If he loves you he will see it. I think he will see it.

DANNY

Korfa. Is that his name?

ABDI

Yes.

DANNY

Tell him something... ok? Explain something to him so he understands.

ABDI

He is very smart, he understands things intuitively.

DANNY

If he comes at me again I'll bite it off.

ABDI

Good. He will appreciate me telling him that. Next time he will not come at you that way.

(Rain. Shift to DENNIS; KORFA sits nearby. Phone rings and DENNIS answers. We see CHARLOTTE in her place.)

DENNIS

Hi Charlotte.

(KORFA gets up and leaves quickly.)

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Denny. How are you?

DENNIS

They won't let me see Danny. I don't know what's going on with him. I have no idea.

(KORFA enters with NEGOTIATOR.)

CHARLOTTE

Oh, Denny, I'm sorry to hear-

DENNIS

You need to get them to free up the money. Now. Right now.

CHARLOTTE

Ok, it's very complicated.

DENNIS

No, Charlotte, what's complicated is that I'm here and I can do nothing and you're there and you're doing nothing.

CHARLOTTE

I'm not-

DENNIS

Tell Howard to get down there and use all his financial acumen to get them to roll over.

CHARLOTTE

Howard has been down-

DENNIS

Tell him to light a fire under them. It's my money. Mine. I want it.

CHARLOTTE

It's about the loan. Howard is-

DENNIS

The loans are my money too. They've been offering me an extension on my line of credit up to 1.5 million for years and I've always declined it. Now I want it. It's my right, as a good investor, as a member of that bank in good standing.

CHARLOTTE

Yes but now your circumstances have changed-

DENNIS

And that is exactly when people need their credit, when their circumstances change. Now I want it. Get it from them. Get it.

CHARLOTTE

I'll talk to Howard.

DENNIS

Don't talk to Howard. Do it, Charlotte. Do it! Do you understand? If Howard's too much of a wimp, you do it. But do it.

CHARLOTTE

Yes. Denny.

DENNIS

Today.

CHARLOTTE

Yes.

DENNIS

That house of yours, that I own most of, that I bought for you, that house of yours-

CHARLOTTE

We built it Denny, Howard and I-

DENNIS

And I paid for it, I did. Ok. Make this happen. You needed that fucking house, you needed it to raise your family, ok. I need this, for my family.

CHARLOTTE

Yes Denny. Why are you so...

DENNIS

Just do it Charlotte. It's not about crying and "Why are you so..." Just do it.

CHARLOTTE

Ok.

(Pause.)

CHARLOTTE

How is Danny? Dennis, is Danny all right?

DENNIS

Just make it happen, Charlotte. Call back with good news. Call back with news that it is happening.

(He hangs up. NEGOTIATOR looks at KORFA. KORFA exits. Blackout. Rain stops. We hear dripping. Lights up on DENNIS and DANNY. There is no one in the tent with them. DANNY sits to one side, leaning on his arm.)

DENNIS

What happened to you?

DANNY

They beat me up.

DENNIS

Bastards. Bastards!

DANNY

They know about us.

DENNIS

Yes, I figured they did. Why are you sitting like that?

DANNY

He kicked my ass. Literally. With his boots.

DENNIS

Danny...

DANNY

Don't worry about it. You have money so they'll leave you alone.

DENNIS

How are you?

DANNY

What do you mean how am I? I'm fucking awful. How are you?

DENNIS

The same.

DANNY

The same what? The same as me? "Fucking awful?" Or your same gay, happy-go-lucky self?

DENNIS

Don't get snippy, DD.

DANNY

I'll get snippy if I want to, princess.

DENNIS

And don't start with the feminine nominatives.

DANNY

“Nominatives” isn't a word.

DENNIS

It can be.

DANNY

No, it can't. You and your sister have this relationship to words which is... aggressive.

DENNIS

I am a published author and a noted speaker.

DANNY

So is Dan Quayle.

DENNIS

I can't always find a word to express what I want so I make one up that is syntactically logical.

DANNY

First of all, if you read more and watched less TV your vocabulary would grow to include more words so you wouldn't have to make them up. Secondly, and this is precisely the problem with the way you speak, “syntactically” isn't the word you want. I mean it is, it works, but it's not precisely the word you want which is to say, you want a word that says “you make sense,” not “syntactically” which is related to correct word placement.

DENNIS

Ok, so what word do I want?

DANNY

I don't know. If you read more you wouldn't have to ask that question.

DENNIS

I read constantly.

DANNY

You read technical stuff. Read more fiction.

I read fiction. DENNIS

You read science fiction, which is written for children. DANNY

I read H. G. Wells. DENNIS

Which is for old children. DANNY

(DANNY puts his hand on DENNIS's leg.)

What are you doing? DENNIS

Massaging your inner thigh. DANNY

Be careful. DENNIS

Am I behaving inappropriately? DANNY

Be careful. DENNIS

It's ok. DANNY

No, it's not. DENNIS

It is. That negotiator is out there. He's practically gay. DANNY

What does that mean? DENNIS

He's very sensitive. He likes Lady Gaga. DANNY

DENNIS
How do you know that?

DANNY
We talk.

DENNIS
Oh, for Christ's sake.

DANNY
He's seen *Evita*.

DENNIS
Where did he see *Evita*?

DANNY
Not onstage, the movie.

DENNIS
That awful Madonna thing.

DANNY
Bight your tongue. Anyway, he thought Antonio Bandaras was scrumptious.

DENNIS
He used that word? Scrumptious?

DANNY
No, he used another word. But scrumptious is the word he would have used if he read more.

DENNIS
What exact word did he use?

DANNY
He said Antonio was persuasive.

DENNIS
Persuasive? That's hardly scrumptious.

DANNY
He said it like he meant scrumptious. It was weak word choice.

DENNIS
What exactly did he mean by scrumptious?

DANNY

He meant he'd like to lick his sack.

DENNIS

(Laughing)

A gay pirate. I love it.

DANNY

He's not a pirate. He's the negotiator. He's a white-collar middleman.

(DANNY continues to rub DENNIS' thigh.)

DENNIS

Stop. I'm serious.

DANNY

It's ok. Really.

DENNIS

I don't think I can.

DANNY

Yes. I know how. Really. We should.

DENNIS

You make it sound important.

DANNY

It is.

(ABDI and NEGOTIATOR enter and see.)

ABDI

Stop that! Stop it!

(ABDI grabs DANNY.)

DANNY

Fuck you!

ABDI

Stop it!

(ABDI hustles DANNY out of the tent.)

DENNIS

So now you know.

NEGOTIATOR

Of course, we knew before.

DENNIS

But we thought we'd make it official. It doesn't make any difference. He still doesn't have any money, it's all from me or from nowhere. You're just being sadistic to beat him. It's just sadism.

NEGOTIATOR

They didn't only beat him.

DENNIS

I don't want to hear about it.

NEGOTIATOR

They are very cruel, you're right. Very sadistic.

DENNIS

Shut up.

NEGOTIATOR

They raped him. Korfa did. He will do it again.

DENNIS

That's not true.

NEGOTIATOR

Of course it's true. They would do anything to him to get money. They are ruthless.

DENNIS

It's not them, it's you. You're a part of them.

NEGOTIATOR

I'm not.

DENNIS

I don't believe you.

NEGOTIATOR

Talk to him again. Ask him. He'll tell you.

DENNIS

He would have told me already.

NEGOTIATOR

He's in grave danger.

DENNIS

You sound like someone on a TV show.

(Shift to DANNY's area. DANNY tries to do a push-up. It hurts. He tries some more. ABDI enters with DENNIS and leaves him. DANNY leans on his side to talk to him.)

DENNIS

They said they raped you.

DANNY

They didn't.

DENNIS

Why are you sitting that way?

DANNY

I told you. I got beaten.

DENNIS

They did, didn't they?

DANNY

Denny.

DENNIS

Just tell me. I need to know.

DANNY

That's what they want you to think. They're trying to frighten you.

DENNIS

Just tell me.

DANNY

They didn't.

DENNIS

Then why are you sitting that way?

(Pause.)

DENNIS

Danny. Tell me.

DANNY

I had sex with the Negotiator. I asked him to have sex with me. For food. He was interested, I could tell. So I showed an interest. He was reluctant, I could tell. Shy about it. But I convinced him. I persuaded him. He gave me some food. He was a little rough but I asked for it. So you see, it wasn't rape.

DENNIS

I don't believe you.

DANNY

You weren't taking care of me. They feed you because you have money. You're making contacts. They stopped feeding me. Only the Negotiator was nice to me. So I made my own arrangements.

DENNIS

Did they rape you?

DANNY

No, Denny. I was completely willing. I actually had to persuade him.

(DENNIS moves away.)

DANNY

Easy for you. You have cash. I have none. I needed a protector.

DENNIS

I don't believe you.

DANNY

And yet you're over there, aren't you?

(Lights fade.)

End of Act One

ACT TWO

(NEGOTIATOR and DANNY stand outside, in the sun. DANNY looks about him.)

NEGOTIATOR

It's a very poor country, of course. Very poor. None poorer. Desert, sea, some dried up rivers, that's all there is.

DANNY

I know. I read about it.

NEGOTIATOR

The New York Times?

DANNY

Of course.

NEGOTIATOR

They say the pirates live in palaces, they have discos. As you see. Nothing like that. Just poor people living on a beach. Some fish, others attack ships. In the capitol there are many tribes, all fighting one another. All trying to get aid, assistance from Foreign Governments and NGOs. Here people create their own assistance. Here people get along pretty well. There is an economy here, some money is made. So people get along pretty well.

DANNY

Are there other hostages nearby?

NEGOTIATOR

Yes, most of the encampments you see have a hostage or two.

DANNY

Can I meet some?

NEGOTIATOR

No, of course not. Hostages do not meet.

DANNY

You know what you do is illegal. If they were ever caught you'd be prosecuted just like them.

NEGOTIATOR

No, I am only negotiator. I am not even of this country. I am Kenyan. I would just slip across the boarder if there was trouble. To my tribe. These men must stay here, they have no choice.

(Pause.)

NEGOTIATOR

He's stopped speaking to me. Why?

DANNY

I don't know.

NEGOTIATOR

He only speaks to Abdi, not to me. What did you tell him?

DANNY

I told him we were fucking, that I've turned you into my friend, my protector. I guess he believed me.

NEGOTIATOR

Why would he believe you?

DANNY

I have a history. I knew just how to phrase it.

NEGOTIATOR

I could kill you, you know.

DANNY

Yes, I took that risk. Korfa's stopped coming at me. That's all I cared about. I knew if I alienated Dennis there would be no reason for Korfa to come at me. Now Dennis doesn't care about me so there's no point in raping me.

NEGOTIATOR

They'll never let you go if you don't get some money.

DANNY

Then I'll stay here. Maybe I can help.

NEGOTIATOR

Help with what?

DANNY

I could help you negotiate. I could tell the other hostages what happened to me, what happens to people who don't negotiate.

NEGOTIATOR

They'd never allow that.

DANNY

Feeding me costs money. There must be something I can do. I want to be useful. I find this all interesting. If I can't leave I want to be a part of it.

NEGOTIATOR

The only reason you're alive is you didn't tell anyone else the lie about us.

DANNY

I wouldn't do that. Denny's the only one who needs to think it. So now he does.

NEGOTIATOR

Of course you are clever.

DANNY

How so?

NEGOTIATOR

You have let Dennis off the hook. You have freed him to concentrate on freeing himself, not worrying about you.

DANNY

That's not why I did it.

NEGOTIATOR

Of course it is. You must love him deeply. To make such a sacrifice.

(Pause.)

NEGOTIATOR

I will talk to Abdi. Maybe there is something you can do for them.

(Shift to DENNIS on the phone with MOODY. NEGOTIATOR stands with him.)

DENNIS

Listen, I've heard of African groups, in the United States, who have helped other kidnapped people, and there was specifically a group in England that helped two Brits, a couple who were recently kidnapped.

MOODY

Yes, I know about that case.

DENNIS

Would they be interested in helping me?

I don't know. MOODY

Could you ask? DENNIS

I actually... I already have. MOODY

Oh. DENNIS

(Pause.)

What did they say? DENNIS

That they weren't interested. MOODY

Why is that? If you don't mind me asking. DENNIS

They just weren't interested in this case. MOODY

Is there something specific to my case that they weren't interested in? DENNIS

I've tried to narrow the focus of my inquiries to groups that I thought might be specifically interested in your case. MOODY

What groups would those be? DENNIS

Well, without detailing my outreach... I've come across some stumbling blocks. MOODY

I'm sorry, could you speak frankly? DENNIS

No. I can't. MOODY

DENNIS

Are these groups that might have specific interest in our case going to help?

MOODY

No, they're not. It's not that they don't want to, they do. But they have other lobby points with the government that they continue to raise whenever they are approached with regards to your case, they are... persistent on a number of other older issues.

DENNIS

Oh, yes, I understand. (Pause.) I have another piece of information that I want you to know, in case it will help.

MOODY

Go ahead.

DENNIS

You only need to worry about me. My acquaintance, he will handle himself.

MOODY

I'm sorry to hear that

DENNIS

Why?

MOODY

Having an acquaintance is good. Also... I'd hate to think that a wedge was driven between you two. That can happen.

DENNIS

What do you mean?

MOODY

Are you taking care of yourself?

DENNIS

I wish you'd stop asking me that. (Pause.) Yes, I'm trying to. It's difficult... they don't want me to feel particularly good for obvious reasons.

MOODY

I'll leave you with this thought. Whatever you do, you should diversify your efforts. As insurance. And don't burn bridges, don't forget what you know, what you believe, try not to get confused.

DENNIS

Ok.

Does that make sense? MOODY

No. But I'll brood on it. DENNIS

Brood on it? MOODY

It's an expression. I'll think about it. Maybe it will. DENNIS

I can help you. MOODY

How? DENNIS

With your sister. MOODY

How can you help me with my sister? DENNIS

If mentioning me to her will help you, please go ahead. MOODY

I don't understand. DENNIS

Brood on that. MOODY

(DENNIS laughs.)

I will. (Pause.) Can you tell me, honestly, something? DENNIS

I'll try. MOODY

I mean, give me an honest response, without thinking about it. DENNIS

Ok. MOODY

DENNIS

What are you doing tonight? After work?

MOODY

Going out with my lady friend. Dinner.

DENNIS

Yes, I get the idea. Thanks.

(Shift to ABDI, KORFA and DANNY in speedboat, bouncing on the waves. KORFA is at the wheel. DANNY looks sick.)

ABDI

You are sick?

(DANNY doesn't respond. ABDI and KORFA laugh.)

ABDI

We have to go farther south now, almost to Kenya. Everyone plays it safe now.

(ABDI picks up a gun and goes to DANNY.)

ABDI

If you try to escape we'll shoot you.

DANNY

Ok.

ABDI

(Handing DANNY gun)

Here, you should hold this, makes it official.

DANNY

Ok.

(ABDI takes out phone and snaps a shot of DANNY holding the gun. He smiles at the image.)

ABDI

TIME magazine will like this. Now you're as guilty as me, as guilty as any of us.

(ABDI and KORFA laugh. DANNY points the gun at KORFA and pulls the trigger. The gun doesn't fire. He pulls the trigger again. It still doesn't fire. ABDI and KORFA are laughing.)

KORFA

Here, give me that.

(KORFA takes the guns away from him. DANNY reaches for knife in KORFA's belt, the two of them struggle.)

DANNY

You motherfucker! I'll get you! I'll fucking get you!

(KORFA smacks him down.)

DANNY

I'll fucking get you somehow.

KORFA

You'll never get me.

ABDI

(Spotting something in the distance)

There's a boat.

KORFA

What?

ABDI

A boat.

KORFA

Shit.

ABDI

Sailboat. Tie him up. Quickly.

KORFA

(Moving to tie up DANNY)

Here.

DANNY

Get your hands off me.

(KORFA cuffs DANNY, stunning him into silence.)

KORFA

(To DANNY, as he ties him up)

When we get to them you will show them what happens to assholes. You will tell them.
(To ABDI) Yeah, he's fine. Go!

(ABDI increases the throttle on the engine. They now bounce as if they had increased speed across the waves. KORFA checks the weapons. ABDI smiles; they are getting closer to their prey. KORFA stands at the ready holding both weapons. Suddenly we hear a deafening blast from a sound canon. ABDI and KORFA both cry out and cover their ears. The sound continues. ABDI crouches in the boat huddled up against the sound. KORFA is just barely able, while covering his ears, to take the wheel and steer the boat away from the sound. They are now racing away from the sound; we hear it diminish in volume until it is gone.)

KORFA

Fuck!

ABDI

Even the small boats. Fuck!

(ABDI cries out, enraged by frustration. KORFA grabs DANNY and shakes him.)

KORFA

You, you asshole. You have to get that man to give us money! You have to get him to do it! Do you hear me? Do you?

DANNY

Yes.

KORFA

Do you hear me?

DANNY

Yes, yes, I hear you.

KORFA

We need money! He doesn't get it!

DANNY

He doesn't care about me anymore. He hates me.

KORFA

Make him care. Make him get us the fucking money.

(Shift to DENNIS, slumped on floor looking as if his energy was bleeding away. NEGOTIATOR brings in DANNY. DANNY sits with DENNIS.)

Hey. DANNY

Hi. (Sitting up) DENNIS

How are you? DANNY

All right. DENNIS

You don't look so good. DANNY

You look all right. DENNIS

Yes. Well... DANNY

Your protector? DENNIS

You need to take care of yourself. DANNY

That's what the guy from the State Department advises. DENNIS

It's good advice. DANNY

(DANNY sits beside him, revealing in the process that his ribs hurt, where he was kicked by KORFA.)

Are you all right? DENNIS

Sure. They took me to the beach. I tried to body surf, ended up getting pummeled by a wave. DANNY

(DENNIS looks at him. He takes DANNY's hand.)

DENNIS

I've done a lot of thinking.

DANNY

Good.

DENNIS

I've done a lot of thinking.

DANNY

Ok.

DENNIS

And I decided, I decided I loved you. That what they've done to me, making me paranoid, making me sick, all of this, what they've done to me, ruined my judgment, made me think I didn't love you anymore. All that allowed me to believe your stories.

DANNY

Ok.

DENNIS

But they were false. Phony stories. They did rape you. And you lied to me about it, so I would free myself and stop worrying about you? True isn't it?

DANNY

Ok.

DENNIS

You can say it. You can admit it's true. You were protecting me, weren't you?

DANNY

Yes.

(They hug.)

DENNIS

When I realized that, I could accept everything, I could live with it.

DANNY

Oh, Denny.

DENNIS

Yeah, now it's all all right. So long as I have you.

DANNY

You always had me.

DENNIS

I know. Charlotte's a bust. She can't do anything, not with the bank and all her anxiety about Howard. The government won't help. I even had a queer special interest group wanting to get involved. They just screwed things up because now an African group won't help, because we're gay I think. I don't know. So it's a bust, a wash-up.

DANNY

It's ok.

DENNIS

Are they still...

DANNY

No, that stopped. When they saw you turned on me, that all stopped.

DENNIS

You're so clever.

DANNY

Thanks.

DENNIS

Good. So we'll just... stay here.

DANNY

And die.

DENNIS

I guess.

DANNY

You should call Charlotte again. Just one last time. Be very nice. Tell her to exert some pressure on the government, gentle pressure, as a mother, as a nice middle-class woman. She'll be much more effective than an LGBT action group.

DENNIS

No, she has nothing to give us.

DANNY

She does. These things work. The LGBT group is good in the long run because the State Department, when they help Charlotte, can also show that they've helped a minority group. Once they see that everybody wins, they'll move forward.

DENNIS

How did you figure all this out?

DANNY

Working at that University. You figure out how to triangulate things.

DENNIS

Yeah, sounds like it. Anyway, Charlotte's useless. I stupidly convinced her to get Howard involved, which was a mistake. He told her they couldn't do anything because they'd lose the house; they've already lost Rocky, she thinks if they lose the house Candy will run away also.

DANNY

Rocky took off?

DENNIS

Yeah.

DANNY

Well, that was inevitable. Nice kid but...

DENNIS

Screwed up.

DANNY

Yeah.

(Pause.)

DANNY

Screwed up because those two are dreamers. They never settled down and raised those kids.

DENNIS

Yeah, head in the clouds.

DANNY

She'll lose Candy no matter what she does. It's got nothing to do with us or losing that house.

DENNIS

Yeah.

DANNY

You'll have to explain that to her. In the most forceful terms. You'll have to straighten her out.

DENNIS

Can't.

DANNY

Yes, you can. You'll have to. If you want to leave.

DENNIS

What makes you so tough?

DANNY

There's no other solution. There's no staying here. I've tried that. There's nothing. Nothing but get money. The sooner, the better. We're dying. You and I. The longer we stay here the closer we get to death. Soon we'll be so close to death we won't be able to save ourselves. Solve it. Solve the problem. Right now.

DENNIS

They can't kill us.

DANNY

Of course they can.

DENNIS

No.

DANNY

Yes. No one cares. They're outside the government. They have nothing to gain by playing nice with the United States. They're lucky that way, unique in the world. The US has no sway over them. They are truly independent, which means that at the moment we become just another mouth to feed, they can kill us. That is their right. They've earned it and they will exercise it. They will kill us. Count on it. Call Charlotte. If you really love me, as you said, call her. Make it happen. Set us free. This isn't between the US and some broke African nation or the State Department and extra territorial pirates. It's not about right and wrong. It's about us, them and Charlotte. That's the trifecta, the triangle. Make it work. Call her. Complete the triangle. Finish it.

(Blackout. Sudden downpour. Shift to NEGOTIATOR on DANNY's side of stage. DANNY enters and lies down on floor, exhausted. Shift to DENNIS, on phone with CHARLOTTE.)

CHARLOTTE

Ok, well nothing's changed, there's still no movement at the bank so I don't know what we have to talk about.

DENNIS

Nothing?

CHARLOTTE

Howard refuses to talk to them anymore. He says it's too dangerous for him. He and I have stopped speaking. So that's where things are. I'm sorry.

DENNIS

Ok, well... I need to talk to you about something.

CHARLOTTE

What's that?

DENNIS

I'm in touch with this government guy...

CHARLOTTE

Yes, you've told me.

DENNIS

Just listen please. I want you to put your house and my house up as collateral on the loan, combined they will be enough to guarantee the loan.

CHARLOTTE

We can't afford to lose our house, Dennis.

DENNIS

You won't lose it.

CHARLOTTE

We will. If we lose the house we'll lose Candy, I just know it. She's halfway out the door as it is and if we move into an apartment...

DENNIS

You won't lose the house. We won't lose either house, please listen to me. If you don't put the houses up, both of them, and guarantee the loan, I'll tell my friend in the State Department about Howard's financial dealings. He has associates in the Treasury and the SEC. They'll investigate Howard. He promised me they would. Do you understand?

CHARLOTTE

Dennis.

DENNIS

Charlotte. There's no time for this. We're dying here, both of us. This will be fine. Just put the houses up by Monday, Monday morning. If I don't hear from you that the money is available by Monday at noon your time, I'll call Charles Moody in the State Department and tell him to go ahead with the investigation. You can look him up on the Internet and call him. He'll confirm what I've told you. Do you understand?

CHARLOTTE

Dennis, you're blackmailing me...

DENNIS

Charlotte, we can sort this out when I get back or we can never speak to each other again. I don't care. Just make it happen. Make it happen or I'll get Howard put in jail. I'm hanging up now.

(He does. The NEGOTIATOR enters from behind flap in tent.)

NEGOTIATOR

Good. Very good. Forgive me eavesdropping.

(Shift to DANNY doing sits ups, really working out. NEGOTIATOR enters and watches. DANNY stops and puts himself into "the plank.")

NEGOTIATOR

It worked.

DANNY

Good.

NEGOTIATOR

Of course. Now we have to work on your money.

DANNY

Stop that. Just stop it. You know I have none. There's nothing more I can do for you.

(NEGOTIATOR kicks DANNY's arms out from under him such that he collapses.)

DANNY

Well, at least you didn't call Korfa.

NEGOTIATOR

You're very arrogant.

DANNY

No, just finished. My life has changed here, you've changed it. Leave me alone.

NEGOTIATOR

The hand-off is today. His money is handed off today.

DANNY

Good. Maybe he'll go home and figure out a way of releasing me.

NEGOTIATOR

We can't rely on that. We need to solve your money before he leaves.

DANNY

There is no solution. Leave me alone.

(NEGOTIATOR quickly puts his foot on DANNY's neck as if he was going to break it. DANNY looks resigned. NEGOTIATOR removes foot and leaves. Shift to DENNIS. ABDI enters with briefcase. DENNIS looks up eagerly.)

DENNIS

Did it happen?

ABDI

Relax please.

DENNIS

Ok.

(NEGOTIATOR enters.)

NEGOTIATOR

We have a problem. It's this. He has convinced us he has no money and he seems... impervious to persuasion. So we don't see the advantage in releasing you.

DENNIS

It gets back to release me or you don't get the money.

NEGOTIATOR

Oh we've got your money. We have it. That happened. The hand off is complete.

DENNIS

You're fucking lying.

NEGOTIATOR

No, here it is. It has met our conditions completely. They hand off, we turn you over. They did, we didn't. They had to trust us.

DENNIS

Why would they?

NEGOTIATOR

They had no other choice.

DENNIS

That's fucking bullshit.

NEGOTIATOR

No, here it is. (To ABDI) Show him.

(ABDI shows DENNIS money in briefcase.)

DENNIS

You got the money and you're not letting me go?

ABDI

Not till you help us get money from him.

DENNIS

Why should I trust you now?

NEGOTIATOR

You have no other choice. Think about it.

DENNIS

I... There is no money. That's it, you've got it. It's not just me, it's the people back home. They won't trust us now, they won't trust any of us.

NEGOTIATOR

The economy here is not good. There are no other captives for these men. They need to get as much money from you as possible. Think in terms of amelioration. Tell your relatives the quality of your life has gotten better. That their money has improved your captivity, now a little more will actually set you free.

DENNIS

They... they just won't do it. Especially the government, they won't... they won't facilitate it. I wouldn't even know who to call.

NEGOTIATOR

Your colleagues. They were not forthcoming last time. Tell them what has happened. Tell them about your friend; many of them must know him and like him. He's most amusing. Tell him you have stayed on as a free man to insure his freedom. They will like that, they will help.

DENNIS

They won't.

NEGOTIATOR

Either try or die.

DENNIS

Why are you doing this? You thought this up, this is your idea.

NEGOTIATOR

I did not.

DENNIS

You did.

NEGOTIATOR

(To ABDI)

Tell him. Tell him who thought this up.

ABDI

Korfa. He is not happy. With the arrangement, with the pay off. Korfa thinks you're getting, what is the expression?

NEGOTIATOR

Two for the price of one. He says, "Forget it. Make them beg." So now you must beg for more money.

DENNIS

Or he'll kill me?

ABDI

Worse. Much worse.

DENNIS

What could be worse?

ABDI

He will kill me. So now, you and I are...

NEGOTIATOR

In the same boat.

DENNIS

I don't believe you.

NEGOTIATOR

You must, you have no other choice. There must be money for him as there is for you. It is why they pay me. You are not the only person at risk. I too must produce results. Korfa is unhappy with me as well.

(Shift to DANNY who is exercising vigorously, really sweating.
NEGOTIATOR enters and DANNY stops.)

NEGOTIATOR

There's something you should see before you go.

DANNY

Before I go?

NEGOTIATOR

Yes. You are going.

DANNY

Ok.

NEGOTIATOR

But there is still one more thing you should see.

DANNY

What's that?

NEGOTIATOR

Something we've discovered. It's fascinating.

DANNY

I don't think I want to see it.

NEGOTIATOR

Oh, it's nothing hard to look at. It's more of a phenomenon than a site. But it always amazes us.

DANNY

Really?

NEGOTIATOR

Yes, I think you'll find it interesting, it will help you understand all this. In many ways.

DANNY

Ok, you're trying to scare me.

NEGOTIATOR

Of course not. Don't be scared. It's interesting. You will find it very interesting. And helpful.

(Shift to ABDI with DENNIS.)

ABDI

Have you thought about what we've discussed?

DENNIS

I've tried. People won't even answer my phone number now.

(KORFA enters. He stares at DENNIS. He removes his belt. DENNIS is clearly terrified.)

DENNIS

(Suddenly)

But I have thought about this. I have.

ABDI

Ok

DENNIS

Take me. Take me. Just take me. Hold onto him. He's got money. He does. Take me away and hold onto him. He'll be able to get money. On his own. You'll get double. They will see, the people at home, when I'm released, they will see that you do release people and they will move to give you money, just for him. Just do it. Once I am out of here, once I am home, I can get him released. I can.

(NEGOTIATOR pulls back a flap to reveal DANNY standing there; he has heard everything. DENNIS and DANNY stare at one another. DANNY leaves. NEGOTIATOR closes flap.)

NEGOTIATOR

We're sorry. We thought he should know his situation. Otherwise, if we just told him, he would not believe us. He would think we were making it up. Sorry. You will be released, as soon as he gives over.

(NEGOTIATOR starts to leave.)

DENNIS

Wait a minute.

NEGOTIATOR

Yes.

DENNIS

If he knows I'm still here he won't truly believe he's on his own. He needs to see me gone, see me go away to realize he's on his own. I'll do a broadcast from home so he sees I'm gone, set free, then he'll roll over, give you what you want. He's does have money. He's been holding out on you. He'll give over when he sees I'm gone.

NEGOTIATOR

How do we know you'll do this?

DENNIS

I don't know. Film me being handed off to a state department guy at the border, I don't know. If I'm still here he won't give over.

NEGOTIATOR

We will think about it.

(NEGOTIATOR pulls back flap once again and DANNY is standing there. DANNY has also heard this last exchange. He just stares at DENNIS. DENNIS stands and runs off. DANNY looks at NEGOTIATOR.)

NEGOTIATOR

Now you can go. Now you can both go.

DANNY

So what was the point of that?

NEGOTIATOR

You have money, we do not. That was the point. You feel superior because even in a hopeless situation like this, you can buy yourselves out of it. You should know the truth about him, about his willingness to betray.

DANNY

That's the truth? It's indecent, making him do that, making me watch. Why couldn't there be decency between us, between you and me at least.

NEGOTIATOR

I didn't make the world.

DANNY

No, but you perpetuate it. With things like that. It's very American what you just did; a cheap parting shot, completely selfish and completely unnecessary; vainglorious and cruel.

(NEGOTIATOR exits. Blackout. Lights up on DENNIS. NEGOTIATOR enters.)

NEGOTIATOR

We're letting you go.

DENNIS

You are?

NEGOTIATOR

Of course. You see, we need to maintain some integrity ourselves in the international market. We said we would turn you over today, if we don't we will lose face.

DENNIS

How did you...

NEGOTIATOR

What?

DENNIS

How did you get away with the extra time, the two weeks?

NEGOTIATOR

It was actually only one week. We always do it. It's understood. Gives us time to make sure the money is real, not counterfeit, not compromised somehow. You know, escrow.

DENNIS

So we're going home?

NEGOTIATOR

He went home yesterday. We drove him. He wanted to leave separately.

DENNIS

Why did you do this? Do it this way?

NEGOTIATOR

It's my job to raise as much money as possible. That's my job. I do my job well. Even though we didn't raise more they saw that I tried, used all possible avenues. I am very good at negotiating.

DENNIS

You mean masterminding.

NEGOTIATOR

No, I truly am an employee.

DENNIS

You're a savage. A fucking animal.

NEGOTIATOR

A nigger?

DENNIS

Don't turn it into that. You know that's not what I'm saying. Any more than I'm a faggot. You know I don't think that way.

NEGOTIATOR

Ok, I think about survival, yes. About myself. I act selfishly. Like you.

DENNIS

My circumstances were extraordinary.

NEGOTIATOR

So are mine. You have Starbuck's on every corner, we have a sign that says we serve Starbuck's that we stole from a ship.

DENNIS

That's bullshit and you're smart enough to know it is. We come from different circumstances. It's not my fault where I come from.

NEGOTIATOR

Yes, but I'm jealous. You would never want to be me but the whole world assumes I want to be you. And maybe they're right. Maybe I want to be gay, have a boyfriend, a big house, not live in this desert. But I can't, I cannot. You can do any of those things, can do all of them.

DENNIS

I can't live here.

NEGOTIATOR

No, that's true. It is a unique place in the world, isn't it? It's like living history. Pirates used to mean Johnny Depp and Disneyland, now they mean us. Front page of *The New York Times*. Johnny Depp's only in the Entertainment Section.

(Blackout. Music – Abba. We hear helicopters, and then the sound of a commercial jet. Lights up on DENNIS and DANNY, both well dressed. They are free.)

DANNY

So here we are back in Boston.

DENNIS

Feeling like they got what they wanted.

DANNY

Twice over.

DENNIS

That's not what I meant.

DANNY

You sold me out.

DENNIS

We sold each other out.

DANNY

Yes, but I sold you out to free you, you sold me out to free yourself.

DENNIS

Yes.

DANNY

When I read *1984* in high school we talked about the whole point of fascism is to get you to sell out your family to save yourself. Then they set you free. And there you all are, standing with your family staring at each other, at the people you've betrayed. So there really can be no loyalty to anything except the things you fear: the state and the future, which the state controls.

DENNIS

Yes.

DANNY

I'm very practical. I live for the present. That's something I've always understood. What does the future mean? It's a fantasy, just a wisp of something in your head.

DENNIS

Not when it's the immediate future, a bite to eat that you can see, a sip of water that you know is there, freedom, tomorrow.

DANNY

Still might not happen. I'd rather, if my present is so bad, live for the past, live for what I know rather than the bottle that might be empty or the freedom that might be taken away.

DENNIS

That's the sign of a strong intellect and the power to keep thinking. Hard to do in extreme situations.

DANNY

Not if you keep eating, exercise a little, keep your mind active. Body and mind, they're one.

(DANNY looks at him.)

DANNY

When you live with a smart person you always think “Oh, he’s smart” and he is, but the main reason you think that is he gets paid a lot of money because he’s smart. It’s funny what happens when he stops getting paid, where the smarts go.

DENNIS

I love you, Danny.

DANNY

All those years at the university, then the year on the boat - I was content. I thought of one thing: Dennis. But my mind cracked open when it needed to and I like what I found, something solid, a core I hadn’t seen since grammar school when, yes, I hated my life, but I had to live through it so that one day I could enjoy it, when I found a Dennis. People are like countries, they undergo horrible teething pains growing up, but when they’re done they have nice sharp teeth to defend themselves. All through that ordeal I thought I must survive this so I can be there to enjoy Dennis at the end, and then I thought, I must survive this so I can enjoy a Dennis at the end. You see I went from the specific to the general. I adapted well. Earth abides.

DENNIS

We both did things.

DANNY

Of course we did.

DENNIS

We both have scars.

DANNY

Yes. It was set up that way, from the beginning. We just didn’t anticipate it.

DENNIS

Anticipate what?

DANNY

We thought they just wanted to separate us from our money, they wanted to separate us from each other. It was important to them.

DENNIS

Why would it be?

DANNY

It was a philosophical battle. A lesson.

(Pause.)

We should go.

DANNY

Where?

DENNIS

Don't be so melodramatic. We'll go home and relax, watch TV, go to movies, dish. It'll be fun, rediscovering our very normal, very boring lives.

DANNY

Ok. (Suddenly remembering) The boat! What about the yacht? I completely forgot about it.

DENNIS

Forget about the boat.

DANNY

I love that boat.

DENNIS

It's insured.

DANNY

But it's our boat.

DENNIS

It's gone. Submit a claim.

DANNY

It's gone?

DENNIS

They all got drunk one night and shot it up, for target practice. It's a wreck.

DANNY

They should have kept it.

DENNIS

For what, a pirate ship? It's a sailboat. It's a yacht for middle-aged queens to sail around the world in.

DANNY

Animals.

DENNIS

DANNY

No, they're not animals, and we're not rich Americans. Forget about all that. Let's go home.

DENNIS

I'm sorry for what I did.

DANNY

I think the less we talk about it the better.

DENNIS

So we'll just go on, like nothing happened?

DANNY

I don't know, maybe, maybe not. Maybe we'll separate because we can't deal with it; maybe we'll stay together. I don't know. Anything's possible. That's all I've learned. But for now... I want to go home.

DENNIS

You think you can sleep in that bed of ours? After all this?

DANNY

Maybe not. But we have a floor, we have a back yard, maybe we can sleep there for a while, we'll figure it out. I'm alive. That's a nice feeling. Tomorrow I want to wake up and have a cup of coffee, that's my fantasy.

DENNIS

Ok.

(Blackout.)

End of Play