

SEALED WITH A KISS
By Stephen A. Schrum

Sealed With a Kiss (©1984) could be considered my first full-length play. I finally had a dramatic idea that went beyond 12 pages.

Written in 1981 before I began my master's program in theatre, it was my idea of what grad school would be like. (Often what I write begins as musings on my future; *Here's To California* came from thoughts of moving to the West Coast.) Lisa is a composite, based loosely on my friend, Cathy Birk and her med student friends of the time. Walt is, due to the autobiographical nature of just about everything I write, me. Cathy Ann Peterson is based on an ex of mine with the same initials, and Judy is the personification of a voice who telephoned me one night when: I was a radio d.j. and suggested all sorts of lewd things she would like to do to me.

While revising the play to be copyrighted, Dianna Bourke suggested I add a scene where Walt calls Cathy Ann. I did, and I think it adds more to Walt's dilemma. Other places were clarified on the advice of Mindy Gulden, who helps me with all my plays. Much thanks to them both.

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Dramatis Personae:

Walter Day (The Director)
Lisa Stern (The Med Student)
Judy (Salome)
Sam (The Stage Manager)
Jack (The Set Designer)
Cathy Ann Peterson (Walt's ex)
Cathy's Roommate
Med School Instructor
Male Med Student
Bob (Herod)
Rick (Jokanaan)
Student Actors in *Salome**:
 The Young Syrian
 Page of Herodias
 First Soldier
 Second Soldier
 Cappodocian
 Naaman the Executioner
 Slave
 Herodias
 Togellinus

*All the actors of *Salome* may not be required, depending on how the rehearsal and production scenes are handled.

SCENE 1A

(INT—REHEARSAL ROOM OF A UNIVERSITY THEATRE DEPARTMENT. A VERY GRUNGY ROOM WITH WORN WOODEN FLOORS, PEELING WALLPAPERED WALLS, AND VISIBLE PLUMBING PAINTED CANARY YELLOW IN BRIGHT CONTRAST TO THE REMAINING DREARINESS. DESKS AND FOLDING CHAIRS IN VARIOUS BIZARRE COLORS AND STAGES OF DISREPAIR ARE IN THE ROOM. FIFTEEN OF THESE ARE ARRANGED IN A CIRCLE, FILLED BY ACTORS AND THE STAGE MANAGER. WALTER DAY SITS ON THE BACK OF ONE DESK, WITH FEET ON THE SEAT, HIS CLIPBOARD OF NOTES AT THE READY. WALT IS 23, WITH A PREMATURELY RECEDING HAIRLINE, BEARD, AND CLOTHES ON THE DRESSY PREPPY SIDE. HE SURVEYS THE GROUP, MOST OF WHOM ARE FRIENDS WHO HAVE WORKED TOGETHER BEFORE, CHECKS HIS WATCH, AND STANDS.)

WALT

Okay, since everybody's here, at least physically, we'll get started. As you know, I'm the director of this play, Walter Day. (SOME OF THE ACTORS AD-LIB "WHO?") Some of you I've worked with before, but in spite of that I've cast you again anyway. (AD-LIBS: "Oooh, "touché," etc.) Anyway, this is my second year project as a graduate directing student and I hope it will go very well.

SAM (THE STAGE MANAGER)

Or else?

WALT

Or else I won't see a third year as a graduate directing student.

SCENE 1B

(INT—MEDICAL SCHOOL CLASSROOM. CLEAN, BRIGHT, SHINY. THE INSTRUCTOR, OVER 40 AND MORE LIKE A HARPY THAN SHE SUSPECTS, IS LECTURING AND HER VOICE GRATES ON THE STUDENTS AS SHE EXPLAINS THE DETAILS OF THE LESSON. SITTING AMIDST THE STUDENTS WHO ARE TAKING EVERYTHING DOWN IS LISA STERN. A SECOND YEAR MED STUDENT, LISA IS SHORT AND PRETTY, WITH LONG, SLIGHTLY FRIZZY HAIR, GLASSES—ONLY FOR READING—AND VERY CASUAL PREPPY CLOTHES, LISA MAKES AN OCCASIONAL NOTE, BUT WATCHES THE INSTRUCTOR MORE.

INSTRUCTOR

...As you will notice in the next slide. Lights off, slide on.

(THE SLIDE APPEARS WHEN THE ROOM IS DARKENED) This is the fiber with which we are concerning ourselves in this discussion. Note the branching here. . . and here.

SCENE 1C

(INT—REHEARSAL ROOM. WALT IS EXPLAINING HIS CONCEPT OF THE PLAY.)

WALT

So the music and chanting should have a hypnotic effect on the audience. Any questions?
(THERE ARE NONE) Okay, let's read the play.

(THE ACTORS OPEN THEIR SCRIPTS TO THE FIRST PAGE. UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, THE CHARACTER NAME IS GIVEN.)

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

How beautiful is the princess Salome tonight!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

Look at the moon! How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead woman. You would fancy she was looking for dead things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. You would fancy she was dancing.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly.

SAM

"Noise in the banqueting hall."

FIRST SOLDIER

What an uproar! Who are those wild beasts howling?

SECOND SOLDIER

The Jews. They are always like that. They are disputing about their religion.

FIRST SOLDIER

Why do they dispute about their religion?

SECOND SOLDIER

I cannot tell. They are always doing it. The Pharisees, for instance, say that there are angels, and the Sadducees declare that angels do not exist.

FIRST SOLDIER

I think it is ridiculous to dispute about such things.

SCENE 1D

(INT—MEDICAL SCHOOL CLASSROOM. THE END OF THE SLIDE EXPLANATION.)

INSTRUCTOR

...Common to the disease itself. Slide off, lights on.

MALE MED STUDENT

(LEANS IN TO LISA) That's what she says to her husband every night.

(LISA BEGINS TO LAUGH, TURNS IT INTO A HACKING COUGH.)

SCENE 2

(INT—WALT AND LISA'S APARTMENT. IT IS FURNISHED THE WAY TWO IN-DEBT GRADUATE STUDENTS WHO ARE LIVING TOGETHER WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF WEDDING PRESENTS DO—WITH CARTONS COVERED WITH THROW RUGS FOR TABLES, A HAND-ME-DOWN COUCH, A FEW SALVATION ARMY SALVAGED CHAIRS, AND OTHER BARGAIN BUYS. THERE IS ALSO A STEREO AND SPEAKERS, LOTS OF BOOKS, AND AN ELECTRIC TYPEWRITER. WALT AND LISA ARE SITTING ON THE FLOOR STUDYING. WALT HAS ONE BOOK, LISA IS SURROUNDED BY BOOKS, NOTEBOOKS, AND PAPERS. BOTH ARE DRESSED AS THEY WERE IN THE PREVIOUS SCENES.)

LISA

Oh, listen to this. (READING FROM HER BINDER) "Nitrogen narcosis. Breathing air below 130 feet of water can produce narcotic effects. The person begins to become Jovial and loses cares. Parentheses. "I remember one episode of 'Sea Hunt' with Lloyd Bridges when a buddy of his had 'rapture of the deep,' and grabbed a moray eel by the tail and pretended he was playing golf. Of course, the fact that moray eels don't live at 130 feet has nothing to do with the dramatic effect of TV. End parentheses. I'm surprised the government doesn't regulate this effect by banning all bodies of water deeper than 130 feet."

WALT

More "enlightened commentary" from your note service?

LISA

From Diane. She's an ex-rerun addict.

WALT

Ex—rerun or ex-addict?

LISA

You know what I mean.

WALT

It's a wonder she had time to get into medical school. And it's a wonder any of you learn anything with those tidbits of trivia sprinkled through your notes.

LISA

It helps to make us more rounded individuals. Besides, these tidbits of trivia keep us laughing, or otherwise we would be crying.

WALT

Nobody said you had to become a doctor.

LISA

Unless you believe in predestination.

WALT

I'm not sure I believe in life after grad school.

LISA

Oh, come on. You didn't believe in life after undergrad school.

WALT

Sure I did, I knew there had to be something more than *that*. (PAUSE) I wonder if there are any Calvinists in foxholes?

(THEY RETURN TO THEIR RESPECTIVE STUDIES FOR A MOMENT. SUDDENLY WALT INTERRUPTS WITH A "HM! " THIS IS HIS SOUND—USED FREQUENTLY—WHEN HE REMEMBERS OR IS IMPRESSED BY SOMETHING.)

LISA

(PUTTING HER BOOK DOWN) What?

WALT

Here. (READS) One should always make love to a woman if she is pretty, and to someone else if she is plain. "

LISA

I'm glad he liked women.

WALT

Actually he was gay. But I think it succinctly captures the *raison d'etre*, the crux, yea, the very *nub*, as it were, of Oscar Wilde's angst amidst the British Victorian *Zeitgeist*.

LISA

I think you're mixing your metaphors. Or at least your foreign words and phrases.

WALT

It's all part of my *Weltanschauung*.

LISA

Well, my worldview right now consists of passing tomorrow's exam.

WALT

I'll be quiet. (PAUSE) Hm! (LOOKS AT HER) Sorry.

LISA

(PUTTING HER BOOK DOWN, SIGHS) Tell me.

WALT

"Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit. Touch it and the bloom is gone." (SHE STARES AT HIM, UNIMPRESSED.) I'll go into the bedroom.

(HE EXITS. SHE RETURNS TO HER BOOK AGAIN. BRIEF PAUSE; THEN WE HEAR FROM THE BEDROOM, "HM!")

SCENE 3

(INT—THEATRE. IT IS THE FIRST REHEARSAL IN THE ACTUAL STAGE SPACE THAT THE SHOW WILL BE PERFORMED IN. WALT AND SAM SIT IN THE HOUSE; JUDY, AS SALOME, IS THE CENTER OF ATTENTION, WITH BOB, AS HEROD, AND JANE, AS HERODIAS, STANDING WITH HER.)

BOB

(CLAPPING HIS HANDS TOGETHER) Ah! Wonderful! Wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salome, come near, that I may give you your reward. Ah! I pay the dancers royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

JUDY

(KNEELING) I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger.,.

BOB

(LAUGHING) In a silver charger? Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? (SHE GLANCES TO WALT, SMILES) What is it you would have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salome, you who are fairer than all the daughters of Judea? What would you have them bring you in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, they shall give it you. My treasures belong to thee. What is it, Salome?

(JUDY STANDS AND LOOKS INTENTLY AT BOB, BUT A VETERAN OF THE STAGE CAN TELL SHE HAS LOST THE LINE. SHE HESITATES BUT A MOMENT, THEN CLUTCHING AT STRAWS SHE THINKS OF A LINE.)

JUDY .

(WITH THE WRONG INTENSITY) Off with his head! Off with his head!

WALT

(MOSTLY TO HIMSELF) Oh, God, now we're doing *Alice in Wonderland*.

SAM

(TO THE ACTORS) Hold it.

WALT

(TO EVERYONE) Let's take a five-minute break, everybody. But just five minutes. "Salome."

(HE WAVES HER OVER AS HE CLIMBS UP ON THE STAGE. SHE CROSSES TO HIM. SAM HANGS BACK AT A DISCREET DISTANCE.)

JUDY

Yes, love?

WALT

What is the problem? That's the third time today you've blown your lines. I know it's the first rehearsal in the new space, but you've got to concentrate.

JUDY

I am concentrating. On you. I love you. I want to make hot love to you all night long. I want to screw you like crazy.

WALT

We've been over all this before. You know I'm living with someone. And you and I have a purely professional relationship within an academic situation. That's all.

JUDY

Wouldn't you like to screw me?

WALT

No. I'm living with someone whom I love, and

JUDY

I'm living with someone, too. But I still want you.

WALT

You live with your mother.

JUDY

Don't you think that's worse than a jealous boyfriend? Come on, lover, let's go out after the rehearsal, wouldn't you like some free sex?

WALT

No, I'd rather pay for it. What am I saying? That's what I get for doing an Oscar Wilde play.

JUDY

Oh, please, Walt. This dance I do makes me so hot for you.

WALT

(VERY FORMALLY) Look, honey. (CORRECTING) JUDY. You're a fine actress, a beautiful, sexy woman, and I would love to screw your eyes out. (SHE SQUIRMS IN EXCITEMENT) But I have the show to think about right now, all right?

JUDY

Will you screw my eyes out when the show's over?

WALT

Yes.

JUDY

Oh, goody! (SHE KISSES HIM) Excuse me, I have to go to the bathroom. (STARTS OFF) Don't start without me! (EXITS)

WALT

We won't. (TO SAM WHO COMES UP BEHIND HIM) We can't.

SAM

You really gonna "screw her eyes out"?

WALT

Yeah. What do you think—regular or Philips head?

SAM

(CHUCKLES, WALKS AWAY, CALLING TO THE ACTORS) Okay, you pack of cards, back on stage. Let's go.

SCENE 4

(INT—WALT AND LISA'S APARTMENT. ALL OF THE HOMEWORK STREWN OVER THE FLOOR IS GONE. NEW TO THE APARTMENT IS A VASE WITH SIX RED ROSES. LISA, DRESSED IN A SEXY NIGHTIE AND A ROBE, IS TALKING ON THE PHONE.

LISA

Yes, it's our anniversary. We've been living together exactly six months today. This morning Walt sent me six beautiful red roses and a card that said—well, let me read it to you. (PICKS UP CARD, READS) "Dearest love, these past six months have been the happiest of my life, and I hope it has been as happy for you. Tonight I want to make it even happier: wear your sexiest nightie and wait for the doorbell at exactly 6 p.m. pretend it's x a.m. and your wildest fantasy will come true. I love you, Walt. P.S. Happy Anniversary."... No, I don't, but you know Walt, he could do anything.... No, I haven't asked him about the letters yet. I will—maybe tonight, I don't know. (DOORBELL RINGS) Oh, that's him now. I've got to go. I'll let you know what the surprise is.... Okay, thanks, Karen; bye.

(SHE HANGS UP, RUNS TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT. THERE STANDS WALT IN A WHITE MILKMAN'S UNIFORM AND CAP, HOLDING A CARRIER OF MILK CARTONS. HE ACTS THE ROLE OF THE MILKMAN, AND LISA PLAYS ALONG.)

WALT

Good morning, madam. Milk delivery.

LISA

Oh, good morning. Do come in.

WALT

Thank you. (STEPS IN; SHE CLOSSES THE DOOR) How much would you like?

LISA

Well, my husband is not home. . .

WALT

Then you'll get as much as I have. Speaking of milk, you have lovely breasts.

LISA

Why, thank you, Mr. Milkman.

WALT

Please, don't be so formal. Call me Milk.

LISA

(SEDUCTIVELY) All right... Milk.

WALT

Let's to bed, my love.

(HE GRABS HER, DIPS HER BACK. SHE THROWS HER ARMS AROUND HIS NECK. THEY KISS. HE LOWERS HER TO THE FLOOR BEHIND THE COUCH, AND THEN HE DISAPPEARS, JOINING HER. SOUNDS OF FOREPLAY; THEN THE SOUND OF FLATULENCE.)

LISA

How romantic!

WALT

Sorry. Fast food lunch. I hope you won't hold it against me.

LISA

And what *should* I hold against you. Oh!

(THE SOUNDS OF FOREPLAY RESUME.)

SCENE 5

(INT—WALT AND LISA’S APARTMENT, TWO HOURS AFTER THE LAST SCENE. THEY ARE STILL BEHIND THE COUCH, QUITE FINISHED.)

WALT

Happy anniversary, Love.

LISA

Happy anniversary to you.

(SHE STARTS TO GET UP. HER HEAD APPEARS OVER THE COUCH, AND THEN DROPS BACK DOWN.)

LISA

Oh, God, I can’t get up.

WALT

So? Planning on going dancing tonight?

LISA

No, but I thought I might make dinner. (TRIES TO RISE AGAIN)

WALT

I’ll get it. You stay down here.

LISA

That’s easy enough. (SHE PLOPS DOWN)

(WALT GETS UP ON HIS KNEES, PUTS ON LISA’S BATHROBE, GROANS AS HE STANDS, AND CROSSES INTO THE KITCHEN. ONCE THERE HE BEGINS TO PREPARE TWO TACO SALADS. AS HE DOES THIS, LISA, WEARING WALT’S MILKMAN SHIRT, CRAWLS OUT AND CLIMBS UP ONTO THE COUCH.)

LISA

Where did you get this milkman’s outfit?

WALT

Remember that environmental theatre production of *The Seagull* last year—*The Seagull in ‘69*? It’s a leftover from that. I borrowed it from the costume shop.

LISA

Did you have a rehearsal this afternoon?

WALT

Yes. Unfortunately.

LISA
Problems with Salome again?

WALT
You don't know the half of it. Whatever that means.

LISA
What did she do this time?

WALT
I asked the impossible of her. I told her to walk and act at the same time. You know the Dance of the Seven Veils that she's supposed to do?

LISA
Yes.

WALT
Today she decided to improvise some additional sensuous moves. (HE ENTERS THE LIVING ROOM, DOING A DANCE WITH POTHOLDERS) The last veil got caught in the Velcro holding what little of her costume that was left. Naturally, gravity being what it is....

LISA
Shall we say, very revealing?

WALT
To say the least. When it happened, she shouted, "Walter! " so I'd be sure to see. I didn't need the announcement.

LISA
I'm certain of that.

WALT
Well, I am the director. I've been trained to watch everything that happens on stage.

LISA
Uh, huh. And?

WALT
She has this huge mole right above her—

LISA
I don't care to know.

WALT
I thought you wanted to go into OB-GYN. (SHE GLARES) Anyway, the cast greatly enjoyed my embarrassment.

LISA

You—embarrassed?

WALT

I've never had anyone pursue me with such vigor" before.

LISA

Never?

WALT

Never outside the privacy of my own home. (KISSES HER ON THE HEAD) I'd better get to work on dinner.

LISA

What are we having?

WALT

Tacos. (THOUGHTFUL PAUSE) You know, they remind me of your—

LISA

I know. I didn't think you needed reminding.

(HE SMILES, STARTS TO EXIT INTO THE KITCHEN, BUT STOPS WHEN SHE CALLS.)

LISA

(SERIOUS) Walt?

WALT

Yes, my love?

LISA

Did you ever consider...well, seeing anyone else while we've been together?

WALT

What? And lose my virginity? I'm saving it for you, dearest.

(HE BLOWS HER A KISS, USING ONE OF THE POTHOLDERS, AND EXITS INTO THE KITCHEN. SHE CONSIDERS WHAT HE'S SAID, THEN FOLLOWS HIM INTO THE KITCHEN.)

LISA

Walt, can I ask you something?

WALT

Of course.

LISA
Do you love me?

WALT
(WHILE STILL MAKING DINNER) Of course I do. I love you very much. Do you have to ask?

LISA
Well, no. It's just that you haven't told me so in the past few days.

WALT
I didn't? I'm sorry. Wait—what about the roses? Wasn't there a card?

LISA
Yes, that said so. But you didn't tell me verbally. I began to wonder. (PAUSE) And there was something else I wanted to talk to you about.

WALT
Oh, shit.

LISA
What?

WALT
Some of the hamburger rolled under the stove.

LISA
Oh. Anyway. The other day I was looking through some old cartons of yours, just out of curiosity I guess, and I found some letters.

(SHE FEELS THEY ARE VERY IMPORTANT. HE CAN TELL FROM HER VOICE THAT THEY SHOULD BE TO HIM, BUT DOESN'T RECALL THEM.)

WALT
Letters?

LISA
Yes. A stack of them sent to you at different addresses, home, undergrad school, (A BEAT) here. All from the same person. The return address said, "C.A.P." All were unopened.

WALT(
REMEMBERING) Oh, those.

LISA
The handwriting looked like a woman's and the latest was post marked two months ago.

WALT

Well, Sherlock—besides being a brilliant medical student and a beautiful young woman, you are also shrewd and eminently capable of deduction. Not to mention seduction.

LISA

It doesn't bother you that I found the letters?

WALT

You were supposed to say, "Elementary, my dear lover.

LISA

(FLATLY) "Elementary, my dear lover. " (NORMAL) You're not mad at me, or any thing?

WALT

Or anything? No, I'm not mad at you. Curiosity killed the cat and certainly didn't do Pandora any good, but you have nothing to worry about. I don't mind at all. As a matter of fact, I had completely forgotten about those letters.

LISA

Who are they from? Who is this mysterious "C.A.P."?

(THE PHONE RINGS. LISA HESITATES BRIEFLY, WANTING THE ANSWER TO HER QUESTION, THEN ANSWERS THE PHONE.)

LISA

Hello?... Oh, hi, Jack... Fine.... He's cooking dinner.... No, I wash the dishes.... Okay. (TO WALT) It's your gifted set designer. He told me to say that.

WALT

(TRADING SPOON FOR PHONE) Yes, Jack.... Taco salads.... What? You're kidding.... Yeah, right.... No, she can cook, it's just that I prefer cooking to dishwashing, and she loves me so she does that. But I do dry them. (SHE LOOKS AT HIM) Sometimes.... Okay, Jack, thanks for calling. Just wish you had better news.... Yeah, see you tomorrow. Bye. (HE HANGS UP)

LISA

Problems?

WALT

One of the undergrads working on the set was standing on one of the traps and it broke. He fell through the stage into a room down below.

LISA

Was he hurt?

WALT

No, fortunately. As it turns out, the room was filled with Styrofoam snow left over from *Bus Stop*. Apparently it filtered down through a hole in the floor and wasn't found until now. Anyway, my set will take an extra day to be completed, since they have to repair the trap and get rid of a few pounds of Styrofoam.

LISA

But it will be ready for opening.

WALT

That's what he said. (TURNING OFF THE GAS ON THE STOVE) I think this is ready.

LISA

Will you tell me now who those letters are from?

WALT

Sure. Grab your bowl. We can talk about it while we eat. (HANDS HER THE SPOON) Beautiful women first.

(WITH SPOON AND BOWL IN HANDS, SHE HUGS HIM.)

LISA

I love you. (THEY KISS) Now tell me about the letters.

(AS HE EXPLAINS, THEY MAKE THEIR TACO SALADS AND GO BACK TO THE LIVING ROOM TO SIT ON THE FLOOR AND EAT.)

WALT

Okay. The letters in question came from a Ms. Cathy Ann Peterson. I met her three years ago. A friend of mine, Amy, brought her along to see a play I was acting in. She was apparently quite taken with my dashing actor's ways. (LISA GIVES HIM A STRANGE LOOK) I was incredibly high on post show adrenalin at the time. (SHE NODS, GOES BACK TO (HER DINNER) And she was quite beautiful, so I was very taken with her. It added up to falling in passionate love at first sight, I guess. Anyway, we dated the rest of the summer, but after that we never saw each other again. In September she went westward to college and I went back east. I did talk to her on the phone that Christmas, and we both said how we'd have to get together. I knew we wouldn't; you know how those things go. She also hinted that she was dating someone else. So much for the great love of my life. (PAUSE) I then wrote her an "I love you and have ever since we met" letter. She wrote back and said some very nasty things. Then I wrote back to defend myself, and ever since she's been writing those letters, even though I no longer send a rebuttal. For a few months the letters stopped, but then they started up again. And that's it.

LISA

Haven't you ever wondered what she had to say in the later letters?

WALT

More of the same, I guess.

LISA

Let's find out. I want to know some nasty things about you. I'll get the letters. (SHE EXITS)

WALT

If you insist. But after this I'm throwing them all away. I don't even know why I kept them.

(LISA RETURNS WITH A SMALL CARTON OF LETTERS. HE PULLS SOME OUT, FANS THEM LIKE A DECK OF CARDS.)

WALT

Pick a letter, any letter.

(LISA PICKS ONE AND OPENS IT AFTER CHECKING THE POSTMARK. WALT PULLS ONE OUT, CHECKS THE POSTMARK, AND DUMPS THE REST BACK INTO THE BOX.)

LISA

January of last year.

WALT

Mine's from this past August. I think this is the first one after her short vacation from letterwriting.

LISA

Oh, my: Listen to this: "...egotistical, conceited, over-bearing, and—" what's this word? I can't read it.

WALT

(WITHOUT LOOKING) Try "selfish. "

LISA

Oh! So it is.

WALT

She always listed everything in multiples of four. (READS HIS LETTER.)

LISA

Why does she say you're egotistical and conceited? I never thought you were.

WALT

When she knew me, I was a trifle insecure. I made up for it by acting conceited. She didn't know it was just an act.

LISA

Oh. (FLIPS THE LETTER OVER) What does yours say? (PAUSE) Walt?

WALT

(ABSORBED IN THE LETTER) Hum?

LISA

What does yours say—more of the same?

WALT

Uh, no. Very different. (PAUSE, THEN READS) "...I'm sorry, Walt. I made a big mistake. It was getting away from home, a different environment, you know. It made my head spin. Then I met Max." (TO LISA) A German shepherd, no doubt. (BACK TO THE LETTER SKIPPING DOWN) Uhhh. "But now I realize it was you I loved. I hope you can forgive me. I wish I could see you, to tell you all this in person. I wish you could love me again." (HE TRAILS OFF)

LISA

Walt?

WALT

How about that?

LISA

(CONCERNED OVER HIS MUSINGS) Well, if you're not going to read any more, I'm going to throw them away. I don't need competition through the mails.

WALT

No, no, throw them away. (LISA EXITS TO GET THE TRASH CAN) She loves me now, after all this time.

LISA

(RETURNING WITH CAN) Typical human response. Doesn't know what's good for her when it's good for her.

(SHE RIPS THE LETTERS IN HALF AND DROPS THEM INTO THE CAN. HE CONSIDERS HER LAST STATEMENT.)

WALT

Yes. That's true.

SCENE 6

(INT—THEATRE DEPARTMENT OFFICE. VERY FUNCTIONAL. WALT SITS ON AN OLD METAL DESK, DIALS A LONG DISTANCE NUMBER, WAITS. LONG DISTANCE CLICKS, THEN A RING. A SECOND RING. AT THE END OF THE THIRD, IT IS ANSWERED BY A FEMALE VOICE.)

FEMALE

(GIGGLING) Hello? (TO SOMEONE ELSE) Cut it out. (INTO PHONE) Hello?

WALT

Uh, is Cathy Peterson there?

FEMALE

Yeah, just a minute. Who's calling, please?

WALT

Walter Day. I'm an old friend of hers.

FEMALE

(RECOGNIZING THE NAME) Oh, yeah. Hang on. (PAUSE)

CATHY

(COMING ON THE EXTENSION) Hello?

FEMALE

(ON FIRST PHONE) Come here, lover. (CLICKS OFF)

WALT

Hi, Cathy, it's Walt. How are you?

CATHY

Fine. How are you?

WALT

Okay. I got your number from Amy.

CATHY

I'm glad you did. Where are you?

WALT

At grad school.

CATHY

Are you coming home any time soon?

WALT

Not until summer, probably.

CATHY

I'd like to see you. To talk.

WALT

It's too bad I can't get away for awhile, but my classes keep me pretty busy. Plus I'm directing a show now, too.

CATHY

Which one?

WALT

Salome by Oscar Wilde.

CATHY

"Let me kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

WALT

That's right. I had forgotten that you did that role.

CATHY

A long time ago. Why are you calling, Walt?

WALT

I finally read your last letters.

CATHY

I see.

WALT

Is there anyone in your life right now?

CATHY

(SLIGHT PAUSE) No. How about you?

WALT

No. (CHECKS WATCH) Look, I've got rehearsal in a few minutes and, uh, this call is on the department phone, so I can't make it too long. Um, look, I'll call you in a couple of weeks when my show is over.

CATHY

I can call you. What's your number?

WALT

I don't have a phone in my apartment. You could call me here at school. Uh, well, I've got to run. Bye.

(HE HANGS UP, STARES INTO SPACE.)

SCENE 7

(INT—THEATRE. DRESS REHEARSAL. DRUMS AND FINGER CYMBALS PLAYED IN A HYPNOTIC RHYTHM ACCOMPANY THE ACTION OF THE FULLY COSTUMED ACTORS. WALT SITS IN THE HOUSE, STARING AT THE STAGE.)

JUDY

It is thy mouth that I desire, Jokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory. It is like a pomegranate cut with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than the roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine press. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of the doves who haunt the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from the forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings!... It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is painted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth...let me kiss thy mouth.

RICK (AS JOKANAAN)

Never! Daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! Never!

JUDY

I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan, I will kiss thy mouth.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

Princess, Princess, thou who art like a garden of myrrh, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not at him! Do not speak such words to him! I cannot suffer them.... Princess, Princess, do not speak these things,

JUDY

I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN

(STABBING HIMSELF.) Ah! (HE FALLS BETWEEN JUDY AND RICK.)

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS

The young Syrian has slain himself. The young captain has slain himself. He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and earrings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not foretell that some misfortune would happen? I, too, foretold it, and it has happened. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

FIRST SOLDIER

Princess, the young captain has just killed himself.

JUDY Let me kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

RICK

Daughter of adultery, there is but one who can save thee, it is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee (and to all who call on Him He cometh), bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins.

JUDY Let me kiss thy mouth.

RICK

Cursed be thou, daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!

(JUDY PAUSES FOR A LONG TIME. THE PAUSE IS FILLED WITH ALL THE INTENSITY THAT HAS BUILT UP. SUDDENLY SHE TURNS TO THE WING WHERE SAM IS WORKING.)

JUDY

Line!

(ALL THE ACTORS BREAK CHARACTER AND LOOK OUT TO WALT. SAM WALKS OUT TO ALSO LOOK AT HIM. HE STILL STARES.)

SAM

Walt? (NO REPLY) Walt?

WALT

(NOT STIRRING) What?

SAM

Salome Just went up on her line. I—

WALT

Give it to her.

SAM

Since it's dress rehearsal I thought you'd want to say something

WALT

What's the line?

SAM

(AS ALL THE ACTORS WHISPER IT) "I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan. "

WALT

Good. Continue.

(THE ACTORS SHUFFLE AWKWARDLY BACK TO THEIR PLACES.)

JUDY

(WITH THE SAME INTENSITY AS BEFORE) I will kiss thy mouth, Jokanaan.

RICK

(TO SAM) I'm sorry, which one is that?

SAM

(FROM OFFSTAGE) "I do not wish to look at thee.

RICK

(WITH GREAT INTENSITY) I do not wish to look at thee. I will not look at thee, thou art accursed, Salome, thou art accursed.

(JOKANAAN IS LOWERED INTO THE CISTERN. WALT IS A LITTLE MORE ATTENTIVE, MAKES A NOTE.)

SCENE 8

(INT—THEATRE. WALT, SITTING ON THE EDGE OF THE STAGE, IS GIVING NOTES TO THE ACTORS AFTER THE DRESS REHEARSAL.)

WALT

Okay, a general note. Tomorrow, let's get the energy up. I fell asleep out there. (SEVERAL ACTORS EXCHANGE GLANCES) And concentrate on the lines. After all, we are having a preview tomorrow night. There will be people out there watching you. (PAUSE) Okay, that's it. See you all tomorrow.

(THE ACTORS DISPERSE—ALL BUT JUDY. AS WALT CHANGES FROM COMMANDING DIRECTOR TO TROUBLED LOVER SHE, STILL IN HER SKIMPY

COSTUME, WALKS OVER TO HIM AND SITS DOWN. SHE IS NO LONGER THE SENSUOUS WOMAN; NOW SHE APPEARS AS A CONCERNED FRIEND.)

JUDY

Walt? Is there anything I can help you with?

WALT

What?

JUDY

Whatever has you so distracted. We know you didn't fall asleep because of the show.

WALT It's personal. I don't want to talk about it.

JUDY But talking can help. And I'm a good listener. I want to help you with this, whatever it is.

WALT (CONSIDERING) It might help to talk about it.

JUDY My mother's at Monte Carlo night at her church, so we can go to my place. You can tell me what's wrong.

WALT All right. Maybe that'd be good.

JUDY

Good. I'll change and be right out.

WALT

Okay.

(JUDY RUNS OFF TO CHANGE. SAM WALKS OVER TO WALT)

SAM

You *are* okay, Walt?

WALT

Yeah, sure.

SAM

Just watch out for Salome.

WALT

She's okay. (PAUSE) It's funny. She reminds me of someone else I know.

SCENE 9

(INT—JUDY'S APARTMENT. NOTHING TOO CLASSY; A MODERN CITY APARTMENT WITH TOO MANY KNICKKNACKS SITTING AROUND AMID THE MANY PLANTS, AND TOO MANY THINGS HANGING ON THE WALLS. WALT AND JUDY ARE SEATED ON THE COUCH, EACH WITH A GLASS OF WINE.)

WALT

So that's the problem. I love Lisa very much, but Cathy wants to see me again. That should have nothing to do with it, but it does. I don't know what to do.

JUDY

That is a problem. But there's an easy solution.

WALT

I find that hard to believe.

JUDY

There is.

(SHE MOVES CLOSER TO HIM, TAKES HIS GLASS, AND SITS IT WITH HERS ON THE COFFEE TABLE. HER HAND GOES TO HIS THIGH, AS THE UNDERSTANDING WOMAN GIVES IN TO THE SEDUCTRESS.)

JUDY

Love me instead.

(SHE KISSES HIM WITH GREAT FERVOR. HE RESISTS AT FIRST, THEN ALLOWS IT FOR A FEW MOMENTS, THEN RETURNS THE KISS. AFTER A MOMENT HE PUSHES HER AWAY.)

WALT

Hm! (HE GRABS HER FACE AND KISSES HER AGAIN, BRIEFLY, THEN BACKS AWAY.) That's it!

JUDY

(NUZZLING HIM) I told you I had the solution to your problem.

(HE STANDS UP; SHE ALMOST FALLS DOWN WHEN HE MOVES AWAY.)

WALT

No, not that answer. *My* answer. I know what to do now. Thanks, babe. (HE KISSES HER QUICKLY ON THE FOREHEAD) You kiss very well, but it's not the same. I've got to go home now. See you tomorrow.

(HE EXITS. JUDY, VERY FRUSTRATED AND ANGRY, HUGS A CUSHION AND SULKS.)

SCENE 10

(INT—WALT AND LISA'S APARTMENT. LISA IS SITTING ON THE FLOOR ONCE AGAIN SURROUNDED BY ALL HER MATERIALS. WALT ENTERS, CLOSES THE DOOR AND DASHES BEHIND THE COUCH, HIDING.)

LISA

Hi, Walt. How was rehearsal?

(NO ANSWER. LISA TURNS TO HER RIGHT, LOOKING FOR HIM. HE CRAWLS AROUND THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COUCH, AND SNEAKS UP ON HER.)

LISA

Walt?

WALT

(GRABBING AND KISSING HER) Yes, my one and only.

LISA

Oh! You scared me. (KISSES HIM) You're late. Rehearsal go okay?

WALT

It was pretty bad. But the show will go well. But let us not talk of that. (INDICATES HER NOTES) Another exam?

LISA

Next Monday. I thought I'd start studying early for it.

WALT

Nothing too pressing, then.

LISA

Only you.

(WALT HUGS HER, THEN PICKS HER UP, STANDS, AND CARRIES HER TO THE BEDROOM.)

WALT

Let's to bed, my only love.

LISA

Walt, are you okay?

WALT

I am now. I solved the problem of Salome. I'll tell you about it—later. After we make love.

(THEY EXIT INTO THE BEDROOM.)

SCENE 11

(INT—BACKSTAGE, AT THE END OF THE SHOW ON ITS FINAL NIGHT. THE FINAL LINES ARE HEARD.)

BOB

Come! I will not stay here. Come, I tell thee. Surely some terrible thing will befall. Manasseh, Issachar, Ozias, put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stare! Let us hide ourselves in our palace, Herodias. I begin to be afraid.

(PAUSE)

JUDY

Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood?... But perchance it is the taste of love....They say that love hath a bitter taste...But what of that? what of that? I have kissed thy mouth, Jokanaan.

(PAUSE)

BOB

Kill that woman!

(CRASH OF PERCUSSION. PAUSE. LOUD APPLAUSE. WALT ARRIVES DURING THE CURTAIN CALL, WAITS FOR HIS ACTORS TO COME BACKSTAGE. HE SPEAKS TO THEM AS THEY PASS HIM ON THE WAY TO THE DRESSING ROOMS.)

WALT

Good show, everybody. Good show, Bob.

BOB

It's finally over.

WALT

It was only a four day run. Besides, all good things must come to an end.

BOB

Now all I have to look forward to is post show depression. Thank God.

(BOB WALKS OFF. LISA RUNS UP TO WALT, KISSES HIM)

LISA

Oh, Walt, it was really good. You'll make it to Broadway yet.

WALT

Thanks, love. For a closing night, it wasn't too bad.

LISA

It was good. (JACKS WALKS UP TO THEM) Hello, Jack.

JACK

Hi, kids. like the set, Lisa?

LISA

Of course. After all, it was designed and built by you.

JACK

Of course. Anyway, it was a good show.

WALT

Did you see it again tonight, Jack?

JACK

No, just on opening. I heard the applause from the green room, though. Appreciative audiences are nice to have.

LISA

Are you striking the set now?

JACK

Yeah. I've got twelve undergrads poised outside, each with a destructive tendency and a claw hammer. Just get me to the victory party on time. Oh, Walt—guess who my date is.

WALT

I have no idea.

JACK

Salome.

WALT

Really?

LISA

I'm glad she's finally gotten over Walt.

JACK

(SURPRISED) You know about her?

LISA

Oh, yes. Walt told me everything. I think it's cute.

WALT

And now you, old buddy (PUNCHES HIM ON THE ARM), have taken my place.

JACK

Hey, anything for a pal. I'll do all I can to really take your place. I've got everything I need.

(JACK PULLS TWO SCREWDRIVERS, ONE REGULAR, ONE PHILIPS, OUT OF HIS TOOL BELT, AND HOLDS THEM UP, ONE IN EACH HAND.)

WALT

Yep, you're prepared all right.

LISA

What do you mean?

WALT

(TO JACK) I didn't tell her everything. (STARTS TO USHER LISA AWAY) See you at the party, Jack.

LISA

What did he mean, he's all prepared?

WALT

Well, one night....

(WALT AND LISA EXIT. JUDY COMES UP TO JACK, AND LOOKS AT THE DEPARTING COUPLE.)

JUDY

So that's Lisa. She's pretty, I guess.

JACK

Yes, but you are beautiful. Those eyes, those lips, those....

(SHE SUCCUMBS TO THE FLATTERY JUST AS SAM WALKS BY.)

SAM

Come on, Jack, let's strike the set.

JACK

Coming. (TO JUDY) In my pants.

(HE STARTS TO WALK AWAY. SHE PATS HIM ON THE BUTTOCKS, GOES OFF TO THE DRESSING ROOM. JACK FOLLOWS SAM.)

CURTAIN.