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FADE TO  
**BLACK**

**A One Act Comedy**

**by Greg Freier**

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# Fade to Black

by Greg Freier

## CHARACTERS

3W / 3M

RAYMOND MOUNDS: *Late 30's; Playwright. His play just opened on Broadway to disastrous reviews*

TONY ZETTLER: *50's; the play's director*

TERRANCE GILBOY: *40's; Raymond's friend from L.A. A television actor*

BETSY SIPPEL: *21, but looks 13; a fan*

PORTIA KLONDIKE: *60's; Elegant and very rich. The host of the opening night party*

LILITH ECKERT: *60's; Portia's neighbor*

## SETTING

*Early 1975: An elegant study on Park Avenue*

## FADE TO BLACK

by Greg Freier

*(AT RISE: An elegant study on Park Ave. It is one of those rooms that exudes manliness. There is a large built in bookcase along the back wall, filled to the brim. Stage left, along the wall is an antique bar, well stocked. A leather couch sits stage right, with two leather chairs on each side. A nice coffee table sits in front of couch. Lower stage left is a desk that faces the audience. The main entrance to the room is stage right. A large picture window takes up most of the wall stage left. RAYMOND MOUNDS, playwright, is seated in one of the chairs. He's dressed in a nice tuxedo, tie undone, holding a glass of whiskey and has the look of a man who has just had the most absolute worst day of his life. After a moment, TONY ZETTLER enters. He too is in a tux, but carries the look off much better than RAYMOND.)*

TONY

Channel 2 just came in.

RAYMOND

*(Beat)* Would it be less painful to just shoot me?

TONY

I suppose that all depends on your threshold for pain.

RAYMOND

*(Beat)* I think I'm going to throw up.

TONY

So do you want to hear the review or not?

RAYMOND

Of course I don't.

TONY

Don't be such a baby.

RAYMOND

Just read the damn review, will you.

TONY

*(Removes a piece of paper from his jacket)* I wrote it down. I wanted to make sure I remembered it exactly like Charles Dean spewed it off.

RAYMOND

Oh god. He's going to eviscerate me.

TONY

*(Unfolds the paper)* Are you ready?

RAYMOND

*(With attitude)* Of course I'm not ready.

TONY

One never is for a public evisceration.

RAYMOND

Will you just read the damn thing before I jump out the window.

TONY

Not to worry, the windows don't open.

RAYMOND

*(All but screams)* Read.

TONY

And remember, this is what Charles Dean said, these aren't my words.

RAYMOND

I'm going to kill you here in a minute.

TONY

I was just checking is all. Okay but here goes... *(Clears his throat)* Raymond Mounds' "The Last Cocktail Party" took theatre to a new level this evening. A level that I have to admit, that I wasn't aware existed. The sheer magnitude of his audacity was a stunning reflection of just how little Mr. Mounds knows about the theatre. At least passable theatre. However on that note, I also must applaud him. For someone to have the testicular fortitude to concoct a Last Cocktail Party, before the Last Supper takes creative license to a place that even God Himself couldn't have imagined. Granted the only additional applause Mr. Mounds is likely to hear is when they remove his soon to be forgettable name from the theatre marquee. This is Charles Dean, for CBS news, with the shortest review I've ever done. Back to you Mike...

*(TONY folds the paper and puts back in jacket.)*

RAYMOND

*(Downs his whiskey)* I'm finished.

TONY

You've still got channel 4, 7, 11 and 13. Plus we can't forget the papers.

RAYMOND

You can't be serious?

TONY

I've seen weirder things happen.

RAYMOND

When?

TONY

*(Beat)* Okay, maybe "seen" is an exaggeration.

RAYMOND

How can you be so calm? I mean after all you are the director.

TONY

Charles Dean liked the direction. I just thought I'd best leave that part out.

RAYMOND

I need another drink. *(Rises and crosses to bar)*

TONY

Don't get so down on yourself. Everyone has a failure now and again.

RAYMOND

But this was my Broadway debut. How many second chances do eviscerated people get?

TONY

That all depends on the depth of the evisceration.

RAYMOND

Judging by Charles Dean it was deep enough that I'd be lucky if I still had any genitalia left.

TONY

What does Charles Dean know?

RAYMOND

*(Loudly)* Everything.

*(TERRANCE GILBOY enters. He's a seriously height challenged, diminutive man dressed in a tux.)*

TERRANCE

Mrs. Klondike said to let you know channel 4's review should be on here in the next ten minutes or so.

RAYMOND

*(Looks up)* Oh just take me now.

TERRANCE

Apparently some sporting event was accidentally interrupted by a Dean Martin roast for some odd reason and their news is running late.

TONY

Happens all the time in New York. Usually some bizarre act of God.

TERRANCE

That's the problem with living in L.A. these days. God doesn't seem to exist out there anymore.

TONY

Something to do with pointless television according to the Bible.

TERRANCE

Which is how I make my pointless living.

TONY

I think I'll go downstairs and wait for God to bring me channel 4. (*Exits*)

TERRANCE

Why does everyone have to get on me about television every time they see me?

RAYMOND

Because television is garbage.

TERRANCE

And to think I flew all the way out here to be at your Broadway debut.

RAYMOND

No one asked you to come.

TERRANCE

And judging by what I saw tonight...

RAYMOND

I don't want to hear it. Okay? I mean outside of my parents dying, this has been the worst night of my life.

TERRANCE

Yeah, but at least when your parents died, people brought you food.

RAYMOND

Will you just shut up?

TERRANCE

It's just one play. I mean my shows get canceled all the time.

RAYMOND

That's because all your shows stink.

TERRANCE

Of course they do. It's television.

RAYMOND

*(Starts pacing)* How could all of this go so wrong so quickly?

TERRANCE

I'll take it that's a rhetorical question.

RAYMOND

Please go back to television land. I'm miserable enough alone tonight.

TERRANCE

I'm just trying to show some support is all.

RAYMOND

By what, telling me how awful my show was?

TERRANCE

I never once said your show was awful. You said my shows were awful.

RAYMOND

*(Stops pacing)* How about we just speak in Gaelic now? That way neither one of us will understand what the other one is saying.

TERRANCE

That's what I love about you playwrights. Everything is always so dramatic.

RAYMOND

My dream just went down the toilet. Of course I'm being dramatic. And if it wasn't for the fact the windows don't open, I'd probably be suicidal as well.

TERRANCE

Now why couldn't you have had dialogue like that in your play? I mean that's good dialogue.

RAYMOND

Will you please just go back downstairs with all the other idiots. I just want to be alone right now.

*(BETSY SIPPEL enters. She's dressed to the nines— whatever that means. She's one of those very easily excitable people and not too bright.)*

BETSY

I'm sorry I thought this was the bathroom.

TERRANCE

No worries. My good friend here's in a hypothetical toilet, so in reality, you're not too far off.

BETSY

Oh my God. You're Terrance Gilboy, the actor.

TERRANCE

Guilty as charged.

RAYMOND

*(To himself)* Oh why can't the Earth just open up and masticate me into a useless pile of fodder.

TERRANCE

Another great line. I knew you had it in you.

BETSY

*(Crosses to TERRANCE)* I just love your shows. And by that I mean all of them.

TERRANCE

Well thank you. It's always a pleasure to meet one of my fans. Especially one as pretty as yourself.

BETSY

*(Flustered)* Oh thank you...it's just that...well you know...I don't usually...I mean...I just thought this was the bathroom.

TERRANCE

Quite understandable in a place this size.

RAYMOND

Could you please just all go away.

BETSY

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to intrude.

TERRANCE

Intrude nothing. My friend here is just wallowing in self pity. Why don't you sit down and we can have a nice chat. He can wallow in a corner over there.

BETSY

Are you sure?

TERRANCE

Absolutely. Let's place ourselves on the couch. It's one of the few pieces of living room furniture in which being horizontal isn't an obscene position.

RAYMOND

What part of wanting to be alone doesn't anybody get?

TERRANCE

Pretend we're not here. That's what makes writers great. Their ability to pretend. So why don't you pretend over there. In that nice corner by the window.

RAYMOND

I hate you.

TERRANCE

That's quite all right. If one can't hate their friends, who can one hate I always like to say.

BETSY

*(Giggles)* This is exactly why I love your shows. You always have the most clever things to say.

TERRANCE

And that one was unscripted I might add.

RAYMOND

*(With total disgust)* I'm going to the bathroom. *(Exits)*

TERRANCE

Please, let's sit. That couch is just calling our names.

BETSY

Oh my God, I can't believe I'm actually going to sit on a couch with Terrance Gilboy the actor.

*(TERRANCE ushers BETSY to the couch and they sit.)*

TERRANCE

Sitting on couches is one of the things I do best.

BETSY

*(Giggles again)* And you're just as funny in real life.

TERRANCE

You have no idea how funny.

BETSY

*(Smacks his arm while giggling)* Will you stop. You're just being so much like yourself you're going to make me have an accident.

TERRANCE

Well we certainly can't have that.

BETSY

I'm really sitting on a couch with Terrance Gilboy. My boyfriend is never going to believe this.

TERRANCE

And where exactly is this boyfriend of yours at the moment?

BETSY

He's downstairs talking to some producer lady. He's an actor too.

TERRANCE

How nice.

BETSY

He just got back from being out on the road. He was an understudy in the touring company of "Boys without Fear."

TERRANCE

I'm not familiar with that one.

BETSY

I don't think anyone is. That's why he's back.

*(LILITH ECKERT enters. She's disheveled in appearance, but has on an elegant black evening dress.)*

LILITH

I'm so sorry. I thought this might be the bathroom.

BETSY

See, it wasn't just me.

TERRANCE

Perhaps it might be best if there was a label outside every door. Bathroom. Closet. Closet for sex toys. That sort of thing.

LILITH

Oh my God, you're Terrance Gilboy, the actor.

TERRANCE

You have a very keen eye madam.

LILITH

I'm a huge fan. Not of your shows of course, those are awful, but of all those commercials you've done. I especially love the one where you're wearing an elephant nose cleaning toilets. That one is just a stitch.

TERRANCE

You're too kind.

LILITH

I mean who would have ever thought that someone like me would ever be in the same room with Terrance Gilboy.

BETSY

I said exactly the same thing. It's all so surreal.

TERRANCE

You have no idea.

LILITH

Do you mind if I join you? The downstairs part is starting to get rather depressing.

TERRANCE

*(Insincere)* Of course not. The more the merrier.

*(LITLITH enters, crosses to the couch and almost sits on top of TERRANCE.)*

LILITH

It's like I'm so close I could touch you.

TERRANCE

That you certainly are.

LILITH

You look much smaller on television. I bet you get that all the time.

BETSY

I think it has something to do with the way he's sitting.

LILITH

You're right. It's no doubt a vertical thing.

TERRANCE

(To LILITH) And you are?

LILITH

Lilith. Lilith Eckert. I live next door. Portia always invites me to these things. Although this one doesn't seem to be going too well judging by all the crying going on downstairs.

(RAYMOND enters.)

RAYMOND

Oh dear God, more people in here. What part of me wanting to be alone doesn't anyone get?

TERRANCE

(To LILITH) That would be our delightfully popular playwright.

LILITH

So you're the one making everyone cry downstairs.

RAYMOND

(Glares at her with immense hate) I need another drink. (Crosses to bar)

LILITH

I'm glad all the other opening night parties I've been to were better than this one

BETSY

This is the first one I've ever been to, and outside of the play part it's been pretty exciting.

TERRANCE

There's never a dull moment in the theatre. That's why I prefer television. No one cares.

LILITH

Oh, you and your wit.

BETSY

And no one's writing it for him. He's making it up right on the spot.

LILITH

Of course he is. That's what true genius does.

RAYMOND

You people are making me sick. This man is no more of a genius than I am.

TERRANCE

And tonight certainly proved that.

RAYMOND

Piss off.

TERRANCE

*(To the WOMEN)* He's a bit high strung.

LILITH

Failure can do that to a person.

RAYMOND

I am not a failure. One review does not a failure make.

*(TONY enters.)*

TONY

Good news. Channel 4 decided not to review your play. The critic had had enough in the first five minutes.

TERRANCE

*(To RAYMOND)* See. Just when you thought it couldn't get any worse.

RAYMOND

What do you mean they didn't review the play? How can they not review a Broadway debut?

TONY

Apparently rather easily. But don't let it get you down. Granted I've never seen this happen before. But you still have 7, 11, 13 and the papers. It's bound to get better.

LILITH

*(To RAYMOND)* Although you might want to consider staying up here. The people down there won't do anything to cheer you up.

RAYMOND

Who in the hell is this woman?

LILITH

Lilith. Lilith Eckert. I'm Mrs. Klondike's next door neighbor.

TERRANCE

She's a big fan of my commercials.

TONY

*(To RAYMOND)* Why don't you just sit down, decompress, and enjoy your drink. I mean at this point there's nothing else you can do.

BETSY

He's right you know. There's nothing you can do now to change what you already did.

LILITH

Exactly. It's like my ex-husband always liked to say after every time I caught him cheating—"The past is the past," he'd say. "There's no going back."

TERRANCE

Your ex-husband would have made a brilliant television writer.

RAYMOND

*(Beat)* Idiots. I'm surrounded by nothing but idiots.

TONY

You might want to consider writing when you're upset. Your dialogue seems to be much better.

RAYMOND

I hate you. I hate all of you.

BETSY

Are all playwrights like this?

LILITH

None of the ones I've met before are. Granted their plays were good.

TERRANCE

*(To LILITH)* A knife through the heart. Well played.

LILITH

I have a problem with the truth sometimes.

TERRANCE

If I didn't know any better, I'd have to say you might have a career writing in television as well.

LILITH

Wouldn't that be a hoot? Me writing for television.

*(PORTIA KLONDIKE enters. She is the epitome of elegance.)*

PORTIA

Wonderful news all. Channel 7's review will be on in less than five minutes.

RAYMOND

How in the hell is that wonderful?

PORTIA

They blew a fuse downstairs. So there's a good chance we won't have to see it.

LILITH

(To BETSY) That's what makes her such a great producer.

TERRANCE

That and a keen eye for talent, which apparently is getting a tad myopic.

LILITH

Once again with the funnies. I just love this man.

PORTIA

(Crosses to RAYMOND) Now come here my boy. Just because things aren't going your way at the outset doesn't mean things can't change. This isn't my first show, nor will it be my last. Theatre is a funny business. Funnier than most think. Because even the unsuccessful, such as tonight might become, often lead to success. Isn't that right Tony?

TONY

My direction was quite good from what we've been hearing.

PORTIA

So you see, without your play, Tony's direction never would have happened. So on one level, tonight might end up being a complete success. It's all a matter of perspective.

RAYMOND

(Beat) How drunk are you?

PORTIA

As drunk as the evening requires my boy.

TERRANCE

I'm surprised she can speak at all then.

LILITH

(Smacks him and giggles) Will you stop before I wet myself.

BETSY

I know what you mean. He has the same affect on me.

TONY

(To RAYMOND) Tell you what, why don't I go downstairs and see if they fixed the fuse. I mean what's the worst that can happen?

TERRANCE

He's got a point. Channel 7's couldn't be any worse than 2 and 4.

PORTIA

And if for some reason it is, you could possibly be on your way to some form of theatrical history.

RAYMOND

By what? Having the worst reviews ever?

PORTIA

Exactly. So in an odd way you might work your way into the annals of theatre lore.

RAYMOND

(Grabs a bottle of liquor off the bar; speaks with great sarcasm) And then if I drink myself to death on the same night, it would just make it that much better, now wouldn't it.

TERRANCE

Now you're getting into the swing of things.

TONY

I'll go check on those reviews. (Exits)

PORTIA

(Crosses to RAYMOND) Don't take this all so personally my boy. All reviews are is one person's opinion. Nothing more. Nothing less. One opinion. Do you think I've let one person's opinion stop me? Of course I haven't. I wouldn't be where I am today if I listened to opinions. It's all about the gut. Whatever my gut tells me, that's what I do.

RAYMOND

And all those opinions are making me sick to mine.

PORTIA

Let me tell you a little story. Years ago, I think it was my second...no third production...no, it was the second—anyway the first reviews came in and they were awful. Possibly even worse than yours...or maybe not that bad...but the point is, as the later reviews came in, they seemed to get better. Not only better, but one might also say stunning. And to this day, that was one of the most lucrative and successful productions I've ever had.

LILITH

I remember that one. I'm just drawing a blank on the name.

PORTIA

"No Time for Heinie."

LILITH

That's right, I loved that play. Especially the end when Rabbi Heinie saved all those dying fish. There wasn't a dry eye in the house.

BETSY

I saw the movie version of that just the other night.

TERRANCE

I was almost in that movie. Lost out on the part of the rabbi to Burt Reynolds of all people. They said he looked more rabbinical than me.

RAYMOND

Oh dear God, this night gets worse by the minute.

PORTIA

And luckily the night's still young. So hold out some hope. There's always a chance for a second Heinie.

TONY

*(From off stage)* Bad news, they fixed the fuse and the TV is back up and running.

TERRANCE

God really does work in mysterious ways.

BETSY

*(Giggling)* I can't take this anymore. I've got to go tinkle. *(Exits)*

PORTIA

I think I'll head back to the party and wait for the review. Nothing can put a damper on an opening night party. *(Exits)*

LILITH

I think I'll join her. She always so much fun at these things. *(Stands; to TERRANCE)* But don't you go anywhere. I will be back. I promise.

TERRANCE

I'll wait with the breath of a baited simpleton.

LILITH

I just love this man. *(Exits)*

TERRANCE

Looks like it's just down to you and me.

RAYMOND

And you're free to leave at any moment.

TERRANCE

What's with all the hostility? I'm just trying to be supportive here.

RAYMOND

By what? Watching me fail miserably?

TERRANCE

Nothing could be further from the truth. I mean how many of my shows have you watched fail?

RAYMOND

All of them.

TERRANCE

Exactly. But inevitably I get another one and life goes on.

RAYMOND

That's because it's television. Television has no conscience.

TERRANCE

Of course it doesn't. But that's not the point. The point is one failure can lead to more failures, which is what life is all about.

RAYMOND

You're really not cheering me up here.

TERRANCE

I'm not trying to cheer you up. What I'm trying to do is put this all in perspective. Regardless of what happens tonight, your life will go on. With or without you. It's all up to you.

RAYMOND

*(Confused)* What the hell is that supposed to mean? How can my life go on with or without me?

TERRANCE

I'm not sure. But it made sense in the 'Movie of the Week' I just did. So someone out there obviously understands it.

RAYMOND

Why don't you just go downstairs with the others? Maybe that would help cheer me up.

TERRANCE

I'm too comfortable up here. Plus there are all those nutty women down there that love me.

RAYMOND

How about we don't talk then. At least give me that, could you please?

TERRANCE

I could...but then again if I did...you might regret it one of these days.

RAYMOND

How could I regret not talking to you? I don't even want you to be here?

TERRANCE

Because at some point you're going to want to explode, whether you like it or not. And when you finally do, it's usually nice to have someone around that knows you. You look less insane that way.

RAYMOND

Could you just please not talk?

TERRANCE

Think of me as a therapist then. They always say talking to a stranger sometimes is easier.

RAYMOND

*(Loudly)* I don't want to talk at all!

TERRANCE

Yes, I know. You've already made that abundantly clear.

RAYMOND

Then why do you keep talking?

TERRANCE

Because I'm an actor. I don't think I have any choice.

*(RAYMOND screams; BETSY enters.)*

BETSY

I take it things haven't gotten any better?

TERRANCE

Not from a hostility standpoint, no.

BETSY

I'm glad my boyfriends not a playwright. Not that there's anything wrong with being a playwright, it's just that actor's can be strange enough...present company excluded of course.

TERRANCE

Of course.

RAYMOND

Why can't anyone just leave me the hell alone?

TERRANCE

(To BETSY) Don't answer. He's just toying with us at this point.

TONY

(Enters) That was one heck of a scream up here.

TERRANCE

I'll take it channel 7 has reared its ugly head.

TONY

That it has.

TERRANCE

And I'll take it you're here to regale us with it?

RAYMOND

Well regale it someplace else. Someplace of which I am not.

TONY

See. Another great line. It's like you're brilliant completely by mistake.

TERRANCE

(To BETSY) I sense another scream coming on.

TONY

You might want to hear this one. It's really not that bad...in comparison of course.

TERRANCE

And look at it this way, at least they reviewed it.

PORTIA

(Enters) Have you read it to him yet?

TONY

Not yet. He doesn't seem to want to hear it.

PORTIA

But he must. It's heading us in the right direction.

RAYMOND

You're just mocking me at this point, aren't you?

PORTIA

Mocking nothing. This one almost rings with music.

RAYMOND

You people are all insane.

PORTIA

(To TONY) Just read it to him. He'll see.

TONY

And remember once again, this is only a single person's opinion.

PORTIA

Just read it.

TONY

*(Removes paper from his pocket and clears his throat)* Tonight this reviewer had the curious experience of seeing Raymond Mounds' "The Last Cocktail Party." While far from brilliant it did possess a certain quality that this reviewer hasn't seen in sometime. A quality that one usually associates with amateur theatre, but mediocre amateur theatre at best. Yet there was something about the amateurish way the play progressed that gave its amateur quality a certain tenderness that could warm a savant's heart to the point of his wanting to caress a swatch of felt. Was the play any good? Of course not. It was awful. But put in front of the right audience this play could not only thrive, but could be the start of a new kind of theatre. This was Brock Leatherman, for Channel 7 news.

TERRANCE

So there you have it. If you play to nothing but morons and village idiots they'll be screaming TONY.

*(RAYMOND screams again.)*

BETSY

I don't think he took it in the right spirit.

PORTIA

Nonsense. That's nothing but a scream of joy.

RAYMOND

I'm going to be the complete laughing stock of every theatre in the world.

BETSY

(To TERRANCE) He sure is theatrical.

TERRANCE

Yes, but only when he's a complete failure.

PORTIA

*(To RAYMOND)* You're missing the entire point of all of this. What you're creating here is a new kind of brilliance.

TONY

*(To no one in general)* I wouldn't go that far.

PORTIA

What you're doing is creating a theatre for a specific audience that has yet to be tapped.

RAYMOND

What kind of theatre is that? The kind for people who are too stupid to recognize good theatre?

PORTIA

Now you're getting it. It's theatre for people who have no clue about theatre.

RAYMOND

*(Beat)* You are insane.

LILITH

*(Enters)* Channel 13 reviewed your play using hand puppets. It was a stitch. I haven't laughed that hard in I don't know how long.

BETSY

*(To TERRANCE)* Channel 13 is PBS.

TERRANCE

Then well played I might add.

RAYMOND

*(Looks up)* What, am I the antichrist all of a sudden?

TERRANCE

*(To TONY)* You're right. His writing would be much better if he's wallowing in self pity all the time.

PORTIA

And yet you have nothing to wallow about my boy. Because if there's one thing I know it's theatre, granted usually not bad theatre, but theatre. And if this can create something new you'll become a very wealthy man. And I will become only wealthier. It's a win-win for all of us.

LILITH

Plus we could see more reviews with hand puppets. I mean who doesn't love hand puppets.

RAYMOND

How can you people be serious? Tonight was nothing but a complete and total disaster that keeps getting more disastrous every time someone watches the television.

BETSY

I'll be the first one to admit I know nothing about the theatre, but he does make some sense. I mean—I think if I was him I'd be so embarrassed about all of this that I'd move someplace in the middle of the ocean.

RAYMOND

And with my luck they'd have a theatre there.

TONY

You're missing a big point of all this though. All the reviews said the direction and production values were second to none. Even in an amateurish way.

TERRANCE

It was just the play itself that stunk.

RAYMOND

Why are you still here?

TERRANCE

Isn't it obvious? I'm your biggest supporter.

RAYMOND

*(Beat)* You know what? Since none of you people will leave, how about I just leave.

PORTIA

How could possibly want to leave? This is the most exciting night of your life.

BETSY

That's kind of sad, if that's true.

LILITH

I just still can't believe they did it with hand puppets. I mean who ever would've thought.

RAYMOND

Would somebody please just shut her up?

LILITH

What's he so up in the air about?

TONY

*(Calmly)* I think most things at the moment.

PORTIA

What time is it?

TONY

*(Looks at his watch)* Almost two.

PORTIA

That means the first of the papers should be here soon. *(To LILITH)* Would you be a darling and go check? I told Sylvester... *(To OTHERS)* ...that's the butler... *(To LILITH)* ...to return the instant the first papers comes in. The first one is always the most important.

TONY

And unfortunately that'll be the Post.

TERRANCE

Why's that unfortunate? They the most vicious?

TONY

Quite the opposite. They're the most clueless.

BETSY

*(To TERRANCE)* They always give your shows great reviews.

RAYMOND

*(With great despair)* Oh dear God, they're going to love it then.

LILITH

I don't think he understands this whole review thing.

*(RAYMOND screams yet again.)*

LILITH

Why don't I go check with Sylvester? *(Exits)*

TERRANCE

Next time one of my shows calls for a screamer, I'm going to suggest you. You're a natural.

PORTIA

Why don't we all have another drink and wait for the Post. This is just getting all too exciting.

TONY

*(Crosses to bar)* What can I get everybody? And nothing too difficult. I only bartend on opening nights.

Scotch. TERRANCE

Anything with wine for me. BETSY

Mrs. Klondike? TONY

Champagne. PORTIA

Of course. Mr. Playwright? TONY

Cyanide. RAYMOND

TERRANCE  
I hate to keep saying it, but you really should be writing all this down. It's some quality stuff.  
*(TONY makes drinks.)*

RAYMOND  
What don't you people understand about my life being over?

BETSY  
*(Matter-of-factly)* It will be if you drink the cyanide.

PORTIA  
I think he was merely joking my darling.

TERRANCE  
Of course he was joking. He's brilliant that way it turns out.

RAYMOND  
*(Beat; calmly)* I would love to kill all of you.

TONY  
*(Crosses with drink)* Have a drink first. It will cheer you up.

PORTIA  
I think this calls for a toast.

TERRANCE  
Great idea.

PORTIA

Everyone get their drinks ready.

*(TONY passes out drinks to OTHERS.)*

BETSY

This is exciting. I've never been part of toast before.

TERRANCE

There's no doubt a great many things you've never been part of. One of which I'm sure I could show you this evening.

BETSY

This keeps getting better by the moment.

PORTIA

*(Raises her glass)* A toast. To the most esoteric and personally dramatic playwright I've ever been associated with. Raymond Mounds.

Everyone

To Raymond Mounds.

*(ALL drink with the exception of RAYMOND.)*

RAYMOND

You people are vicious.

LILITH

*(Enters with the Post and another newspaper)* Sylvester met me on the stairs with the papers. I haven't had a chance to see what they say yet.

TONY

Hand me the Post. Let me read it. That way we can at least keep the continuity the same.

LILITH

*(Hands him the paper)* I have no idea what that means, but I just love the theatre.

BETSY

So you think they liked it?

TONY

Of course. It's the Post. They always get everything backwards.

RAYMOND

I am in the room here people. I mean, just once could somebody please lie.

TONY

*(Flips through the paper)* Theatre...theatre...theatre... okay, here it is...I'll be damned, that's a first. *(Hands paper back to PORTIA)*

RAYMOND

They hated it?

TONY

Not exactly. It seems their critic died in the bathroom before the show even started. Apparently someone found him dead in a urinal somewhere around the middle of act one.

TERRANCE

How does someone die in a urinal?

PORTIA

*(Reading)* Says he fell off a step stool. Apparently a little short on range.

BETSY

*(Starts to laugh)* Oh my...I'm sorry...it's just that ...well...you know....

TERRANCE

No need to apologize my dear. Death by urinal is quite humorous. That's how my father went.

PORTIA

And the great part is you can't buy publicity like that.

RAYMOND

What the hell are you talking about?

PORTIA

Don't you see? It's the perfect metaphor for the play.

TERRANCE

I can see the tag line now, "Come see Raymond Mound's, "The Last Cocktail Party", or Die in a Urinal." People will see it out of fear alone.

PORTIA

Exactly. It's the accidental type of advertisement one can only dream of.

RAYMOND

How in the hell did you ever make any money in this business?

PORTIA

It's called starting a new trend.

RAYMOND

No, what you're starting is the beginning of complete insanity.

LILITH

Oh, I almost forgot. Sylvester had the Times too.

TERRANCE

The perfect cap for the evening.

BETSY

I'm going to take that as you're joking.

TONY

*(To LILITH; reaching hand out for paper)* May I?

LILITH

*(Hands him the paper)* Of course. We have to keep this continuity thing going now don't we?

TERRANCE

Precisely.

RAYMOND

I refuse to listen to this. I don't care what anybody says.

*(RAYMOND puts his hands over his ears and starts making loud noises while pacing.)*

LILITH

You don't by chance think he might be the one going insane?

PORTIA

He's a playwright; they're all a bit off.

TONY

This isn't as bad as I thought...all things considering.

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**