

the beginning of

LION TAMER (from **COUPLES**)

a short play by Rich Orloff

Place: A living room.

Time: Early evening.

Characters: A MAN and a WOMAN of mature age

As the play begins, the MAN and the WOMAN enter the living room.
Their apparel is that of intelligent people who care about their appearance.

MAN

– and there seems to be a nice breeze.

WOMAN

You'll find this place has excellent
cross-ventilation.

MAN

Good light in every room.

WOMAN

I can't live in a place without decent exposures.

MAN

I can't live in a place without
indecent exposures.

WOMAN

So I've heard.

MAN

From whom?

WOMAN

Oh, the usual suspects: friends, colleagues,
Internet sites for the depraved.

MAN

I see... How are your neighbors?

WOMAN

They're fabulous.

MAN

Quiet, I hope.

WOMAN

Nary a peep.

MAN

No loud stereos or TVs coming through th–

WOMAN

Oh, I couldn't tolerate that. I would've moved out in a minute if I had to deal with that.

MAN

I feel the same –

WOMAN

I mean, you hear the occasional grunt and groans, but that's never bothered me.

MAN

I could live with that.

WOMAN

Every now and then, you hear –
(accurately recalled:)
"Oh god – oh god – oh god."

MAN

I like religious people.

WOMAN

And sometimes, "Yes, give it to me baby, that's it, ohhh yeah, more baby, ohhhhh yeah."

MAN

I think communication is very important.

WOMAN

It's the key to a good relationship.

MAN

This is really a fine place you've got.

WOMAN

It's made me very happy.

MAN

Did I ask why you were moving?

WOMAN

(a definite drop in energy)

I forget. Let's see, you came in... hi,
I'm blah, blah, blah... I said, blah, blah, blah...

MAN

(quickly, overlapping with the above)

I asked, "Where shall we start?"
You said, "Let's start here and work
our way up the bedroo—"

WOMAN

And I said, blah, blah, blah –

MAN

So –... Why are you moving?

WOMAN

Do you really want to know?

MAN

Definitely.

WOMAN

(thinks a moment, then:)

I need more closet space.

MAN

Really? This seems to have a lot of closet space.

WOMAN

I need more.

MAN

And what's in this closet?

WOMAN

Oh, that's where I toss my old lovers.

MAN

Saying goodbye is never easy, is it?

WOMAN

Well, you know, once you establish
a connection with someone...

MAN

Are they *all* in here?

WOMAN

God, no. The closet's not *that* big. –

MAN

Hm.

WOMAN

– Just the ones I've had since I've moved here.

MAN

And the lovers before that?

WOMAN

Different closets. Different places.

MAN

If you don't mind me asking,
how many places have you lived?

WOMAN

I've lost count.

MAN

Really? Are you promiscuous
or bad at math?

WOMAN

I am as active as I am selective,
and I focus my energy on more
substantial things than counting.

MAN

I'm impressed.

WOMAN

So do you have any lovers in *your* closets?

MAN

No, that's not my style.

WOMAN

It's not?

MAN

When I'm done with a lover, I stuff them.

WOMAN

And mount them?

MAN

God no, I have more self-restraint than that.
Once I epoxy them and catalogue them, I...

WOMAN

You – ?

MAN

I give them to friends as Christmas presents.

WOMAN

That's thoughtful.

MAN

Anybody who gets me as a secret Santa
is always pleasantly surprised.

WOMAN

I like a man who's good to his friends.

MAN

Your eyes are quite luminescent,
you know that?

WOMAN

Thank you.

MAN

So is there a current... closet contender?

WOMAN

Not at the moment.

MAN

Are you looking for one?

WOMAN

I thought you came here to look
at the *place*.

MAN

Yes, but if I can –

WOMAN

Look, you seem like a very nice man.

MAN

Hardly.

WOMAN

Nice enough to make me
want to be frank with you.

MAN

If you'd like.

WOMAN

As I get older, I, well I lose patience quite easily.

MAN

Is that a warning?

WOMAN

It's an acknowledgement.

MAN

I see.

WOMAN

Do you honestly think an interlude of incredible
bliss is worth being tossed into a closet for eternity?

MAN

Oh, I have no intention of being
tossed into your closet.

WOMAN

Oh?

MAN

I'm also sure you'd never *want*
to toss me in the closet.

WOMAN

Oh?

MAN

Yes, "Oh".

WOMAN

The last man who had your confidence, God I
miss him. He was, how to, he was, he sparkled.
He was generous, kind, far kinder than I am,
and when we made love, tears came to my eyes.

MAN

Oh, did he spank you?

WOMAN

(a change in energy)

I don't appreciate that.

MAN

I'm sorry.

WOMAN

When he made love to me, he made men like you seem like expired luncheon meat.

MAN

I apologize. Really.

WOMAN

Where was I?

MAN

You said he sparkled.

WOMAN

Oh, yes. He always, he started slowly, kissing my fingers, each of them, individually, as if they each had their own – temperament, their own needs. His touch was, well, when he stroked my arm, he gave each hair on my arm, each follicle – goosebumps. No man could keep a goosebump going longer than he could. The more he stroked, well, you men, you always get so excited from one little rise. Just imagine feeling a thousand at the same time. Imagine a thousand parts of your body wanting more, a thousand parts aching for release. Finally, after I could stand it no longer, he put his hand on my shoulder, and with one commanding stroke from the curve of my shoulder down to my fingertips, he satisfied my entire arm.

MAN

I'm a two-arm man myself.

WOMAN

I'm not finished.