

SAME TIME, SAME NETWORK

By Jason Ohler

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Why now?

This is an original play that I still find timely and important despite the fact that it was written in 1987. It is a comedy with tragic overtones set in the Digital Age that explores the unchanging nature of the human condition regardless of how evolved our technology becomes. It is a story about the people behind the computer screens who use the latest tools to satisfy the oldest of desires. In my opinion, it addresses an area of human endeavor that needs serious attention, comically speaking.

As a biographical note that might help illuminate the basis for this play, I have been teaching online for 30 years, and had over 1000 online students before the Internet was available to the public.

A few production notes

Two men, perhaps many miles apart or perhaps next door to one another, give birth to a relationship on stage via their computers using electronic means; that can be interpreted as using email, texting, Facebook- it doesn't matter. Most of the action consists of them typing on their keyboards and letting the audience know what is going on through a combination of the following: a) speaking aloud what they are typing as they type, b) speaking aloud what they are reading (that is, what is sent by the other character), and c) speaking aloud to themselves *about* what they are typing and reading on their screens, annotating their conversations as they unfold.

I use this approach to letting the audience know what the characters are doing and saying, rather than using a more technological approach, such as actually displaying what they are typing on large screens that the audience can read. My approach is much simpler, and requires no functioning technology at all, only props that the actors use as computers.

Although the 'dialogue' is written as a conversation between two characters, it actually consists of two separate monologues that sometimes overlap in time. This approach to dialogue required adopting a few conventions for describing the characters' actions.

First, the markers [BT] and [ET] indicate when the characters *begin typing* and *end typing*. Second, I enclosed overlapping dialogue in a box, indicating when the characters are speaking at the same time. The dialogue outside the box does not overlap, but instead appears to the audience as a somewhat normal real-time "dialogue" between two people. The following provides an example of the use of these conventions:

DANA
I think someone's there. [BT] Hello? Anyone there? [ET]

CHRIS
Ahh, I have company. [BT] Indeed there is. [ET] Me!

DANA
I wonder who this is. [BT] The name's Dana. Yourself? [ET] Please don't be just another idiot with a computer.

CHRIS
Dana! Just like Mummy's cat. [BT] Hello, Dana. I'm Chris. Nice to meet you. [ET] Well, I'm not exactly meeting you! (*DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.*) Oh look at that. "Hello, CHRIS. What's your shoe size?" My shoe size?! He's into feet, I suppose. Not necessarily a bad thing.

The director and the reader are welcome to find other examples of overlapping dialogue, and to discern their own rhythms in the conversation.

Staging the technology

The two computers in the play are not used as functioning computers and do not even need to be turned on. To facilitate their use as props, the characters face the audience as they sit behind their computers, leaving the computers' screens more or less out of view. An option to building computer props is to intercept two of the many obsolete computers relegated to the junkyard by government and businesses on a regular basis.

Although the play calls for a computer 'beep' sound at one point, such a sound can be generated a number ways that don't require a computer, such as using a simple battery and buzzer or perhaps having the characters make the sound themselves. If it is possible to create the computer's hum (Soundtrack? A small fan hidden in the character's desk?) and glow (Turn the computer on but don't use it? Put a small lamp with a colored bulb in front of the monitor?), splendid.

Staging the actors – the need for movement

I have not indicated much movement of the actors. I leave that to them and the director. But it is clear that without movement (pacing, going to the window, gesticulating, etc.) the play is in danger of being overly inert. The characters need to move. How they move is up to those staging the performance.

Setting

There are two separate areas on stage, one representing CHRIS's living room, the other representing DANA's. Each area is outfitted with furniture, a PDA or DVD music player (or whatever is in vogue at the time of the production), a mirror that faces the audience, a desk with a computer on it, a phone, manuals and other computer paraphernalia. Each area also has a simple rectangular wood frame hanging from the ceiling that serves as a window.

CHRIS's area is neat, organized, tidy. Off to one side is a magazine rack. CHRIS is in his late-thirties, well-groomed, somewhat effeminate. He is wearing a dress shirt, a sweater, dress slacks, polished shoes. He is drinking tea.

In direct contrast, DANA's area is a pile of papers, crumpled beer cans, empty pizza boxes, equipment under repair, and half-read books cracked open and lying on his desk. Off to one side is a small refrigerator and a hot plate. He is also in his late-thirties, dressed in dirty jeans, a t-shirt, an old sweater, work boots.

As the play opens, DANA and CHRIS are buried behind their newspapers. They are reading the same issue of the same national newspaper (Wall Street Journal, USA Today, whatever); the front pages are turned toward the audience. DANA emerges from behind his newspaper, checks his watch and throws his paper down.

DANA
Goddamn, I hate waitin'.

CHRIS
(CHRIS emerges from behind his newspaper and checks his watch. He folds his paper and sets it in the magazine rack a bit nervously.) Who said anticipation was the fun part...

(They switch on their radios. Ideally, a sound track would play through the theater's sound system that presents the sounds of both Dana and Chris scanning through channels on their radios before finally selecting a station. DANA's radio should be playing something wild, brassy and electric, like Jeff Beck or AC/DC, and CHRIS'S radio should be playing something moody, vibrant and acoustic, like Chopin. If creating such a soundtrack is problematic, the director could have the characters simply play CDs on stage in a boombox or other portable music player that is in vogue at the time of the production. DANA leans back in his chair and stares at the ceiling. Off and on he taps his foot to the music and mimics playing the guitar. From time to time, CHRIS mimics playing the piano. They turn their radios down, go to their windows and look up at the sky.)

CHRIS
Oh what a beautiful star!

DANA
Somethin' about the cold, night sky that makes me feel at home.

CHRIS
This calls for a wish. I wish I may, I wish I might, meet my true love on Uncle Jerry's Online Show tonight.

DANA

Uncle Jerry, you're my star. I hope you're a millionaire, even if you ain't real.

CHRIS

(Laughing, looking in the mirror.) Honestly, Christopher, you gave up a ticket to the opera to pass notes through your computer to someone you'll probably never meet. How do you explain that?

DANA

(Looking in the mirror.) Dana, Dana, what are we doing, asshole? It's the weekend again, and here we are, hangin' on to this stupid idea that somewhere out there is someone who might understand us. Does that make me anally retentive? What would Freud say?

CHRIS

Being 37 and alone...I guess it's more important to meet new friends, even if I can't see them. Oh, dear, I hope I'm not neurotic. Mummy would just die.

DANA

(Looking in the mirror.) You know something? You haven't grown up at all, not one goddamned bit. In high school while everyone else was at the dance tryin' to cop a feel, you were at home making robots in the basement, getting' off on advanced calculus and readin' Freud. So why are you so surprised that you stay home on Saturday night to talk to some faceless stranger? No wonder dad called you shit for brains.

(Both look at their watches.)

CHRIS

Oh! It's time.

(Chris turns off his radio. He grabs a teapot and sets it on the desk as he sits down behind his computer. He picks up the phone to make sure there is a dial tone. He types as he makes an online connection. Author update note: dialing up via modem can be replaced by modern forms of connectivity currently in use -- DSL, cable modem, whatever's being used at the time.)

CHRIS

I'm connected! Oh hello! [BT] Good evening, Uncle Jerry. [ET] Such a nice man.

DANA

Holy shit! *(He turns off his radio. He snatches a beer from the refrigerator, sits behind his computer and dials up).* Wasn't payin' attention. There we go. [BT] Hi, Uncle Jerry. How's tricks? [ET]

CHRIS

By all means, [BT] Yes, I am ready to see the first category. [ET] Ooooo. This is so exciting.

DANA

Yahs, yahs. [BT] I'm ready. Let it rip. [ET] Let's get on with it.

CHRIS

(Reading off his screen.) First category, “Elderly Christians with a penchant for buttermilk, square dancing, good clean fun.” [BT] Sounds inviting, but I’m not elderly. [ET]

DANA

Never been clean a day in my life. [BT] No thanks. Next. [ET] *(Reading off his screen.)* “Bikers into leather and public affection.” None of your damn business. [BT] Nope. [ET]

CHRIS

I enjoy leather immensely, when it is done tastefully of course, but public affection always struck me as such an inconsiderate nuisance. [BT] No thank you. [ET]

DANA

This is a little closer. *(Reading off his screen.)* “Computer addicts left by their spouses for normal relationships.” Maybe so, but who wants reality on a Saturday night. [BT] Nope. [ET] Besides, normal’s just a setting on your washing machine.

CHRIS

Too close for comfort. [BT] I’ll pass. [ET] Do lighten up a bit, Uncle Jerry.

DANA

(Reading off his screen.) “Librarians with a love of Shakespeare and bird watching.”

CHRIS

Mercy, that describes me to a ‘t’! [BT] Plug me in, please. [ET]

DANA

Haven’t the foggiest about either. And it sounds sort of faggy. Oh, what the hell. I might learn something... [BT] I’ll take it. [ET]

CHRIS

Here’s hoping there’s a like minded soul out there.

DANA

Besides, the evening’s young and there’s networkin’ to be done!

(Pause.)

DANA

I think someone’s there. [BT] Hello? Anyone there? [ET]

CHRIS

Ahh, I have company. [BT] Indeed there is. [ET] Me!

DANA

Who we got here? [BT] The name's Dana. Yourself? [ET] Please don't be just another idiot with a computer.

CHRIS

Dana. Just like Mummy's cat. [BT] Hello, Dana. I'm Chris. Nice to meet you. [ET] Well, I'm not exactly meeting you! (*DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.*) Oh goodness, look at that. "Hello, CHRIS. What's your shoe size?" My shoe size?! He has a foot fetish, I suppose. Not necessarily a bad thing at all.

DANA

Might as well let them know up front how weird I am.

CHRIS

[BT] Six and a half. [ET]

DANA

Whoa. That didn't scare 'em off. Impressive.

CHRIS

(*DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.*) Am I over 18 years of age? My yes! [BT] I'm... [ET] ...well, let's not scare them away, it's such a youth oriented culture we live in... [BT] I'm thirty-two...and a half. [ET] Close enough. [BT] I just happen to have small feet. What's your shoe size? And how old are you?[ET]

DANA

Oh, OK. (*DANA lifts up a foot and studies it before putting back down.*) Let's make this civilized. [BT] Mine are elevens [ET] well, shit, that's close enough... [BT] except in the spring when the rain makes 'em swell up a size or two. I'm... [ET] ...thirty-six, seven, eight...I forget... [BT] ...thirty-three. [ET]

CHRIS

How clever! [BT] Speaking of spring, do you follow the warbler migration? [ET]

DANA

[BT] I thought you could get arrested for that sort of thing. [ET]

CHRIS

Uh oh, I think I have a fibber. [BT] Warblers are little birds that come in an assortment of songs and colors. Maybe they don't frequent your area. What part of the country are you from? [ET]

DANA
[BT] The Northwest. [ET]

CHRIS
[BT] I'm from the East Coast. So if you don't watch birds, what do you watch? [ET]

DANA
(DANA rummages around in his pile of books, and picks up a personal notebook and reads.) [BT] "My weight and my life, which passes by slowly, like a slug on a sidewalk after a hard rain." [ET] I wrote that one night when I was shit-faced. Not bad.

CHRIS
A wounded worm. Must be a fisherman. How earthy, yet sensitive. Time for some Shakespeare. [BT] You are not alone. Do you remember which play this comes from? "Tomorrow and tomorrow, and tomorrow creeps into this petty pace until the last moment of recorded time..." [ET]

DANA
Oh shit, I think I'm supposed to know that. [BT] Just a minute. Phone's ringing. [ET]
(Dana picks up his phone, speed dials and waits a few moments impatiently before speaking.)

DANA
Bruno, you retard English major, it's Dana. No time to gab. Here's your chance to show me that your college education isn't as worthless as we all know it is. And this can pay me back for puking in my car after the football game. *(Listens...)* I don't care if it was 15 years ago. It still stinks in the back seat. Anyways, shuddup. Listen to me...

CHRIS
He certainly is taking a long time. I'll beat he's cheating and looking it up on the Internet... *(CHRIS pulls out a nail file and files his nails.)*

DANA
(Still talking to Bruno on the phone and reading from his screen.) Who said "Tomorrow and tomorrow, and tomorrow creeps into this petty pace until the last moment of recorded time..." ...uh huh...uh huh... I don't want a fuckin' dissertation, puke meister...uh huh...uh huh...got it...gotta' go.

DANA
(Dana slams down the phone and starts typing.) [BT] Shakespeare. [ET] Christ, everyone knows that. Ask me something hard...

CHRIS
Well, yes, silly, of course it's Shakespeare. [BT] Yes. But which play? [ET]

DANA

(Dana speed dials again and a moment later is speaking into the phone.) Which play, dimwit? What do you mean you can't remember!?! *(Slams down the receiver and looks intently at his screen.)* What is this, fuckin' Jeopardy? How the hell would I know?

CHRIS

(DANA types and CHRIS reads off his screen.) "I don't remember the name of the play, but I do remember it had something to do with love and power... and the love of power...and the power of love." [BT] Bravo! How very well stated! [ET]

DANA

Shit, you'd buy anything. Wish I had somethin' to sell 'em.

CHRIS

Obviously a scholar. [BT] Where did you go to school? [ET]

DANA

[BT] The streets of New York City. And you? [ET]

CHRIS

Oh, how frighteningly contemporary. Probably a drastic understatement as well. If I say I received a B.S. in library science from Anvil Baptist College, I'll be thought horribly prosaic.

DANA

I didn't think it was that hard of a question.

CHRIS

[BT] I received my [ET] ...oh dear, what to do...oh go with the flow, Christopher... [BT] my Ph.D. from Berkeley in physics,

DANA

Cool...

CHRIS

[BT] ...and eastern religion... [ET]

DANA

Whoa...

CHRIS

[BT] ...with a minor in business. [ET]

DANA

Holy shit!

CHRIS

[BT] I found my education was quite useful when I was in... [ET] ...hmm... Brazil?
No- too boring... [BT] ...Pakistan. [ET] ...I do hope I go there someday.

DANA

Pakistan! The only foreign country I've ever been to is Alaska. [BT] I didn't get to
Pakistan when I traveled through Euroasia. I hear it's dirty there. [ET] ...Hope he's
not Pakistani. Could piss a guy off.

CHRIS

[BT] Depends on where you go. [ET]

DANA

[BT] I was referring to the dirty parts. [ET]]

CHRIS

[BT] Of course. Because the clean parts are quite clean. So, Dana, what do you do
when you aren't traveling? [ET]

DANA

[BT] Stay at home. [ET]

CHRIS

Doesn't want to tell me. Quite alright. [BT] I spend a lot of time at home too. As a matter
of fact, I rarely go out. And you? [ET]

CHRIS

(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) I thought so.

DANA

[BT] Do you do videos? [ET]

CHRIS

Do I *do* them? *DO* them? And how exactly does one *do* a video? Maybe they're talking
about those participational videos, like Richard Simmons' exercise tapes.

DANA

Christ almighty, [BT] Do you watch videos? [ET] ...or doncha'? Don't tell me I got a
dingbat.

CHRIS

Well, now, that's a bit clearer. [BT] Oh yes. I watch them. [ET]

DANA

Thank you! I'll make the questions simpler in the future.

CHRIS

(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) "What type do I watch?" None of your business.

DANA

(CHRIS types, DANA reads off his screen.) "All types." [BT] Me too. Videos make stayin' home a lot of fun. I take videos with me wherever I go. VCRs are everywhere. For me, videos are sort of a portable living room. [ET] ...Dang it, that's damn near profound.

CHRIS

That was profound.

DANA

(Dana belches). So's that.

(Pause. Both look at their watches.)

CHRIS

Enough small talk.

DANA

Don't piss the night away.

CHRIS

[BT] I stay home because people don't understand me. I got tired of explaining myself. [ET]

DANA

Boy, do I hear ya'. [BT] Exactly. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] I actually went to see a psychiatrist about it once. He said I have agoraphobia. That's the fear of everything. [ET]

DANA

Everything! How do you eat if you're afraid of food? Maybe someone feeds him when he's asleep...?

CHRIS

Oh dear, I hope I haven't scared off Dana.

DANA

I thought agrophobia was the fear of farmers.

CHRIS

[BT] But I'm not afraid of birds! [ET]

DANA

[BT] Not even vultures? [ET]

CHRIS

Well...I... [BT] yes, I suppose; I'm afraid of some hawks too...and too many starlings in one place makes me nervous... [ET]

DANA

Been watchin' too much Hitchcock.

CHRIS

[BT] ...and blue jays when they are hungry. What a racket! [ET]

DANA

Oh yeah, way too much Hitchcock. I understand. I know what it's like to be haunted by TV. When I was six years old I broke every vase my mother had, looking for the woman who played in "I Dream of Genie."

CHRIS

Please say something...

DANA

Dad kicked the shit out of me. Mom just sat and cried.

CHRIS

[BT] Isn't there something you are afraid of? [ET]

DANA

No, but if it will make you feel better... [BT] There are some days when I'm afraid of sunshine. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] So am I! [ET]

DANA

"So am I" *what?*

CHRIS

[BT] I'm afraid of the sun! [ET]

DANA

Well, yahs, Shakespeare! You're afraid of everything. That would include the sun.

CHRIS

(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) “Do I have the blinds drawn all time?”

DANA

(CHRIS types, DANA reads from the screen.) He does!

CHRIS

(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) “Do I wear sunglasses on cloudy days sometimes?”

DANA

(CHRIS types, Dana reads off his screen.) He does.

CHRIS

(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) “Do I hide in a closet at parties?”

DANA

(CHRIS types, DANA reads off his screen.) Cool!

CHRIS

How wonderful! A fellow closeteer.

DANA

Bizarre. I’m not alone after all.

(Both get up and walk around. CHRIS sips his tea, DANA slurps his beer. Suddenly, they run back to their terminals and begin typing.)

DANA

[BT] Into molasses brandy? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Yes. [ET] A tremendous aphrodisiac, especially when applied externally.

DANA

[BT] Do you hate yams? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Their very presence on the table, nay, in the world, nauseates me. [ET]

DANA

Whoa. [BT] Into Star Trek? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Absolutely. I have seen all of the reruns five times. [ET]

DANA
Now, that's hard core.

CHRIS
Well, three times actually... But I do wear the official Captain Kirk pajamas to bed every night, though there is no need to admit it that to a complete stranger! Mummy got them for me.

DANA
[BT] People who jog make me sick. [ET] There. I said it. Fuck 'em if they jog.

CHRIS
Goodness, gracious, [BT] Me too! [ET] Joggers are extremely ca-ca.

DANA
[BT] Though I don't smoke. [ET]

CHRIS
Oh, heavens no. [BT] Me either. But you don't have to be a non-smoker to be offended by joggers. [ET]

DANA
[BT] Exactly. [ET] Well... (*picking up a pack of cigarettes*)...I don't smoke much, anyway. Birthdays, weekends, after a good meal, that sort of thing...

CHRIS
[BT] Are you religious? [ET]

DANA
[BT] Never. Picked it up it from my dad. He said joinin' a religion was like putting your soul in a vise. [ET] He was a ragin' alcoholic, but he had his moments of clarity.

CHRIS
Precisely.

DANA
[BT] He was a machinist. [ET]

CHRIS
How blue collar! How romantic!

DANA
[BT] How about you? Are you a practicing anything? [ET]

DANA

(CHRIS types, DANA reads off his screen.) “I practice being a Christian every Christmas with Grandpa and Grandma.” Well, that’s permissible. “Makes them feel better about things. My sister’s a harlot, my mother shot herself...” On purpose I wonder... “I don’t know who my father was. Grandma and Grandpa are worried that the family will be un-represented in heaven.”

CHRIS

(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) “I know what you mean. I take Ma to church every Easter. My father’s in jail...” What for I wonder...” My brother’s a gigolo, and my sister, Phil, had her sex changed. ‘Phil’ used to be Phyllis, now he’s Phillip. My mother’s afraid she won’t know which bathroom to use in the next world.” My, we certainly are being candid...

DANA

I’ve sure been talking a lot...

CHRIS

It’s sort of mysterious...

DANA

It’s sort of Hitchcocky...

(Pause. Both stare into their screens.)

DANA

[BT] I need to do a few things. What do you say we hold the line open and go for an interactive time out? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Fine with me. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Uncle Jerry, chat room 89 connected to CHRIS, requesting an interactive time-out. [ET]

(Pause.)

CHRIS

[BT] Okay by me, Uncle Jerry. [ET]

DANA

[BT] One of us will beep when we’re ready. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Right-O. [ET]

DANA

[DANA reads off his screen.] "Your interactive time out has been approved." Good.
Good. "4,754 onliners tonight." Cool. Busy night in data land.

CHRIS

Marvelous. I need to stretch.

(They get up and walk around. DANA slurps his beer. CHRIS sips his tea.)

DANA

A he or a she...

CHRIS

Dana...hmmm...male or female...

DANA

I know lots of people named Chris, guys and women.

CHRIS

Mummy's psychiatrist was a woman named Dana, but then there's Uncle Dana, the
animal trainer...

DANA

Afraid of blue jays...gotta' be a woman... though I remember Buck Johnson, All-Star
fullback at my high school, who was afraid of worms...anything's possible... fainted right
in the middle of a game once when he saw one crawlin' on the ground, that asshole...cost
us the championship..

CHRIS

Doesn't...feel like a lady...though there are all kinds; there was dear old cousin Betty, Big
Bottom Betty as the patrons of Gus's Saloon called her, who, for an extra fifty cents,
would open your bottle of beer with her teeth...

DANA

And my buddy Lance, a crane operator, who couldn't stand the sight of peanut butter; it
made him pass out.

CHRIS

And dear, sweet Aunt Louise. Deacon in her church, treasurer of her bridge club, sued by
the SPCA for experimenting with just how long a cat could last in a microwave oven set
on bake...what a mess that must have been to clean up...I wonder what cleanser she
used...

DANA
(*Looking in the mirror.*) There's a very simple way to find out.

CHRIS
I'll bet Aunt Louise used ammonia.

DANA and CHRIS, simultaneously, looking in their mirror.
I could just ask.

(*Pause.*)

DANA
Naaa.

CHRIS
Honestly, Christopher.

DANA
Who cares?

CHRIS
It's...

DANA
...just not...

CHRIS
...not important...

CHRIS
(*Looking in the mirror.*) Suppose it was a woman, what then?

DANA
(*Looking in the mirror.*) Just what are you going to do with the information once you get it, asshole? So you're the loneliest goddamned person in the whole goddamned world, you think havin' a girlfriend on the East Coast is going to help you any?

CHRIS
You really are being rather silly, Christopher. Certainly Dana is one of the more interesting, like-minded, compatible, understanding people you've ever met, but worth moving across the continent for? Don't be absurd.

(Pause. They both settle in behind their computers. DANA and CHRIS type. A bell sounds at each other's computer.)

CHRIS

Dana's back! Perfect timing.

DANA

Are we connected, or what?

CHRIS

I'll flip. Heads I ask, tails I don't. *(Flips the coin.)*

DANA

(Looking at his mirror.) Yo, Dana. You're lookin' pretty sharp tonight, asshole.

CHRIS

Tails. Oh poo, I'll ask anyway.

(Pause.)

DANA & CHRIS in unison

They're waiting...

DANA

Just let 'er rip. Waddya got to lose?

CHRIS

Be bold, Christopher. Don't let this moment slip through your keyboard.

DANA

Just ask 'em whether they wear panties or boxers.

CHRIS

Lead them into revealing it. Get their view on vaginal cleansers or something.

DANA

Just ask them whether they sit or stand to take a piss. Tho' sometimes I sit down... *(He rises majestically.)* Dad never sat down... *(He sits again.)*

CHRIS

[BT] Are you... [ET]

DANA

Yes...

CHRIS
[BT] ...could you... [ET]

DANA
(He reads the screen.) ...speak, goddamn it!

CHRIS
I really should have a few sessions with Dr. Goodman.

DANA
C'mon shit for brains, go for it. [BT] Is that CHRIS as in Christine or Christopher? [ET]
There I did it. No big deal.

CHRIS
[BT] Are you a Ms. or a Mr.? [ET] Phew!
DANA and CHRIS in unison
Amazing! They want to know if I'm a man or a woman!

DANA
The fucking nerve!

CHRIS
That is so superficial!

(They get up, pace, and sit back down.)

DANA
[BT] I suggest we move to privacy level four. [ET]

CHRIS
[BT] Excellent idea. [ET]

DANA
[BT] Uncle Jerry, chat room 89, connected to CHRIS, requesting level four clearance.
[ET]

CHRIS
[BT] Yes, Uncle Jerry, acknowledged from CHRIS in chat room 89. [ET]

DANA
Yes, I understand that you will no longer be able to track our connection.

CHRIS
Yes, fine, I understand we will be completely on our own.

DANA
Enter [BT] Y [ET] to confirm...

CHRIS
Enter [BT] Y [ET] to confirm...

DANA
Goodbye, Uncle Jerry. Thanks.

CHRIS
Goodbye, see you next week.

DANA and CHRIS in unison
Now then...

DANA
Answer the question.

CHRIS
Right-O. Male or female. That's pretty simple.

(Both mumble about being hot as they take off their sweaters or outer shirts. DANA throws his on the floor, CHRIS folds his neatly.)

DANA
Now...

CHRIS
Now...

DANA
I'm a....

CHRIS
The last time I checked...

DANA
According to informed sources at the fuckin' Pentagon...

CHRIS

In this lifetime, psychically speaking...

DANA

They must be wondering what's taking so long. So am I. Why's it suddenly so goddamned important what sex I am?

CHRIS

Do we really need to know? Knowing will limit our relationship so much.

DANA

I mean, isn't that why we communicate this way, so we don't know, so we don't set ourselves up for disappointments?

CHRIS

So we find out, then what? Then everyone goes into their little gender box and that's where they stay. How dreadful.

DANA

Why's this so damn hard? God knows I'm a brave man, but...

CHRIS

Once we find out we'll never get to know each other beyond a certain point.

DANA

(Looking in the mirror.) Oh buck up, ya' faggot. No guts no glory!

CHRIS

(Looking in the mirror.) Make peace with the inevitable, Christopher.

DANA and CHRIS speaking in unison

C'mon (DANA, CHRIS), be a man. *(They both type and speak in unison.)* [BT] I am a woman. [ET] *(Both, reading off their screens.)* "A WOMAN!"

DANA

Shit!

CHRIS

Blast it!

DANA

Well, up mine for lyin'.

CHRIS

Mummy's right. I do need professional help. So neurotic, so, so neurotic. Identity meltdown! I must get help. Must.

DANA

Why the hell did I lie? Just how fucked up am I? I think I'll think about it later.

CHRIS

Why did I lie? A little wishful thinking perhaps? Dream on, McDuff.

DANA

Not at all cool. If you'd been honest you might have had your first date this year.

CHRIS

Oh, mummy wouldn't be proud of me at all. Here I go back into the dark hole of not being able to accept my sexuality. Bad metaphor...

DANA

What the hell were you thinking? (*Looking into the mirror.*) Whaddya so afraid of, asshole? Well now you're in a helluva mess. You can't tell her the truth now. She'd hate you. 'Wonder what Freud would say...

CHRIS

Now what am I going to say? Mummy must never find out.

DANA

Fuck Freud. What's a woman question? How about, 'Do you put tarragon in Lasagna?' No, she'll be offended...maybe not, though, coming from another woman...

CHRIS

(*DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.*) "Do I read Ms. magazine?" I suppose I do.
[BT] Surely. Last issue really hit home, don't you think? [ET]

[*Author update note: Feel free to substitute Ms. Magazine with the name of another current magazine.*]

DANA

[BT] Sure did. Just goes to show what you can do if you stand up to the chauvinists of the world. We have our rights! We're covered in the constitution. [ET] I think...

CHRIS

Oh dear. She sounds sort of militant.

DANA

[BT] Equal pay for equal work and four months off for pregnancy or the men that run the power structure can find their own damn way to make kids! [ET]

CHRIS

Her wounds are deep. She's been oppressed a long time.

DANA

I've never felt oppressed before. It genuinely pisses a guy off! [BT] Fuck Freud! [ET]

CHRIS

Oh dear, the "f" word! How vulgar! ...but so...*exciting*...umm...[BT] Right on! [ET] ...I think...

DANA

Right on. OK. Good. What else do women talk about? Marriage. [BT] Are you married? [ET]

CHRIS

Married? *Married?* Well I suppose at my age I must be. What would it say about me if I weren't?

DANA

Either you are or you aren't.

CHRIS

[BT] Yes. [ET]

DANA

Shit! Well, that sure closes a few doors.

CHRIS

But I'm probably not happy, am I? No, I'm not at all happy. As a matter of fact, we're getting a divorce! But I mustn't tell her...not yet. She might think I'm a...nothing...(Looking at her screen.) What is this? (DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) "What does my husband do?" Umm...well, now, let me see... [BT] My husband's a...banker [ET] how bourgeois, [BT] a computer programmer, [ET] so cliché...

DANA

Hmm...

CHRIS

[BT] ...and a masseuse... [ET], that's better.

DANA

Oh, come on, lady. I suppose he races yachts too!

CHRIS

[BT] ...and a world class competition yacht racer. [ET]

DANA

No fuckin' way! Is that all?

CHRIS

That ought to round him out. After all, I want a husband I can be proud of even if we are splitting up. [BT] And you? Are you married? [ET]

DANA

Ha! You bet I am. [BT] My husband, his name is Clint... [ET]

CHRIS

Married! Oh shoot!

DANA

[BT] ...who bears a remarkable resemblance to a movie star of the same name, is a...physics professor...a classical pianist...[ET]

CHRIS

Oh, do be serious...

DANA

[BT] and a sky diver. [ET] Ha! World class yacht racer, my ass...

CHRIS

Oh, Clint is it? [BT] Rocky, my husband, used to skydive. Now he hang glides. [ET]

DANA

Big deal. [BT] So does my grandmother. [ET] (*DANA swigs his beer and burps.*)

CHRIS

[BT] Rocky used to be an astronaut. [ET]

DANA

Oh, bullshit. [BT] He just said that so he could get out of the house. It's the oldest excuse in the book. [ET]

CHRIS

I beg your pardon! [BT] My Rocky spent a great deal of time at NASA. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Nassau, Bahamas, gettin' his rocket launched by some beach blanket bimbo maybe. [ET]

CHRIS
Oh! How cruel!

DANA
Bitch!

CHRIS
Hussy!

DANA
Slut!

CHRIS
Strumpet!

DANA
(Looking in the mirror.) I'm sorry for bein' a jerk but I just can't stand it when someone lies to me.

CHRIS
[BT] My Rocky would never lie to me...never... [ET] Oh, he might...if he...existed...I'm sure he would...

DANA
It's your fantasy, lady. [BT] Sorry. It reminded me of some bad times with Clint. It set me off. [ET]

CHRIS
[BT] I understand. Did Clint abuse you? [ET]

CHRIS
(DANA types, CHRIS reads off his screen.) "Mostly emotional abuse, the kind that is impossible to prove in court." I know the kind. "Totally insensitive to my needs as a woman to be empowered by my own life."

DANA
Not bad! 'Heard it on a soap opera.'

CHRIS

Men. They're so...plugged up. Bad metaphor for me to use. [BT] Did he leave you? [ET]

DANA

Did he? I think so. Think so? KNOW SO! Of course he did, the shithead. [BT] Sure did. He took all the money from our joint account to finance a trip to Nepal. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] A familiar story. He left his woman in search of a guru. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Exactly! How did you know? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Happens all the time. My Rocky is ...gone. In the desert somewhere, looking for a shaman. [ET]

DANA

Ahh! I may have a date this year after all.

CHRIS

[BT] Unconditional love and a happy home weren't enough. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Right! I know what you mean. I was there for him. He took me for granted. I learned how to cook gourmet, just for him! [ET] No small thing, given I'm basically a meat, potatoes and pizza man.

CHRIS

[BT] He had to go find himself while you sat and stewed and worried and experienced the rejection of a lifetime. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Exactly! Why do they do it, Chris, why? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Because, they are bored with themselves and they blame it on the people around them for not being exciting enough to hold their attention. They think they are bored with us, but that's just plain avoidance. They're bored with themselves. They're unhappy with their lives. No amount of love we ever give them will be enough. And rather than look in the bathroom mirror they go looking for a holy man just to see their own reflections. I was glad Rocky went. I was tired of not being 'the woman in the movies,' do you know what I mean? [ET]

DANA

[BT] Exactly! I'm tired of being judged against some two dimensional, movie bimbo that all the men feel up with their eyes. [ET]

CHRIS
Precisely.

DANA
[BT] As a matter of fact, I'm tired of a lot of things. [ET]

CHRIS
Get it off your chest, Dana.

DANA
[BT] I am tired of compromising my needs as a woman. [ET]

CHRIS
Right-O.

DANA
[BT] My integrity... [ET]

CHRIS
Precisely.

DANA
[BT] And my power in the name of love! [ET]

CHRIS
[BT] Absolutely! [ET]

DANA
Maybe I was just having a bad lay...I mean day...

DANA
[BT] Oh Chris, what is love anyways? [ET]

DANA and CHRIS typing and speaking in unison:
[BT] Never having to say you're sorry. [ET]

CHRIS
(Tearfully.) Such a beautiful book!

DANA
(Sniveling.) God awful fuckin' movie!

DANA

[BT] You really understand. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] So do you. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Clint and I are getting a divorce. [ET]

CHRIS

Splendid!

DANA

I just decided. I mean, fuck Clint. He's just not there for me.

CHRIS

[BT] Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Don't waste your energy. Clint's history. It's for the best. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] I understand...as much as I can...that's why Rocky and I are calling it quits. [ET]

DANA

So you said. [BT] I'm sorry. [ET]

(Pause.)

CHRIS

[BT] Maybe we could meet? [ET]

DANA

No fuckin way!

CHRIS

Oh, God, what have I done. But Dr. Goodman did say to take more risks to overcome my insecurities.

(Pause, while both become agitated.)

CHRIS

[ET] Oh, how stupid of me. I am sorry.[ET] I think I love my insecurities. They make me feel so...secure.

DANA

[BT] Don't be. I'm leaving on business...for awhile. Maybe when I get back we could meet halfway. Iowa, maybe. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Sure. Iowa. Meet you in the cornfield. [ET] Oooh, bad metaphor again.

(Pause.)

CHRIS

[BT] Never mind. [ET]

DANA

[BT] OK. [ET]

(Pause.)

CHRIS

[BT] May I ask your occupation? [ET]

DANA

Fair enough. What the hell do I do for a living?

CHRIS

She's going to ask me next.

DANA

[BT] I...do...a lot of things... [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Odd jobs, those sorts of things? [ET]

DANA

[BT] Exactly. "No job too odd," is my motto. They call me Ms. Fixit. [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] I'm afraid I'm no good with that sort of thing. The only thing I know how to fix is dinner. [ET]

DANA

[BT] We'd get along just swell. I can't make a baloney sandwich. [ET] Jeesuz, that was a dumb thing to say.

CHRIS

Oh dear, you don't eat baloney, do you?

DANA

[BT] Though I don't actually eat baloney. [ET]

CHRIS

That's a relief.

DANA

Well, not very often... and you usually can't taste it with all the mayonnaise I use. And the Fritos I smash into the white bread.

CHRIS

[BT] What kind of wardrobe do you keep? [ET]

DANA

Wardrobe? Sure, she's a woman. It's all clothes and jewelry to them. Hmm... [BT] It's hard to describe...It's...varied... [ET] *(DANA rummages through a pile of magazines and plops one in front of him.)* [BT] Let me tell you what I am wearing right now. I have on a burgundy wrap-around skirt, a green flannel shirt and a white sash. And you? [ET]

CHRIS

Oh dear. I, uh,... *(CHRIS takes a magazine from the magazine rack and sets it in front of him. It is the same one that DANA has. It should be a mass market magazine, like an ad on the back cover of Newsweek.)* [ET] I am wearing a dark red, burgundy actually, skirt, a greenish flannel shirt and...a white sash. [ET]

(They pick up their magazines and stare at them.)

DANA

[BT] Boots? [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] Silver-gray, half-way up my calves. [ET]

DANA

[BT] Me too! [ET] Cool!

CHRIS

How wonderful! [BT] My goodness, we are connected. [ET]

DANA

[BT] I guess so! [ET]

(Pause.)

DANA

[BT] Rather than meet in Iowa, why don't we exchange phone numbers? [ET]

CHRIS

Hmmm...

DANA

[BT] Sorry I was a little scared about meetin' before. First time jitters and all...about having a new friend... [ET] Ooo, goddamn, that was dumb.

CHRIS

[BT] I understand. It's easier to talk first, even for women. [ET]

DANA

Right.

CHRIS

[BT] There's something about seeing someone that is so final. I understand, really. [ET] What's the worst that could happen? She could be a psychopath, a fugitive from the law, a republican hatchet murderess looking for a mother figure. She'll plug my number into some gigantic database, find out where I live and come hack me to pieces for impersonating a woman.

DANA

She's thinking. What if she says yes? I'll have to tell her who I really am. She won't be pleased. Goddamn you sometimes, Dana.

CHRIS

And yet, I've never felt so at ease with a woman before. By Jove, this could be it. Even at a distance I feel somewhat...fulfilled...transported...

DANA

Maybe she won't get mad. Maybe she'll be cool about the whole thing. Maybe she'll be ecstatic to know that there's a man in the world who understands her. We have so much to talk about. Our husband's are so much alike!

CHRIS

Oh, Christopher, go for it. [BT] OK. Let's exchange phone numbers. [ET]

CHRIS

I should record the number in a file.

DANA

I oughta' catch this in a file. *(To himself.)* [BT] I'll name the file 'DANA'. [ET] *(To himself.)* [BT] Think I'll call the file 'CHRIS.' [ET]

CHRIS

[BT] 777-848-0864 [ET]

DANA

[BT] 777-424-0981 [ET]

CHRIS

That's my area code. She doesn't live in the Northwest!

DANA

What the hell? She doesn't live on the East Coast. She's next door. God, I hate it when people lie to me.

CHRIS

(Slowly.) How interesting. There seems to be a pattern in the numbers.

DANA

(Slowly.) Look at that. Middle numbers are all multiples of two and the last four digits form a pattern of squares. God, I am such a geek!

CHRIS

I wonder what a numerologist would find in it.

DANA

I wonder what my cross-translating pattern recognizer software would make out of it...

(The lights go out.)

CHRIS

A power outage!?

DANA

A fuckin' power failure?!

CHRIS

Oh dear God! Darn, darn, darn, darn, darn!

DANA

There is no god! Fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck, fuck!

CHRIS

Oh, how awful! I haven't saved my file! And we were at level 4 with no tracking. I've lost the number!

DANA

The number! I didn't save my file! And Uncle Jerry stopped tracking us!

CHRIS

Oh, Christopher, honestly!

DANA

It's gone! For chrissake, me, of all people! ME! How long have I been tellin' other people to save their files! I can't fuckin' believe it! I didn't save my goddamned file!

CHRIS

It all felt so magical, so wonderfully mysterious!

DANA

Think, shit-for-brains, think. What was the number? (*Scrambles to grab pen and paper in the dark.*)

CHRIS

The number...what was it?...Oh, I can see it. There was a pattern. Area code was the same. Then they were like mine...

DANA

Can't lose the number...the pattern. Mine is 424 his was 848...

CHRIS

777-424-...then...

DANA

777-424...no, that's mine! ...777-848...0

CHRIS

777-424-0981. That's it. That's it. Where's a pencil? Where's a flash light? 777-424-0981...777-424-0981...

DANA

777-848-0864. That's it. Like mine, except hers is 8 then 8 squared. 777-848-0864. Gotta' write it down.

CHRIS

777-424-0981. 777-424-0981. 777-424-0981. Lord, let there be light!

DANA

777-848-0864. 777-848-0864. 777-848-0864. Hey God, how 'bout some fuckin' lights?! (*The lights come back on.*)

CHRIS

(*Ecstatically.*) I love Divine intervention!

DANA

(*Indignantly.*) Thank fuckin' You!

(They write the numbers down, begin to dial and stop.)

CHRIS
I can't!

DANA
Hold up, asshole.

(Pause.)

CHRIS
I...just...can't...

DANA
Time out.

CHRIS
She won't like me. I just know it.

DANA
Don't ruin a good thing.

(Pause.)

CHRIS
If this were a real relationship...

DANA
Why do I have this problem all of a sudden?

CHRIS
...then the evening would probably have been enhanced by a power failure. The romance would have been increased by the darkness.

DANA
If I didn't have these problems, I'd have other problems for sure...

CHRIS
We would have lit a candle, watched the shadows dance on each other's face...

DANA
...worse problems, for sure, bein' as fucked up as I am and all...

CHRIS
...we could have gotten close enough to smell each other's perfume...

DANA

When the refrigerator stopped purring...

CHRIS

...listened to one another's breathing,

DANA

...and the clocks stopped hummin', and it got real quiet...

CHRIS

...felt each other's breath as we sat close to each other...

DANA

...she might have been scared, and asked me to hold her.

CHRIS

...even heard one another's heartbeat.

(Pause.)

DANA

(Looking in the mirror.) You're just plain scared, shit-for-brains. Admit it! You're computer makes it all so safe, so goddamned far away. It doesn't reject you. It connects you to people that will never ask anything of you. You're gutless!

CHRIS

(Looking in the mirror.) You deceive yourself into thinking that that ...*thing (pointing to the computer)* brings you closer to people, but all it really does is help you to avoid them.

DANA

But every person you connect with runs on batteries. They're not real, and neither are you. Well, tonight the batteries ran out, shithead. 'You got the balls to run on your own energy or doncha?'

(Pause. They look at their phones. Slowly they pick up their receivers and begin to dial.)

CHRIS

(Dialing.) I just can't...I shouldn't...

DANA

(Dialing.) Put down the phone, Dana. Stop foolin' yourself.

CHRIS

Please, Christopher. Stop!

DANA
Put it down, Dana!

DANA and CHRIS in unison:
It's busy!

(DANA slams down the receiver; CHRIS sets the receiver down gently.)

DANA and CHRIS in unison:
Thank God!
DANA
...Probably the wrong fuckin' number...

CHRIS
It was probably the wrong number...

DANA
So much for bravery.

CHRIS
Well, that's that. Just as well. One less thing to explain to Mummy.

(Pause. They look at their watches and then suddenly break into a flurry of action.)

CHRIS
There's time left! I'll go to Uncle Jerry's bulletin board!

DANA
Uncle Jerry's still on! I'll go to the board and look for someone named Chris.

(They hurriedly sit behind their computers and begin banging away on their keyboards.)

DANA
Come on, come on, today sometime you shit-for-brains piece of plastic!

CHRIS
Please hurry. Onward. Thank you.

DANA
I'll go to the bulletin board and post a notice.

CHRIS
If she's been doing this awhile she will know to check the bulletin board. Ahh, back online. What's this?

DANA

“Transmission failure?”

CHRIS

The satellite’s gone kablooey?!

DANA

Great! We’re probably under attack. Just when I get my lucky break, World War III starts.

CHRIS

(Pressing keys indiscriminately.) Hello? Hello?

DANA

If you do create your own reality, I must have a helluva bad self-concept problem.

CHRIS

Finally! *(Reading off his screen.)* “Try Uncle Jerry’s Online Club Next Week.”

DANA

(Reading off his screen.) “Same Time, Same Network.” Thanks a bunch and a fuckin’ half.

(Pause.)

DANA

Well, I don’t have until next week. [Looks in the mirror.] You will call Chris, you will call Christine, you will call Chris.

CHRIS

What if it wasn’t the wrong number?

DANA

(DANA grabs himself by the collar and marches himself in front of the mirror.) You WILL have the balls to call Chris and you will have those balls, NOW! *(DANA leads himself by the ear to his desk and forces himself to sit down.)* Ow, ow, ow ! OK, God! Take it easy!

(DANA and CHRIS run to their mirrors and primp.)

DANA

(DANA puts on a baseball hat.) ‘Hat looks stupid! *(He yanks it off and looks in the mirror.)* That’s worse. *(He puts his hat back on.)*

CHRIS

(Primping.) I simply must get my hair restyled; highlights maybe...

(CHRIS sits down with the phone in his lap. DANA looks at the piece of paper with the number on it and dials.)

CHRIS

It's one of those moments in life when I pray for something providential to happen to give me strength.

(CHRIS'S phone rings. He waits, then answers.)

CHRIS

Hello?

DANA

Hello? Is, umm, is Chris, Christine there?

(Pause.)

DANA

Hello...

CHRIS

Yes, the connection's weak. Who were you looking for?

DANA

Umm...Christine. I'm afraid I don't know her last name.

CHRIS

I'm afraid there isn't a Chris or a Christine here.

DANA

Are you sure?

CHRIS

Quite sure. No one here but me, Carlton G. Faust. Should a Christine happen by, who shall I say called?

DANA

Oh, no. I've probably got the wrong number...

CHRIS

I'll be happy to take a message.

DANA

That's OK. I'll just...

CHRIS

It's no problem at all. As a matter of fact, I think a Christine is coming to stay here. A cousin or something. Mummy asked me to put her up for a week or so.

DANA

Probably a different Chris.

CHRIS

You never know.

(Pause.)

DANA

Tell her Dan called.

CHRIS

Just 'Dan'?

DANA

Yes. Just Dan.

CHRIS

And is there a message...?

DANA

Just...hello. Tell her hello. And that Star Trek's on tonight after the eleven o'clock news on channel 17.

CHRIS

Star Trek? My favorite! Thanks for the tip. I've seen all of the reruns three times...

DANA

How many?

CHRIS

Three.

DANA

Oh.

CHRIS

Why?

DANA

Nothing.

CHRIS

And where can Christine get a hold...

DANA
She's got the number.

CHRIS
You're certain?

DANA
Yes.

CHRIS
Because if it's the cousin I am thinking of, she's quite forgetful.

DANA
I'm positive.

CHRIS
Maybe you should call back.

DANA
Umm...

CHRIS
Calling back would be better.

DANA
I...

CHRIS
I could tell her to call you, but she'd just forget.

DANA
Look. Just tell her it doesn't matter.

CHRIS
Yes...

DANA
That it's not important.

CHRIS
Yes...

DANA

That I know.

CHRIS
Yes...

DANA
And that I don't care. I still want to connect with her.

CHRIS
Anything else?

DANA
Tell her I'll see her at Jerry's.

CHRIS
Are you still going to call?

DANA
No. Tell her I'll see her at Jerry's. She'll understand.

CHRIS
I'm sure she will. She'll want to know, I'm sure, how much you want to see to her. She's very shy. She might not go if she's afraid you don't mean it.

DANA
Tell her... that... it's important to me.

CHRIS
Very important?

DANA
Yes. Very important.

CHRIS
Because she's been rejected a lot in her life and she'll need to know that.

DANA
It's real important, got it?

CHRIS
When she should she meet you at Jerry's?

DANA
Same time, same network. Next Saturday night.

CHRIS

Why wait so long? I mean, I'm sure she will want to know. That's just the kind of thing that scares her. I am sure she will want to know why you want to wait that long.

DANA

Because that's when Jerry is having his next... party.

CHRIS

But surely you could meet her somewhere else before then.

DANA

Tell her not to push a good thing.

CHRIS

She wasn't trying to do that.

DANA

That she will just have to wait.

CHRIS

She can be so impatient. It's one of her biggest faults.

DANA

Or jeopardize everything.

CHRIS

But she knows waiting is good for her. It builds character.

DANA

Because the whole thing is new to me.

CHRIS

She'll understand. I'm sure she wouldn't want to jeopardize anything. She's not much of a risk taker.

DANA

Because I get spooked easy.

CHRIS

She'll appreciate that. She can wait. I promise you.

DANA

And that that's the best I can do for now, which is a lot better than usual.

CHRIS

I understand. I think above all, she won't want to chance losing her connection with you.

DANA

Good. Look. I have to go. I have some people waiting. Nice talking to you.

CHRIS

Likewise. I'll pass on the message to Chris when she gets here.

DANA

Thanks. Goodbye, Carlton.

CHRIS

Goodbye, Dan.

(They get up and wander a bit, finally looking out their windows.)

CHRIS

What if we could limit our needs...

DANA

What if we could bounce our thoughts off a star, ..

CHRIS

...to those we could meet on our own?

DANA

...down to somebody else, far, far away? Then we wouldn't need Uncle Jerry, would we?

CHRIS

Then we wouldn't need Uncle Jerry, would we?

(They move away from their windows and turn their radios on. The same, or very similar, music as before is playing. They listen for a few seconds, turn down their radios and bury themselves behind their newspapers, making the front page visible to the audience.)

(Lights fade.)