

TALK OF THE WALK-UP

by

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Dialogue Sample

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Act I**Scene 1**

(The apartment hallway. Night. LESTER, ELAINE and TEAFOOT gather. They listen to banging offstage.)

LESTER

There goes the Super, destroyin' Three-B.

ELAINE

Kaput, the T.V.
The stereo's next.

TEAFOOT

That maniac wrecks
more gear every day.

ELAINE

Why Ronnie should play
his CDs after ten -

LESTER

You shouldn't hen
for a cock like the Super.

SUPER

You think that's what your lease says? I know what your
lease says! Here's my retort-ical!

(Off, a bat smashing electronics.)

TEAFOOT

There goes the stereo. That's gotta sting.

LESTER

Sounds like he dinged it
with old Mister Cobb.

ELAINE

Ronnie's a knob
that can't mind his own bubble.
If Super's lookin' for trouble,
don't make your tuchis big.

TEAFOOT

Just zig
with his zag?

(MORE)

TEAFOOT (cont'd)

He'll frag
my iPod, at the rate he's losing his mind.

LESTER

I wonder what could cause his knot to unwind.

TEAFOOT

We shouldn't have to live with that troll.

ELAINE

Don't you start with your rigmarole.

(More racket off stage.)

(MIMI enters in a robe.)

MIMI

My goodness, such mayhem
at two in the a.m.

LESTER

Super knows how to light the powder, ma'am.

MIMI

How'd he acquire his position?

LESTER

Landlord liked his ignition.

MIMI

I knew he was atomic, but I didn't think fission.

ELAINE

You're new, don't you swish in
this mishigas.

TEAFOOT (to MIMI:)

Shouldn't we muzzle that old blunderbuss?

(More crashes offstage.)

MIMI

I believe
we've got instance to grieve.

TEAFOOT

The Landlord took leave
of this lame-o galaxy long, long ago.

ELAINE

And there's no
complaint box to kvetch in.

MIMI

I wouldn't stretch in
that direction.
The Super's to whom I'd reach out.

TEAFOOT

I doubt
that dude wants to shake hands.

LESTER

You think you could put some bands
on his Kansas
twister?

MIMI

I'm a licensed therapist,
a respected sociologist,
and a dedicated activist.
It's my profession to heal.

ELAINE

Darling, listen to my schpiel:
You shouldn't spoil
your good fortune futzing with Super's spill of crude oil.
Your poor bobbe didn't dare it,
So she could see you inherit
Her three rent-controlled bedrooms. Don't get silly.

LESTER

Mimi, you chilly?
Would you like a jacket?

ELAINE

Hold on to your packet,
Lester, she's wearing a ring.

MIMI

You can rely on my reasoning.
We can turn him around. His tyrannical passion'll
have its basis in the rational -

SUPER (off:)

From now on, you'll negotiate with Mr. Cobb!

*(Sound of a bat hitting a head, and a
body collapsing.)*

Stunned silence.)

MIMI

Do you feel that thrill in
your veins? He's a real villain.

ELAINE

Poor Ronnie...

MIMI

I have to admit, I admire
the passion, even if I abhor the fire.
But the more the Super lays waste,
the sweeter the taste
of his reform.

TEAFOOT

You paint a pretty picture of a bleeding heart,
but according to my chart,
no matter how it's framed,
what's wicked is wack.
What this shack
could use is an old-fashioned mob.

MIMI

Let's not act like bobble-
headed buffoons.
You can scoop more spoons
of motivations
for his hard potatoes,
or follow my recipe: the secret ingredient
to cure inexpedient
meatheads really is a dash
of compassion.

(More smashing.)

MIMI (cont'd)

It all depends on whether
Or not we do this together.
Don't think it's so strange,
but lead turns to gold, and even steel can change.

LESTER

So, you like tough guys, huh?

(Lights change.)

Scene 2

*(The stoop of the apartment building.
Morning. The SUPER speaks to a group of
garbage cans.)*

SUPER

I'm glad you all could make it to this morning's meeting. Trusty Gus. So sturdy. If only you could keep that lid of yours on. But we all got a temper. And Melanie. Poor delicate Melanie. The wind's always blowing you away, and I gotta go chasing down the block after you. Old Thor. From the aluminum days. You're half made of rust, but you're still out there seven days a week. Big Bill Blue. You're from that new recycling crowd. Seems a little fishy to me. But you're young, you got new ideas. You'll be happy to hear that yesterday the Landlord renewed my contract for another ten years. That's right. It's gonna be me and you, at the morning meeting, for another ten years.

*(MIMI enters, leading ELAINE, LESTER and
TEAFOOT.)*

SUPER (cont'd)

Does anybody got questions or comments? Anybody? Anybody?

MIMI

Bonjour!

SUPER

Did you say something, Melanie?

MIMI

No no, it's only me.

SUPER

Oh. Mimi, right? You gonna pull some uptown hoity-toity on me 'cause your paint job ain't glossy? Regulation eleven-A says you get one coat of white flat.

MIMI

I only want to chat.
About Ronnie McDoo, and last night's spat?

SUPER

Ronnie was playing his CDs after ten, in violation of building policy. He didn't want his peaches canned, he shouldn't'a got ripe with me.

MIMI

One push gets him three,
that old Bowery bonhomie.

SUPER

If you came to push back -

MIMI

We come to push peace, not a reprisal attack.

(LESTER steps forward, with flowers.)

LESTER

We let the fur fly,
but let's each be the big guy,
and cage our fightin' possums.
So I hope these blossoms
will be a gateway
to a better day
-- in a straight way.

(He gives SUPER the flowers.)

ELAINE

May you enjoy the drinkable sweeties,
if you don't have the diabetes,
God forbid your teeth should fall out.

(She gives him a bottle of soda.)

TEAFOOT

I brought gum.

(He hands a stick of gum to SUPER.)

SUPER

What is this?

TEAFOOT

Wintergreen.

MIMI

So when you next feel the urge
to play a dirge
on someone's cabeza,
remember we gave a
soda pop, a bouquet,
some gourmet
gum.

SUPER

You tryin' to gimmie a butter?

MIMI

Oh let's not clutter
our convivial mood, but since you mention,
a suspension
of hostility and a new channel for your aggressions -

TEAFOOT

Don't forget our concessions.

MIMI

In a minute.

LESTER

Mister, I don't want you barginin' in every first of the
month, hollerin' 'bout rent and stuff.

ELAINE

And enough
with the flushing my cockatoos down the john, saying no pets
like a fershtinkiner.

TEAFOOT

And don't you think in your
wildest fury that you can get near my laptop.

SUPER

I knew it, you're all a bunch of gimmie-gimmies.

MIMI

It's just a few simple applications
from our Collected Tenants Association.

SUPER

This building would run fine if it weren't for all you
collected tenants. Why don't you get useful, like Rita the
Push-Broom? She'd love to have a pretty hairdo like you,
but she's got to put her scalp to the ground and scrub.
She'd trade places with any one of you. I should oblige
her, stop by your doors one night, push yours noggins up and
down the hall.

MIMI

Now threats will only displease
the authorities.

SUPER

Authorities? Go ahead, new girl. Call the cops. The number's nine and two ones. They know there's one corner they don't gotta patrol, 'cause I'm here. I haul out the trash, I sweep up the stoop, just like that streetlight gives its green-yellow-reds. Would they arrest the streetlight for givin' the green-yellow-reds? Any of you collected tenants wanna stop my green-yellow-reds?

LESTER

I think my phone is ringing.

ELAINE

So many bills to sort through.

TEAFOOT

The web doesn't surf itself.

(LESTER, ELAINE and TEAFOOT exit.)

MIMI

If you treated us kindly,
you'd find
lots more love than you get from a broom.

SUPER

She's a Push-Broom, and she follows policy.

MIMI

But does Rita
really make your tea sweeter?
Do you greet her
with smiles that she returns?

SUPER

Yeah Princess, how'd that grin of yours look if I put Mr. Cobb to them pearlies? You got the brass, naggin' me about niceness, when you got a dear of your own. Some of us don't got our own dear!

MIMI

There's a clear reason why.

SUPER

You wanna start the bad batch with me?!

(VEGAS steps out from behind the stoop.)

VEGAS

What's cookin', Soup? You and my wife pickin' bones?

SUPER

She ain't broken a rule yet.

(SUPER exits.)

VEGAS

You're a florist among meatpackers, baby.
Maybe
your fruit-basket approach can't reach him.

MIMI

I have to teach him
the language of conflict resolution before he can speak it.

VEGAS

Or we can knock off his havoc before he can wreak it.
I used to play cards with some goodfellas.
If I should tell of
our problem during a deal -

MIMI

Vegas, don't squeal
to those Tonys.

VEGAS

Fine, let me close the Super's show myself.

MIMI

No, no no! Promise me, no bloody fuss.

VEGAS

All right, all right. On a bus-
full of mothers, I swear.

MIMI

There's a fair
solution called diplomacy.

VEGAS

Oh, I don't think you wanna sign treaties.
Your hankering ain't wholesome as Wheaties.
The Super-sized sausage, that's what you're hungry for.

MIMI

I'll try to ignore
that locker-room talk.

VEGAS

I used to turn your clock,
before I turned my other cheek. I gave up the street
and the game for you, angel sweet,
but now you're off converting some other devil to a padre.

MIMI

That's right, we're a pair,
the Super and I, having a secret affair.

VEGAS

So it's true.

MIMI

Believe whatever you like.

VEGAS

Do you admit you're hot for his rod?

MIMI

You want to lose your mind, then let go and let God.

VEGAS

If I lose my marbles, it's only 'cause you drilled holes in
my head!

MIMI

Let's not reheat this.
Shouldn't there be sweetness
between sugar pies?

VEGAS

I'd like to put your honey lies
to the taste test.
Let's get undressed
at the Best
Western tonight.
Candlelight
and Frangelico, like we used to.

(The recycling can wobbles again.)

MIMI

Those rats sure are strong.

VEGAS

Maybe they belong
to a gym. Now, how 'bout that motel?

MIMI

I swear I heard someone groan --
 Hold the phone,
 there's someone inside the can. Help me lower it, slowly.

(PUMPKIN crawls out of the can.)

VEGAS

Your grandma's naib
 is a real stable
 of nightmares.

MIMI

She can't be a day over sixteen.

VEGAS

Don't gotta be in your majority
 to join the homeless sorority.

MIMI

She's not homeless, she's too dainty.

VEGAS

Ain't the
 unsolvable mystery.
 She strikes the midnight poses
 with Ronnie McDoo, and the Super disposes.

MIMI (to PUMPKIN:)

We're not evil. We're not mean. Who put you in here?

PUMPKIN

[deliberate silence]

MIMI

Do you have someone to call?

PUMPKIN

[shakes her head, "no"]

MIMI

Do you want us to get the police?

PUMPKIN

[shakes her head emphatically, "no."]

MIMI

Tell me your name.

(MORE)

(Beat.)

PUMPKIN opens her mouth. A scream begins, high, building to a great wail, subsiding into sobs.)

MIMI (cont'd)

What a name.

(The SUPER returns, with a cardboard sign.)

SUPER

I heard a siren. You bother the boys in blue? Where'd this chop come from? The alley?

Miss, there ain't no loiterin' on this walk. Skip along home to your mother.

(He hangs the sign: "VACANCY".

PUMPKIN doesn't move.)

SUPER (cont'd, to PUMPKIN:)

Little Miss Muffet, don't make me play the spider. Pretty as you are, this ain't a stoop for frolickin'. Unless... you're applyin' for the vacancy maybe? Building policy regarding prospective tenants is this: two references, confirmation of employment, and a clean credit history.

MIMI

She's penniless,
her application won't impress.

SUPER

Why don't you let her speak for herself?

(to PUMPKIN:) What's your name?

MIMI

Don't ask!
I just casked her wine.

SUPER (to MIMI:)

Put a cork in it.

(to PUMPKIN:) Maybe you got some identification?

MIMI

Maybe she wandered out of a lobotomy operation.

SUPER

Maybe she just needs some of your smiley affection.

VEGAS

There's a Hallmark store on Tenth.

SUPER (to PUMPKIN:)

At least gimme confirmation of employment.

PUMPKIN

[mumbles.]

SUPER

Speak up, I took a staple in this ear once.

PUMPKIN

I'm a doctor. I'm a young, brilliant, sexy doctor in the ER.

SUPER

What, like surgery and things?

MIMI

So the cuckoo bird sings.

SUPER

What's the name of the hospital?

PUMPKIN

Centralia Medical.

SUPER

Centralia What?

(The following emerges with great energy from PUMPKIN, to everyone's surprise, none more than hers.)

PUMPKIN

Centralia Medical, in the beating heart of the city. In the ER, we see the worst of the city, but also the best: Police keeping the streets safe, firefighters and EMTs saving lives, doctors and nurses caring for the people who need them the most. It's my work. It's my home. It's my hell.

(She acts out an Emergency Room-type scene.)

PUMPKIN (cont'd)

Twenty gunshot wounds in the last hour! It's been so long since I slept, I forgot what my bed looks like.

SUPER

I heard those ERs are crazy places.

PUMPKIN

Martin, Tell Dr. Trafalger this is the last double shift I cover for him. He wants to take advantage of me, he can buy me a steak dinner like a normal man.

SUPER

Heh, I'll bet you don't take no guff.

PUMPKIN

Four-car pile-up on I-87. We've got one of the drivers here. Heavy trauma to the head.

SUPER

Uh oh, that's trouble.

PUMPKIN

I need plasma, stat! Hey, who let the kid in here?

SUPER

Oh no, a kid?

PUMPKIN

Don't worry, son, your daddy's gonna be all right.

SUPER (involved, as a spectator:)

Don't worry! She's a brilliant doctor!

PUMPKIN

We're gonna make a cut across the peridial ventricle... where's the Rexadine I asked for? Nurse! Nurse!

SUPER

God, I hate that nurse!

PUMPKIN

EKG is down, pulse seventy over forty, the thatalmus is pulminating! Somebody take this kid!

SUPER

Poor little kid... he's gonna be an orphan...

PUMPKIN

You're not gonna die on me!

SUPER

You're only human, doc! It's not your fault!

PUMPKIN

Heart failure! His heart's stopped! Clear! Live, dammit, live!

SUPER

It's not your fault, doctor. You did everything you could.
Poor little orphaned kid...

PUMPKIN

I've got a heart beat!

SUPER

What?

PUMPKIN

He's breathing! Let's get him into surgery!

SUPER

It's a miracle! What an amazing doctor!

PUMPKIN

I saved another man. If only I could have saved my own
father.

SUPER

Aha, I see what motivates her. It's a lonely road she
travels.

*(PUMPKIN is silent again, in awe of what
just came out of her.)*

SUPER (cont'd)

You got beautiful words in you. Duty. Decency. Clean hard
work. The street'll try to steal it from you.

*(SUPER pulls down the vacancy sign. He
takes PUMPKIN's hand and leads her in.)*

SUPER (cont'd)

The room ain't much, one bedroom, the last tenant was a
creep, but the heat works like gangbusters...

(SUPER and PUMPKIN exit.)

VEGAS

So, how about that Best Western?

MIMI (re: SUPER)

No questions. No applications.
He takes the first miseration
off the street?
Because the little lamb bleat
out a primetime soap?

(MIMI exits.)

VEGAS

I could sing for some supper too, if you like!

(Pause.)

VEGAS (cont'd, to the cans:)

Hey friends, any of you know how to play poker?

(Lights change.)