

SHOWER

Not filmed

Written June 1965

(for Edie Sedgwick, Roger Trudeau, Ondine, Elektra!,
Dan Cassidy)

Stage Version:

Opened July 29, 1965

The premiere of The Theatre of The Ridiculous

with:

Beverley Grant, John Vaccaro, Mark Duffy, Elsene Sorrentino,
Eldritch Von Blocksburg, Ray Saunders (replaced)

Directed by John Vaccaro

Sets by Jack Smith

Logo and program by Jack Smith

Revival:

1967

with:

Marti Whitehead, Norman Robert Glick, Raymond Edwards, etc.

Directed by Harvey Tavel

Lights by Joanna Schielke

When a friend of Andy's, Aaron Fine, dying of cancer in September 1962, inquired why he chose to depict the Campbell's soup can, Andy answered:- "I wanted to paint nothing. I was looking for something that was the essence of nothing, and that was it."

He also produced Campbell's soup can sculptures, exact-sized duplications of the food-containing tins, much along the line of the Brillo Boxes that I so admired. One day during this conflicted period, a rather sweet, middle-aged couple was in the process of acquiring one of these tins when the wife, holding out a pen, explained that they really couldn't unless it had the artist's signature. "But I don't do that," Andy responded. The couple smiled, and persisted. Andy was watching me pace because I was waiting for him, a short distance away in the Factory, while the customers haggled. Then he summoned me, placed the soup tin and the woman's pen in my hand, and said, "Sign this with my name."

And all but coinciding with this incident was the distraction being provided by the erotic daring of some new, shower-soap ads then blitzing TV. Andy was mesmerized by them: he told me he found them "really sexy," and said he thought "we should do a shower movie." Once again, the scenario was to be aimed at producing an entry in the all-white series, and was to be still another vehicle for the all-white female lead, Edie.

Although she believed I did not like her and ventured to put that in as many words, this spoiled brat and increasingly incapacitated substance abuser clearly was a muse to me.

But the time had come as well to take on the adventure of Pop-imaging The Nothing - which Andy had manned up to with the Campbell Soups - but which I had to tackle with English, action, two reels, a rickety camera, and our superstars - who I gambled might well suit the subject, since they appeared to have, in the quaint coinage of the day, "nobody upstairs."

SHOWER was written in forty-eight hours with one eight hour break for sleep. I don't recall wasting time eating during that stretch. When I was finished, it was evident I'd made some kind of breakthrough, that is to say, I was somewhere now I'd not been before in my work, in my life, in the Factory. Roger Trudeau, once more drafted to play opposite Edie, knew it at a glance, as did Dan Cassidy who was quick to respond and line up for a role; nor was Andy slack in recognizing that something had happened here, an abstraction with sore feet. But I myself wasn't at all sure where to locate it: and was to make the mistake of trying (immediately) to repeat several times SHOWER's confident gag-through in its customized, tense and tailored English before finding that useless and striking out in a different direction.

Edie alone was impervious to what I'd come up with for her. Indeed, it was evident to anyone who cared to really listen to the woman, that she had absolutely no idea of what Andy was after or had ever done, of what the films effectively were or what they effectively would be. If ever she had had the capacity to be involved seriously with art, her world was becoming confused now, and her hedonism, a poorly-chosen safety vent, had risen to the fore and was monopolizing her day. She was exceptionally easy prey, then, to Chuck Wein's suggestion that she need not dilute her pleasures with memorizing scripts and rehearsing them, for he himself could furnish film ideas for her that used no scripts. Only Tavel was in the way: why not, he urged, dislodge him - tell Andy that you "won't be a mouthpiece for Tavel's perversities."

Sloppy with her sleeping pills and cigarettes at this embattled point, she accidentally set fire to her apartment and was seen in the papers being towed from a smoke-filled hallway, her leopard coat (all she could think of saving) askew upon a thin shoulder. Some jungle girl.

But she managed to memorize the one Wein line and be shrilly theatrical delivering it to Andy who, not having her on salary of course, thought retracting the talents at his disposal the better part of canning product then, and wasted no time with inutile objections.

As for myself, I was forced to acknowledge by then (June 1965) that Edie couldn't be a mouthpiece for anyone's dialogue, perverse or not, since she was completely beyond grasping the simplest stage directions, knowing right from left in fact, let alone learning a role. Nor was there any point in my trying to reason with her, for in those days many actors believed that they should perform stoned: since acting, like any other activity, was something to be enjoyed. That it is a job was far from their thoughts, and the shakey chip fallen off the old social register was about to do anything but take a job in addition to the one she already had, that of killing herself.

Finally, Edmund Kean said, "Dying is easy: comedy is hard." And though ultimately opting for the less arduous task, Edie as a legacy confirmed that a comic's timing is the first thing amphetamines kill. A glance, which one ought to give it, at her conduct in KITCHEN is, in the vigorous face of Andy's staunch amorality, a moralizing case in point.

So the filming of SHOWER was canceled; and at Andy's urging I proceeded to see to the staging of the piece and, in effect, the creation of Ridiculous Theatre. (See, the article, The Roots of The Theatre of The Ridiculous, etc.) Andy wanted to lens the stage production of SHOWER on its second or third weekend but the cast, some of whom were Equity members, naturally and correctly objected. After that, rights to the one-acter were sold to Off-Broadway producers, and all question of Factory interests in it obviated.

Ironically then, my best work under the painter's tutelage eluded his net, and though my debt to him for SHOWER is greater than for anything else, it is the one work he could not stamp faultily or make the least claim to.

If some people have regretted that we have no record of Queen of the Underground, Beverley Grant's performance (in the role intended for Edie), or Mark Duffy's of The Living Theatre, or John Vaccaro's, or the late Elseno Sorrentino's, not to mention Jack Smith's set with its engineering set-up for the showers, the work at least evaded the perpetual insult of an inadequate Warhol take.

CODA Gallery 89 E. 10th St. PRESENTS

Shower and...

with
Beverly Grant

The Life
of
Juanita Castro

July 29, 30, 31

Aug. 5, 6, 7

8:30p

Adm. by
Cont.

2 Plays by
Ronald Tavel

Directed by John Vaccaro



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RONALD TAVEL.

Shower

First performance, July 29, 1965, at the Coda Galleries,
New York City, with the following cast:

TERENE Beverly Grant
x-35 John Vaccaro
MISS TERKITE Elsene Sorrentino
PETER Larry Drago
DICK Patrick Michaels
DUMMYY Mark Duffy

Directed by John Vaccaro; music by Tony Conrad and
Granchan Moncur III

Scene: Two adjoining showers with their shower curtains drawn and the water running in both. After several moments the shower curtain at stage right slowly draws away, revealing x-35 standing under the running water, fully clothed, but wearing a shower cap. He rubs himself up and down, as if with soap. Then the shower curtain at stage left draws aside, revealing TERESE under the running water, fully clothed but wearing a shower cap. She rubs herself luxuriously up and down.

x-35 shuts off his faucet. TERESE listens: she has heard his water go off. She presses her ear to the stall side nearest his. x-35 presses

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his ear close to the same side, listening to hear what she is doing. TERESE turns off the water in her shower. Both stand wringing the water from their soaking clothes. Then x-35 pokes his head out of his shower and stretches it around until he can see into TERESE's stall. She is startled by his head and says, as if apologizing:

TERENE Oh—er—cleanliness is next to godliness.
x-35 (standing upright in his stall, trembling from his glimpse at her beauty) The shape of things to come!

TERENE Can you come with this shape?

x-35 If you will come into my shower (lowering his voice) . . . heh-heh . . . said the spider to the butterfly.

TERENE (innocently) Why do you ask me to come into your shower?

x-35 Because I am lonely.

TERENE If I came in your shower, wouldn't you still be lonely?

x-35 Yes, after you came, I would still be lonely. . . . It is certainly worse to be lonely with someone than it is to be lonely alone. So don't come in my shower.

TERENE I won't.

(Long pause)

x-35 I mean, can you think of any loneliness that is greater than the loneliness you feel when you are with someone?

TERENE Yes.

x-35 So can I!

(Long pause)

x-35 What are you doing in that shower?

TERENE Getting cold.

x-35 I mean, why are you in that shower?

TERENE (cautiously) I'm waiting for someone.

x-35 Who?

TERENE (very sexy) I don't know—but when he comes along I will!

(Long pause)

x-35 How will you know him when he comes along?

TERENE (thinking hard) Hey, you, this country once belonged to the Indians. Right?

x-35 (*cautiously*) Right. . . .

TERENE This whole country was full of Indians. They owned the country. Right? So where are all the Indians now? Why aren't they here?

x-35 (*cautiously*) Well, dey was old. . . .

TERENE Hmmmmmm . . . very interesting. Listen: In the book *The Last of the Mohicans* there are two Mohicans: Chingarrumadre and his son, Uncas. Uncas gets killed in the end but Chingarrumadre lives. So who is the last of the Mohicans then? x-35 (*thinking hard*) . . . The Last of the Mohicans. . . . *Les derniers des Mohicans*: both of them are!

TERENE Hmmmmmmmm . . . very interesting. Listen: Do Scotchmen wear underwear under their kilts?

x-35 That's easy: Of course, Scotchmen *don't* wear underwear under their kilts. If they did, no one would ever have dreamt up the question, "Do Scotchmen wear underwear under their kilts?"

TERENE Do you wear underwear under your kilts?

x-35 Only one way to find out.

TERENE What's that?

x-35 By putting your hand up.

TERENE (*angry*) Who do you think I am—your Roto-Rooter woman or something?! You foul-mouthed pig!

x-35 (*angry*) Say that again and I'll close my fly and starve your mother.

(*Long pause; both are furious at each other*)

TERENE Listen—you have only one more question to answer.

x-35 (*very interested*) And what is that?

TERENE Which came first, the chicken or the egg?

x-35 Come into my shower, Chicken, and we'll find out soon enough.

TERENE (*overjoyed*) Marvelous—you answered all the questions correctly! You must be the man! You must be Mark. . . .

x-35 Stark!

TERENE Mark Stark Naked! The man I was to meet!!!

(*TERENE and x-35 rush out of their showers and fall into each other's arms. They embrace and kiss madly. PETER enters*

from the left and dick from the right. PETER and dick snoop around, spy on the kissers and rush into their showers, exiting everything there)

TERENE Oh, darling, darling, do you have sex with your eyes open or closed?

x-35 It depends on how ugly my partner is.

TERENE Enough, enough of this madness! We may be watched!

(*x-35 breaks out of her arms and rushes downstage to deliver an aside with a foreign accent*)

x-35 Terene and Mark Stark Naked embrace madly, unaware that they are both being watched—by eyes filled with DESIRE!!!!

(*When PETER and dick bear this aside, they look up frightened and rush out. x-35 runs back to TERENE and resumes kissing her*)

TERENE Oh, Seymour! Seymour! Seymour!!!

(*PETER pokes his head out from behind the right shower stall*)

PETER No, thanks, lady, I seen enough!

x-35 Darling, my name isn't Seymour.

TERENE (*pulling away from x-35, becoming very continental*) I know, Mark Stark. I was just testing you.

x-35 Are you still suspicious of me?

TERENE (*quickly, testing him*) —What's my name?

x-35 Terene. . . . Terene, the Terrible Tart of Terra Cotta!

TERENE (*cautiously*) . . . That is correct. . . .

x-35 Terra Cotta—he's a no gotta—I'm a gotta!

TERENE (*overjoyed*) Correct! Correct! You're my man!

(*TERENE and x-35 fall into each other's arms once again and kiss madly. PETER and dick rush in, play the Peeping-Toms, rubbing their hands, drooling from their mouths. As the lovers pull apart, the spies scramble off again*)

TERENE Enough of this insanity, Mark! We have important business to attend to.

x-35 I'd like to let you see my business.

TERENE People like us can't afford to fall in love. If we do, we're all washed up.

x-35 Let's wash up together, Terene—in my shower!

TERENE Well, we certainly have enough dialogue. Now all we need is a washcloth—and we'd have a movie.

(TERENE and x-35 hold hands and walk into the left shower stall)

PETER (pokes his head out again, rubs his hands libidiously, and says juicy) Out of the solitude of a tranquil monastery comes the secret of a truly satisfying kosher bread.

(PETER disappears; TERENE and x-35 begin to undress in the left stall. In the meantime, DUNKY, a deaf mule, and MISS TERMITE enter and walk into the right shower stall. MISS TERMITE laughs lecherously, and they draw the curtain closed, but the curtain stays open in the left shower. From time to time, MISS TERMITE's delicious laughter can be heard. x-35 pinches TERENE's cheek)

TERENE Why did you pinch my cheek so hard, Mark Stark?

x-35 So you'll still remember me three days from now.

TERENE You mean like an icky, don't you?

x-35 Rosey cheeks and lips within time's bending suckle's compass come.

TERENE Mark Stark, do you like Art Nouveau?

x-35 Art Nouveau? It's the call letters of the stars.

TERENE But, I mean, do you like it?

x-35 I'm open to all suggestions.

TERENE (sexy) How suggestive. . . .

(x-35 removes his shirt and TERENE fingers his nipples and chest muscles)

TERENE (very, very sexy) Mmmmmmmmm, what wonderful definition you have—you ought to write a dictionary!

x-35 I'm open to all suggestions.

TERENE To a dildo, too?

x-35 All this talk is making me horny!

TERENE Don't get so upset, Mark Stark. It isn't like this is going to last forever. Because someday we'll all be dead.

(TERENE and x-35 strip down to their underpants)

PETER (pokes his head practically into the shower, then turns around, looks up and down, and says in a looming, seaman's voice) Have ye seen the White Whale?

(MISS TERMITE is heard laughing; PETER's head disappears)

TERENE If you were only a little older.

x-35 If you were only a little younger.

TERENE Wait a minute—just how old do you think I am?!

x-35 Oh, don't be sensitive. It isn't that we get older—it's that we pass into another phase—which is the same amount of radius length from the center as Youth was.

TERENE (very sexy) Hmmmmmm . . . radius? What did you say the length was? Mmmmmmmmm. . . .

(TERENE turns, removes her high-heel shoe, and begins spilling the water out of it)

x-35 (regarding TERENE's backside with popping eyes) Oh, God! What's givvel!

(singing, as if shower-singing) Give me some givel

Oh, please be civil

Enough of this drivvel

Before they shrivel

Give me some givel!

TERENE (regarding his backside) You've got quite a bass. Voice, I mean.

x-35 (kneelings; singing) Ass of ages!

Cleft for me!

Let me hide myself in thee!

Oh today I'm yet uncome

As I climb into thy throne—

Then, ass of ages,

Cleft for me!

Let me hide myself in thee!

Amen!

(TERENE and x-35 giggle happily and x-35 draws the shower curtain closed. The water runs in both showers. Much lecherous and suggestive laughter is heard coming from both showers. PETER enters and snoops around; he listens to the giggling with anger. Suddenly the water is turned off. PETER does an eery-meaty-mny-mno in front of the showers, makes a decision, and rushes over to the right shower, tears open the cur-

tain reveals MISS TERMITTE and DUMMY in an embrace, fully clothed, dripping wet)

PETER (*yanking* MISS TERMITTE from the stall) Ah-ha! I caught you! What were you doing in that Japanese shower, you unwholesome harlot!

TERMITTE My whole and then some yourself! Who do you think you're talking to?

PETER Listen to me Termitte. . . .

TERMITTE Miss Termitte to you, Peter Pecker!

PETER Miss Termitte, what were you doing in that shower?

TERMITTE I thought I'd clean up a bit before going on the set.

PETER Didn't we agree upon a tryst?

TERMITTE Sure, Peter Pecker.

PETER Well, never double-twist a tryst. You might find it very unhealthy!

TERMITTE Keep your pecker dry, Peter. I take my orders from headquarters.

PETER (*pointing to his crotch*) This is your headquarters from now on!! Did you get the information?

TERMITTE Sure, I did. I got it from headquarters.

PETER Then tell me quick. Wait a minute—who's the stud?

TERMITTE Oh, that's Dummy. Don't worry about him. It don't matter what he hears—he won't tell—he's deaf and dumb, see?

(MISS TERMITTE and PETER both laugh sardonically. DUMMY laughs too, without sound)

PETER Excellent, Miss Termitte, excellent. I always said you were one of our cleverest agents! (*putting his hand around her hip*) I could get you a lot ahead, with my backing your front.

TERMITTE It's what's in back of what's up front, I always say. PETER Do you, my little bug, do you? Okay, what's the information? Wait a minute: did you fill out the female forms?

TERMITTE (*taking a short sexy stroll*) Just take a look!

PETER Mmmm . . . I see, I see. Okay. What's the info?

TERMITTE (*to the audience*) Well, the part of Terene is played by _____ . And the part of Mark Stark Naked is played

by _____. They were last seen together in *Kitchenette*, and are co-starring once again by popular demand!

PETER In whose kitchenette were they last seen together?

TERMITTE In _____'s kitchenette.

PETER (*rubbing his hands*) Ah-ha! I thought so! Just as I thought. Excellent sleuthing, Miss Termitte! (*bearing laughter from the tight shower; annoyed*) What are the two of them doing in there so long?

TERMITTE (*slowly, deliciously*) They're mixing sex and seriousness.

(*Laughter and movements in the shower curtain*)

PETER (*becoming thoughtful; his chin is in his hand*) Tell me, Miss Termitte, is this a sixteen-millimeter movie?

TERMITTE Yeah, what of it?

PETER Then X-35 will be quite upset about that. He should be informed immediately!

TERMITTE Why, Peter?

PETER Because X-35 is a spy for thirty-five-millimeter movies.

TERMITTE But who is X-35?

PETER I don't know. Nobody knows. That's what we've got to find out. But one thing I'm sure of!

TERMITTE Yeah? What?

PETER (*confidentially*) X-35 is somewhere very close. He may be spying on us this very moment!!

X-35 (*poking his head out of the shower*) Peter Pecker and Miss Termitte conspire together, unaware that they are being spied upon by—X-35!!!!

TERMITTE Peter, what do thirty-five-millimeter movies need a spy for? What is X-35 spying for?

PETER For ideas, of course. Thirty-five-millimeter movies haven't had a new idea since *Bride of the Gorilla*.

(*The sound of a recorder playing an eerie tune is heard*)

TERMITTE (*sincering*) You hear that, Peter? It's that strange music again.

PETER (*frighened*) Yes . . . I hear it! I always hear it. Every time someone mentions the word "gorilla," that music starts. It's gorilla music! It's music for gorilla movies; they use that same hack recorder player—that sexy kid with the phallic

symbol recorder! As if gorillas weren't sex symbols enough—they have to enhance it with a recorder. If mine's not made to order, use my recorder. Well, I've had enough of it, enough of it, I tell you! I quit gorilla flicks because of that recorder music. *Tim Tyler's Luck* was the last gorilla flick I made. Did you see it? I was the second gorilla from the left in the cliff scene.

TERMITE No, I don't think I seen that pic. I'm too young. It was before my time.

PETER Just how old are you, chicken?

TERMITE I'm only twenty-two.

PETER Oh, say it again—I'll cream in my pants!

TERMITE I'm only twenty-two.

PETER (*waiting romantic*) There's cream in me plenty, for sweet two and twenty!

(*The recorder music grows louder*)

PETER It's coming closer—the recorder's coming closer! The eery competition is advancing. Flee! Flee! The Romans are coming!

(*DICK enters from the right, playing the recorder, as PETER and MISS TERMITE take to their heels and disappear. DICK plays his strange tune, pokes about, peeks into the shower, and winds his way offstage. The shower curtain is drawn away, revealing TERENE and x-35, both exhausted*)

TERENE Mark Stark, darling, do you think your ass is really photogenic?

x-35 How should I know? I never saw it.

TERENE Oh, yes, of course. How silly of me!

x-35 (*stepping out of the stall, drying himself*) Come out, Terene.

TERENE No, I'm scared!

x-35 What is there to be scared about? What are you hiding in the shower for? It's only a movie!

TERENE But it's a pretty realistic movie—you've got to admit that much.

x-35 Come on out Nobody's going to hurt you. I'm here. (*fleeing his muscles*) I'll protect you.

TERENE Is anybody looking?

x-35 No. Just the audience. And they're not really here. I mean, the audience isn't here now.

TERENE (*innocently*) When are they coming?

x-35 Well, that depends on the promotion. But don't you bother your little female head about technical problems. Come on out, I say.

TERENE (*stepping from the stall; abstractly*) Excuse me, Mark,

I have to make a phone call. (*She walks in her high-heels to a telephone; she lifts the receiver, dials, and waits a moment;*

x-35 eavesdrops on her conversation) Hello—Dick's Delicatessen? (*pause*) Do you deliver?—I mean food (*pause*) Yes,

I'd like a tongue sandwich. No, no, don't slice it. I want a nice, long wet tongue. Yes, that's it. Thank you, Dick. (*She hangs up*)

x-35 Any luck?

TERENE Yes, Dick's bringing up a tongue.

x-35 That is luck.

TERENE Yes, it's Tim Tyler's Luck.

x-35 (*standing as if transfixed by her words, studying her face with great suspicion*) Would you repeat what you just said, Terene?

TERENE (*cautiously*) I said, "Yes, it's Tim Tyler's Luck."

x-35 That's what I thought you said. All right, Terene, you haven't been leveling with me!

TERENE You leveled me, didn't you? What else do you want?

x-35 You are—

TERENE Terene, the Terrible Tart of Terra Cotta.

x-35 So you have said. But can I believe you?

TERENE Why can't you believe me?

x-35 Because of certain things you've said. Because of certain slips you've made!

TERENE What slips? I haven't made any slips. How can I, Terene the Terrible Tart from Terra Cotta, make a slip? How can a master spy slip up slip shod before a mere amateur like Mark Stark Naked?

x-35 I may not be quite the amateur you so confidently esteem me!

- TERENE I'm cold. I feel cold.
 x-35 Stop avoiding the issue.
 TERENE But, Mark, I feel cold!
 x-35 If you come clean, I'll warn you up.
 TERENE Come clean? You mean, you want me to go back into the shower?
 x-35 Talk, Tart!
 TERENE (*suddenly capitulating*) All right, all right, I'll make a clean breast of everything! (*about to pull a breast out from the towel covering her*)
 x-35 No, stop—wait a minute. (*clamping his hand over her mouth*) I hear someone coming.
 (*Dick enters with the sandwich. During the entire exchange between him and x-35, x-35 stands behind Terene with his hand held over her mouth. Dick is not fazed by anything he sees or hears; he acts as if all were completely normal*)
 DICK I have an unsliced long wet tongue sandwich for Miss Terene the Terror of Tartta Cotta.
 x-35 (*high-pitched, feminine voice*) Oh, yes, thank you.
 DICK Are you Miss Terene?
 x-35 Yes, I am. Are you Dick's Delicatessen?
 DICK No, I am just Dick. The unsliced long wet tongue is the delicatessen.
 x-35 I see. Please put the sandwich down.
 DICK Where shall I put the sandwich, Miss Terene?
 x-35 Oh—er—put it in the shower, please.
 DICK Won't it get wet there, Miss Terene?
 x-35 No, it is already a long wet tongue.
 DICK I see. Thank you.
 (*He goes to the right shower and drops the sandwich inside next to DUMMY, who proceeds to nibble on it. Dick returns to where Terene is still struggling to free herself from x-35*)
 x-35 Er—thank you, Dick.
 DICK Thank you, Miss Terene.
 (*Long pause*)
 x-35 I said, "Thank you, Dick."
 DICK Thank you, Miss Terene.

- x-35 Well, what are you standing around for?
 DICK My tip, Miss Terene.
 x-35 (*releasing Terene and reverting to his normal voice in a fury*) Your Tip! Idiot! Can't you see I'm in my underwear? How can I give you a tip? Do you think I keep money in my underwear?
 DICK I'm sure I don't know what you keep in your underwear, Miss Terene. Presumably, a very bulky Modess.
 x-35 Will you get out of here before I bend you over and drive you back to that delicatessen!!
 DICK Thank you, Miss Terene. (*starting to leave, transforming himself into an altogether different disguise as he speaks*) I find it most interesting and not a bit curious and not a very bit revealing that Mark Stark should be masquerading as Miss Terene. But I am not hoodwinked for a single instant. (*He exits. Terene, freed, is not ruffled in the least; she speaks as if she had been standing there calmly all the time*)
 TERENE What a strange fellow. So ugly.
 x-35 Yes, he was ugly.
 TERENE I can't stand ugly people. Can you, Mark?
 x-35 Not any more than you can, Terene. You want your sandwich now?
 TERENE No, thank you. Your hand sufficed my hunger.
 x-35 You couldn't have been very hungry.
 TERENE I wasn't. The salt in your skin sufficed me. It was only a momentary hunger pang.
 x-35 That's fortunate . . . (*scheming*) . . . You have luck. . . .
 TERENE Yes, Tim Tyler's Luck.
 x-35 (*grabbing her and shaking her violently*) Okay!!! You slipped again. I caught you in a second slip. I want the truth now, Terene. I want the terrible truth! I'm warning you: my patience is at its end!
 TERENE All right, all right! I'll tell you the terrible truth! Just let me go, will you?
 x-35 (*releasing her*) Let's hear it, Miss Tart.
 TERENE (*recomposing herself*) Er—just what is it that you want to know?

x-35 You know!

TERENE Of course, I know. But you don't know. So what is it that you want to know?

x-35 I want to know what your mission is! I want to know why you are here. I want to know what you're doing in the shower!

TERENE Some men just have to know everything—don't they?

x-35 Quit stalling. You ain't so sexy.

TERENE You thought differently just a short while ago. (*sobbing*) Yes, you thought differently just a short while ago. All men thought differently but a short while ago. That was before—before this mission was necessary. All right, I'll tell you why I'm here. I'll tell you why Terene the Terrible Tart of Terra Cotta is here. She is looking for . . . she is in search of . . . she is trying to recover . . . a stolen good.

x-35 A stolen good?

TERENE Yes. . . .

x-35 A stolen good?

TERENE Yes, a stolen good. What is so strange? Aren't all goods, isn't everything that is good, stolen? Stolen away from their owner?

x-35 So far so good.

TERENE (*dreaming, distracted*) No . . . no . . . not good.

x-35 (*impatient*) Well, Terene, what good?

TERENE Yes, what good? What good is anything any more?

x-35 I mean what stolen good are you seeking to recover?

TERENE My cherry.

x-35 Your—

TERENE (*loud voice*) I said, "My cherry." . . . And, now, Mark Stark, if you will excuse me, I have to take a shower. I feel dirty . . . somehow. . . .

(*She drifts into the right shower. x-35 is dumfounded; he turns and walks into the left shower; they both soap up*)

x-35 (*shower-singing*)

Once broken, never mended!
How the ladies are offended!
At the first they are befriended

At the second rarely tended

At the third they are commended

After that most condescended!

Then suddenly they are distended,

And once broken, never mended!

So spread, spread, spread!

When their bottoms are extended

And our parts are interblended

To our friends they're recommended

And we from them are transcended

And they're left unattended,

Once broken never mended!

So spread, spread, spread!

O how splendid, splendid, splendid!

Once broken, never mended!

So spread, spread, spread!

And the ladies wish that they were dead!

(*Both draw their shower curtains and turn on their faucets. DUMMY wanders about briefly, carrying towels as if he were a bath attendant*)

TERENE (*turns off her water and opens her curtain. She is showering. She reaches for the towel DUMMY is holding*)

I'm cold. I'm freezing. Nothing seems to keep me warm. (*she steps from the stall and paces back and forth*) Is there no way to be clean and warm at the same time?

x-35 (*turns off his water, opens his curtain, and steps out. He takes a towel from DUMMY and begins drying himself*)

How do you feel now, Terene?

TERENE Cold.

x-35 Frigid?

(*Long pause*)

TERENE I think I'm catching a cold.

x-35 It's from the showers you're taking.

TERENE No, it's not from the showers. (*staring at him*) God needs men . . . massing toward the maneuver of His composition . . . How am I less by need?

(*slowly*) How am I more as part than your wholeness, Mark? Give me your grasp.

x-35 Are you saying something?

TERENE Aren't I saying something?

x-35 I don't know. I'm not a woman.

TERENE You and I are friends, Mark.

x-35 We're not as delicious as other couples.

TERENE But we're both good-looking.

x-35 We're both good-looking, but we're not so delicious.

TERENE Give me your grasp! (*taking desperate hold of the arm he extends to her*) Those boys. Those gentle boys. . . . There was something so gentle about those boys. . . .

x-35 (*as if eyesdropping*) Which boys?

TERENE The boys in our spy ring. The boys with the rings on their fingers. The gentle boys with gentle rings in our gentle spy ring. They were gentle men. They were what I call real gentlemen. (*suddenly, directly*) That's what a gentle man is.

x-35 What?

TERENE (*not hearing him*) An image of hatred! Hatred is the momentum behind my mission. Images of hatred I shall be seeking always, every midnight to know to express them. . . . And come up pale in a morning of Mondays emptied into—a yawn. . . .

x-35 What are you walking around naked for if you're so cold?

TERENE You know what I feel like, Mark Stark?

x-35 Like a Sabine woman?

TERENE Exactly. You read my thought.

x-35 Sure. That's why you got raped. The Sabine women ran around nude—remember? You've seen the Rubens' painting. And all that sculpture. Remember? Who told them to run around naked?

TERENE I don't know who told them.

x-35 Who told you to run around naked?

TERENE Nobody. I told myself.

x-35 Well—why?

TERENE Because before I felt that I was bound, that I was possessed in as many ways as my lifted nightslip was . . . (*musings, wandering away from x-35*) And then . . . and then. . . .

x-35 And then, what?

TERENE And then I felt that things might really be facilitated so. I felt that when I'm nude and armored only in my hair—I might with more precision know the one who knew me first . . . and rise in the morning out of bed quite free, to walk the foyer—or descend the stair.

x-35 And the guy who got your cherry?

TERENE (*suddenly furious*) For him hatred! Hatred! Images of hatred! Ultimeatums! What do I really want to say about loneliness? That I won't have it! That I won't have it! (*PETER and MISS TEREMITE suddenly appear. PETER is holding an espionage gun, MISS TEREMITE a small purse*)

PETER So you don't have it!

x-35 She won't have it. She wouldn't have it.

PETER Stop pretending! Just how stupid do you both think I am?

She has it, and I know it!

TERENE The impeccable Peter Pecker!

PETER At your service, Terene! Hands up, both of you!

TERENE So—you speak English!

PETER Of course—and Coptic, Syrian, Sanskrit, and Greek and Latin, too. You see, my dear Miss Terene, I was born abroad, but I was educated in your country—at Northwestern University!

TERENE (*innocently*) You were born a broad?

PETER Yes, but I visited Denmark and thereafter took the then more appropriate name of Peter. Peter Pecker, if you please.

TERENE With two "Ps"?

PETER It pees. And with two "Ps" for alliteration, with two "Ls"?

And now, hands up, both of you!

TEREMITE (*opening her purse, removing a miniature gun and cocking it*) I just cocked this. He said hands up!

x-35 Who's your ladyfriend?

PETER I am never friendly with ladies. Ladies are a waste of time.

This spy's name is Miss Teremite.

x-35 Miss Termite?

PETER Yes. She is called Miss Termite because she works from the bottom up.

x-35 I'd like to let her try my bass.

TERENE Voice, he means.

PETER And what is your name, O bass one?

x-35 My name is Tony. Tony—you like that, huh?—it excites you!

PETER Say it again—I'm coming in my pants.

x-35 Tony! Tony!

PETER Shut up! Enough of this! Your name is not Tony. We will settle this matter of the names. Miss Termite, do you have the information?

TERMITE Yeah. The part of Peter is played by _____ and the part of Miss Termite is played by _____ and I played damn well, I might add.

PETER How embarrassing!

TERMITE (*sexy*) Just chalking up credits in heaven, honey.

PETER But the technical information?

TERMITE You wanna get technical?

TERENE Hurry up, will you!

TERMITE The technical assistants are Mr. _____ and Mr. _____

PETER All right, where do you two hide out?

x-35 We have orders not to disclose that.

PETER (*regarding the two of them practically naked*) Why not? You've disclosed nearly everything else.

x-35 Our lips are sealed.

PETER But that's about all of you that must be. Look, you two are in no position to hold out.

TERMITE (*sexy*) They're in a better position to put out.

TERENE (*suddenly hysterical*) All right, all right, we'll talk! We hide out on the West Side. In the twenties.

PETER How unfashionable! You two ain't even worth the bullets we are about to waste on you! Where in the twenties?

TERENE The early twenties.

TERMITE (*sexy*) Hmmm. The early twenties. Just like me.

TERENE There is nothing just like you.

PETER All right, you two, for the last time—hands up!

DICK (*enters from the left with a gun in his hand*) All wrong, you two, for the first time—all four hands up. I mean, all eight hands up!

(*The four immediately obey; they turn and face Dick*)

PETER Who are you?

DICK I'm Dick, the private dick.

TERMITE Why private? Nobody else around here is particular.

TERENE I thought you were Dick's Delicatessen!

DICK (*pointing to his crotch*) Dick's delicatessen is here, lady. You're all under arrest.

TERMITE What for?

DICK We're picking up all undesirables.

TERMITE (*sexy*) On the contrary—I think I'm quite desirable. But you can pick me up for that!

TERENE What do you want, you fugitive from a frankfurter factory!

DICK You know what I want.

TERENE You know what you want.

DICK I want to know, Who is X-35?

TERENE (*terrified*) No—not! Not X-35!!

DICK Yes! X-35!

PETER No! not X-35!

DICK Yes! X-35!

x-35 No!—You can't—you can't mean X-35!

DICK Yes! Yes! I can—I do mean X-35!

TERMITE I guess it's my turn: Oh, not X-35, anybody but X-35!

DICK No—no, not anybody—just X-35!

(*TERENE turns and tries to escape in the confusion*)

DICK Hey, chicken, where do you think you're going?

TERENE Shopping!—I have to get some toilet paper—I've been using the Village Voice.

DICK Stop right where you are or I'll bring you down with a single bullet.

TERMITE (*going over to TERENE to comfort her*) There, there, honey. Get hold of yourself. Show these bullies who really

wears the pants. Oh, excuse me, I see you *are* showing them. PETER See here, Private Dick, nobody knows the identity of X-35. You're wasting your time.

X-35 See here, privates, X-35 isn't anywhere in the vicinity. DICK Everybody shut up! I know for a fact that X-35 is someone in this very shower room.

TERMITTE It could be you, Private Dick. That would be the usual switch.

DICK Yes, it would. Only, I'm sorry to disappoint you because I ain't X-35. Okay, well start with you, Termitte: tell me what you know.

TERMITTE Well, I know for a fact that the part of Dick is played by _____.

DICK Thank you kindly.

TERMITTE You are very welcome, I am sure.

DICK And, now, you, Terene: *Qui est X-35?*

TERENE Pardon?

DICK *J'ai dit, "Qui est X-35?"*

TERENE I'm sorry, I only speak English.

DICK Only English? How long have you been in this country?

TERENE Twenty-two years.

DICK Twenty-two years and you only speak English? Why, I'm just a cop on the beat and I speak English, French, German, Sanskrit, and Copic!

TERENE Really? You ought to get a promotion.

DICK Okay, Mark Anthony Stark Naked: What do you know?

X-35 I only know that this scenario was written by Ronald Tavel and that the director is _____.

DICK And you, Peter Pecker: What have you to say?

(PETER panics suddenly, turns about and tries to escape. Everybody screams; much confusion; DICK waves his gun wildly. X-35 and Miss Termitte catch Peter and bring him back, each holding one of his hands so that he can not move. DICK takes aim very carefully and fires his gun off directly in Peter's face. TERENE, X-35, and Miss Termitte cry out in horror. PETER drops lifeless to the floor)

DICK (turning to DUMMY) Hey, Dummy, get rid of this stiff pecker, will you? (DUMMY lifts PETER, but is uncertain of

what to do) Oh, just drop him in that shower over there, will you? (DUMMY carries PETER to the right stall and dumps him in; he draws the curtain and sits to the side)

TERMITTE Well, that was curtains for one more stud!

DICK Yes, and that just about rounds up this case.

TERENE How do you mean?

DICK Well, Peter Pecker was obviously the secret spy, X-35. If he wasn't, why would he have tried to escape?

X-35 Hnnnnnnnn. I never thought of that.

DICK Naturally. But the police get paid to think of just such things.

TERMITTE Why, Officer, you're a genius!

DICK Thank you, madame.

TERMITTE In fact, I'm getting to like you better all the time.

DICK Do you think we two could get together—I mean, now that we're not enemies any more?

TERMITTE I'm sure we two could get together. I always wanted to be somebody's old lady. And I might as well be a dick's as a dyke's.

DICK (holding Termitte's hand) Bye, everybody, see youse at the wedding.

X-35 Congratulations, Dick.

TERENE Congratulations, Dyke.

(All four shake hands, pat backs, and kiss, and Dick and Miss Termitte exit, happy in each other's company)

TERMITTE exit, happy in each other's company)

X-35 Oh, Terene, would you excuse me?

TERENE What for?

X-35 Oh, I have to take a piss.

TERENE Use the sink. It's closer than the throne.

X-35 Thanks. I'll be back in a moment.

(He exits)

TERENE (wandering back and forth) So that was X-35! Peter Pecker was X-35! The man who was my enemy for so many years. The brute who took me in my bloom, in my flower-hood, when I was helpless. The barbarian who stole that which can never be replaced. If he kneels now on the hot sulphurs of Hell for thrice three millenniums, he can never

repay the theft, could never restitch the ripped membrane.
(*sitting near the stalls*)

What I believed was secret, volition, or hate that consciously directed hurt and dearth, was only how the handsome wind can whirl around the goat-clung ledges of a precipice, or how the sun can with a constancy that tires ponderance, keep course across the violet ceilings of the sky . . . or some such habited principality. . . .

(TERENE *meanders like the mad Ophelia*)

PETER (*come inexplicably back to life, pokes his head into view, rubs his hands juicily, and proclaims with great evil*) Sweet little Mary Lou Lambkins—she carelessly culled daffodillies while he sharpened the axe!!!

(*He disappears. x-35 is heard from offstage*)

x-35 Enter again, distraught, with your hair down.

I think I'd like to see that scene replayed.

God knows, but the Director certainly

Seems satisfied the way the reel was made,

Would hate to draw an extension on our stay

And keep us stuck in town another week.

And yet I think we ought at least to take

Advantage of our filming of the play.

It's not as if I didn't want to break,

Race off to rendezvous with all the rest,

The brand-new script, the salary we'd make

And all—it's simply that I'm not at peace

With every scene we've shot: they're not our best.

Particularly the one where you come in,

Distraught, your hair all down, tangled, and wild:

I think it isn't all it might have been

And shouldn't like to quit until I see

What else it could contain. It's just too mild,

Too limited; I'm sure you're meant to mean much more . . .

That, somehow, you've become all Elinore.

And that's just what I can not figure out.

Because if that's the case, why should I talk

Anent my readiness and wrack in doubt,

Wondering whether I shall thrust or balk.

The Quality is waiting in the hall.

The script makes very plain, if you'll recall,

It's dirty work that caused the sparrow's fall.

(x-35 *enters, relieved*)

TERENE (*regarding him curiously*) Mark, did you read that narration?

x-35 What?

TERENE I thought I heard someone narrating this film. Oh, never mind.

x-35 I don't mind, if you don't mind.

TERENE That's it—the same voice! You have the same voice as the narrator.

x-35 I suppose I do.

TERENE What are you narrating this film for? Do you think it really needs narration?

x-35 No.

TERENE Then will you stop it right now?!

x-35 I hear and obey!

DUMMY Help me to rise: I wish to make a statement.

TERENE Did you say something, Mark Stark?

DUMMY Help me to rise: I wish to make a statement.

x-35 Did you say something, Terene?

TERENE Yes, I said, "Did you say something, Mark Stark?"

x-35 No, I mean (*turning around*) Look, it must have been Dummy!

(*TERENE and x-35 rush back to where DUMMY is sitting by the stall. They kneel next to him and bend their ears*)

DUMMY In my youth I was a notable scholar and a reputed penman. . . . But nowadays my mind wanders from the subject—

(*long, painful pause*) Help me to rise: I wish to make a statement.

(*TERENE and x-35 lift DUMMY to his wobbly feet. He collapses and they lift him up again. He coughs violently; his entire frame shakes. He clears his throat and finally speaks*)

DUMMY I just thought I'd tell you two I am not deaf and dumb as you have so confidently esteemed me. And, oh, by the way, this man is secret spy X-35.

TERENE (*screaming*) What!!! You—you are X-35!

x-35 No! No, I am not X-35! I—

DUMMXY He's obviously. Examine yourself, my child.

x-35 No, no—don't.

(TERENE pulls out the waistband on x-35's underpants and stares in; x-35 is helpless; DUMMXY takes a peek, too)

TERENE (*hysterical*) Yes, yes! You are X-35! I can tell by your circumcision!

x-35 (*furious*) Oh, you stink every twenty-eight days!

(TERENE begins to cry in earnest. x-35 stands perplexed)

DUMMXY Well, I guess my work here is finished. I'll leave you two lovebirds to yourselves

(*He waves good-by and hobbles off*)

x-35 So what if I am X-35? What difference does that make? What's in a name? A rose by any other would smell the same every twenty-eight days. Don't you know that I love you.

TERENE Oh, get away from me! Get away from me!

x-35 Is it because I'm a spy for thirty-five millimeter movies?

TERENE Oh, who cares about movies! Who cares what movies you spy for! You know less about movies than Bosley Crowther does.

x-35 Then what is it, then? What, then, is so horrible about me? TERENE (*drying her tears*) Look at me, X-35, look very closely at me. . . .

x-35 Er—I—what f—

TERENE X-35, do you not recognize who I am?

x-35 You are Terene the Terrible Tart of Terra Cotta. Everybody knows th—

TERENE No, O short-remembered one, I am not Terene the T.T. of

T.C. I am . . .

x-35 (*slowly recognizing her*) You are . . . you are . . .

TERENE I am Lulu LaGoulu, the Lady from La Laluna!!!

x-35 The innocent, helpless virgin whom I seduced oh so many years ago!

TERENE Yes, the very same shell!!

x-35 Well, I certainly am glad I found you. I've been meaning to return your cherry to you for the longest time!
(TERENE screams and falls in a faint to the floor)

x-35 (*starting blankly down at her*) Some tarts take their cherries

so seriously.

(*He shakes his head sorrowfully, turns and enters the left stall, he draws the curtain*)

TERENE (*Waking up and drying her tears*) How many names he had. Mark . . . Mark Stark . . . Mark Stark Naked . . .

Tony . . . Mark Antony . . . Mark Antony Stark Naked

. . . X-35 . . . Isn't it funny? But I love him. Lady spies always love the guy who copped their cherry. . . . Oh, Mark, I have a closeness to you that no one new now can have. That no one hereafter can have when your true identity becomes general knowledge. I will be able to surprise those

people then. I can even shock those close to you now. . . . Oh, and Mark, dear, don't show any new girl your circum-

cision. . . . (*she stands and walks back into the right stall, repeating the name "Mark" several times over; then she breaks into song*)

No ship shall ever sail

Anywhere at all,

But I'll hear your call.

No swift departure fail—

No ship shall ever sail.

No gull recalled from sea,

From any far port,

But it will escort

Your sad call back to me;

Your proud sad call for me.

Yet I, Love, though listening to those birds

With clean, impatient acclaims,

Hear your same thoughts, hear unchanged your words:

I know your homes and your names.

No cargo in the bay,

Anchored to the dock,

But in its bound rock

Seems somehow to betray

Your call from far away.

Ah, yes, your call is clear,
Every note I hear,
Nothing sounds more dear—
Yet not a thought has changed,
No word been disarranged
By something I once cried
Before my leaving lied
To me about your claims—
I know your homes, your fames,
I remember all your names.

(She draws the curtain of her shower, tosses her towel to the audience)

DUMMY *(bobbling back, announces)* My, my, how my mind does wander these days from the subject. I forgot to say that the part of Dummy was played most marvelously by _____.
(Sounds of singing and the shower-water running)

CURTAIN

