

GUS. The cast of *The Iceman Cometh* just got here. It's a very long play. *(The phone rings. Gus answers it.)*

PETER. This'll be Buzz.

JULIA. All we need is one strong quote and I'll run this play forever.

GUS. Hello? *(They all seem to sense that this is "it.")* It's your press agent with the rest of the reviews.

JULIA. *(Shaking her head.)* James? *(James reluctantly starts for the phone.)*

PETER. The moment he's been waiting for, Julia.

JAMES. *(Genuine.)* That's not true, Peter.

JULIA. He doesn't mean that, James. *(James takes the phone. Julia, Peter, Virginia, Gus, and Frank hold hands.)*

JAMES. *(Into phone.)* Buzz, Jimmy Wacker ... Thank you, I'm sorry, too. It was a good ride while it lasted. Listen, I hope you've got some good news for us. That review in the *Times* was a shaft out of left field. You were double-crossed? How do you think they felt? Okay, let's go. Fuck the *Times*.

GUS. *(Helpfully.)* I take shorthand...? *(Julia nods. Gus takes up pencil and paper.)*

JAMES. *(He will listen and repeat the following.)* "In the final analysis, Mr. Austin's new play falls just short enough of the mark to fail utterly, however honorably." *The Daily News*.

PETER. I love you, too.

JAMES. "If and when the great American play is written, Peter Austin could be its author, but not with this one."

FRANK. You hear that, mate?

VIRGINIA. A review like that would keep me going for at least the rest of my life.

JAMES. "Virginia Noyes is a luminescent actress. She brings a touching dignity and emotional honesty to the role that is a huge step forward from her screen persona. Welcome back to the theatre, Miss Noyes."

VIRGINIA. That sounds good.

FRANK. It's bloody brilliant.

START JAMES. "Sir Frank Finger's direction ..."

FRANK. Don't even bother.

JAMES. "... escapes me, the play and the production."

FRANK. You want to repeat that?

JAMES. "Long the most overrated talent I know (the Queen was clearly having a Senior Moment when she put him on her Honor's List), Mr. Finger is one emperor who isn't wearing any clothes. Will somebody take away this man's Green Card and send him back to

Mother England? We fought a Revolution to rid ourselves of assholes like him." *The New York Post*.

JULIA. Congratulations, Sir Frank, bravo.

FRANK. Thanks.

PETER. I'm very happy for you, Frank.

VIRGINIA. Are you okay?

FRANK. I'm fine. I feel good. Really really good. Thank you *New York Post*. I finally got what I wanted. I hate it. Who does he think he is anyway? My father? "Good boy! Bad boy! Go play some rugby with your mates, 'stead of playing with bleeding puppets." "But I love me puppets, Daddy." "I'll show you what I think of your little toy theatre. (*Frank smashes his little toy theatre to smithereens.*) That's what I think of it! Think you're better than your old man, don't you?" "I don't, Daddy!" "Going off to Oxford to read literature when your dad can't even read his own name." "He can't read his own name." "I know! The biggest mistake of me entire life was taking you to that bloody Christmas panto." "I want to be Peter Pan, Daddy. I want to fly." "I'll teach you to fly, you little lump of nothing." (*Frank proceeds to give himself a good physical beating. He is having a breakthrough: psychic fireworks abound. Finally, he grows still.*) Okay. That was great. I've got an appointment with Mildred tomorrow. Here. I don't need these anymore. (*He unloads more purloined goods. The amount and variety of them will astonish us.*)

JULIA. My gym membership.

IRA. My gun.

VIRGINIA. My Quaaludes.

JAMES. A meatball hero. (*Back into phone.*) Yes, we're still here, Buzz. Did you hear all that? You've made one person very happy. (*Peter drapes Frank in his black shroud.*)

PETER. Rest, rest perturbed spirit.

FRANK. Thank you, mate. (*We sense a new Frank after this catharsis.*) **END**

PETER. What about the weeklies?

JAMES. (*Quoting Buzz.*) *Time* magazine doesn't review shows that already closed.

PETER. We haven't closed!

JAMES. *Time Out* left after the first act. *New York* left during the first act.

PETER. Get the *New Yorker*. They've always been good to me.

JAMES. They're coming the second night, if there is one. (*They all look at Julia. She shakes her head and weeps.*) Should he cancel the blimp? (*Julia nods.*) I guess that's the ball game, Buzz.