

Noon

- Terence McNally

While the house lights are still up, we hear a phone ringing—ringing and ringing and ringing. Endlessly. Just when the play is about to begin, the person on the other end gives up and the ringing stops.

We are in a large room, maybe a loft, no furniture, perhaps a few crates to sit on if necessary.

KERRY, in his early thirties, medium build, pleasantly outgoing, enters. He carries a flight bag. He's out of breath from climbing stairs.

KERRY Christ! oi vey! and mamma mia! (Catches his breath) Somebody ought to report this place to the Red Cross. Whoof! I thought there were laws about this sort of thing. I mean this beats Mexico City. Dear God! My heart! (Calls) Hello! I'm here. You said after twelve and . . . (Looks at his watch) well, you know what the early bird catches! (Pause) Hey? Anybody home? Dale? (BONG. BONG. Enormously loud tolling sounds as a clock somewhere nearby begins to tell the hour. BONG. BONG. BONG.) Ow! (Covers his ears. The clock continues to toll. ASHER, in his early twenties, tall, thin and nervous, will come up the stairs and into the room during the following. He is carrying several books. It is impossible to talk over the tolling, but KERRY tries to get a word in whenever he can) I thought Big Ben was in London! (BONG. BONG) I'll be with you in a minute! (BONG. BONG) The door was open! (BONG) I took the liberty! (BONG) I hope you don't mind! (BONG)

characters: Kerry
Asher
Allegra
Cecil
Beryl

Tara
63-6299

I SAID THE DOOR WAS OPEN, AND I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF JUST WALKING IN! (*The clock has stopped tolling*) Hey, friend, you got the time?

(*He laughs*)

ASHER (*He looks at his wrist watch*) It's just noon.

KERRY No kidding! (*Shaking hands*) Hi. I'm Kerry.

ASHER Hello.

KERRY Nice place you got. All you need is a ski lift and earplugs. Did you check for nose bleed?

ASHER This isn't my place.

KERRY You don't live here?

ASHER No.

KERRY Good! I can stop feeling sorry for you. And if I didn't have to worry about getting my tail back down, I could even stop feeling sorry for me.

ASHER Oh. The stairs. Yes. They're really something.

KERRY I don't have to ask if you do this often. You'd be up on manslaughter charges. (*Reading from an imaginary headline*) "Large numbers have heart attacks climbing stairs. Dale is charged."

(*He laughs*)

ASHER It's quite a climb, all right.

KERRY Just out of curiosity, what was wrong with your place?

ASHER Hunh?

KERRY Your place. What's wrong with there?

ASHER Nothing.

KERRY Got a roommate, hunh? Me too. She's a bitch about things like this. Come to think of it, she's a bitch, period.

ASHER I don't have a roommate.

KERRY No?

ASHER I mean a lover.

KERRY Oh.

ASHER Mistress is what I'm trying to say!

KERRY Then you're married?

ASHER Me?

KERRY You keep a very large dog then?

ASHER What dog?

KERRY You can't be *that* ashamed of your place . . .

ASHER I'm not.

KERRY You *do* have a place, don't you?

ASHER Well, sure.

KERRY 'Cause I'd sure as hell love to know what was wrong with it. If it's any worse than this, you ought to write your congressman. How are you fixed for time?

ASHER Fine.

KERRY I'm supposed to be on a business lunch. (*Sits on a crate*) Dale what?