

*The flapping of the pigeon's wings,
The coos of love, the song bird sings.
The pigeons were a way of life,
But were interfered with by a wife.*

*The flapping of the pigeon's wings,
The presents that the family brings.
The storm, the thunder, the crash of light,
The coop was pushed with all his might.*

*The flapping of the pigeon's wings,
The coop went down with other things.
The boards, the nails, the feathers too,
The coos of love, the fortune stew.*

(This play is dedicated to the memory of my Grandmother (O'Leary) who loved pigeons more than she loved cows. And to the pigeon who inspired its writing.)

L.D.
(02/25/10)

CHARACTER OUTLINE

- Lester Monk.....34 years old, an external introvert and very ill at ease with strangers. However, with his sister, and later his wife, he is very outspoken and uninhibited. He is obsessed with the idea that someday he will become internationally famous as the world's leading breeder of homing pigeons. His life has completely revolved around the pigeon coop on the roof. His appearance, except for a brief time during the play, is very un-groomed and soiled. He wears a pair of khaki pants that are too short, and a tee-shirt that rides up the back as the play opens. The suit that he wears in the play is of the 1955, one button variety and was probably purchased at Goodwill. It is extremely important that this character not be played as a clown, but as an eccentric.
- Sistine Monk.....Lester's sister and only living relative. She has taken her final vows in the order of the Little Sisters of the Poor. She is 30 years old; however, her age is difficult to determine under her traditional habit. She has a dominant personality with Lester, and much of her energy and ambition is devoted to Lester's welfare.
- Virginia Valentine.....Pretty, although not accentuated with makeup, hair styles, etc. She is intelligent, and believes that she knows exactly what she wants from life. Her personality runs the emotional gamut. She is about 25 years old.
- Niles Whipple.....Tall, dark hair and eyes. Very Handsome. He is a few years younger than Lester. He was Lester's only friend in high school and he was the only boy Sistine dated in high school. He is the complete opposite of Lester in everything. He is an ego maniac, who preys on the naive, depressed and unsuspecting women who are experiencing a difficult time in their lives. He is a complete phony.

ACT I

Time: Spring 1971.

The entire action of this play is set in a very old two-story house in Philadelphia. The acting area consists of two rooms in the downstairs area of the house. The most important of these rooms is the living-dining room combination. A large stuffed sofa is located at stage right and is decorated with crocheted doilies on its arm rests and center head rest. A stuffed chair with a foot rest is decorated similarly to the sofa and faces a very old TV set standing against the right wall. Against the rear wall right is an old china closet filled with magazines, old pigeon trophies, and sundry items. Upstage right is a door that leads to the roof. Center stage is a round wooden table covered with a table cloth. Over the table is a multi-colored lamp shade from the 1890's era. Placed around the table are four matching wooden chairs. Stage left is a kitchen cabinet over a small sink, a gas stove, a refrigerator, and an ironing board set up with an iron on it. This entire area serves as the kitchen. The walls are done in a cheap wood paneling. The small window over the sink is dressed in cheap curtains. Next to the window is the back door, and this is the only outside entrance and exit used during the entire production. Drapes cover the entire right wall with the exception of the front door down right that is never used. Upstage center is a small table with a telephone; next to the table is a floor model Zenith radio, with all the bands from police to radio Moscow. On the wall upstage center is a large photograph of Grandmother (Lester dressed like an old woman), and to the left of the photograph is a clothes tree. In the kitchen area there are three large and relatively new garbage cans that contain a variety of feed. They are marked CORN, RACER-BREEDER, and GRIT. These cans are used frequently throughout the play. As the play opens the time is 5:30 P.M. and the day is Thursday, sometime in April. The sound of pigeons cooing is heard coming from the area over the stage. Suddenly a rustling of wings is heard and the sound of them ascending in flight. Sounds of shrieking whistles and Lester's voice screaming.

Lester

Go! Go!

The sound of the flock of pigeons circling low over the roof is audible. The back door opens, and Sistine enters. She is dressed in the traditional habit and wears a pair of wire frame glasses. She carries a large bag filled with ready-prepared food and staple groceries. In her other hand is a copy of the American Racing Pigeon News. She sets everything on the table and crosses to the sofa, takes off her shoes, wipes her brow, and wiggles her toes. She appears very tired although she radiates an atmosphere of contentment and happiness. After a moment she speaks with a loud, but dignified voice.

Sistine

Lester!Lester, I've brought your supper! *(No answer)* Lester, do you hear me!?

1

Lester

(From the roof) What?

Sistine

(She rises and goes to the door leading to the roof) I said, I've brought your supper.

Lester

I'll be right down. *(She crosses to the table, takes out a large jar of stew, puts the contents into a pot on the stove, puts the pot on the burner, and turns up the temperature. She begins to set the table from the cabinet over the sink. Lester enters from upstairs)* It's that goddamn hawk again! He got three of my best birds last week!

Sistine

Lester, please watch your language while I'm in your presence.

Lester

I'm sorry, Sistine. I keep forgetting that you're a nun now.

Sistine

It's not that I don't want you to feel relaxed. I do. It's only, when one is exposed to that kind of language, one may begin to use it too. You wouldn't want me to slip in front of another nun or the Mother Superior with one of your undesirable expletives, would you?

Lester

No. I wouldn't want to see you get into any trouble because of me.

Sistine

I know you wouldn't. Now, be a good boy and watch what you say from now on, okay?

Lester

(He nods his head in the affirmative. Pause) It's just that damn hawk...*(He slaps his hand over his mouth)* I guess I did it again. I'm sorry.

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Sistine

Please, Lester, you must be more careful! *(He shakes his head again as before. After a slight pause)* Lester, there is something I've been meaning to talk to you about.

Lester

What's that?

Sistine

Well, it's come to my attention that a course is being offered in the evenings, beginning next fall, for those persons desiring to finish high school.

Lester

Well, what's that got to do with me?

Sistine

Since you never finished, I would think it should have everything to do with you. I mean for God's sake you're only one course shy. Don't you want your diploma?

Lester

What do I want a diploma for? I mean, what am I going to use a diploma for up on the roof raising pigeons?

Sistine

That's the whole point! When are you going to grow up and begin to do what men Thirty-four years old do?

Lester

I don't care what other men thirty-four years old do! I do what I want to do! I raise pigeons, and for that I don't need a high school diploma!

Sistine

Why can't I reach you, Lester? I have devoted my life to helping others and every day I do just that. I help others. Then I come here in the evening and realize what a real failure I am. I can't even begin to help my own brother. *(Pause)* You know sometimes you don't even talk to me the entire time I'm here. Did you know you did that?

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Lester

I'm sorry.

Sistine

Don't say you're sorry! *(Continuing the lecture)* You just sit there and eat, staring up at the roof when you hear the sound of those pigeon's wings. And sometimes, you're in such a hurry to get back up to that roof, you don't even say good-bye.

Lester

I'm sorry.

Sistine

(Sternly) Will you stop saying you're sorry!

Lester

For Christ sake, what is it you do want me to say?

Sistine

I will not remind you of that usage of language again!

Lester

I'm sorr.....*(Pause. Completely confused)* I don't know what I am anymore.

Sistine

That's exactly the point I've been trying to make. Don't you see what your life is, and what's more tragic, where it's going?

Lester

It's not going anywhere.

Sistine

That's right! It's not going anywhere. What are you doing to yourself? Look at you, thirty-four years old and what have you done with your life? I'm almost ashamed to say it for you. You raise pigeons on the roof.

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Lester

You used to like pigeons before you became a nun.

Sistine

No, not before I became a nun, but when I was 10 years old I liked pigeons--when I was a child. I think that's the root of our problem; you've never stopped being a child. (*He turns his eyes dejectedly to the floor*) I don't suppose it's entirely your fault, if grandmother had only.....

Lester

Don't you speak disrespectfully of that kind old lady. (*Looking at the picture of grandmother on the wall*) She's the only person on this earth that really loved me. She helped me when I needed help; she gave me encouragement.

Sistine

Lester, don't you want to be like other people and get a good job, get married and have a family?

Lester

I have a family, Sistine. I have you; you're my family.

Sistine

But it's not the same thing. What's going to happen if I get transferred to another convent? How are you going to eat? Are you going to live on that seventy-five dollars a week that grandmother left you?

Lester

There's more! There's plenty more!

Sistine

But not for several months, and you can get pretty hungry in that amount of time.

Lester

I'd find a way.

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Sistine

Don't you realize the risks you're forcing me to take to help you? I'm supposed to be delivering this food to some needy person who doesn't have another means to survive. But instead I give it to you. You're responsible for me committing a sin every day. And ninety percent of the time you don't even say thank you.

Lester

Okay! From now on I'll say thank you.

Sistine

(She looks heavenward) Oh, Good Savior, help me, please.

Lester

Can we eat now?

Sistine

No!

Lester

No? What do you mean, no.

Sistine

Just what I said. You're going to have to wait this evening for your dinner. We're having a guest.

Lester

(Becoming very nervous) What?

Sistine

We're having a guest. A friend of mine is coming to dinner. I invited her.

Lester

Her?! (*Nervous*)

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Sistine

Yes, her. Her name is Virginia Valentine. She's a very sweet young lady who just became employed at the convent as a secretary to the Mother Superior.

Lester

Well, why is she coming here?

Sistine

Because I invited her. (*Slight pause*) Now come on, get yourself together. She's a very nice person, you'll like her.

Lester

But I don't understand why I have to eat with her. You can feed me now, and I can go on back up to the roof, and let the two of you eat alone.

Sistine

That wouldn't be very polite. I asked her to have dinner with my brother and me; therefore, that technically makes her your guest too.

Lester

I can't have dinner with a lady the way I look.

Sistine

That's another small item I wanted to discuss with you; however, that can wait until another time. Right now, I would like you to get yourself upstairs, get washed, and put on your best suit.

Lester

I've only got one.

Sistine

Well, then, put it on. (*Lester begins to ascend the stairs*) And, Lester, don't forget to wash behind the ears. (*He exits. She continues to set the table as a knock is heard at the door. She goes to the door and opens it. Virginia enters.*) Oh hello. Did you have any difficulty finding the house?

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Virginia

None whatsoever. I just followed your directions, and here I am.

Sistine

Come in. I'll show you around. (*They both enter the living/dining room area*) This is the living room and dining room. They are my favorite rooms. When I was a child I spent many happy hours playing here.

Virginia

(*Sounds of pigeons cooing is heard*) What's that noise?

Sistine

What noise?

Virginia

Listen. (*They both get quite. The pigeon cooing is heard again.*) That noise! Can't you hear it?

Sistine

Oh yes, that. Well, that's just my brother's pigeons.

Virginia

Pigeons?

Sistine

Yes. My brother raises them up on the roof.

Virginia

Isn't that quaint! Is it his hobby?

Sistine

Not exactly. With Lester it's more of a vocation.

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Virginia

Then he takes it seriously. That's good. A man who takes his endeavors seriously usually displays a strong mark in his character.

Sistine

Yes. I guess you could look at it that way.

Virginia

Where is your brother now, Sister?

Sistine

He's upstairs getting dressed, and please dispense with the Sister while we're here. My name is Sistine. I want you to call me that.

Virginia

All right, Sis...Sistine, if that's what you want. *(Looking around the room)* Yes, this is a friendly place, isn't it? *(Slight pause)* What did you say your brother did again, Sistine?

Sistine

I didn't. I'm usually very wary when I speak of Lester to anyone who doesn't know him. I think that statement will be more clear when you meet him for yourself.

Virginia

Is there something wrong with him?

Sistine

Not exactly. He's just very shy, that's all.

Virginia

I see. Well, that's okay. You see, I believe that people who are shy usually compensate their personalities with some other strong characteristic or trait, displaying more times

than not, a great degree of raw and explosive talent. Those kind of people are as a rule more valuable to our society. Although their contributions are limited, they are mostly very beneficial; thus, they are remembered forever. Alexander the Great would be a good example.

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Sistine

I wouldn't compare Lester to Alexander the Great.

Virginia

No! I didn't mean to imply a parallel. Since I haven't as yet met your brother, to draw conclusions would be most presumptuous on my part.

Sistine

(Attempting to change the subject) How do you like the job at the convent?

Virginia

I like it all right, I guess. It's exactly what I need at this time in my life. *(Looking right at her)* I suppose I can tell you. I was....*(She gets all choked up)*

Sistine

What's wrong, what happened?

Virginia

(Wiping her eyes) I'm sorry. You must think that I'm crazy acting like this. I really am sorry.

Sistine

There's really nothing to be sorry for. *(Pause)* If you want to tell me about it, I'll be more than glad to listen.

Virginia

(Pause) I was jilted! *(Pause)* He was a nice boy. I loved him very much. We were high school sweethearts. Do you know that he's the only boy that ever kissed me outside of those games children play at parties. Well, anyway, John, that was his name, his name was John. John and I developed an understanding while we were going steady. We agreed that he would go to college, become an engineer, get commissioned as an officer in the army, serve his time, get discharged, and we would get married. Well, everything went exactly as planned. John went to college, became an engineer, got commissioned in the

army and went overseas. Everything was fine for a few months. And then, one day, I received a letter from John saying that he had met a Japanese girl while working on an assembly line, part-time, assembling transistor radios. It was love at first sight, he said.

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Virginia

Can you imagine a country that has an army, that pays its officers so little that they have to moonlight in order to get along. And in the interim, they become exposed to the feminine lures of preying foreigners, searching for a cheap passage to the States?

Sistine

I'm terribly sorry. I didn't know.

Virginia

I'm getting over it. It's been nearly five years now.

Sistine

Five years! But why would an attractive young woman like you, want to sit around brooding over the loss of one man, with so many eligible young men on the market today?

Virginia

It was love, Sistine. With John and me it was love. I'm afraid to try again. Suppose I'm not capable of experiencing it with anyone else.

Sistine

But you are! I know you are! *(Pause)* Virginia, you must let me help you, And who knows; in doing so you may help me also.

Virginia

How can I help you?

Sistine

Lester.

Virginia

Lester? I don't understand what you mean?

Sistine

My brother Lester is a very nice young man.

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Virginia

Yes, I'm sure that he is. But, I don't see how that is helping me, or how it can get me to help you?

Sistine

Just meet him.

Virginia

Yes, I intend to in just a few minutes, but what.....

Sistine

And when you meet him, do it within the frame of mind that you are considering him a potential husband.

Virginia

You mean really psyche myself up for the introduction. To really expect the ultimate.

Sistine

Well, don't expect all that; but at least make up your mind that you're not going to make any snap judgments about him; that you'll give him a chance to show you the wonderful, kind, loving and enterprising young man that he really is.

Virginia

I'm psyched up already; he sounds great!

Sistine

There are several things, in all fairness, that I think I should point out to you before you meet him though.

Virginia

What's that?

Sistine

He is all the things I said, but they are not immediately apparent. Lester has one real flaw. He's obsessed with the idea that someday he'll become internationally famous as the man who bred the world's fastest homing pigeons.

Virginia

He really believes that?

Sistine

That's all he's been living for since I've been old enough to remember.

Virginia

But why didn't your parents insist he turn his interest and talents into other directions?

Sistine

(Referring to photo on the wall) Grandmother!

Virginia

Grandmother?

Sistine

Yes, Grandmother! You see, Grandmother raised us. She's responsible for Lester being the way he is today. She encouraged him. She emphasized that it was the way of the Monk men to continue the work of their ancestors. So she gave him money, praised him, and when she died left him the Monk fortune in order that he might continue his avocation.

Virginia

You mean he's wealthy?

Sistine

Not exactly, at least, not yet. You see she left him the fortune with the one clause, that he'll get seventy-five dollars a week until he turns thirty-five. If at that time, he's still raising those pigeons up there, he'll get the entire two point three million dollars.

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Virginia

And if he doesn't continue the pigeon hobby?

Sistine

The entire fortune would automatically be donated, with the exception of a very small settlement to Lester, to the American Pigeon Society, to be used for the advancement and encouragement of breeding pigeons in America.

Virginia

My God! And you've been against his pursuing this fortune?

Sistine

I'm not interested in the worldly goods. It's the character of my brother that concerns me. He can't go through life doing nothing except raising pigeons.

Virginia

But don't you understand? Any man would do the same thing with that kind of reward as stake.

Sistine

You don't understand! Lester is not doing this for the money. He's doing it because he really wants to raise the fastest pigeon.

Virginia

I see. Then what you're trying to tell me is that your brother is an eccentric?

Sistine

That is not precisely the word I had in mind, but I guess it will do temporarily.

Virginia

Good! Now let's see if I have it straight as to what you would like me to do. You would like me to enter into an acquaintance with your brother, keeping an open mind at all times, looking and searching for a spark that nature may have planted, that will ignite a lasting relationship between two similar individuals longing for the same thing. Love!

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Sistine

(Slight Pause) Yes. I think that's what I want.

Virginia

Good. Now you must tell me as much about him as you can, in the short amount of time that we have left.

Sistine

I don't know where to start?

Virginia

Start at the beginning.

Sistine

In the beginning there was a Monk.

Virginia

Not that far back in the beginning. Begin with Lester. Where was he born?

Sistine

Here, in this house.

Virginia

And where are his Mother and Father?

Sistine

Dead. *(She blesses herself)* They died in an automobile accident years ago leaving Lester and me wards of our grandmother.

Virginia

I see. Then there are no other relatives, except you and Lester?

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Sistine

Yes. That's correct.

Virginia

Good. Now the schools. Where did he go to school?

Sistine

He went to Holy Trinity Elementary School for eight years, and then to St. Joseph's High School. But he never graduated.

Virginia

You mean he's a high school dropout?

Sistine

He failed English in his senior year and refused to go to summer school to make up the credit.

Virginia

Imagine, married to a high school dropout that raises pigeons on the roof. That's quite a come down from John, a college graduate engineer.

Sistine

Don't forget the two point three.

Virginia

That's a point well-taken, Sistine. I mean, after all, what does our society measure success on except the bank account?

Sistine

Now you're talking positively. Keep up the good work.

Virginia

Do you really think that I'm the one? I mean, why me? Of all the women in Philadelphia

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Virginia

that you could have brought home and introduced to your brother, why did you decided to invite me?

Sistine

I don't exactly have access to the files at the lonely hearts club, you know. After all, I am a nun, and have very little social activity in my life. My exposure to large numbers of people is very limited.

Virginia

Do you believe in destiny, Sistine?

Sistine

I'm not sure, why?

Virginia

Because I think he's coming down those stairs right now. *(Lester descends the stairs and stands before them very shyly. He is dressed in a one button, wrinkled suit of the 1955 vintage. The suit does not fit and presents a pathetic picture.)*

Sistine

Virginia Valentine, I would like you to meet my brother Lester. Lester, this is Virginia.

Virginia

How do you do, Lester.

Lester

(Pause) Hi. *(He casts his eyes to the floor)*

Virginia

(Pause) I understand that you raise pigeons.

Lester

What? (*Looking at Sistine*) Oh, pigeons, yes I raise them.

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Virginia

Where do you keep them?

Lester

On the roof.

Virginia

Isn't that against the law?

Lester

Oh, no. It's all right. I have about a hundred or more up there in my coop.

Virginia

My brother used to raise pigeons when we were children.

Lester

(*Becoming interested*) He did? What kind did he have?

Virginia

What kind? Well, I really don't remember. They were just pigeons.

Lester

(*Pause*) There's a difference, you know?

Virginia

No, I didn't know.

Lester

Oh, yes, there are many breeds. First there's the Homing pigeon. That's the kind I'm raising up there. (*He points to the roof*)

Sistine

Come along, you two, before the stew gets cold. *(Sistine gets the stew off the stove and serves it to Virginia and Lester, who sits at the table)*

Virginia

I would like to see your pigeons sometime, Lester.

Lester

You would? *(Slight pause)* Would you like to see them now? *(He starts to rise)*

Sistine

Lester Monk, don't you dare leave this table before you eat your dinner.

Lester

(Shyly) I was just kidding. *(To Virginia)* She treats me like a kid sometimes.

Virginia

Well, I would really like to see them sometime, Lester. Maybe another day when I have more time.

Sistine

Are you in a hurry this evening, Virginia?

Virginia

It is the middle of the week, and I have to be at the convent tomorrow.

Lester

What kind of pigeons did you say your brother raised, Vir.....*(Looking embarrassed)* I can't remember your name.

Sistine

Her name is Virginia Valentine, Lester.

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Lester

That's right, it was right on the tip of my tongue. (*Looking at Virginia*) So what kind were they, Virginia?

Virginia

I'm sorry, Lester, but I really don't remember.

Lester

Well, what kind does he raise now?

Virginia

He doesn't.

Lester

(*Pause*) You mean he doesn't raise any at all?

Virginia

He raised them when he was a child. Since then he grew up, and his interests became more diversified.

Lester

(*Incredulously*) I can't believe that anyone who has raised pigeons, for any length of time, could just stop! Just like that!

Virginia

It wasn't "Just like that", Lester. It happened over a period of time.

Lester

I just can't imagine my ever doing that. It would be like giving up a member of my family.

Virginia

You mean you consider those pigeons members of your family?

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Lester

(Pause. Looking at the roof) Brothers and Sisters....

Virginia

Sistine is this a joke?

Sistine

Would you like some tea, Virginia? *(She rises and crosses back to the stove)*

Lester

I'll have some, thank you. *(Looking at Virginia)* So what else do you know about them?

Virginia

About who?

Lester

Pigeons. You did say that your brother raised them once?

Virginia

Yes.

Lester

Then what else do you know about them?

Virginia

I told you. I don't know anything. It was my brother who raised them, not me.

Sistine

Can't we talk about something else in this house besides pigeons?

Lester

(Becoming very bashful again) I'm sorry. I must be boring you with my interest in pigeons.

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Virginia

Not at all! I think they're very interesting, only I don't know anything about them. At least not enough to converse with an authority like you.

Lester

Is that what you think?

Virginia

What?

Lester

That I'm an authority on pigeons.

Virginia

Well, aren't you?

Lester

(Looking up at the roof. Then looking at Sistine and then to Virginia) Yes, that's exactly what I am. I'll bet that there isn't anyone within a hundred miles, no, ten thousand miles, that knows more about pigeons than I do. *(Looking at Virginia)* Do you know what a Yellow Magpie is?

Virginia

A yellow Magpie?

Lester

How about a Blue-Black Argent Modena or a Pigmy Pouter or maybe a Bohemian Ferry Swallow?

Virginia

I've heard the last term used! *(Trying to recall)* But not in reference to pigeons.

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Lester

It's really great when you can walk down the street and you know that there isn't anyone within miles who knows what you know. Someday my name in the pigeon journals will be as famous as Antwerp, Barb and Bagdette. The name Monk will be known and respected by the pigeon breeders and racers throughout the world.

Virginia

There's a touch of insanity in you, Lester, and I believe a touch of genius too.

Sistine

Lester was never dumb. He was just single-minded.

Virginia

You've got potential, you know that, Lester?

Lester

(He becomes embarrassed again) No. No one ever told me that before.

Virginia

Well, they should have. If I have ever seen a man with more enthusiasm than you have right this moment, my name isn't Virginia.

Lester

(Pause) What did you say your last name was?

Sistine

Oh, Lester, sometimes I could just brain you.

Virginia

Valentine. My name is Virginia Valentine.

Lester

(He rises) Well, it was awfully nice meeting you, and I hope to see you very soon. *(He turns and runs up the stairs to the roof)*

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Sistine

(Pause) I'm sorry, Virginia. *(Looking at the stairs)* He's usually not like that at all.

Virginia

(Starring off and smiling) I like him.

Sistine

(Still looking at the stairs) I mean, if I had any idea that he was going to act this way...
(Realizing what she just said) What's that you just said?

Virginia

I said, I like him. He's not my John, but I do like him.

Sistine

(Looking heavenward) Thank you. *(Turning to Virginia)* You mean it? You're not just being polite.

Virginia

If I didn't like him I would say so. If it's one thing I can't tolerate, it's someone tolerating someone they don't like.

Sistine

I never thought I'd see the day that Lester would meet someone who would care.

Virginia

Of course, we're not sure how he feels about me. I mean, I just can't force myself on him.

Sistine

Why not?

Virginia

Sistine!

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Sistine

Of course not. I was just kidding. But he likes you, I can tell.

Virginia

How can you tell?

Sistine

The way he was looking at you at dinner. He was looking at you. Usually, he just stares at the ceiling. And the way he talked to you. He's never talked that much before.

Virginia

I must admit there were encouraging signs.

Sistine

I haven't heard him talk so much since before Grandmother died.

Virginia

I would like to get to know him a bit better.

Sistine

Oh, that's really wonderful. Let me think. Suppose I just run down to the convent and do a few things, and after prayers I'll sneak back here and see how things are going.

Virginia

You mean leave me alone here with him, without a chaperone.

Sistine

You don't have to worry about Lester. He was raised a good Catholic boy. I don't think he's kissed a girl since the girl next door had her twelfth birthday party.

Virginia

What happened?

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Sistine

I don't know. He would never tell anyone. Every time someone would question him about it, all he would do is just stand there and shiver

Virginia

I wonder what could have happened?

Sistine

Who knows? Even Grandmother couldn't get it out of him.

Virginia

It could be the key to his problem

Sistine

You mean his obsession with the pigeons? (*Virginia nods affirmatively*) No, I don't think so. I think his problem with birds is more deep-rooted than that.

Virginia

Well, it could be a start. If we were to learn why he can't kiss a girl. It just might give us a clue.

Sistine

I suppose it's worth a try. I can't think of anything, you would possibly do, that could injure him anymore than he already is. At least at this stage of the game.

Virginia

I had an experience once that turned me off kissing boys for a long time.

Sistine

Oh really, what?

Virginia

Well, I was thirteen and just beginning to notice boys. Do you know what I mean?

26

Sistine

Yes.

Virginia

You do?

Sistine

Yes. Does that surprise you?

Virginia

Yes. I think it does. I don't know why exactly, but it does.

Sistine

I had quite a time before I chose the habit.

Virginia

I'm sorry.

Sistine

And why are you sorry?

Virginia

Because we're pursuing a line of conversation that may be embarrassing for you.

Sistine

On the contrary. I like talking about some of the evil things I did in my youth. It makes me aware that I'm a woman.

Sistine

I just have a very difficult time picturing a nun doing anything other than teaching, praying or doing charitable deeds.

27

Sistine

Do you know how many of us were once wayward and worldly women?

Virginia

How many?

Sistine

Plenty. And do you know how many of us want to do the evil things that some of us did before we entered the convent?

Virginia

How many?

Sistine

Plenty. And do you know how many of us want to throw in the old towel and leave the convent; but just don't have the nerve?

Virginia

Plenty!

Sistine

Most of us, that's how many.

Virginia

Sister, what are you saying?

Sistine

I'm saying that when I was a young girl, I had plenty of boys. But every time I got interested in one, something would turn me off. Like the time I was sixteen, I met this boy named Harold. He was the most handsome boy I had seen up to that time. So when

Harold asked me to go to the senior prom I was beside myself. We had a wonderful time. We danced and talked quietly, and after a while he kissed me very lightly on the lips. Right on the lips! My heart started to race like I had just finished the hundred yard dash.

28

Sistine

This is it, I thought, this is love! If he asked me to marry him at that moment, I would have said yes without giving it a second thought. He asked me to go to the beach the next day, and I accepted. When we arrived at the beach, I had my image of Harold shattered. When he took off his shoes you'll never guess what I saw?

Virginia

Feet?

Sistine

Toe nails!

Virginia

Toe nails?

Sistine

Dirty filthy toe nails! Now how could I be in love with a man who didn't manicure his toe nails? I couldn't. It was disgusting. After that, I never dated Harold again.

Virginia

(Slight pause) I once dated a boy who used to belch all the time. What a pig he was. He tried to kiss me good night. I was only thirteen, and just as our lips met, he belched. It was the most repulsive thing that has ever happened to me. He had just finished eating cheese dip and the smell was revolting. I didn't kiss another boy until I met John.

Sistine

In my early teens, I was referred to as the fast little sister of the kid who was queer for pigeons.

Virginia

Sister, you shouldn't be telling me all this.

Sistine

I like talking about it, and stop calling me Sister.

29

Virginia

But isn't it a sin to recall those lewd years of your past?

Sistine

Well, technically, yes it is. But I might as well confess to you that I'm one of those nuns that I was talking about before. You know the ones who don't have the nerve to throw in the old towel.

Virginia

I see.

Sistine

(Getting somewhat angry) You don't see anything, you only think you see, but how could you. You don't know what my life has been like. I was the wildest teenager in the school. I smoked marijuana, and had enough sex to last any married woman a lifetime. Grandmother favored Lester because of his interest in pigeons and ignored me. When she died she didn't leave me a cent. She left it all to Lester and those pigeons. The will stated that only in the event that Lester were to marry, and then die, would any of the fortune revert to me. With those stipulations, I knew that my chances of getting any of that money were not very good. *(Pause)* It was just about the time of Grandmother's death that I met the only man I really and truly loved. We were to be married. But when he learned that Grandmother had given me a back seat in her will he backed out of the marriage. I understood though. I mean, after all, it's difficult enough for one person to get along in this world without having a second to support. So, in desperation, I turned to God. I applied and was accepted into the Order of the Sisters of the Poor. I thought that's where I belonged, after all, that's what I was, poor!

Virginia

I'm very sorry for you, Sistine. I didn't know.

Sistine

For God's sake, Virginia. Don't be sorry for me. I'm happy. You're the one whose life needs direction. And if my intuition is correct your direction is up there. *(She points to the roof)*

Virginia

God?

30
Sistine

No, Lester!

Virginia

You know with all of his eccentricities, I do think I could love him, in time.

Sistine

Time is the one commodity that you have plenty of. So use it to your advantage.

Virginia

What do you mean?

Sistine

You do want to get married someday, don't you?

Virginia

Yes. Well, I mean yes, when I meet the right man.

Sistine

Are you telling me that you haven't met him already?

Virginia

I'm not sure.

Sistine

And why aren't you sure?

Virginia

I just haven't had time to think about it.

31

Sistine

And that get me back to what I said before. You have plenty of time. Remember, Lester is a single man; that means he is very eligible. Lester is a very rich man; that means an easy life for you. And Lester isn't all that bad looking if you can ever get him cleaned up.

Virginia

He is kind of cute.

Sistine

Cute? If he wasn't my brother, and if I wasn't a nun. Or if I was the kind of a nun that had the nerve to drop out, I would have old Lester up to the alter before his most pregnant hen laid another egg.

Virginia

Do you think that he really likes me? He didn't seem very impressed at dinner.

Sistine

You can't always tell with him. He doesn't get impressed very often. So when he does he has a difficult time expressing himself.

Virginia

Then maybe he was impressed?

Sistine

It's like I said. It's difficult to tell, but there is a fifty percent chance that he was.

Virginia

(Slight pause) You know, Sistine, you're a real waste.

Sistine

A waste?

Virginia

Being a nun and all. You must have been just an absolute whirlwind in civilian life.

32

Sistine

I was a typhoon.

Virginia

So, what do you advise me to do?

Sistine

You're a woman, use your imagination.

Virginia

But I'm not sure I know how. I didn't have to play these kinds of games with John.

Sistine

Maybe you should have.

Virginia

Do you think that's why I lost him?

Sistine

We'll never know, will we?

Virginia

And at this point, I really don't care.

Sistine

That's the girl. Now what you have to do is to seduce my brother.

Virginia

Sister!

Sistine

Will you stop calling me Sister, and start thinking about how you're going to go about it.

33

Virginia

But why do I have to seduce him?

Sistine

Because you'll never get Lester to the alter any other way.

Virginia

I don't think it's at all fair for a woman to use those tactics to get her man.

Sistine

As long as you get the man, what difference does it make what kind of tactics you use?

Virginia

Well, there's the principle of the thing.

Sistine

Are you kidding? Who ever heard of using principles when you're man-trapping. This is the Now age, Virginia, and if you want a man Now, you had better get with it.

Virginia

I just can't believe that I'm standing here, right now, talking about trapping a man with his sister, who just happens to be a nun, and the man raises pigeons on the roof, and hasn't kissed a girl since he was twelve years old.

Sistine

Yes, the whole scene is somewhat ludicrous, isn't it?

Virginia

It's crazy. It's so crazy in fact, that I'll do anything you say just to see how this fantastic situation resolves itself.

Sistine

Good girl. Now I'll leave you alone. I must be going now anyway. I'll stop back in a little while and find out how things are going.

34

Virginia

Don't be too optimistic.

Sistine

Just let nature take her course.

Virginia

I'll give it a try.

Sistine

Good. I'll see you later. And don't forget, be forceful and aggressive. Lester needs that kind of approach. *(She exits. Virginia is left alone. She looks up at the roof, then slowly crosses to the stairway and softly, but melodiously, calls Lester's name)*

Virginia

Lester. Lester, it's Virginia. Would you come down here for a moment please. *(He doesn't answer)* Lester, can you hear me? I would like to see you for a moment.

Lester

(Off) What do you want?

Virginia

I want to talk to you, Lester. Would you please come down the stairs so I can see you.

Lester

(Still off) You can talk to me without me coming down.

Virginia

I find it very difficult talking to someone without being able to see the person I'm addressing.

Lester

What is it you want to talk to me about?

35

Virginia

Pigeons! I want to talk to you about something I just remembered about my brother's pigeons!

Lester

(He bounds down the stairs, crosses past Virginia, and sits on the sofa facing her) What was it you remembered?

Virginia

(She crosses to the sofa and sits next to Lester) Well, I just remembered about the kind of pigeons it was that my brother raised.

Lester

That's great! What kind were they?

Virginia

Rollers.

Lester

Rollers, I knew it! The first time I saw you and you told me your brother raised pigeons, I thought to myself, I'll bet they were Rollers.

Virginia

How did you know that?

Lester

You just look like the kind of a girl who would have a brother who would raise Rollers.

Virginia

And do you want to know something else, Lester. *(He looks at her)* I like you very much.

Lester

You do?

36
Virginia

Yes. It just so happens that I have a real weakness for men who raise pigeons.

Lester

Really?

Virginia

Really. I loved my brother, and he was a pigeon fancier.

Lester

(Nervously laughing) Yeah, but he was your brother. You had to love him.

Virginia

I didn't have to. And besides, he had friends who raised pigeons too.

Lester

Did they raise Rollers too?

Virginia

Some did and some raised Homing Pigeons.

Lester

That's the kind that I raise.

Virginia

It was always the guys who raised the Homing pigeons who turned me on the most. *(She moves a bit closer to him so that her body is touching his)*

Lester

Rollers are damn good birds though! (*Feeling uncomfortable with Virginia invading his space he rises and nervously crosses to the center*) They're real exciting birds to watch. Have you ever seen about a hundred young Rollers fly for the first time? (*Virginia shakes her head negatively*) It's a spectacle unmatched in nature. They're high altitude flyers, you know. They fly so high you can hardly see them with the human eye. Then they

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Lester

begin to circle, around and around, until the circle gets very small and there doesn't seem to be any (*Has trouble pronouncing the next word*) circumference of the circle left. Then without warning, they begin to roll. One at a time, they roll closer and closer to the earth until just when you think they're going to splatter onto the street, they break from the roll and swoop upward to begin the process all over again. (*Pause*) Of course, with the young birds, they all don't break from the roll, and consequently they roll to their deaths. They're different from human beings in that respect.

Virginia

I don't understand?

Lester

Any time we do something for the first time, we are subject to making a costly mistake. But once we make that mistake, if we have another chance, unless we're stupid or crazy, we don't make it again. The Rollers don't get another chance, and in that way, they differ from us.

Virginia

(*She rises and crosses to Lester*) What were you doing, just now, when I called you?

Lester

I was taking a nap.

Virginia

On the roof?

Lester

Yep.

Virginia

Aren't you afraid you'll fall off?

Lester

Nope.

38

Virginia

But you might you know?

Lester

There ain't no way.

Virginia

How come?

Lester

Because I sleep in the coop.

Virginia

You sleep in that dirty pigeon coop?

Lester

It ain't dirty! I clean it every day.

Virginia

But Lester, it isn't healthy to sleep with pigeons.

Lester

Who says so?

Virginia

Doctors.

Lester

Ha!....Doctors?! What do they know? They don't know nothing, that's what they know! Where were all the doctors when I was born? My grandmother couldn't even find a doctor for my mother when she was having me. All she had was my pigeons to comfort her.

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Virginia

You mean there were pigeons in the room, with your mother, while you were being born?

Lester

My mother was up on the roof feeding the pigeons when I started to be born. Grandmother told me I came like a thief in the night, without warning. Before my mother knew it, she was on the floor of the pigeon coop, and I was in this world. I was born up there in that coop. So you see, I can't be more at home anywhere, than up there. (*He points to the roof*)

Virginia

(*Pause*) I would like to see your coop sometime, Lester. How long has it been up there?

Lester

I don't know. I'm not sure anybody does. Those birds have been in the Monk family for a long, long time.

Virginia

Is that why you feel you must continue to raise them? For the family tradition?

Lester

No, not at all! I like it! It's my life; it's my work! If I didn't have the pigeons, I could no longer exist. There would be no purpose to my life.

Virginia

You don't mean that?

Lester

I do! There would be nothing left in life for me if my pigeons were taken from me.

Virginia

But, Lester, there are many things in life to live for other than pigeons.

40

Lester

Name on thing worth living for besides pigeons?

Virginia

Well, let me think. Let's see, there's food. Don't you like to eat?

Lester

Yes. But I don't see that as a substitute. I eat because I have to eat, not because I enjoy it all that much.

Virginia

How about money? Don't you enjoy spending money.....spending it on all the things of pleasure it can buy for you?

Lester

I don't have any money. I only get seventy-five dollars a week. That don't buy very many pleasures.

Virginia

Yes. But very soon you'll inherit the entire Monk fortune. You'll be able to buy anything you want, any time you want to buy it.

Lester

That money ain't mine! Grandmother wanted that money to go to the pigeons. The only reason she left it to me was because she couldn't legally leave it to them. She left it to me because she knew she could trust me to carry out her wish.

Virginia

(Slight pause) There is one more thing worth living for that we've overlooked.

Lester

What's that?

41

Virginia

Women.

Lester

Women?

Virginia

Yes, Lester, women! A woman. Me, Lester. Do I appeal to you? *(She moves to him, puts her arms around him and puckers her lips for him to kiss)*

Lester

(Becoming very stiff and nervous) But I don't know anything about women.

Virginia

I can teach you, Lester. Let me teach you. *(Still puckering)*

Lester

What do you want me to do?

Virginia

You can begin by kissing me, Lester.

Lester

(Laughs nervously) Oh no, I couldn't do that. I haven't kissed a girl since I was twelve years old.

Virginia

(Still puckering) Lester, I want to taste your lips. *(She begins to draw him closer)* You won't regret this, I promise you. *(They struggle, and Lester manages to get away)*

Lester

I can't! I can't do it! *(He runs around the other side of the sofa)*

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Virginia

(She just stands in the position where he escaped her embrace and regains her self control) Am I that unattractive to you, Lester?

Lester

It's not that you're unattractive to me, Virginia.

Virginia

Say that again?

Lester

It's not that you're unattractive to me, Virginia.

Virginia

Not all of it! Just the last part?

Lester

What part of the last part?

Virginia

My name! Say my name!

Lester

(Struggling to make his mouth form the sounds) Vir...Virg....Virginia....

Virginia

Say it again!

Lester

Virg.....Virginia!!!

Virginia

Again!

43

Lester

Virginia!

Virginia

(Excited) You see! You can say my name without stuttering when you try.

Lester

I don't understand. *(Looking confused)*

Virginia

You will! Now, what I want to know is why you can't get over your problem of kissing with the same therapy. Using, of course, a slightly different approach.

Lester

(With a look of horror and staring off as if he sees something terrible in front of him) I don't think any therapy will ever erase my memory of that terrible day.

Virginia

Why don't you talk about it, Lester? It may help.

Lester

I don't even like to think about it. It was horrible.

Virginia

But don't you see? By talking about it, the whole thing may now seem to be one of those silly little childish hang-ups, that we all get over at some time or another.

Lester

Sometimes, I wake up in the middle of the night in a cold sweat. It's those times when I dream about her. I see her face, I see.....*(As a horrible apparition is before him)* I can't continue to talk about it. *(He puts his hands over his face)*

Virginia

Who, Lester? Who was she?

44

Lester

(After a slight pause) Schultz!.....Melisa Schultz!!.....The little girl who used to live next door. *(Putting his hands over his face)* Oh, Virginia, I can't go on! Don't make me go on!

Virginia

(She grabs and begins to shake him) What happened, Lester? You must tell me what happened?

Lester

No.

Virginia

(Shaking him harder) Yes!

Lester

No.

Virginia

(Still shaking him) Yes!

Lester

No.

Virginia

(Shaking him violently) I said yes!

Lester

All right! All right! Stop shaking me. I'll tell you *(She stops shaking Lester. After a slight pause and he regains his composure)* Well, it all started when I was twelve years old.

Virginia

We've established the fact that you were twelve, Lester. Now will you get to what happened!

45

Lester

Melisa was twelve too. *(Virginia looks at him threateningly)* Well, she was! It was her twelfth birthday. Grandmother dressed me in my best suit, bought me an appropriate present and sent me off to the party. The party was held at an appropriate time, two o'clock in the afternoon. When I arrived next door, I did all the appropriate things. I gave the present to the hostess, wished her a happy birthday, and took my appropriate place at the table. We ate the ice cream in the appropriate manner, and after the birthday cake, we proceeded to the basement to play the appropriated party games of the day. The game was called "Spin the Bottle". You see, everybody sits around in this big circle. *(Using his hands to indicate the arrangement of the children)* The most appropriate arrangement is boy, girl, boy girl. Well, anyway, we were playing the game when it came to be my turn to spin the bottle. I spun that old bottle a real good spin. She spun so fast you couldn't even see what color it was. Then it started to slow down. Slower and slower until it finally stopped. There wasn't any doubt about it; it was pointing right square at Melisa Schultz. Now the appropriate thing to do was to proceed back to the coal bin area where one could have a bit of privacy, and the others couldn't giggle and make smart remarks, to pay the penalty. The appropriate penalty was to kiss your partner right on the lips. *(Looking at Virginia)* I didn't have any trouble with that. I had kissed a lot of girls before that time. So I got all prepared. I put out my arms to invite her in, and that's when it happened! *(He screams)* Oh, God, it was horrible!! *(He doesn't seem to be able to continue)*

Virginia

Don't stop now! You're doing great!

Lester

(He screams again) Oh God. it was horrible! I was ready to receive her lips, when I saw it!

Virginia

Saw what?

Lester

Her teeth!

Virginia

Her teeth?

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Lester

Her teeth! She had braces on her teeth! Her lip was rolled back and I could see those goddamn braces! Just before we had begun the game she had eaten a Baby Ruth candy bar, and all that mess was gummed up in those braces. *(Acting out the action)* I moved back, but there wasn't anywhere to go. Before I had a chance to protest she had me, her lips against mine. And I could feel all those nuts and chocolate and steel. Ahhh!! *(Pause. He regains his composure and turns to Virginia)* From that day until this, I've never been able to kiss another person. Not even Grandmother.

Virginia

I can see where that might turn you off in the kissing department. But Lester, you can't go through your entire life not kissing anyone; it isn't healthy.

Lester

What can I do? Every time I try, I remember Melisa and become repulsed.

Virginia

But you've got to try.

Lester

I can't. I suppose I'll never kiss another human being.

Virginia

You mean there are other things that you can kiss?

Lester

Yes.

Virginia

Like what for example?

Lester

My pigeons.

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Virginia

Of course, the pigeons! Why didn't I think of them?

Lester

I don't know.

Virginia

(Slight pause) Lester, would you like for me to help you?

Lester

Nobody can help me.

Virginia

I can help you. You must trust me or you wouldn't have confided in me the way you did. I'll bet you never told anyone that story before, did you?

Lester

Nope.

Virginia

You see, that must prove something.

Lester

It does.

Virginia

And what does it prove, Lester?

Lester

It proves that I was afraid you were going to shake me to death; that's what it proves.

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Virginia

No, Lester. It proves more than that. It proves you trust me; it proves you like me; it proves that you may even possibly love me.

Lester

I love you?

Virginia

Does that surprise you, Lester? Well it shouldn't. It happens to people; people just like you and me.

Lester

Oh wow! I don't understand any of this.

Virginia

You don't have to understand it. Just let it happen. *(She moves close to him)* Now let's pretend.

Lester

Pretend?

Virginia

Yes. You're going to pretend that I'm one of those pigeons on the roof, and I just did something to please you very much. *(She puckers with her eyes closed)*

Lester

Which one?

Virginia

(She looks at him) What do you mean, which one?

Lester

Which pigeon. I have over a hundred up there.

49

Virginia

(Getting a little perturbed) Which ever one you want! I'll be which ever one you want!

Lester

How about by Blue Bar hen who won the five hundred last year. She's one of my favorites.

Virginia

Okay. I'm a Blue Bar. *(She closes her eyes and puckers again)*

Lester

(Slight pause) What did you do?

Virginia

(She looks at him again getting more perturbed) What's that?

Lester

What did you do to please me?

Virginia

Does it make a difference?

Lester

Yes, it makes a lot of difference! I just don't go around kissing my pigeons for nothing. They have to do something to please me.

Virginia

(Getting very frustrated) Okay! Let me think! I've got it! Let pretend that I just won the five hundred!

Lester

Nope, that won't work.

50

Virginia

(Completely losing her patience) And why, might I ask, won't that work?

Lester

Because I already kissed her for that.

Virginia

Well, can't you kiss her for it again?

Lester

Nope. I have a very strict policy of only giving one kiss per one please.

Virginia

I see. *(Crossing away and thinking for a moment)* I've got it! Let's pretend that I just laid an egg, *(She puts her hand behind her as if she has deposited an egg in it)*, and this egg is going to produce the fastest Homing pigeon in the world. *(At this point Lester is trying to see what is in her hand)* You know the one that is going to make you internationally famous. Would that rate a kiss?

Lester

(Thinking about it) Yes. But how do I know that egg is going to do all of what you said it's going to do?

Virginia

You'll just have to trust me.

Lester

Do I have a choice?

Virginia

(Staring at him and squeezing her egg hand as if to destroy it) No! (She closes her eyes and puckers again)

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Lester

Can you coo a little like my Blue Bar hen. *(She open her eyes and looks at him)* Just to get me in the mood.

Virginia

(Incredulously) You want me to coo like your Blue Bar hen?

Lester

Yep.

Virginia

But I don't know how your Blue Bar hen coos.

Lester

It's easy. She sounds something like this. *(Imitating the sound of a pigeon cooing)*
Coooo.....Coooo....

Virginia

(Virginia closes her eyes and puckers and begins to coo, imitating Lester. At this point they are both cooing simultaneously. Lester really gets carried away and takes on the role of the male Homing pigeon seducing the hen. He coos all around her; she begins to move her arms in a flapping movement. Lester is rubbing and brushing himself against her in a pigeon-like fashion. Finally,, he moves in from the front and pecks her lightly on the lips. She puckers again. He repeats this ritual several times, then she reaches out with her flapping arms and draws him into her. At first he shows a little resistance, but then he completely succumbs to her passion. At last they embrace in the human tradition)
Oh, Lester! You're every bit of a man I thought you were, and then some!

Lester

Kiss me.....(*He continues to kiss her*)

Virginia

(*She breaks away*) Lester, I've cured you!

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Lester

Kiss me.....(*He kisses her again*)

Virginia

(*And again she breaks away*) Lester, don't you understand. You're actually kissing a girl, after all these years.

Lester

It's good. I like it. Kiss me.....(*He grabs her again and kisses her*)

Virginia

But Lester. I want to talk now.

Lester

No time for talk, just kiss.....(*He grabs her and begins to kiss her*)

Virginia

(*She breaks away*) My God! I think I've created a monster. (*Lester is coming after her in a Frankenstein Monster posture*) Lester, listen! We can't just continue kissing like this! It isn't healthy!

Lester

(*Snapping out of his trance*) What? What's that?

Virginia

I said, it isn't healthy.

Lester

But just a minute ago you said not to kiss was unhealthy.

Virginia

I know what I said a minute ago. But don't you understand that anything in excess, isn't healthy?

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Lester

Well, when is it healthy?

Virginia

In moderation. (*Lester begins to coo*) Now what are you doing?

Lester

I liked you better when you were my Blue Bar hen.

Virginia

I don't want to be your Blue Bar hen. I want to be me. I only imitated that pigeon to help you. And now that I've accomplished that, I don't see any need to continue to act like a pigeon.

Lester

(*Slight pause*) Okay. What's next?

Virginia

Next?

Lester

Yes, next! After two people kiss for a while, doesn't that lead to other things?

Virginia

I'm not following your line of thought.

Lester

Other things, like....*(He looks around to make sure that no one is eavesdropping)* SEX...

Virginia

Sex?

54

Lester

Yes, Sex! Delicious, nasty, naughty sex!

Virginia

That comes later.

Lester

Later?

Virginia

Yes, later!

Lester

What do you mean, later?! I want to right now!

Virginia

I'm sorry, Lester. But I'm not that kind of girl.

Lester

(Getting very annoyed) Oh, I see it all now! The handwriting is on the wall! You're one of those girls who gets her kicks getting a guy all worked up then turns him off!

Virginia

(Becoming very insulted) I am not one of those kind of girls. I just want to be married before I have my first.....experience.

Lester

You mean you never did? Not in your whole life?

Virginia

Never.

55

Lester

That is really neat! I don't think I've ever met a girl that didn't, at least once. Not even in high school.

Virginia

I'm not saying that I haven't had the urge. *(Pause)* Lester, would it make a difference to you if a girl wasn't a virgin?

Lester

(Pause) I don't know what I'm doing here talking to you. I should be up on the roof feeding my pigeons. *(He crosses to the garbage cans in the kitchen and begins to fill up a small can sitting on the floor next to the feed)* Those guys up there, *(He points to the ceiling)* they're the only ones that love me.

Virginia

Lester....*(Pause)* I love you!

Lester

(He pretends that he doesn't hear her and continues to fill up his can with the variety of feed that is in the different garbage cans) Let me see, two-thirds racer breeder to one third grit.

Virginia

Lester! Did you hear what I said?

Lester

(He reaches into the can marked "corn" and takes a handful to Virginia) Would you like some corn? It's the best money can buy?

Virginia

Didn't you hear what I said? I said I love you.

Lester

(Ignoring her) Someday I'm going to be famous.

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Virginia

I know you are. And that's part of the reason that I love you.

Lester

(Eating some corn) This is really delicious. You sure you won't try some? *(She shakes her head no)* How about some grit. It has sort of a salty taste to it. *(He crosses to the can and gets a handful of grit and then crosses to Virginia)* Now, just put it in your mouth like this. *(He puts a half a handful in his mouth and Virginia does the same)* Just suck on it. *(Pause)* Isn't it delicious?

Virginia

(She shakes her head yes) What is it used for?

Lester

For pregnant pigeons.

Virginia

(Spitting out the grit) Pregnant pigeons?

Lester

Yes. It's mostly calcium. It gives their eggs a good strong shell, thus protecting the embryo contained within.

Virginia

When you talk about those pigeons sometimes you sound like a text book.

Lester

My manual. I quote my pigeon manual. I wouldn't be without it. *(He takes it out of his back pocket and shows it to her)* Everything a pigeon breeder should know is in here.

Virginia

(Eating another handful of grit) Lester, this must prove that I love you.

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Lester

Prove? *(He looks at her eating the grit)* Oh, you mean because you're eating that grit? Oh, hell, Virginia, that ain't nothing. I eat grit every day. It's damn good for you, and it's tasty too.

Virginia

Yes. It is rather good.

Lester

I don't know why you're trying to prove anything to me. After thinking it over, I really don't have any time for girls. I got too much work to do up there. *(He points to the ceiling)*

Virginia

Didn't you feel what I felt when we kissed?

Lester

Sure. I got to thinking about how good sex used to be before I developed my problem.

Virginia

But, Lester, you were only thirteen years old when you developed that.

Lester

Twelve.

Virginia

All right you were twelve. That even makes it worse. You mean to tell me that you had sexual experiences when you were twelve?

Lester

Yep. I started first feeling sexy when I was six.

Virginia

That's impossible.

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Lester

That's what my grandmother told Mrs. Whipple.

Virginia

Who's Mrs. Whipple?

Lester

That's Niles Mom.

Virginia

Lester, are you telling me that when you were six years old, you had your first sexual experience, and it was a homosexual one?

Lester

No. I'm not saying that at all. I didn't have it with Niles; I socked it to his sister, Millie.

Virginia

Lester Monk, I'm truly ashamed of you.

Lester

That's what she said.

Virginia

That's what who said?

Lester

Mrs. Whipple. She said, Lester Monk, I am truly ashamed of you. And Grandmother said it was impossible, called her a dirty old woman, and kicked her ass out.

Virginia

I'm not ashamed of you for having sex before puberty. I'm ashamed of you for thinking of another woman while you're embracing me.

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Lester

Hell, Virginia! She was only six years old.

Virginia

That compounds the shame. You're not a pervert are you, Lester?

Lester

A what?

Virginia

Pervert.

Lester

I don't think I know exactly what that is.

Virginia

That's a relief. If you don't know what it is you couldn't possibly be one, could you?

Lester

No. I don't suppose I could.

Virginia

(Embracing Lester) Oh, Lester, I do love you. I do, I do, I do.

Lester

Prove it!

Virginia

Prove it?

Lester

Yes, prove it! You said before you wanted to prove it. So now prove it! And I don't consider eating grit a good or acceptable way.

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Virginia

I see. *(Slight pause)* Well, that really puts me on the spot, doesn't it? *(He nods his head in the affirmative)* All right, I will. I am going to tell you something that I haven't even thought about for five years. *(Pause)* You're probably wondering why I haven't mentioned my family. Didn't you find that a bit unusual? *(He shrugs his shoulders)* It's not because they're dead, because they're not. They're very much alive, but as far as I'm concerned they're dead. You see, Lester, I did something that they will never forgive me for. I did a very, very bad thing.

Lester

What kind of bad thing did you do, Virginia?

Virginia

I went to the movies.

Lester

How could you embarrass them by going to the movies?

Virginia

Will you shut up and let me finish! *(She leads him to the sofa and sits him down)* Please sit down, and listen to what I have to say. It isn't easy for me to talk about it. And remember, I've never told another soul about this. I've been keeping it to myself for five years. *(She looks from him and starts to reminisce)* John and I had been to the movies. When we arrived back at the house it was completely dark. Mother had left me a note that Daddy and she had decided to go to the ocean at the last minute. They always did things like that. They were spur of the moment people. They had a ocean home, and it wasn't at all unusual for them to drop everything and just take off for the weekend. Mother had put a P.S. on the note reminding me to be sure to keep an ear for the washing machine in the basement. She had put a load of clothing in it, and it had a tendency to get stuck. When

that would happen, a buzzer would sound notifying you that it wouldn't complete the cycle unless someone would manually re-cycle it. Anyway, John and I were engaged, and we loved each other very much. The most we had done up until that time was the normal amount of petting and, of course, a lot of kissing. Well, we no sooner got into the house when we started to kiss and pet and kiss and pet. *(She starts to breathing very heavy at this point)* It was becoming more and more difficult to control ourselves beyond the kissing and petting stages. This particular night we had gone beyond the limits of control. We were only a week away from being man and wife, and at that moment it didn't seem to matter. He started to undress me, kissing every inch of skin he uncovered. I started to

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Virginia

undress him, until we were feverishly undressing each other. Kissing and undressing and petting. And then there we were standing before one another, naked. Cold chills began to run all over my body. I noticed the window was open and closed it. We stood there just looking at each other, neither of us saying a word. As I looked at his body I thought to myself, "Just as I imagined". He broke the silence as he said, "Just as I imagined. You're beautiful." He put his hand on my breast and fondled it gently. I slowly began to sink to the floor. I wanted that man so bad I could taste him. And then, just as he was about to take my virginity, that goddamn buzzer in the basement went off. I said that I had better go down and turn it off. He uttered a few obscenities and agreed. I opened the basement door. He said, "I'll carry you. It'll be good practice for carrying you over the threshold later." He picked me up in his arms and started down the stairs. It was very dark, but I knew the way. We didn't think it would be a very good idea to turn the lights on considering the condition we were both in at the time. He must have got somewhere near the bottom when, all of a sudden, lights went on from everywhere! The basement was filled with people! People we both knew! My parents, aunts and uncles, cousins, all his relatives, all screaming at the top of their voices, "SURPRISE"! All I heard him say as he dropped me right on my ass was, "GOOD CHRIST". I fainted, and he ran up the stairs, and out into the street, as naked as the day he was born. No one has ever heard from him again. After I revived, everyone had left. My father had my clothes packed. He showed me the door, and told me to get out and never come back. He said, "As far as he and my mother were concerned, I was dead." I left and haven't been back since. *(Pause)* So you see, Lester, that proves I love you; otherwise, I could have never trusted you with the deepest, darkest secret in my life. *(She sits next to him on the sofa)*

Lester

(After a slight pause) I see. *(Looking somewhat diabolical)* Virginia, have you ever thought about how good you felt just at the moment John was about to mount you?

Virginia

I haven't dwelled on it. But I have thought about it sometimes, yes.

Lester

Would you like to try again? I don't have a washing machine.

Virginia

Lester! John and I were going to be married.

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Lester

What's that got to do with it?

Virginia

It's got everything to do with it. Didn't anything I said to you before make any impression?

Lester

In other words, if we're going to get married, everything is all right. We can make the old sofa squeak.

Virginia

(Thinking about it for a moment) Yes. I think it would be all right then; if we're going to be married very soon.

Lester

How soon?

Virginia

A week at the most.

Lester

How about Saturday afternoon. I've got races every day next week.

Virginia

(Sistine enters quietly) You mean you're asking me to marry you?

Lester

Yep.

Virginia

Oh, Lester! *(She grabs him and they begin to kiss passionately. His hands begin to roam all over her body)*

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Sistine

Lester Monk! Don't you dare touch that woman until you've been properly married before a priest.

Lester

God damn it!

Sistine

And be careful of that foul mouth of yours, or I'll wash it out with soap.

Lester

What are you doing here?

Sistine

Never you mind about that. Right now, all you've got to worry about is keeping your vow to this fine woman. You know how the church feels about long engagements.

Lester

(He rises and goes to the feed cans, picks up the small can and starts up the stairs) I got to go now.

Virginia

Where are you going, Lester? We've got to start making plans.

Lester

(As he exits) My blue Bar hen is in labor. She needs me. I've got to go.

Virginia

Oh, Sistine, I'm so happy! This has got to be one of the happiest days of my life!

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Sistine

Happier days are yet to come, my child. Lester will make you a good husband, you'll see. Now, we must get started on the invitation list. You'll want your mother and father at the top for sure.

Virginia

(She looks at her with a very stark expression) Oh yes. For sure....

(The lights slowly fade as Sistine begins to write)

End of Act I

