

(LARRY takes a plate of food, goes to sit on the back of the couch from behind it.)

COWBOY. It's good.

HAROLD. (Quick.) You like it, eat it.

MICHAEL. Stuff your mouth so that you can't say anything.

(DONALD takes a plate.)

HAROLD. Turning.

BERNARD. (To DONALD.) Wine?

DONALD. No, thanks.

MICHAEL. Aw, go on, kiddo, force yourself. Have a little *vin ordinaire* to wash down all that depressed pasta.

HAROLD. Sommelier, connoisseur, pig.

(DONALD takes the glass of wine, moves up by the bar, puts the glass of wine on it, leans against the wall, eats his food. EMORY hands BERNARD a plate.)

BERNARD. (To EMORY.) Aren't you going to have any?

EMORY. No. My lip hurts too much to eat. Anybody going to take a plate up to Alan?

MICHAEL. The punching bag has now dissolved into Flo Nightingale.

LARRY. Hank?

HANK. I don't think he'd have any appetite.

(ALAN, as if he's heard his name, gets up from the bed, moves slowly to the top of the stairwell.)

EMORY. Do you like it, Hallie?

HAROLD. I'm having seconds and thirds and maybe even fifths.

(He gets up off the stairs, comes toward the table.)

I'm absolutely desperate to keep the weight up.

(BERNARD bends to whisper something in EMORY's ear. EMORY nods affirmatively, and

BERNARD crosses to COWBOY and whispers in his ear. A beat. COWBOY returns his plate to the buffet and follows EMORY and BERNARD into the kitchen.)

MICHAEL. (Parodying HAROLD.) You're *absolutely* paranoid about *absolutely* everything.

HAROLD. Oh, yeah, well, why don't you *not* tell me about it.

MICHAEL. You starve yourself all day, living on coffee and cottage cheese so that you can gorge yourself at one meal. Then you feel guilt and moan and groan about how fat you are and how ugly you are when the truth is you're no fatter or thinner than you ever are.

EMORY. Polly Paranoia.

(EMORY moves to the coffee table to take HANK's empty plate.)

HANK. Just great, Emory.

EMORY. Connie Casserole, no-trouble-at-all-oh-Mary, Don't-Ask.

MICHAEL. (To HAROLD.) ...And this pathological lateness. It's downright *crazy*.

HAROLD. Turning.

MICHAEL. Standing before a bathroom mirror for hours and hours before you can walk out on the street. And looking no different after Christ knows how many applications of Christ knows how many ointments and salves and creams and masks.

HAROLD. I've got bad skin, what can I tell you.

MICHAEL. Who wouldn't after they deliberately take a pair of tweezers and *deliberately* mutilate their pores – no wonder you've got holes in your face after the hack job you've done on yourself year in and year out!

HAROLD. (Coolly but defiantly.) King of the Pig People.

MICHAEL. Yes, you've got scars on your face – but they're not that bad, and if you'd leave yourself alone, you wouldn't have any more than you've already awarded yourself.

HAROLD. You'd really like me to compliment you now for being so honest, wouldn't you? For being my best friend who will tell me what even my best friends won't tell me. You hateful sow.

MICHAEL. And the pills!

(Announcement to group.)

Harold has been gathering, saving, and storing up barbiturates for the last year like a goddamn squirrel. Hundreds of Nembutals, hundreds of Seconals. All in preparation for and anticipation of the long winter of his death.

(Silence.)

But I tell you right now, Hallie. When the times comes, you'll never have the guts. It's not always like it happens in plays, not all faggots bump themselves off at the end of the story.

HAROLD. What you say may be true. Time will undoubtedly tell. But, in the meantime, you've left out one detail - the cosmetics and astringents are *paid* for, the bathroom is *paid* for, the tweezers are *paid* for, and the pills are *paid* for!

(EMORY darts in and over to the light switch, plunges the room into darkness, except for the light from the tapers on the buffet table, and begins to sing "Happy Birthday." Immediately, BERNARD pushes the swinging door open and COWBOY enters, carrying a cake ablaze with candles. Everyone has now joined in with, "Happy birthday, dear Harold, happy birthday to you." This is followed by a round of applause. MICHAEL turns, goes to the bar, and makes another drink.)

EMORY. Blow out your candles, Mary, and make a wish!

MICHAEL. *(To himself.)* Blow out your candles, Laura.

EMORY. Awwww, she's thirty-two years young!

HAROLD. *(Groans, holds his head.)* Ohh, my God!

(BERNARD has brought in cake plates and forks. The room remains lit only by candlelight from the buffet table. COWBOY returns the cake to the table, and BERNARD begins to cut it and put the pieces on the plates.)

HANK. Now you have to open your gifts.

(He hands HAROLD a gift. HAROLD begins to rip the paper off.)

HAROLD. Where's the card?

EMORY. Here.

HAROLD. Oh. From Larry.

(Finishes tearing off the paper.)

It's heaven! Oh, I just love it, Larry.

(HAROLD holds up a graphic design.)

COWBOY. What is it?

HAROLD. It's the deed to Boardwalk.

EMORY. Oh, gay pop art!

DONALD. *(To LARRY.)* It's sensational. Did you do it?

LARRY. Yes.

HAROLD. Oh, it's super, Larry. It goes up the minute I get home.

(HAROLD gives LARRY a peck on the cheek.)

COWBOY. *(To HAROLD.)* I don't get it - you cruise Atlantic City or something?

MICHAEL. *(To EMORY.)* How much did you pay for him?

(HAROLD has torn open another gift, takes the card from inside.)

EMORY. He was a steal.

COWBOY. I'm not a steal. I cost twenty dollars.

MICHAEL. And what do you do for twenty dollars?

COWBOY. I do my best.