THE BEAT
GENERATION
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Clockwise from upper left
William S. Burroughs, Joan Vollmer, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg
Preface

Jack Kerouac . . . Allen Ginsberg . . . William S. Burroughs! You’re undoubtedly familiar with the titles of their most celebrated works: On the Road, “Howl,” and Naked Lunch.

Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs

What you may not know, however, is that on the way to establishing the Beat Generation as an avant-garde literary movement in the 1950s, these three friends did more absurd things than
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the most outrageous and wild contemporary college students. They drank and used drugs to excess, engaged in hundreds of sexual escapades, and had run-ins with the law that landed each of them in jail and forced Burroughs to leave the country twice!

They also experienced two tragedies that have rightfully become legends in the annals of the Beat Generation: the murder of David Kammerer, and the shooting of Joan Vollmer.

This play, The Beat Generation, focuses on events which may seem impossible, but it’s actually based on a true story.

BURROUGHS MOVES TO NEW YORK

Born in St. Louis in 1914, Burroughs inherited part of the fortune amassed by his grandfather, who had invented the Burroughs adding machine. A lastborn with an older brother three years his senior, Burroughs grew up in the lap of luxury. Because of the great wealth in his family, he never had to work, although he entertained himself by doing odd jobs now and then, including working as an exterminator and a lush worker.

A lush worker rides the subway at night and steals wallets from passengers who have fallen asleep on the train or who have passed out from drinking. Burroughs did this for a short time in New York. He liked hanging out with small-time criminals and drug dealers.

The reason he came to New York City in the first place is interesting and says something about his spontaneity. His best friend in St. Louis was
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David Kammerer, who happened to be gay. Burroughs was also gay, but he and Kammerer never had sex, they were just good friends. Kammerer was a strange dude who became obsessed with young fatherless Lucien Carr and stalked him, trying to develop a close romantic relationship with the boy. Lucien possessed angelic features, and Kammerer followed him from St. Louis to Chicago, to Massachusetts, to Maine, and finally to New York City. Each time Lucien moved, usually prompted by his mother, who wanted her son to get away from Kammerer, David Kammerer would follow.

Burroughs enjoyed Kammerer’s company so much he decided to move to New York, and they lived a block away from each other in Greenwich Village.

THE MURDER OF DAVID KAMMERER

Meanwhile, Lucien enrolled in Columbia in 1943. By this time, Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and Lucien were good friends.

On August 13, 1944, Kammerer and Lucien were drinking at the West End bar, near Columbia. They left together and went into Riverside Park, where Kammerer started annoying Lucien by demanding that he let Kammerer give him a blow job. Kammerer also
threatened to harm Lucien’s girlfriend. In response to these provocations, Lucien stabbed and killed Kammerer with a Boy Scout knife, dragged the body to the Hudson River, and weighed it down with rocks.

Lucien then went to confess the crime he had committed to his friend Burroughs. Although Kammerer was his best friend, Burroughs didn’t react in an emotional way. He didn’t know whether Lucien was telling the truth, but the boy seemed very disturbed and agitated. Burroughs advised him to call a lawyer.

Instead, Lucien went to Kerouac’s apartment and woke him up with the news of what he had done. Kerouac helped Lucien get rid of the murder weapon, which they dropped down a subway grate. Then the two went to a movie on Third Avenue, after which Lucien finally turned himself in to the police.

Kerouac’s action in helping Lucien after the murder might seem strange, but there is an explanation for his behavior. Kammerer was mentally deranged, and he had become incredibly frustrated by Lucien’s lack of responsiveness to his affection. To vent his feelings, he took his anger out on an innocent animal—which happened to be Kerouac’s cat! Kerouac was understandably and justifiably furious at Kammerer for trying to kill his pet.

For his part as an accessory to the crime, Kerouac was arrested and jailed. He didn’t have enough money to make bail, and his father refused to help him, disgusted that his son had
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become mixed up with a murderer. So Kerouac asked his girlfriend, Edie Parker, for the money. She said she would bail him out, but only if he agreed to marry her! Having no other options, Kerouac married Edie—a marriage that was very short-lived.

Lucien served two years in jail, and upon release became a writer for United Press International.

BURROUGHS MARRIES JOAN VOLLMER

As mentioned, Burroughs was gay, and all his friends knew this. But he liked talking with Joan Vollmer, who was living in a large apartment near Columbia. Joan was married, but while her husband was away, she got pregnant by another man. She pretended to be psychotic so that her husband would return and think the child was his. But when her husband saw all the drugs she was using, and that she was now good friends with drug dealers, criminals, pimps, and prostitutes, he divorced her.

Joan then turned her attention to Burroughs. Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and their friends saw the unlikely relationship developing between their gay pal and this young woman who had a small daughter, and they all encouraged it. Before long Burroughs married Joan.

Joan Vollmer
Upper West Side
WILLIAM CANE

They moved to Texas and Burroughs used his family’s money to buy a ranch. He also had a son with Joan, named William S. Burroughs III. Burroughs raised marijuana on the Texas ranch, and Jack Kerouac would drive the crop back to New York to sell it. The Texas authorities found out about the illegal crop, and Burroughs was advised to leave the country by his lawyer.

In 1951 Burroughs moved to Mexico City, taking along his wife and her two children, which he referred to as “brats.” Joan was addicted to Benzedrine, a stimulant, and Burroughs used heroin, marijuana, and nitrous oxide. Their children were largely neglected, and allowed to go to the bathroom in pots, which were scattered around the floor of their apartment.

Joan may have had an affair with Lucien Carr when Lucien and Ginsberg visited Mexico City. Burroughs was away at the time, traveling with his boyfriend Lewis Marker in the Amazon, searching for ayahuasca, a hallucinogenic drug. Ginsberg and Burroughs later collaborated on a book about ayahuasca.

Left to right: Lewis Marker and Burroughs circa 1951
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THE SHOOTING OF JOAN VOLLMER
When Burroughs returned with Lewis Marker from the Amazon, he was in a depressed mood. One reason was that Marker didn’t return his affection and only had sex with him once a week, provided Burroughs paid him. Burroughs was also disturbed by Joan’s diminished affection, and perhaps also by the hint that she had become Lucien Carr’s lover during Lucien’s recent visit. At this time, Joan regularly taunted Burroughs. For instance, when locals stole one of his pistols, she made fun of him, saying, “So, they took your gun away from you, did they?”

On September 6, 1951 Burroughs went upstairs with Joan to sell one of his handguns. They were both drinking. Burroughs decided to
show off for his friends, asking his wife to put a whiskey glass on her head. He then aimed a pistol at the glass from only six feet away. But the shot hit Joan in the head, and she died without regaining consciousness a few minutes later.

Though it was an accident, it demonstrated the reckless manner in which Burroughs lived. Some have speculated that he used guns as a way to mask his homosexuality and to appear manly. In fact, he never gave up his love of guns and continued collecting and shooting them even after killing Joan.


Naturally he was heartbroken over the accident. He attributed his desire to write to the incident, and he felt that writing helped him expiate the sense of guilt he felt. Allen Ginsberg tried to convince him that Joan was suicidal and wanted to die, but Burroughs rejected this theory.
The death of Joan haunted him for the rest of his life.

Radical feminists were quick to lambaste and criticize Burroughs for the incident. After the death of Joan, Burroughs fled Mexico and moved to Tangier, on the northern coast of Africa. There he frequented whorehouses, having sex with young Spanish and Arab boys. He also finished writing *Naked Lunch* in Tangier. Unlike most writers, Burroughs could never work alone, instead he relied on collaborators. Amazingly, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg traveled to Tangier in 1954 to help him organize and type the manuscript.

*Naked Lunch* is chock full of sexual incidents and coarse language. Burroughs said he wrote it to get all of that out of his system, and to shock his parents. It was published in 1959 in Paris by Olympia Press. After an obscenity trial, it was also released in the United States, where it became a bestseller.

Joan Vollmer’s death appears as the central event in the comedy *The Beat Generation*. The premise of the play is that a man travels back in time to try and prevent Burroughs from shooting his wife.

**GINSBERG’S CAR CRASH**

I’d like to mention one final anecdote that doesn’t appear in the play, but that helps paint a fuller picture of Allen Ginsberg. When he was living in Manhattan, he allowed criminal friends to share his apartment, including Herbert Huncke, a
small-time crook and drug dealer, and Vicky, a six-foot-tall redhead prostitute, and her pimp, Little Jack (not to be confused with Jack Kerouac).

One day Ginsberg came home to find a cigarette machine and a bunch of furniture and fur coats in his apartment. Little Jack and Vicky had stolen the stuff and stashed it there. Ginsberg wasn’t happy with the stolen goods being in his
place, but he had a more pressing concern. He wanted to move his manuscripts, diaries, and poems to his brother’s house in Queens.

He got in the back seat of a stolen car, with Little Jack driving, and Vicky in the passenger seat. On the way, the police began following them. Little Jack sped around a corner, the police began firing at them, and the car hit a lamppost and flipped over.

Ginsberg lost his papers in the confusion, but all three occupants got out of the car. Little Jack was arrested, but Ginsberg and Vicky escaped and returned to the apartment. There they conferred with Huncke, and were planning to leave when the police arrived and arrested Ginsberg. He spent time in a cell at the Long Island House of Detention, waiting for his father to get him out on bail.

FOR FURTHER READING
The most entertaining introduction to the Beat Generation is *The Beats: A Graphic History*. It tells the story of the three friends in cartoon form, and it includes highly accurate biographical details about each of them and Joan Vollmer.

Three other books are worthy of note. *Call Me Burroughs* by Barry Miles is the best biography of William S. Burroughs. Miles also wrote the excellent *Ginsberg: A Biography*. And of all the books about Jack Kerouac—and there are literally
hundreds—the best of the bunch is without doubt *Subterranean Kerouac* by Ellis Amburn. Kerouac was blessed with movie-star good looks, and he had sex with hundreds of women, as well as a few men, all of which is chronicled in Amburn’s entertaining literary biography. Amburn also knew Kerouac personally and was his final editor.

Neal Cassady (left) and Jack Kerouac. Although Neal doesn’t appear in this play, he is talked about quite a bit. Kerouac and Ginsberg were both enamored of him, while Burroughs referred to him as a “psychotic” and a “cheap con man.” Cassady appears as the central character in Kerouac’s *On the Road* (1957).
THE BEAT GENERATION
A COMEDY ABOUT JACK KEROUAC
ALLEN GINSBERG & WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS

WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS
JOAN VOLLMER
JACK KEROUAC
ALLEN GINSBERG
LEWIS MARKER
MURRAY FRANKLIN
HARLAN
MARTINE INDYKE
MRS. INDYKE
REYNALDO

SET DESIGN
The play takes place in 2019 Greenwich Village, 1951 Mexico City, and 1954 Tangier. There is one set: a den with a desk, chair, and typewriter U.C. A curtained window U.R. In Mexico City, there is a bath tub D.R.; and in both Mexico City and Tangier, there is an orgone accumulator U.R.

Act One

Lights up on the Greenwich Village den, into which Murray enters, followed by Harlan, who is carrying a large rock which he puts down.

5 Harlan Master, what’s wrong?
Murray Haven’t you been listening to me for the past hour? I have a lot of problems with Martine.
Harlan Relax, sir. Now that I’m back I can help you patch everything up with the young woman.
10 Murray You slacker! Why did you have to leave me alone right when I needed you most?
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Harlan But, sir, you know I get a three-week vacation every year... I brought you back this rock as a souvenir from the River Ganges.

Murray What the devil am I going to do with that?

You shouldn’t have left me at such a critical time in my courtship of the girl.

Harlan If I may say so, sir, I don’t think you’re really compatible with Martine. All your friends tell you that you shouldn’t marry her. They know you, and they know her, and they say that you always argue with her.

Murray I don’t care if I argue with her. I’m in love with her. And I’m going to marry her.

Harlan If you marry her, within two weeks, I guarantee, she’ll be in the arms of another man behind your back. You know how she’s always looking at other men.

Murray Is she? Well, that’s exactly what I’m going to prevent. Once I’m married to her, she will not leave this house without a chaperone. She will not continue that disgraceful behavior. She will be mine and mine alone.

Harlan If that’s the way you think, you’re never going to make any progress with her. She’s an independent woman.

Murray Independent my damnation! She’s not going to be independent when she’s married to me. And why did you have to go to India, of all places? I couldn’t reach you by phone.

Harlan I’m sorry about that, but I always wanted to visit the country that gave us the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

Murray That’s a coincidence! I’ve been reading The Dharma Bums, and it mentions The Diamond Sutra.

Harlan Ah, the sutras! Kerouac is a helluva writer.
Murray  Too bad Martine doesn’t like the kinds of books that I like.

Harlan  Sir, it’s her mother who’s poisoning her mind against you. It’s obvious her mother doesn’t like you. Unfortunately, Martine is one of those girls who never broke free of her mother’s apron strings. And making matters worse, the two of them went to the same college, took the same courses with the same professors, and as a result the girl acts in lockstep with her mother. To be perfectly honest, I like Mrs. Indyke, she’s a lovely person, and under ordinary circumstances I don’t think you’d have any cause for alarm. You and I were exposed to many different ideas and philosophies during the course of our education. Mrs. Indyke, on the other hand, finished college only last year, and she’s come under the sway of a modern and short-sighted faculty that has no tolerance for the kinds of the books you read.

Murray  If your assessment is correct, and I have no reason to doubt that it is, I can’t handle this situation myself. You’ve got to help me. As my valet, it’s your responsibility to use every skill you possess to ensure my personal relations with the girl go smoothly. There must be some way to get around her mother’s ridiculous objections.

Harlan  I’ll think of something. You can count on me.

(Pause.)

Before I forget, I got you another souvenir. It’s in this box. Go on and open it up.

Murray  Three hand-rolled cigarettes? How did you get them through customs?

Harlan  I hid them in the lining of my suitcase.

Murray  There’s a piece of paper stuck in here.
(Murray pulls a slip of paper from the box and hands it to Harlan.)

5 Harlan I never noticed that . . . It’s written in the Indian language.
Murray Didn’t you know how to speak the language when you went over there?
Harlan No, but I had my pocket dictionary.

(Harlan produces his pocket dictionary.)

Murray Can you translate it?

15 (Harlan sits at the desk and begins working on the translation.)

Murray (Pacing) I think you’re right about her mother’s influence. When I’m alone with Martine, she’s the epitome of sweetness. When her mother is around, it’s a completely different story. The whole thing is driving me crazy. But I can’t stop thinking about her.
Harlan I’m telling you, she’s using you. She’s using you because you’re rich.
Murray Let her use me because I’m rich. I don’t care. I’ve always been rich. I never had to work. My parents give me an allowance every month. They’ll continue giving me that all my life. I didn’t even have to pay for this house.
Harlan You’re a lucky man.
Murray What does it say?
Harlan I’m still working on it. Damnit! It’s not easy. You know, when I was over there I couldn’t understand anything anybody said.

20
Murray Why didn’t you hire a translator?
Harlan On the salary you pay me?
Murray Get that translated. Hurry up.
Harlan A rough translation is: “The cigarettes will send you to the time and place you desire.” The last word isn’t in my pocket dictionary.
Murray The cigarettes will send you to the time and place you desire? That’s a laugh! Somebody swindled you pretty good.
Harlan Now that I think about it, something curious happened when I bought them. The proprietor leaned close, lowered his voice, and said, “They’re very powerful.” I’ve got a bigger dictionary downstairs. Do you want me to look up the last word?
Murray No, not tonight. It’s too late.

(Pause.)

Wait a minute. I hear someone coming down the hallway. It’s probably Martine and her mother.
Harlan Let’s hide where they can’t see us, so we can eavesdrop on everything they say.

(Above the desk, two portrait frames are mounted on the wall. Harlan stands behind the one U.C., and Murray behind the one next to it, which is a bit closer to S.L.)

(Enter Martine and Mrs. Indyke.)

Indyke I don’t want you to marry that man.
Martine Mother, why are you always telling me not to marry him?
Indyke Because he’s crazy.
Martine No, he’s not.

Indyke *(producing a knife)* You refuse to listen to me, your own mother?

Martine Put that knife down!

Indyke I’ll give you three chances to change your mind. If you refuse my third demand, I’ll stab myself to death right in front of you, and you’ll have that on your conscience for the rest of your life. Now, will you cancel your engagement to this man?

Martine No, I won’t.

Indyke For the second time, will you cancel your engagement?

Martine No, I won’t.

Indyke For the third and last time, will you cancel your engagement?

Martine No, I won’t.

Indyke Well, then, if you won’t, I won’t either.

Martine Thank heavens! Mother, you don’t have to threaten to kill yourself to get me to listen to you. Just speak reasonably and explain how you feel about Murray. I’m perfectly willing to answer any objections you have toward him. We’re both reasonable people, aren’t we?

Indyke Then consider my objection to your marriage seriously. You don’t want the same thing to happen to you that happened to me and your father, do you? Now that we’re divorced, I’m on my own. And as a single parent, I’ve got all the responsibility of raising a daughter, as well as taking care of myself. You see my point about Murray? If you marry a man as wrongheaded as he is, you’re going to disagree about everything. You’re not going to be satisfied with him.

Martine I know I won’t be satisfied. But within two weeks of marrying him, I’ll be in the arms of Reynaldo. I can always go to Reynaldo whenever I
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want. My husband will never find out.  

**Indyke** Of course he’ll find out. He may be crazy, but he’s not a complete idiot.  

**Martine** Yes, he is. Love has made him blind to my indiscretions.  

**Indyke** I don’t know why you decided to marry him in the first place.  

**Martine** I decided to marry him because he’s a wealthy man. He has a house. He has an income. He’ll never have to work. He commissions famous artists to do photo-realistic portraits of him and his valet.  

*(They regard Frank and Harlan in the picture frames.)*  

**Indyke** But have you ever stopped to consider the fact that you both have names beginning with the letter M? One of my professors said that you have a better than average chance of marrying someone who’s name starts with the same letter as yours—even if you and that person are incompatible. It’s called narcissistic attraction.  

**Murray** She’s poisoning her daughter against me!  

**Harlan** Quiet!  

**Indyke** Did you hear something?  

**Martine** The walls are so thin, you can hear people outside.  

**Indyke** Remember, you’re a college-educated woman. Your actions, especially with respect to marriage, should be based on facts and logic. If Murray finds out that you’re playing around with Reynaldo, he’ll have you divorced, and then it’ll be my problem, and your father’s problem.  

**Martine** Don’t worry, mother. I won’t make a mess of
our marriage. I'll keep everything with Reynaldo secret.

Indyke  I hope you do.

(Murray produces a peashooter and shoots a pea that hits Martine in the rear end. She jumps.)

Martine  Ow!
Indyke  What’s the matter?
Martine  I got bitten by a fly.
Indyke  What are these books on the table here? . . . For crying out loud, he’s reading William S. Burroughs! Don’t you know that Burroughs was a psychotic pervert—a degenerate?
Martine  Yes, I know all about him. I learned about him in my classes.
Indyke  My classes also! We both took consciousness raising courses in college, didn’t we? We’re both independent women, and we both understand that people like Burroughs are the opposite of independent women like us. Burroughs thought that women were unevolved. Also, he shot his wife, didn’t he?
Martine  Now that you mention it, yes, he shot his wife. I remember hearing about that.
Indyke  Martine, dear, do you think that Murray is going to shoot you?
Martine  Mother, I don’t know. But he’s reading this book. Maybe he’s going to get bad ideas.
Indyke  I think you should break off the engagement.
Martine  Maybe you’re right. Maybe I should break off the engagement.
Indyke  At least wait and see if he’s a lunatic like this Burroughs.
Martine  Yes, mother. I think I’ll break off the
engagement.

Indyke  Where is he?
Martine  His valet was coming back from vacation today. He went to pick him up at the airport.

Indyke  Let’s get out of here before he comes back.
You can tell him by letter that you’re going to break off the engagement.
Martine  Yes, I’ll write him a note. Do you have a pen and paper?

Indyke  No, I don’t.
Martine  Look around on the desk.

(Frank shoots another pea at Martine, and she jumps.)

Martine  Ow!
Indyke  What’s the matter?
Martine  Another fly bit me.

(Murray pulls a sheet of paper out of the typewriter and puts a pen on top of the paper on the desk.
Martine finds them and picks them up.)

Martine  Here’s a pen and paper. I’ll write the letter right now, and I’ll say, “Murray . . .” Mother, dictate the letter to me, so I know how to word it.

Indyke  Say: “Murray . . . I’m breaking off the engagement . . . Love, Martine.”
Martine  Love?

Indyke  Yes, put love. Just in case you decide to get re-engaged. Now, let’s go! Before that ninny comes back.

(Martine and Mrs. Indyke exit. Murray and Harlan come out from behind the frames.)
Murray Did you hear that? They’re going to break off the engagement. I don’t know what I’m going to do. Why are they breaking off the engagement?

Harlan The mother said it’s because you’re a fan of William S. Burroughs. You’re reading his book.

Murray I may be reading his book, but that doesn’t mean I’m a murderer. I wouldn’t shoot my wife. How can they let themselves think anything so crazy?

Burroughs wasn’t a murderer either. He shot his wife by accident.

Harlan You know that, and I know that. But it doesn’t matter to them. All they know is that he shot his wife. And because you’re reading his book, you’re guilty by association. That’s the way they see things. It’s a world view they picked up in those newfangled college classes, and you can’t change a person’s mind about things like that.

Murray If only Burroughs didn’t shoot his wife. Then maybe Martine wouldn’t be upset at me.

Harlan But he did shoot his wife. And we can’t alter history. We’ve got to figure out some other way to calm them down. I’ll put my mind on the problem and maybe I’ll come up with a plan by tomorrow. Is there anything else I can do for you before I retire for the evening?

Murray No, I guess not.

Harlan Good night, sir.

(Exit Harlan. Murray smokes. He collapses into a chair. The lights flicker and fade to black. When they come up the room is empty.)

Harlan (Offstage) Sir, I have good news. I found the word in my dictionary.
(Enter Harlan, looking down into a big book.)

It’s the Hindi word for “past.” So the sentence reads:
“The cigarettes will send you to the time and place
you desire in the past.”

(Harlan looks up from the book.)

was just here! . . . There’s smoke in the air.

(Harlan picks up the cigarette box off the desk.)

One of the cigarettes is gone . . . But it can’t have
transported him into the past!

(Blackout.)

Act Two

Lights come up on the empty Mexico City apartment
of Burroughs. It’s identical to Murray’s except it
also has an orgone accumulator and a bath tub.
Enter D.L. Ginsberg wearing a smock, followed by
Kerouac, both carrying heavy luggage, Kerouac
also burdened with an enormous plastic garbage bag.

Kerouac Can you hold onto my luggage for a minute?

(As soon as Ginsberg is loaded down with Kerouac’s
luggage and plastic bag, Kerouac starts to walk
away.)
Ginsberg I have to tie my shoe.

(Ginsberg gives everything to Kerouac, who promptly throws it back at Ginsberg. They sullenly stare at each other for a prolonged moment, then pick up their stuff and walk into the apartment.)

Ginsberg You don’t like the repetition?
Kerouac No.

Ginsberg Even though repetition is used by almost every poet in the world, it’s not for you?
Kerouac Correct.

Ginsberg And the poem is too confusing?
Kerouac Exactly.

Ginsberg Too wordy?
Kerouac Yes.

Ginsberg Too long?
Kerouac Yes.

Ginsberg Too vulgar?
Kerouac Yes.

Ginsberg Come on, tell me how you feel. Do I have to drag it out of you?

Kerouac You seem to know very well what my opinion is.

Ginsberg A fine friend you are!
Kerouac Do you want me to lie to you?
Ginsberg Are you saying I should revise it?

Kerouac Absolutely not! Anything revised is false. Even where you changed “angry streets” to “negro streets,” you should have left it the way you originally wrote it.

Ginsberg That’s nonsense. Do you know that Tennyson and Frost revised their work?
Kerouac  Tennyson and Frost didn’t pander to the
        lower tastes of their audience with crappy
        vocabulary.
Ginsberg  Crappy vocabulary!
5  Kerouac  That’s right.
Ginsberg  I’ll kill you!

(Ginsberg picks up a large knife, and chases
    Kerouac. They remain on the stage in a stationery
10  position as they mime running, each slightly out of
    reach of the other. As they run, each begins to
    acknowledge the audience’s response.)

Kerouac  Leave me alone! You don’t have to resort to
        violence just because you have worthless arguments.
Ginsberg  That’s the last time you’ll criticize my
        poems.
Kerouac  You’re too sensitive. You have no guts in
        your writing.
20  Ginsberg  I’ll show you who has guts.

(Lights flicker and black out. When they come up,
    Murray is in the chair, head down on the desk.)

25  Kerouac  Hey, who’s that?
Ginsberg  Huh? . . . I don’t know.
Kerouac  I bet it’s Neal’s friend. He said he was
        driving down from New York with a buddy of his.
Ginsberg  Come on, pal. You’re with friends now.
30  Murray (Mumbling) Where . . . Where am I?
Kerouac  He’s really out of it.
Murray (Groggy) Where am I?
Ginsberg  You must have been drinking or smoking a
        bit too much. You’re in Bill’s apartment.
35  Murray  Where?
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Ginsberg  Bill’s apartment . . . William S. Burroughs.
Murray  Burroughs . . . Huh? That’s not possible.
Ginsberg  You’re in Mexico City. You drove down with Neal, didn’t you?

Murray  I must be dreaming . . .
Kerouac  That happens to me when I smoke too much.
Ginsberg  (Giving cup.) Here, have some coffee.
Kerouac  See if he’s got any more of whatever knocked him out. I’d like to try it myself.
Ginsberg  Did you bring any of it with you, pal?
Murray  Who are you?
Ginsberg  I’m Allen . . . and this is Jack.
Murray  Allen? . . .
Ginsberg  Allen Ginsberg.
Murray  Allen Ginsberg? . . . What are you doing here . . . in my house?
Ginsberg  Man, you sure are confused. This is Bill Burroughs’ apartment.

Murray  This can’t be happening.

(Murray sinks his head to the desk. Enter Burroughs wearing a white shirt, black tie, and a pistol in a holster, and carrying a machine gun, followed by Joan, who limps and who wears a button-front dress that gapes revealingly.)

Burroughs  I want to have a drink before we go up.
Joan  Hi, guys.

Ginsberg  Hi, Joanie.
Kerouac  You missed a fascinating discussion between Allen and me.
Joan  About what?
Ginsberg  Don’t ask. It was all criticism of “Howl.”

Burroughs  Your poetry is almost unintelligible.
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Joan  Oh, the two of you! How could you?
Ginsberg  It’s their nature to be cruel.
Kerouac  No, it’s my nature to be honest.
Ginsberg  And critical.

5  Joan  (To Kerouac) Are you going to criticize me for limping?
Kerouac  How could you even think such a thing?
Ginsberg  What happened to you?
Joan  The doctor said I got polio, and my foot has been crippled.
Ginsberg  I’m sorry.
Joan  A minor inconvenience.
Ginsberg  I see you’ve got a new orgone accumulator.
Burroughs  This one really works. I built it myself.

10  Joan  It calms him down when he sits in it. But recently he hasn’t been himself. He’s been preoccupied. I have to take care of everything for him down here. He’s like a child.
Burroughs  I am not like a child.

15  Joan  His parents can’t visit him here, and I’ve had to take over that role in his life. They still send him his allowance every month, but he needs someone to look out for him like a mother. Now that’s my responsibility. Not that I feel up to it. I rely on a little help from my friends.

(Joan picks up a Benzedrine inhaler.)

Ginsberg  Ah, the good old inhaler.

20  Joan  Do you want one?
Ginsberg  No, thanks. We just had a beer.
Kerouac  That’s no reason to abstain.

(Joan and Kerouac inhale the drug.)
Ginsberg  Okay, I’ll try it, too.
Burroughs  Where’s that bottle I opened last night?
Kerouac  This is good. Do you use it too, Bill?
Joan    No, he prefers junk. And Bill on junk is very
4      boring to be around.

(Burroughs finds a bottle of liquor and drinks.)

Ginsberg  Wow! You feel it instantly.
10 Joan    Who’s your friend?
Ginsberg  He’s Neal’s buddy from New York.
Joan    Is Neal here?
Burroughs  I don’t want that psychotic in this
15 apartment. He’s not welcome here.
Jack    Why are you so down on Neal?
Burroughs  Because he’s a maniac, and he’s always
20 asking me for money. I do not for the life of me see
the point of you driving back and forth across North
America with him like the mass migrations of the
Mayans. I don’t mind seeing you and Allen, but that
character has serious psychological problems. He’s a
cheap con man, and I’m surprised you don’t realize
that. I wouldn’t trust anything he says.
Jack    Don’t you know I’m writing a book about him?
25 Burroughs  You’re wasting your talent on a vacuous
mind like that boy.
Jack    He’s not vacuous.
Ginsberg  He’s intelligent.
Kerouac  He’s very intelligent. And he’s a great
30 writer.
Burroughs  He’s never written anything in his life.
Joan    Neal is cute.
Burroughs  Cute?
Joan    Don’t be jealous, hun. You’re supposed to be a
35 faggot. But you’re as good as a pimp in bed.
THE BEAT GENERATION

Kerouac  Bill, that’s a nice compliment.
Burroughs  It’s almost time. I want to get up there.
           But I want to try this new canister first.
Joan     Maybe I should put on a different dress.
Burroughs I wouldn’t bother. They don’t care about
           things like that.

(Burroughs inhales nitrous oxide through a mask.)

Joan    Is Marker coming?
Burroughs He said he was. Have you guys seen him?
Ginsberg No. Nobody was here when we arrived
           except Neal’s friend.
Burroughs I hope that con man doesn’t expect us to
           put him up in this apartment.
Joan     Why not? We’ve got two spare rooms in the
           back.

(Joan motions to Kerouac to prompt him to change
the subject.)

Kerouac  Bill, er, how are your studies going?
Burroughs I was taking an anthropology course at
           Mexico City College, but I scored so much marijuana,
           morphine, and heroin that my coursework suffered,
           and I had to drop out.
Kerouac  I wouldn’t mind having problems like that.
           And what happened to your ranch?
Burroughs  Texas was plagued by Deadly Orgone
           Radiation. My attorney advised me to get out of the
           country. A man can’t grow a plant on his own
           property without some redneck sheriff accusing him
           of breaking the law. I wasn’t hurting anybody. You
           know that better than anyone. All we were doing
           was harvesting it to sell in New York.
WILLIAM CANE

Kerouac Of course. We had a going business transporting that crop back to New York. Nobody was getting hurt.

Burroughs Jack, a single man could live down here on two dollars a day, liquor included. Fabulous whorehouses and restaurants.

Joan We know all about the boys! And there are more of them than ever these days.

Ginsberg Bill, you’re living a lie with Joan because you’re really gay.

Joan (Sarcastically) Thanks, Allen. You know we’re raising two kids down here, and one is Bill’s son.

Burroughs Two brats.

Ginsberg I shouldn’t have said that.

(Kerouac lights up a joint.)

Burroughs I don’t want to come across as inhospitable, but you can’t smoke that in here.

Jack Are you serious?

Burroughs Yes, I am. I got busted by the Mexican police for growing marijuana, and I’m on probation. If they find one joint in this place I could go to jail.

Jack I thought you moved to Mexico to avoid the law. Can’t you do what you like down here?

Burroughs Drugs, whores, and guns, yes. But for some reason they’re making an issue about marijuana. I only risk it when there’s plenty of ventilation, and no strangers in the building. But there are a lot of new people upstairs tonight.

Ginsberg Jack, you better show him what’s in the bag.

Kerouac Take a look.

(Kerouac opens the bag, which Burroughs looks into.)

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THE BEAT GENERATION

Meanwhile, Murray sits up and looks around at everyone.)

Joan What is it?

5 Burroughs Jesus, it’s filled with marijuana. Did anybody see you come in with that?

Kerouac Nobody but a couple of women in the yard.

Burroughs Well, you’ve got to get it out of here.

Kerouac Where am I going to keep it?

10 Burroughs I don’t know, that’s not my problem. My problem is if I get caught with that, I go to jail. And put that thing out. Do you want to get me arrested?

(Kerouac puts out his joint.)

15 Kerouac Okay, I’ll figure out a place to stash this later.

(Enter Marker.)

20 Marker Hi, guys.

Ginsberg Speak of the devil.

Burroughs Lewis, are you coming upstairs with us?

Marker Sure. I want to see how you bargain for the best price.

Murray (Mumbling) What’s . . . what’s happening?

Joan We’re going upstairs to sell a gun.

Murray To sell a gun? . . . How did I get here?

Ginsberg Don’t you remember? Neal dropped you off.

30 Murray Neal?

Ginsberg Neal Cassidy.

Joan Give him some more coffee.

Murray But Neal Cassidy is dead.

Kerouac That’s a laugh. Neal is far from dead. He’s one of the most alive people I know.
Murray Wait a minute. What year is this?
Ginsberg What year is it? Whoa! You’re really disoriented, aren’t you? It’s 1951.
Murray How can it be 1951?
Burroughs This is typical of the people that boy hangs around with . . . Come on, Joan. We have an appointment.
Murray Joan? . . . Joan Vollmer?
Joan Yes, dearie. One and the same.
Murray You’re making a big mistake. You can’t go up there. You’re risking your life.
Joan Don’t be silly.
Murray But I know what’s going to happen. The only way to prevent it is to stay down here.
Burroughs What’s he talking about?
Ginsberg I think he’s confused.
Kerouac We’ll sober him up by the time you get back.
Ginsberg Do you want us to come up with you?
Burroughs No, too many people may spook them. This is an off-the-books transaction. We’ll be back before long. Joan, take that shot glass. Let’s go.

(Joan picks up a shot glass. Exit Burroughs, Joan, and Marker.)

Murray Tell them to come back. She’s in . . . she’s in mortal danger.
Kerouac What the heck is he raving about?
Ginsberg I have no idea.
Kerouac Give him some more coffee.
Ginsberg I don’t think that helped him much.
Kerouac He’s trying to get up.
Ginsberg You’re in no state to be walking around.
You’ll fall down and hurt yourself.
(Murray stagers to his feet.)

Kerouac  Watch it!
5 Murray  Where’s Burroughs and Joan?
Ginsberg  They went upstairs.
Murray  I’ve got to go find them.
Kerouac  Hey, hold it! No, you can’t go up there.
Murray  Why . . . Why not?
10 Ginsberg  Because Bill is going to sell a gun, and he doesn’t want a lot of people around when he does.
Murray  You don’t know what the danger is.
Kerouac  Yes, we do. The danger is that a crowd will spook the sale. The guy he’s selling it to is not exactly a schoolboy type.
Murray  Let me go.
Ginsberg  Jack, help me hold him back.
Kerouac  Sit down. Neal wouldn’t be happy with you if you messed things up.
20 Murray  But you don’t understand. You don’t know what’s going to happen. I have to stop him. I have to stop him before it’s too late.
Kerouac  You’re not going to stop anything.
Ginsberg  Come on, calm down and sit down.
Murray  I’m telling you . . . I’m telling you . . . I have to stop him. This is a nightmare.
Ginsberg  Quiet down. The floors and ceiling are so flimsy, they’ll hear you upstairs.
Burroughs (offstage)  Joanie, let’s show them our William Tell act.
Murray  No!
Burroughs (offstage)  Put that shot glass on your head.
Murray  No, don’t let him do it!
30 Joan (offstage, giggling)  I hate the sight of blood.
WILLIAM CANE

Murray You’ve got to stop him!

(Sound of a gunshot.)

5 Ginsberg What was that?
Murray Oh, my god!
Kerouac Calm down. Bill always does target practice in the house.
Murray That wasn’t target practice. My god, I’m too late!

(Enter Marker.)

Ginsberg You look like you’re in shock. What happened?
Marker They were playing William Tell, and Bill shot Joan.
Kerouac Oh, my god!
Ginsberg We have to get up there.
Marker Don’t bother.

(Offstage sound of a head bumping on the stairs.)

Bill is bringing Joan downstairs.
Murray I couldn’t’ stop it. And I knew what was going to happen.

(Enter Burroughs, dragging Joan by her feet.)

Ginsberg Good god! Why did you drag her body down here!
Burroughs I couldn’t let her lie on the floor for everybody to see. Poor Joan! And to think that I killed her. The mother of my son. The woman who put up with all my philandering. And now she’s
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gone!
Kerouac I don’t think she’s quite dead yet.

(Marker kneels down to feel for a pulse.)

Marker There’s a pulse . . . but it’s very weak.
Burroughs Joan! Speak to me!
Ginsberg I heard you can revive women by twisting their hair.

Marker Don’t you think we should call a doctor?
Burroughs There’s no time. I’ll revive her myself.

(Burroughs pulls Joan’s hair. Joan twitches.)

Kerouac She’s alive!
Burroughs Speak to me, Joan! It’s Billy. Good old Billy.
Ginsberg Twist it harder.

(Burroughs twists Joan’s hair.)

Joan Eh . . . eh.
Kerouac She’s coming to. She’s trying to speak!

(Burroughs kneels.)

Burroughs This is my last chance to hear how much she loves me! But if you can’t speak, my dear, then save your breath. Just give me a final kiss goodbye!

You know I’ve earned the fruits of love! Give me what I deserve.

(Burroughs puckers up. Joan suddenly sits up, punches him, and then falls down dead.)
Ginsberg  She’s dead!
Burroughs  (To Ginsberg) You fool! I should have called a doctor instead of trying to revive her with your idiotic technique!

Ginsberg  Don’t blame me. And don’t blame yourself. You may have been playing a William Tell game, but it’s her fault that she got shot! She stepped in front of that bullet on purpose. Ever since you came back from the Amazon with Lewis, she’s been suicidal.

She wanted to die.

Burroughs  (picks up knife) She did not want to die! If it wasn’t for you making me waste time by pulling her hair, she might still be alive!

Kerouac  Put that knife down!

Ginsberg  What are you doing?

Burroughs  I’m going to cut your throat.

Kerouac  Haven’t you killed enough people for one day?

Marker  Don’t be crazy!

Ginsberg  Before you kill me, please let me take off my smock.

Burroughs  What for?

Ginsberg  In case I soil myself.

Burroughs  Don’t be crude.

Ginsberg  Please! You know when a person dies, they lose control! I beg you, let me take off my smock.

Burroughs  Be quick about it then.

(Ginsberg struggles to remove his smock for a prolonged time but keeps getting more tangled in it. Eventually Burroughs starts to help him. After more struggling, Ginsberg finally shakes himself free of the smock and Burroughs and runs off naked.)

(Blackout.)
Act Three

Lights up on Murray and Harlan in Greenwich Village.

Harlan Where have you been?
Murray I dreamed I went back in time to Mexico City! I smoked one of the cigarettes and hallucinated that I was in Burroughs’ apartment.

Harlan Sir, listen to me. I translated that piece of paper. The last word was “past.” It said the cigarettes would send the user into the past.

Murray My god! Maybe that’s why it felt so real. It wasn’t a dream. They were flesh and blood. Standing right in front of me. Talking to me. And it was nightmarish.

Harlan What happened?
Murray I couldn’t stop it! . . . He shot her! Burroughs shot his wife. And I was there when she died.

Harlan Then that cigarette must have sent you back to 1951. But if you went into the past, why didn’t you put a stop to the shooting?

Murray Quiet! . . . I think I hear Martine and her mother coming down the hallway.

Harlan Stand perfectly still when they come in.

(Harlan hastily wraps sheets around them, and they freeze in place. Enter Martine and Mrs. Indyke.)

Martine Mother, why have we come back into the house of my ex-fiancé?

Indyke Because it’s time to make our final examination and find out if your ex-fiancé plans to
do anything harmful to you as a result of the fact that you terminated your engagement to him. You know how some men are. They fly off the handle. I think Murray might be a hothead.

5 **Martine** Yes, mother, you’re right; we have to find out. But how are we going to find out what he’s thinking? He’s not here.

**Indyke** What’s this?

**Martine** He’s having sculptures made of him and his valet.

**Indyke** Don’t worry, honey. The fact that he’s not here makes it easier for us to find out everything we need to know by examining his things in his absence. Look around. See if you find any clues to his insane intentions.

**Martine** Yes, mother, I’ll look around right now.

**Indyke** Martine! . . . Look on the table. Look what he’s reading, that lout!

**Martine** What is it? What do you see?

**Indyke** It’s a book. It’s a book about William S. Burroughs.

**Martine** Mother, don’t tell me he’s reading a biography of William S. Burroughs!

**Indyke** Yes! Look! There’s at least two or three books by that psychotic on the table, as well as a biography. You know what he said about women, don’t you?

**Martine** Yes, mother. We learned about him in my consciousness raising class.

**Indyke** He said women are unevolved.

**Murray** (aside) Why does she always harp on that?

**Martine** What was the word he used, mother?

**Harlan** (aside) She harps on it because she’s crazy.

**Indyke** Unevolved.

**Martine** Say it again, mother. Say it again so that it
penetrates into my consciousness and skull, so I hear it clearly, so I understand it completely.

**Indyke** He said women are unevolved. Oh, Martine! What if Murray feels the same way, feels you’re unevolved, considers you an animal and decides to put you out of your misery, like a horse.

**Martine** Like a horse?

**Indyke** You know what they do to horses, don’t you?

**Martine** No, mother. What do they do to horses?

**Indyke** They put them out of their misery. What if Murray decides to do the same to you?

**Martine** Mother, what if he does! I don’t know. And, mother—!

**Indyke** What is it, Martine? What is it?

**Martine** Something just occurred to me. Look at this . . . Murray . . . Look where he lives.

**Indyke** What is it? Tell me, tell me!

**Martine** He lives . . . He lives in the lap of luxury.

**Indyke** Yes, he does.

**Martine** Exactly like William S. Burroughs.

**Indyke** Oh, my god! I see what you’re saying.

**Murray** (aside) I’m engaged to an idiot.

**Harlan** (aside) That’s what I’ve been telling you.

**Martine** He has a house.

**Indyke** Yes, he has a house.

**Martine** He has a free house.

**Indyke** Yes, he has a free house.

**Martine** He got the house from his parents.

**Indyke** Yes, he got it from his parents.

**Martine** He doesn’t have to pay any mortgage.

**Indyke** No, he has no mortgage.

**Martine** He doesn’t have to pay any rent.

**Indyke** No, he has no rent.

**Martine** He gets all the money from his parents.

**Indyke** Yes, he gets all the money from his parents.
WILLIAM CANE

Martine  Just like who?
Indyke   Just like who?
Martine  Just like William S. Burroughs.
Indyke   Just like William S. Burroughs!
Martine  Oh, my god! Mother, he’s just like William
         S. Burroughs. He’s rich. He has his own house.
Indyke   He’s rich. He has his own house.
Martine  And—
Indyke   And—
Martine  He—
Indyke   He—
Martine  May—
Indyke   May—
Martine  Do what Burroughs did!
Indyke   Do what Burroughs did! That’s right,
         Martine, see if he has a gun. Does he have a gun?
Martine  I don’t know, mother. I don’t know.
Indyke   Look around. Look around!
Martine  I’ll look . . . I’ll look.
Indyke   Oh, my god. If he has a gun we’re dead, we’re
goners. He’ll do the same thing. He’s exactly like
that—He’s exactly like that psychotic.
Martine  Oh, god, what are we going to do?
Indyke   Look. Look around. See if you could find a
gun. Maybe he has a gun.
Martine  Oh, Mother, I can’t believe it!
Indyke   You have to write him another termination
letter.
Martine  But I already wrote him one.
Indyke   You have to write another one.
Martine  Okay, then. Dictate it to me. Tell me the
words to use.

(Murray whacks Martine with a fly swatter. While
Martine and Mrs. Indyke react, Murray puts a
Martine Ow!
Indyke What’s the matter?
Martine I got stung by a bee!

(Murray whacks Mrs. Indyke, who jumps.)

Indyke Ow! . . . I got stung, too! Let’s finish that letter quickly.
Martine Go ahead.
Indyke Dear Murray.
Martine Dear Murray.
Indyke I am terminating our engagement again.
Martine I am terminating our engagement again.
Indyke Good-bye forever.
Martine Good-bye forever.
Indyke Love, Martine.
Martine Love, Martine. Do I have to put “love”?
Indyke Yes, put it because just in case you have to get reengaged to him for some reason. You always want to leave yourself an out.
Martine Mother, let’s get out of here before he comes back, because he may come back with a gun.
Indyke My dear, you’re going to be so happy without him . . . What are you going to do?
Martine I’m going to fall into the arms of another man.
Indyke Do you have another man lined up?
Martine Oh, mother, I always have another man lined up.
Indyke You’re so smart. Just like me. Your father never knew all the men that I had lined up. Honey, that’s the way to live . . . What’s the name of this new gentleman?
Martine His name is Reynaldo. And he’s from Spain.
Indyke Where did you meet him, my dear?
Martine I haven’t met him yet. We just sent each other love notes and letters. He’s coming to New York tomorrow.
Indyke This is such perfect timing. You broke off one engagement, so you can get engaged to another man. Reynaldo. I like his name: Reynaldo. Oh, he sounds like a wonderful man.
Martine He is, mother. He’s wonderful. He’s a liberated thinker, just like us.
Indyke I can’t wait to meet Reynaldo. This will be fun! I want a boyfriend. I want a boyfriend.
Martine Come on. I’ll ask him if he has an unmarried acquaintance.

(Martine and Mrs. Indyke exit. Murray and Harlan remove the sheets.)

Harlan They’re more determined than ever to break off the engagement.
Murray But I’m not like Burroughs.
Harlan In their eyes you’re just like him! You’re rich, you don’t have to work, and your parents provide everything for you. If they ever found your gun, they’d never get back with you.
Murray Gun? What gun? I don’t have a gun.
Harlan Don’t you remember that when you hired me to be your valet, you authorized me to be your bodyguard? I bought a pistol. It’s downstairs.
Murray You bought a pistol?
Harlan Yes.
Murray Where is it?
Harlan Under my pillow.
Murray I don’t want a gun in this house! Especially
with Martine and her mother snooping around. Bring it upstairs so I can get rid of it.

**Harlan** How are you going to get rid of it?

**Murray** I don’t know . . . I’ll throw it in the Hudson River.

**Harlan** Don’t let anyone see you.

**Murray** I won’t. I’ll go at night.

**Harlan** So, you say the cigarette worked? You really went back in time?

**Murray** It was uncanny.

**Harlan** But why didn’t you put a stop to the shooting?

**Murray** I was too stoned out of my mind to speak coherently. By the time I came to my senses, Burroughs and Joan had gone upstairs, and Kerouac and Ginsberg wouldn’t let me leave the room.

**Harlan** You know what you have to do now, don’t you?

**Murray** No, what?

**Harlan** You have to go back again, but this time, you have to arrive the day before the shooting. This will give you enough time to sober up and warn Joan.

**Murray** Maybe I should do that.

**Harlan** You better do it right away, before Martine meets Reynaldo.

**Murray** Do you think I can change history?

**Harlan** Why not? If you actually went back in time, all you have to do is warn Joan. Then Burroughs won’t shoot her. And when you tell Martine what you did, and when she sees all the history books changed, you’ll be a hero in her eyes. Reynaldo won’t stand a chance against you.

**Murray** Give me another cigarette. I’m going to go back in time and save that poor woman’s life.
WILLIAM CANE

(Murray smokes. Lights flicker and fade out. When lights come up, we’re in Mexico City. Joan is in the bathtub. Burroughs is in the orgone accumulator.)

5 Joan Bill, hand me a towel . . . Bill, did you hear me? . . . Bill, I’m talking to you.

Burroughs (Offstage) What did you say?

Joan I’m in the tub and I want to get out. Can you hand me a towel?

10 Burroughs (Offstage) I’m in the accumulator. I can’t hear you.

Joan (Raising her voice) You’ve been in there over an hour . . . Can you hand me a towel?

Burroughs (Offstage) You’re not supposed to break up the session.

Joan But I can’t reach it. Do you want me to drip water all over the floor?

(Enter Kerouac and Ginsberg.)

20 Ginsberg Hi, Joan.

Joan Hi, boys. Allen would you be a darling and hand me that towel?

Ginsberg (handing her the towel) Where’s Bill?

25 Joan He’s in the orgone accumulator. He’s been in there more than an hour.

(Joan emerges from the tub, wrapped in the towel.)

30 Kerouac I want to try it, too.

Ginsberg I don’t know why he stays in so long.

Joan He smokes in there. He shoots up, too.

Kerouac According to Wilhelm Reich, orgone energy itself should be enough to get you high—in a positive, healthy way.

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Joan  Bill doesn’t do anything in a positive, healthy way.

(K Joan steps behind the accumulator to put on her dress.)

Kerouac  Allen, don’t you have an announcement to make?

(J Joan peeks out from behind the accumulator.)

Joan  An announcement? What kind of announcement?

Ginsberg  I don’t know if it’s an announcement really, but my parents are requiring me to have psychotherapy as a condition of continuing at Columbia. So, I’m finally getting myself straightened out. I mean, I’m going to start dating women. My analyst says I can reinforce this lifestyle decision provided I get myself into a relationship with a girl as soon as possible.

(J Joan emerges from behind accumulator in her dress.)

Joan  Maybe Bill should make an appointment with the same therapist so that he can drop his predilection for Mexican boys. But I don’t think he has any desire to change himself in that department. It’s a disgrace the way he runs after them. You know, they taunt him on the street now. When he goes out, they call him names. What do they call you Bill? Tell them . . . I don’t think he can hear us. They call him boy chaser. Americano queer. Isn’t that nice? Imagine what his kids are going to think when they get old enough to understand.
Kerouac  Maybe Bill will change his mind when he sees how happy Allen is with his new lifestyle.
Joan  I doubt it. But we’ll have to see if we can fix Allen up with some nice Mexican women.

Kerouac  All he needs is a little practice interacting with a girl. Why don’t you let him pretend he’s on a date with you! Then we can coach him in what to say and how to act.
Ginsberg  Oh, no!
Joan  That’s a great idea.
Ginsberg  No way!
Kerouac  Come on, Allen. Try it. Stand next to her, like you’re on a date.

(Joan stands c.s.)

Joan  Come on, Allen. Jack has a lot of experience with women. He can coach you. Don’t be afraid. I’m only going to talk with you.
Ginsberg  But I have no problem talking with you. I talk with you all the time.
Joan  Well, then. Come on.

(Ginsberg stands beside Joan, slightly s.l. of her.)

Joan  Hello, Allen. Boy, you sure are cute.
Ginsberg  Girls don’t talk to me like that.
Kerouac  Go with the flow, Allen. We’ll work on the compliments later. Joan, is it okay if he puts his arm around you?
Joan  Sure.
Ginsberg  What! No, I can’t do that.
Kerouac  You’ve got to practice making the first move.
Ginsberg  But it’s Joanie!

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Joan  For heaven’s sake, Allen.
Kerouac  Get that out of your head! She told you it’s okay to practice your dating technique with her.
Joan  Go on, Allen. It’s okay.

Kerouac  Put your arm around her. To make it easier, say something while you’re doing it, like, “This is a nice place.”
Ginsberg  Er . . .

(Ginsberg puts his arm tentatively around Joan’s shoulders. Kerouac pours a drink.)

Ginsberg  This is a very nice place.
Joan  Oh, you’re such a sweet talker. Just the type of guy I like to meet on a date.
Kerouac  (handing drink to Ginsberg) Here, drink this.
Ginsberg  I’m not sure I should.
Kerouac  Go on. You’ll feel more confidence.

(Ginsberg drinks.)

Kerouac  Good, now Joanie, is it okay if he kisses you?
Ginsberg  What!
Joan  Sure.
Kerouac  Did you ever kiss a girl, Allen?
Ginsberg  Do I have to answer that?
Joan  We’re not going to judge you.

Kerouac  Did you?
Ginsberg  No.
Joan  Aw!
Kerouac  We’ll coach you through it.

(Kerouac pours another drink.)
Ginsberg  I don’t know about this.  
Joan  You can do it, Allen. Don’t worry.

5  (Kerouac gives the drink to Ginsberg.)

Kerouac  Drink this first.  
Ginsberg  I’m already a little tipsy.  
Kerouac  Once we show you how to break the ice, you won’t need alcohol. But right now it might help. Bottom’s up.

(Ginsberg drinks. His arm comes off Joan’s shoulders.)

15  Ginsberg  It’s starting to cloud my judgment.  
Kerouac  As long as it loosens your inhibitions. Keep your arm up there.

(Ginsberg puts his arm back around Joan.)

19  Kerouac  Turn to face him, Joan.

(Joan faces Ginsberg. Kerouac puts his arms on Ginsberg’s shoulders and turns him to face Joan.)

Kerouac  That’s your invitation. Turn to her and move in for the kiss. Bring your head closer and closer to her, so close that you can feel the heat from her lips on yours.

(Ginsberg and Joan lean closer. Burroughs emerges from the accumulator smoking a joint and stares mute with his jaw dropped as Joan makes out with Ginsberg.)

52
Now move a bit closer, pucker up, and kiss her. Lip contact! Lip contact! Rock your heads back and forth. Gently. Enjoying all the sensations. Like two horses in a stall!

**Burroughs** What the hell are you doing?

(Burroughs beats Ginsberg with a stick. Ginsberg falls to the floor.)

**Ginsberg** It was the drink! It lowered my inhibitions.

**Joan** Leave him alone!

**Kerouac** Okay, Bill! Stop! That’s enough.

**Burroughs** I can’t leave you alone for two minutes, and you’re fooling around with another man.

**Joan** This isn’t a man. It’s Allen.

(Pause.)

You got the whole thing wrong.

**Burroughs** (To Joan) Did I get it wrong how you were fooling around with Lucien last month?

**Joan** That’s completely out of line! What were you up to with Lewis while the two of you were traipsing through the Amazon?

**Burroughs** Don’t start on me!

**Joan** (To Ginsberg) I’m sorry our little rehearsal got interrupted.

**Kerouac** His parents want him to start dating women. Joan was giving him some practice.

(Ginsberg gets to his feet.)

**Burroughs** I’m sorry, Allen. Being in the
accumulator charges me up with nervous energy.

Ginsberg Don’t mention it. I think broken ribs heal in about six weeks. And you don’t even need a cast.

(Ginsberg takes a deep breath and winces. Exit Joan.)

Burroughs Jack, I’ve come to some conclusions about your book. The accumulator helped me organize my thoughts.

Ginsberg It’s not orgone that helps him think. It’s the marijuana.

(Lights flicker and fade to black momentarily, and when they come back up, Murray is in the chair.)

Ginsberg Hey, who’s that over there?

Kerouac Huh? . . . I don’t know.

Ginsberg Come on, pal. What’ve you been drinking?

Can I get you some coffee?

(Ginsberg gives Murray a cup of coffee. Reenter Joan.)

Kerouac What is it you wanted to talk with me about?

Burroughs Don’t take this the wrong way, but your writing is terrible.

Joan (To Ginsberg) Who’s your friend?

Ginsberg He’s probably Neal’s buddy.

Burroughs That’s who I wanted to talk with you about. There’s a compulsive pointlessness to On the Road. You drive back and forth across the country with Neal Cassidy, but there’s no purpose in it, no goal, and no plot. I think you’ve got a great talent.
I'm only trying to steer you in the right direction on this manuscript. I think you'd have a better chance of selling it if the main character had a purpose.

**Kerouac** This book was written by the Holy Ghost.

*(Pause.)*

I'm not changing a single word.

**Ginsberg** That approach isn’t going to help you one bit in the publishing world. *(To Murray)* Say, where’s Neal? Hasn’t he gotten that divorce yet?

**Murray** I’m not Neal’s friend.

**Ginsberg** If you’re not Neal’s friend, then, er, who are you?

**Murray** My name is Murray Franklin. I’m from New York. I know this is going to sound hard to believe—

**Ginsberg** Hell, that’s not hard to believe.

**Joan** We’re all from New York!

**Murray** What I’m trying to say is that I’m from New York in the year Twenty Nineteen.

**Ginsberg** Ha, ha, ha!

**Murray** I’m from your future.

**Burroughs** This sounds interesting.

**Ginsberg** He’s suffering from a delusion. Like my friend Carl Solomon.

**Murray** No, I’m not delusional. I happen to know that Bill’s book is going to become an international bestseller, after an obscenity trial—which his publisher will win.

**Ginsberg** He talks about the Beat Generation writers the same way I do.

**Burroughs** I might be able to work this time travel stuff into *Naked Lust*.

**Murray** *Naked Lunch*.

**Ginsberg** *Naked Lunch*?

**Kerouac** That’s a good title for a novel.

**Burroughs** But it doesn’t have anything to do with
lunch. There’s not one scene about lunch in the whole book.

**Murray** This is important. I’m here to tell you that tomorrow you’re going to do something very dangerous with Joan. You’ll tell her, “Let’s play our William Tell game.” And she’ll put a whiskey glass on her head. But you’ll miss with the shot and accidentally kill her.

**Joan** No, Bill wouldn’t miss. He can hit a bull’s eye at twenty paces.

**Burroughs** A William Tell game?

**Murray** Please don’t do it.

**Joan** Oh, don’t worry.

**Murray** But I’ve read the biographies of all of you.

**Ginsberg** We have biographies?

**Kerouac** Of course we’re going to have biographies.

**Murray** It’s going to end tragically.

**Burroughs** I wouldn’t miss. I’ve been shooting since I was six years old.

**Murray** But you don’t understand. It’s a mistake. A deadly mistake.

**Joan** Rest your mind, friend. I’m not afraid.

**Burroughs** Yes, we’ll play that game tomorrow.

(Lights flicker and fade to black. Lights come up on Murray’s living room, where only Murray and Harlan are present.)

**Harlan** What happened?

**Murray** Where am I?

**Harlan** You’re back home. You were gone about an hour. Did you go to Mexico City again?

**Murray** My god!

**Harlan** What’s wrong?

**Murray** I tried . . . I really tried to convince them not
to play the damn game. But it had an opposite effect. They seized on the idea. Burroughs said the William Tell game sounded like fun. Joan said she wasn’t at all concerned.

5 Harlan You mean . . .
Murray I gave them the idea!
Harlan No!
Murray I gave them the damn idea.
Harlan Let me look in the biography.

(Harlan flips through a biography of Burroughs and then looks up.)

Harlan The book is still the same.
Murray He shoots her?
Harlan Yes.
Murray Do you realize what I’ve done? Instead of saving her life, I did just the opposite. I gave them the idea that led to Joan’s death.
Harlan Keep your voice down! If Martine ever learns what happened, she’ll never forgive you. It’s bad enough that you like Burroughs the writer. But if she knew that you gave him the idea to shoot that glass off his wife’s head in the first place, she’d never marry you!

(Fade to black.)

Act Four

Lights up on Murray’s den. Murray c.s., Martine and Mrs. Indyke, s.l.

35 Martine Honey, my mother and I were reading up on
Burroughs. We were trying to give you the benefit of the doubt. You keep saying he was a nice guy, so we reread the chapter in the latest biography about his time in Mexico City. And we came across a footnote.

5 Murray (Aside) Oh, no! Not a footnote!

Indyke A very damning footnote it was, too.

Martine I don’t generally read footnotes. But we were carefully reviewing the chapter about the shooting of his wife. This footnote says a man appeared in Mexico City. At first Allen and Jack thought it was Neal Cassidy’s friend. But he told them his name was Murray.

Murray Murray?

Indyke That’s right.

Murray What of it? Murray is a pretty common name.

Martine The only problem is Neal Cassidy didn’t have a friend named Murray. And as it turns out this fellow Murray is the one who suggested to Burroughs that they play the William Tell game. Which led to Joan’s death.

Murray (Aside) Hang it all!

Indyke This is a very well-researched book. And it points the finger at you. You gave Burroughs the idea to play that game! You told his wife to put the glass on her head! You murdered that innocent girl!

Martine How could you!

Indyke He’s heartless!

Murray No . . .

Martine You caused Joan’s death.

Murray Wait a minute. Burroughs shot Joan in 1951. I wasn’t even born then. That footnote couldn’t have been about me.

Indyke Tell him the rest.

Martine The note says this Murray claimed he was
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from the future. He said that he had come back in
time to meet Burroughs.

**Murray** But that’s . . . that’s impossible.

**Indyke** We don’t know how you did it. But according
to this biography, all our worst fears about you are
true. Tell him that you’re canceling the engagement
again.

**Martine** I’m canceling the engagement again.

**Murray** No, Martine! There’s been a terrible
misunderstanding.

**Indyke** I’ll say there has!

*(Enter Harlan running, breathless.)*

**Harlan** I got a brainstorm. This is important. I have
to give it to my master right away, before he uses
that last cigarette. As soon as he hears this idea he’s
going to thank me a million times for its brilliance.
Get out of my way, everybody. Don’t slow me down.

**Murray** What are you talking about?

**Harlan** I ran all the way here to deliver this plan to
Mister Franklin, and I won’t let anybody stop me
now. Schopenhauer was right. We live in the worst of
all possible worlds. Everybody expects to be happy in
life. But it’s more realistic to expect heartache, pain,
suffering, work, and unhappiness. I agree with the
great philosopher who said the best thing is never to
have been born. The next best is to die soon. At least
my discovery will give my master a small measure of
happiness in this lousy world. But why am I wasting
time philosophizing? I have to find him right away.

*(Harlan rushes past Murray a few times, without
recognizing him as he continues his monologue.)*
Harlan  This is a critical idea for him. But where is he? Where can he be hiding? How can he have disappeared? Where can he have gone? Master, master!

Murray  Slow down, buddy. Talk to me. Stop regurgitating pabulum from all those big books you read.

Harlan  I told you I can’t be distracted. Leave me alone. I’m looking for the man I serve. And I’m not going to engage in small talk with any Tom, Dick, or Harry.

Murray  You nitwit. Look at me! Snap out of it.

Harlan  Hello?

Murray  What’s all this hullabaloo about?

Harlan  Wait a minute. Is it . . . Is that you, master?

Murray  Of course. Who else do you expect to find in the middle of my living room, Mickey Mouse?

Harlan  No, no, for the love of Pete!

Murray  Catch your breath.

Harlan  Oh, my god! I was playing chess when the idea struck me like a bolt out of the clear blue sky. I ran all the way from Washington Square Park.

Murray  Do you want a drink of water? Do you want to sit down?

Harlan  No, no. I’ll be all right.

Indyke  Come on, Martine. Let’s go home. His valet is a complete jerk.

Murray  No, wait!

Indyke  Come on, dear.

(Martine and Mrs. Indyke exit.)

Murray  There, there, now.

Harlan  Boy, oh boy. I’m glad I found you. You’re a 60
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hard one to locate sometimes, do you know that?
Murray Here I am. So?
Harlan Hold on. Give me a moment, will you?
Murray Take all the time you need.

Harlan No, I tell you this is urgent. You didn’t smoke that last cigarette yet, did you?
Murray No, I didn’t. It’s still in the box.
Harlan Good! Then we’re safe.
Murray What are you talking about?

Harlan I got a brainstorm that’s going to save you. I figured out how to make Martine come around to your point of view and agree to marry you. This plan is foolproof, and I’m sure she’ll agree to the engagement again.

Murray Really? Tell me, what’s this plan?
Harlan First ask yourself one question: What’s her greatest objection to marrying you?
Murray The baseless belief that William S. Burroughs was a cold-blooded murderer.

Harlan What if you could show her plain as day that Burroughs wasn’t a cold-blooded murderer, and that he loved his wife, and genuinely cared for her?
Murray How can I do that?
Harlan I happened to pick up the biography you were reading, the one that got Martine and her mother so riled up at you. I was curious what it said. You know it has a lot of footnotes.
Murray I know all about those damn footnotes.
Harlan Maybe you missed this one. It says that Kerouac and Ginsberg were concerned about Burroughs after the shooting. And do you know why? Because he started imagining that he saw Joan. And he would talk to her and tell her how much he missed her. So, I thought what if you could disguise Martine as Joan Vollmer and bring her to Tangier in
1954? Burroughs would think he’s seeing his dead wife. He’ll say sweet things to her. And Martine will realize that he really was a decent guy after all.

**Murray** Harlan, my friend, you’re a genius. That’s a great plan—

**Harlan** Thank you—

**Murray** —except for one minor detail.

**Harlan** What’s that?

**Murray** Martine is a terrible actor. Even if I could convince her to go back in time with me, she could never impersonate Joan Vollmer.

*(Harlan produces a wig.)*

**Harlan** There you’re wrong. First of all, here’s a wig that will make her look like Joan. Second, by 1954 Burroughs was using so many drugs his eyesight became affected, and he was almost legally blind.

**Murray** But Joan Vollmer had a limp.

**Harlan** Leave the limp to me.

**Murray** What are you talking about?

**Harlan** Do you think I ran all the way over here with a plan that would backfire? I’m telling you this is your last chance to save your marriage. Will you give it a try?

**Murray** I don’t think I have any other options, do I? Wait a minute! . . . I hear her now, coming down the hall.

**Harlan** But whatever you do, don’t take her mother with you. That woman will ruin the whole thing. Just take Martine, understand?

*(Harlan gives cigarette to Murray. Enter Martine.)*

**Harlan** Here she comes now. Isn’t that a lucky
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coincidence! The very girl we wanted to see.

Martine I only came back to get my stuff out of your house.

Murray Honey, slow down. Please hear me out for one second.

Martine Yes?

Murray What if I could introduce you to William S. Burroughs, and—

Martine No way do I want to meet that monster.

Murray Harlan brought me a cigarette from Calcutta that can take us back in time.

Martine So you admit that footnote was right! You did go back in time!

Murray Please hear me out. What if you disguised yourself as Joan Vollmer? See? I got this wig with a hairstyle like hers. And what if you met Burroughs, and he thought you were Joan? Suppose that happened, and Burroughs was nice to you.

Martine He wasn’t very nice to her. He killed her. Is that being nice?

Murray The point is . . . that was an accident. Will you at least try it on to see for yourself what he was really like?

Martine Even if I did try it, there’s no way we could meet Burroughs.

(Murray lights the cigarette and smokes.)

Murray Please put it on and see what it looks like.

(Martine dons the wig. Harlan adjusts it for her, and then holds up a mirror for her.)

Harlan It looks beautiful, miss.

Martine Can I keep it?
Murray Sure. Now, stand by me. Hold my hand.

(Harlan picks up the rock.)

Harlan By the way, miss, did I ever show you this rock I brought back as a souvenir from the River Ganges?

(Harlan drops rock on Martine’s foot. She screams and limps to Murray.)

Harlan I’m sorry, miss. It was an accident.
Martine You jerk! You might have broken my foot.
Murray Come here, my dear. Hold my hand.
Martine I can’t stand up.
Murray Hold onto me.

(Lights begin to flicker.)

Harlan Good luck, master! Have a good trip.
Martine What’s he talking about? What trip? Where are you going?
Murray You’ll see. Stay by my side.

(Enter Mrs. Indyke.)

Indyke Martine, Martine! Where are you?
Martine Here, mother.
Harlan No, master! I told you not to take her mother.
Indyke Take me where?

(Mrs. Indyke runs to Martine. Lights flicker and fade to black.)

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(Lights up. Tangier. The room is identical to the apartment in Mexico city, except there’s no tub. 
Ginsberg S.R., Kerouac U.R., both holding pages of a manuscript.)

Ginsberg  This is terrible! How can he write sleaze like this? It’s the worst thing I ever read. It’s filth. Pure filth on every page. If he publishes this garbage it’ll tarnish everything we’ve done to establish the Beat Generation as avant-garde American writers. It’ll ruin our careers. How could he do this to us? Kerouac  He’s obsessed with the fact that he killed Joan, and it’s caused him to write this filthy incoherent book.

Ginsberg  I’d like to kill him. Do you know that? I’d like to kill him. Kerouac  How would you do it? Ginsberg  You be Burroughs.

(Ginsberg puts Burroughs’s hat on Kerouac. Ginberg begins to strangle Kerouac.)

Kerouac  No, you be Burroughs.

(Kerouac puts hat on Ginsberg. Then Kerouac begins to beat Ginsberg.)

Ginsberg  No, you be Burroughs.

(Ginsberg puts hat on Kerouac. Then Ginsberg begins to beat Kerouac.)

Kerouac  No, you be Burroughs.

(Kerouac puts hat on Ginsberg. Then Kerouac
begins to strangle Ginsberg. The hat falls to the floor.)

(Enter Burroughs and Marker. )

Burroughs Quit horsing around, and let’s get back to work.

(Burroughs picks up his hat, and then he sits at the typewriter U.C., typing now and then, and occasionally throwing pages over his shoulder onto the floor. Marker stands slightly S.L. of Burroughs.)

Kerouac The first thing we’ve got to do is get these pages in order. Why in god’s name don’t you number them?
Burroughs I don’t know. But I’m really touched that you guys came all the way from New York to help me.
Marker It is remarkable.
Kerouac That’s what friends are for.
Ginsberg But there are some serious discontinuities in this material. The chapters jump from one crazy scene to the next. There’s no character development. There’s no plot.
Burroughs That’s my cut-up technique.
Ginsberg I’m not a fan cut-ups.
Marker What’s a cut-up?
Burroughs It’s when you take somebody else’s writing, and you cut the pages. Then you put different strips of paper side by side and try to get something original.
Marker You literally cut the pages of other books?
Burroughs (holding up two half pages) Like this.
See?

**Marker**  Wow. Does that work?

**Burroughs**  If you do it right, it does.

**Kerouac**  No, it doesn’t. It gives you gibberish.

5  **Ginsberg**  Cut-ups are not a valid creative tool.

**Burroughs**  It’s the only creative tool that really works.

**Kerouac**  It’s a stupid idea. You’re giving up creative control of your own work.

10  **Burroughs**  You don’t know what you’re talking about. Do you realize that we’re all being controlled by a giant trust of insects from another galaxy? Cut-ups are the only way to free yourself from that control.

15  **Ginsberg**  That’s a paranoid fantasy from your days as an exterminator.

**Marker**  You were an exterminator?

**Burroughs**  An exterminator extraordinaire! Say, Lewis, can you do me a big favor? Go down to Tony Dutch’s and pick up a letter for me. Do you know where it is?

**Marker**  That whorehouse behind the Café Central?

**Burroughs**  Yes. I’m expecting a letter from this Spanish kid Kiki.

25  **Marker**  Are you still seeing that little bugger?

**Ginsberg**  How old is he? Twelve?

**Burroughs**  I don’t know, but I’m expecting a very important communication from him.

**Marker**  *(Sarcastically)*  I’m sure it’s very important.

30  *(Exit Marker.)*

**Ginsberg**  I like Lewis.

**Burroughs**  You might like him less if you had to pay him every time you wanted to have sex.
(Lights flicker and fade to black, and when they come up again, Murray is D.R. Martine (wearing wig) is between D.C. and D.L., and Mrs. Indyke is near her, D.L.)

Martine Mother, where are we? How did we get here? What is this place?
Indyke I don’t know. Who are these people? Where did they come from?
Ginsberg Jack, why did you bring these girls up here?
Kerouac What are you talking about? I never saw them before in my life.
Burroughs Jack, you’re always doing things to annoy me, and you do it on purpose. You introduce me to people who don’t like my work. You did it in New York. I wouldn’t put it past you to have brought these girls here.
Kerouac I swear I didn’t.
Indyke Oh, Martine! Murray did this! It’s his fault.
Martine Where did he bring us? Where are we?
Ginsberg You’re in Tangier, ladies.
Martine Oh, my god, mother! We’re in Tangier!
Indyke Tangier? That’s not possible. Stop this nonsense at once.
Ginsberg These girls are hysterical.
Murray Calm down. I told you. We went back to 1954.
Martine Oh, my god! Am I hallucinating? I think I recognize them.
Indyke Don’t tell me, Martine! Don’t tell me who it is! It can’t be him!
Kerouac How are we supposed to work with all this racket?
Martine  Look at him. Look at him!
Indyke  Martine!
Burroughs  They’re breaking my concentration.
Ginsberg  Jack, would you quiet them down?

(Kerouac approaches Martine, producing his little red diary.)

Kerouac  What’s your name, honey?
Martine  Martine Indyke.
Kerouac  I like your hair. I like everything about you.

(Martine moves away from Kerouac.)

Martine  I recognize him from Murray’s book.
Indyke  How could it be possible!
Martine  Yes, mother. It looks like . . . unless I’m mistaken, it looks like—
Kerouac  Ladies, can I ask you to keep your voices down? (To Ginsberg) Where’s Peter? Did he send them up here?
Ginsberg  He went to the beach.
Indyke  Who is it?
Burroughs  Get them to be quiet, will you?

(Burroughs sits back at his typewriter.)

Martine  Murray, What did you do? Where did you bring us? How did you get these people here?
Indyke  I can’t believe it. We have to get out of this room. We have to get away. Call a cab!
Murray  Calm down.
Martine  (Trying her cell phone) There’s no reception.
Murray  Cell phones won’t be invented for another forty years.
WILLIAM CANE

Indyke  What!
Martine  The guy with the beard!
Indyke  Who is he?
Martine  I think he’s . . . I think he’s . . .
Ginsberg  Honey, I’m Alan Ginsberg. But you have to excuse us, we’re working on an important book.
Kerouac  Are you girls fans of our work?
Indyke  Maybe he drugged us.
Burroughs  Fans or not, would you ask them to pipe down?
Martine  I think it’s William S. Burroughs.
Indyke  But how could it be? That’s impossible.
Martine  I know, mother. But look at him!
Murray  We came back. That’s how it happened.
Martine  Mother, it’s William S. Burroughs, the killer we read about in our courses—
Indyke  Then we’re in great danger! Keep away from him!

(Burroughs ties a tourniquet around his arm, and injects heroin.)

Ginsberg  You started using it again?
Martine  What’s he doing!
Burroughs  I got back on it a couple of weeks ago. But I’m already hooked, and it happened so fast I didn’t have time to stop.
Indyke  He’s injecting a drug.
Burroughs  Doctor Dent is standing by to give me the apomorphine cure.
Martine  It’s heroin!
Murray  Relax, Martine. He’s not doing anyone any harm.
Indyke  I can’t deal with it.
Martine  Neither can I.

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**Murray**  Please give him a chance to show you he’s a decent person. Don’t judge him because he’s using a drug. That doesn’t mean he’s a bad person.

**Indyke**  It certainly does! Come on, honey. Let’s get out of here.

**Murray**  No, don’t go! Give him a chance to show you how normal he is.

**Ginsberg**  We don’t have to prove ourselves to anyone.

**Kerouac**  That’s right.

(Enter Marker.)

**Marker**  I got the letter.

(Marker gives letter to Burroughs, who unfolds it.)

**Burroughs**  I’ve been straining my eyes for hours. I can’t make out the words. Can you read it to me?

(Burroughs hands letter to Marker. Meanwhile, Martine and Mrs. Indyke are huddled with their arms around one another.)

**Marker**  (Reading) Dear . . .

(Marker laughs)

**Burroughs**  Dear what?

**Marker**  (Laughing) I can’t read it.

**Burroughs**  What’s so funny?

**Marker**  (Reading) Dear Pappy . . .

**Kerouac**  Pappy?

**Ginsberg**  That twelve-year-old whore calls you pappy?
Burroughs  Get on with it.
Marker  (Reading) Dear Pappy . . . I . . . (Laughing)
Burroughs  What the hell is it now?
Marker  (Reading and laughing) I miss . . .

(Pause, while Marker laughs.)

Burroughs  Spit it out.
Marker  (Reading and laughing, with long pauses between each word) . . . you . . . so . . . much . . . my . . . big . . . Americano . . . pappy.
Burroughs  Is that it?
Marker  (Laughing) I can’t continue reading it.
Burroughs  Damn it to hell.
Marker  (Same business) I . . . will . . . be . . . at . . .
   Tony’s . . . tonight.
Burroughs  Can you go back and tell Tony to reserve a room for me? Tell him I’ll be there around nine o’clock. And I want two Arab boys in addition to Kiki. He knows the ones I like.
Marker  I’m sure he does.
Martine  Oh, mother!
Indyke  He killed his wife, and now he’s paying to have sex with young boys.

(Marker exits.)

Ginsberg  Bill, why don’t you let Jack type. He’s much faster than you.

(Burroughs gets up. Jack sits at the desk and begins typing.)

Kerouac  Make sure you give me the pages in order.
   Maybe there is some hope for this book after all.
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Murray Of course there is. You’re all going to be household names, not only in the United States, but all over the world.

Burroughs I like this guy.

Ginsberg Yeah, he talks like me.

Burroughs *(Rubbing his arm.)* It’s starting to kick in.

(Martine limps. Burroughs watches her.)

Burroughs Joanie!

Ginsberg Joanie?

Kerouac Billy, calm down! It’s not her.

Burroughs Joanie, so many years have passed since that terrible night in Mexico City.

Martine What are you crazy?

Burroughs That hair . . . that voice . . . that walk!

(Burroughs begins to pursue Martine, who backs away.)

Martine Keep away from me!

Ginsberg Control yourself, Bill.

Burroughs You can’t fool me. There’s no use denying it. I’ve missed you during all these long lonely years. Little Billy Junior misses you too. He signs his letters “Your cursed from birth son.” Your whole family misses you.

Indyke Let’s get out of here before he does something irrational.

(Burroughs picks up a glass and holds it out to Martine.)

Burroughs Here, take this glass. Put it on your
head.

(Martine takes the glass. Burroughs draws his pistol and holds it at his side without aiming it at anyone.)

Indyke He has a gun! Watch out, Martine. He’s going to shoot!
Ginsberg Girls, please—
Martine What did I get myself into?
Kerouac Put that pistol down!
Burroughs I know what I’m doing.
Ginsberg You’re not going to fire off a shot in here!
Burroughs Joan, you’re the reason I write. You inspired me to create this book.
Martine Oh, my god! This can’t be happening.
Burroughs Finally, I have a chance to do it right!
Ginsberg No, Bill! Don’t!
Martine Somebody, help me!
Indyke Honey, get away from him.
Burroughs Put that glass on your head. This time I’m not drunk, only a little zonked-out on H.
Kerouac Bill, don’t!
Burroughs I’m going to prove I can shoot straight.
Martine Oh, my god! This can’t be happening.
Kerouac Bill, don’t!
Burroughs I’m going to prove I can shoot straight.

(Burroughs raises the pistol. Martine holds the glass at arm’s length.)

Ginsberg Get that gun away from him!

(Martine and Mrs. Indyke scream. Kerouac tries to grab the gun. Burroughs fires off several shots over Martine’s head. Kerouac finally manages to wrestle the gun from Burroughs.)
Burroughs  Give me that gun back.
Martine  He’s trying to kill me!
Indyke  The lunatic!

Burroughs  I want to make it right.
Ginsberg  Hide that gun.
Kerouac  You fool!
Ginsberg  What the devil do you think you’re doing?
Martine  God, help me!

Burroughs  I’ve always wished Joan was alive again so I could do the William Tell game sober and prove I could shoot the glass without killing her.
Ginsberg  Don’t you think that’s dangerous?
Burroughs  But I need to clear my conscience. And that’s the only way to do it. When you fall off a horse, you’re supposed to get right back on. I made a mistake in Mexico City. I want a chance to set things right.

(Burroughs picks up his machine gun.)

Kerouac  Open your eyes, man. That’s not Joanie.
Ginsberg  Get that machine gun away from him.

(Kerouac wrestles the machine gun from Burroughs.)

Martine  My name is Martine Indyke.
Burroughs  You’re the only woman I ever loved.
Ginsberg  But this isn’t her.
Burroughs  Of course it’s her. Exactly as she was back in Mexico.
Martine  Mother, these people are crazy.
Indyke  We have to get out of here. We have to go home.
Murray  If you don’t marry me, I’ll go back alone and leave you two here.
Indyke  Don’t you dare!
Martine  You can’t leave us here. You’ve got to take us with you.
Murray  You want me to take you with me?
Martine  Please, Murray. Please! Take us out of this nightmare. I’ll do anything you want.
Murray  You will?
Martine  For heaven’s sake, yes!
Murray  Then come to your senses, stop listening to your mother, and marry me.
Indyke  You can’t pressure her like that!
Murray  Do you want to stay here forever?
Martine  No! You can’t leave us with these people. They’re killers. They killed David Kammerer and dumped his body in the Hudson River.
Kerouac  What do you mean “they”? We didn’t have anything to do with that.
Martine  And they shot Joan Vollmer in cold blood.
Ginsberg  Stop saying “they.” It wasn’t a group action. It was a mistake—an accident—by one person. I’m a poet, not a killer.
Burroughs  Joan, I never meant to shoot you.
Martine  I’m not Joan.
Indyke  You’ve got guns all over the place, and you’re still shooting.
Burroughs  Guns are my life. And I won’t have women telling me what to do.
Martine  Get us out of here, Murray. Get us out of here and away from them!
Murray  Is she going to marry me?
Indyke  Okay, Martine. Marry him! It’s the only way we’ll ever back to our own time.
Martine  Mother, are you sure?
THE BEAT GENERATION

Indyke Of course I’m sure. We can’t stay in this madhouse!
Martine Okay, you win. Take us home. I’ll marry you.
5 Burroughs You can’t marry him. You’re married to me.
Murray I’ve got that seasick feeling in my stomach again. Now, hold my hands. I think we’re going back.

(Martine and Mrs. Indyke each hold one of Murray’s hands, and he whirls around with them. Lights flicker and go out.)

Act Five

Lights up on Murray’s den. Murray, Martine, and Mrs. Indyke are present.

20 Martine Look, mother! We’re back!
Indyke Are you sure? Look around. Make sure those people aren’t hiding somewhere.

(Martine looks around.)

25 Martine It looks like they’re gone.
Murray Of course they’re not here. That was sixty-five years ago. All those people have passed away. We’re back in our own time again.
Indyke Thank god we’re home, safe and sound. Don’t ever do anything like that to us again. You scared the daylights out of us. It was a freak show from start to finish.
Murray There’s no way I’ll be taking you back in time anymore. That was the last cigarette, and there
are no more left to travel into the past.

Indyke  Thankfully.

Martine  Mother, did you forget? What time is it?

Indkye  Three o’clock.

Martine  We’ve got to get to the airport to pick up mom’s friend. He’s arriving from Spain on a four o’clock flight. I’m sorry to have to do this to you, Murray. But the wedding is off. I’m canceling the engagement again, even though I promised to marry you when we were surrounded by those crazy people. I only said I would marry you to get us out of that lunatic asylum. Your friend Burroughs was shooting at me! Plus he shot and killed his wife.

Murray  But killing Joan Vollmer was an accident.

Martine  You can call it an accident all you want. But I know different. Not only have I read about him in books, and learned about him in college, but now I’ve had the opportunity to see him firsthand, up close, and in person with my own two eyes. I saw the way he is with guns. He was even shooting at me!

Murray  Please, Martine. Be reasonable. You know he didn’t mean to kill his wife.

Martine  I am being reasonable. I’m a reasonable person. And I would never in a million years shoot off a gun at someone, especially at someone I’m supposed to love.

Murray  But he was drunk when he shot her. He didn’t mean to do it.

Martine  All the more reason to consider him reckless and indifferent to human life. If I was intoxicated, I would never pick up a gun, let alone shoot it. Your friend is a lunatic, a homicidal lunatic.

Murray  He’s not my friend.

Martine  Whatever! The wedding is canceled. And that’s final.

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Indyke  Come on, honey. Let’s go, before he says something to change your mind.
Murray  But . . . but wait a minute . . . come back here.

(Exit Martine and Mrs. Indyke. Enter Harlan with pistol.)

Harlan  Here’s that pistol.
Murray  Are you crazy!
Harlan  What’s the matter?
Murray  Martine was just here. If she saw that I had a gun she would hit the roof. Leave it on the table so I remember to get rid of it before she returns.
Harlan  What if she sees it?
Murray  Put it behind the liquor bottles. She doesn’t drink, so if she happens to come back early she’ll never notice it.

(Harlan puts gun on table.)

Harlan  What happened in Tangier?
Murray  Burroughs started shooting at her, and she freaked out.
Harlan  Little things like that always annoy women.

(Pause.)

Murray  She canceled the engagement again.
Harlan  I’m sorry, sir. But I’m confident she’ll change her mind.
Murray  What makes you so sure?
Harlan  If I may be permitted to say so, sir, I know women. And you can bet your bottom dollar that a woman as fickle as Martine is very likely to give up...
her objections before long.

Murray  How do you know so much about women?
Harlan  I grew up with four older sisters and a horse.
Murray  A horse! What does a horse have to do with anything?
Harlan  It was a female.

(Pause.)

Now, show me where you keep your records, so I can start on the wedding invitations.

Murray  The wedding invitations! But she canceled the wedding.
Harlan  Trust me, sir. She’ll change her mind. And you want her to see that you’re serious about this marriage, don’t you? There’s no better way to do it than to start on the invitations.

(Harlan claps his hand on Murray’s back, leading him out. Exit Murray and Harlan U.R. Enter Martine and Mrs. Indyke D.L.)

Martine  Can you pick up Reynaldo up at the airport by yourself? It occurred to me that if I come back with him, Murray might become suspicious. Even though I canceled the marriage, I still prefer to keep my relationship with Reynaldo secret.

Indyke  Very wise, my dear. It’s always best to keep romantic relationships secret. It makes things much more exciting, doesn’t it?

Martine  My thinking exactly . . . Now, don’t forget our plan. You pick up Reynaldo at the airport and you pretend that he’s your boyfriend, so Murray doesn’t get suspicious. Can you do that?

Indyke  Of course, I can.
Martine And don’t flirt with him.
Indyke Me? Flirt with a strange man?
Martine You know how you are! You even flirted with Murray before we got engaged.

Indyke That was before I went to college and learned about his perverted world views. I wouldn’t flirt with Reynaldo in a million years. He’s your boyfriend, not mine.
Martine Please remember that! From the way he writes to me, I can tell that he’s a very romantic guy.
Indyke Don’t worry about me.
Martine Restrain yourself!
Indyke I will, honey. I’ll be a model of restraint.

(Mrs. Indyke begins to exit.)

Martine I hope so. I’ll wait here for you to return.
Indyke (Exiting) I want a boyfriend. I want a boyfriend.

(Exit Mrs. Indyke. Fade to black.)

(Lights up on a scene taking place downstairs in Harlan’s quarters, which is played U.R. Harlan and Murray have wedding invitations in hand.)

Murray I’m wasting my time preparing these invitations!
Harlan Buck up, sir. She’ll change her mind and decide to marry you, I’m sure of it.
Murray Really?
Harlan Yes, sir.
Murray I hope so . . . Do you think we would make a happy couple?
Harlan That’s a tricky thing to predict with any two
people. So long as you don’t make any mistakes with
her, you should be okay. Remember, she’s an
independent woman. And these women are very
particular. There’s a strict code of conduct you need
to follow to keep them satisfied. There are certain
things you absolutely cannot do or say. For instance,
under no circumstances can you call her a lousy
blanked bitch.

Murray I wouldn’t call her that.

Harlan Or a lazy godforsaken crock.

Murray A lazy godforsaken crock? I would never say
that either.

Harlan Or a damn chickenshit crupper.

Murray What’s that?

Harlan Never mind what it is. You can’t say it to her.

Murray Okay, I won’t.

Harlan And then, of course, there are things you
can’t do to her if you want a happy marriage.

Murray Such as what?

Harlan I’m sorry, sir. I can’t describe them to you. It
wouldn’t be any good. The only way to understand
them, is to see them demonstrated.

Murray But I’ve got to know what they are. Can’t
you show me what I’m not supposed to do?

Harlan Right here and now?

Murray Yes.

Harlan No, sir. I can’t do that.

Murray I’m ordering you to show me.

Harlan I’m sorry, sir. I couldn’t under any
circumstances.

Murray I’ll fire you if you don’t show me.

(Harlan hurriedly scribbles on a piece of paper.)

Harlan In that case, sir, I hope you don’t mind if I
ask you to sign this.

**Murray** What’s it?

**Harlan** A mere formality. It’s a standard release form. It says “I swear not to fire my valet for showing me what NOT to do to my wife.”

**Murray** You want me to sign this?

**Harlan** If you don’t mind, sir.

**(Murray signs, and Harlan pockets the release.)**

**Murray** Now, please proceed. Show me what I’m not supposed to do.

**Harlan** Okay, you can’t do this to her.

**(Harlan slaps Murray.)**

**Murray** Damn you!

**Harlan** Don’t use that kind of language on her, sir. Do you want the rest?

**Murray** I don’t know.

**Harlan** It’s up to you. If you’re not interested in learning what you can’t do to a modern woman, I won’t show you. It’s no skin off my back.

**Murray** No, don’t leave me in the dark. Go ahead.

**Harlan** Are you sure?

**Murray** Yes, I have to know.

**Harlan** Of course. It’s essential in a happy marriage to know these things.

**Murray** Go ahead, then.

**Murray** I recommend you pay careful attention to this next demonstration, sir. Whatever you do, no matter how you feel, no matter what bad thing she might have done or said . . . You can’t give her one of these.
WILLIAM CANE

(Harlan punches Murray in the stomach. Murray doubles over and falls.)

Murray (Breathless) You lousy son of a bitch!
Harlan Watch your tongue, sir. Remember, she’s a liberated woman . . . Do you want the rest?
Murray (Breathless) Do I need it?
Harlan Only if you want to be happy.
Murray Yes, I suppose so.

Harlan You don’t sound too sure. It’s for your own good. But if you don’t want to know everything, that’s fine with me. I’m not the one getting married.
Murray No, don’t hold anything back.
Harlan I’m not convinced you really want to know.
Murray I really want to know. Please! Go ahead.

(Murray puts his hands over his head in a defensive stance.)

Harlan Very well, then. Pay careful attention. You can’t do this to her, sir.

(Harlan kicks Murray several times, and Murray rolls over.)

Or this, or this, or this!
Murray Stop it, damn it! You’re fired!
Harlan What about that release form?

(Murray staggers to his feet.)

Murray I should never have hired you. I’ll break your damn neck! Give me that release back!

(Murray chases Harlan, and they exit. Lights fade to
black, and then come up.)

(Enter Mrs. Indyke and Reynaldo D.L.)

Indyke I don’t know how my daughter is going to take the news. I wish you spoke better English so you could explain it to her yourself.

Reynaldo I have book.

Indyke You’ll never learn fast enough. We’ve got to see her in a few minutes. I’ve already been gone three hours, and she’s going to be steaming mad that I took so long. What worse, she’s going to be heartbroken when she finds out about us.

(Pause.)

But we couldn’t help it, could we, Reynaldo darling? Somehow, even though you came all the way from Spain to meet my daughter, the instant we saw each other we felt an irresistible connection, didn’t we? It was a force like magnetism, and we were powerless to resist. Oh, please. Maybe you could explain it to her. If she heard it from your own mouth, it might make the shock less severe. Come on, Reynaldo. I’ll rehearse you. Make believe I’m Martine. Explain to her how we fell in love at first sight. Go on. Speak to her. You can do it.

Reynaldo (consulting his phrase book) Hello, my name is Reynaldo.

Indyke That’s a good start. Now break the news to her about us falling in love.

Reynaldo (same business) Can you please repeat that?

Indyke Tell her that we fell in love.

Reynaldo (same business) Hello, my name is
WILLIAM CANE

Reynaldo.

Indyke You already said that.

Reynaldo (same business) Is this seat taken?

Indyke Oh, god. I’m going to have to tell her myself.

Listen, honey. You better give me a few minutes to break the news to her. Wait downstairs for five minutes, okay?

Reynaldo (same business) Do you have a map?

Indyke You don’t need a map. Wait downstairs for five minutes, and then come back. Understand? Comprende?

Reynaldo Come back?

Indyke Yes, in five minutes. Got it?

Reynaldo Come back . . . cinco minutos?

Indyke Yes, and hopefully I’ll have explained it to her by then. But I have a feeling she’s not going to be happy about this.

(Exit Reynaldo left. Exit Mrs. Indyke right.)

(Lights up on Murray’s room. Martine is alone.)

Martine It’s already been three hours since my mother left to get Reynaldo. I’m so nervous about meeting him. Maybe I should have a drink to calm my nerves.

(Martine drinks. Enter Mrs. Indyke.)

Martine Mom, what happened? Did you get him?

Indyke You’re drinking?

Martine I’m so nervous about meeting him. Where is he?

Indyke He’ll be up in a minute. He’s paying the cab.

Martine What’s he like?
THE BEAT GENERATION

Indyke  Exactly as you described.  
Martine  Handsome?  
Indyke  Yes.  
Martine  Romantic?  
Indyke  Yes.  

5  Martine  Sweet?  
Indyke  Yes.  
Martine  Loving?  
Indyke  Yes.  

10  Martine  I need another drink.  

(Martine drinks.)  

Indyke  Listen, Martine, there’s something I need to tell you.  
Martine  What is it?  
Indyke  Reynaldo is not very good with the English language.  
Martine  But he wrote beautiful emails.  
Indyke  He made me understand that they were all written by a friend of his.  
Martine  A friend of his?  
Indyke  Yes.  
Martine  So, I fell in love with his friend? What’s his name? Cyrano de Bergerac?  
Indyke  His friend is actually a woman—a professor of English in Barcelona.  
Martine  I fell in love with a woman? I need another drink.  

30  (Martine drinks.)  

Martine  But he’s nice?  
Indyke  Yes.  

35  Martine  And sweet?
Indyke  Yes.
Martine  And romantic?
Indyke  Yes.
Martine  Thank heavens for that.

Indyke  There’s something else I need to tell you.
Martine  What is it?
Indyke  I don’t know how to say this . . .
Martine  Please tell me.
Indyke  Maybe you should sit down.

Martine  You’re frightening me.
Indyke  You know how I’ve been wanting a boyfriend . . . it turns out that Reynaldo is really my type. He’s not able to speak very well, so he has to act things out . . . and he gets physical . . . and to make a long story short . . . he likes me.
Martine  What!
Indyke  And I like him.
Martine  Mom!
Indyke  I’m sorry, dear. But you have Murray, after all . . . and I need a boyfriend.
Martine  Oh, you’re just rehearsing, to be convincing in front of Murray. God, for a minute there, you had me worried.
Indyke  No, I really do like Reynaldo. And we hit it off right away.
Martine  But he came all the way from Spain to meet me!
Indyke  I know, honey, but . . . we felt this immediate rapport and attraction. It was love at first sight.

Martine  Maybe you’re mistaken. Maybe it’s only a passing infatuation. You always get that way with my boyfriends. Remember? You even liked Murray when I first met him.
Indyke  No, honey. This is different. This isn’t a passing infatuation.
THE BEAT GENERATION

Martine How do you know?
Indyke Er . . . before we came back to the city, we stopped and got a room at the airport motel.
Martine You didn’t!
Indyke We couldn’t help it!
Martine I need another drink. Something stronger. What’s this bottle back here?

(Martine drinks. When she puts the bottle down she sees the gun.)

Martine Oh, god! A gun.

(Martine pick up gun.)

Martine Murray has a gun!
Indyke Put it down. It might go off.

(Enter Reynaldo.)

Indyke Here’s Reynaldo now. Put that gun down.

(The gun goes off. Reynaldo falls. Martine screams and drops gun.)

Indyke You shot him! You shot Reynaldo!
Martine It was an accident!

(Reynaldo gets to his knees, putting his hand to his temple, and reaching out for Mrs. Indyke.)

Reynaldo My head!

(Mrs. Indyke steps away from Reynaldo, and he flops down to the floor.)
Indyke  Do you realize that you did what William S. Burroughs did?
Martine  I didn’t mean it.
Indyke  Are you sure? You seemed pretty angry that he decided to go out with me instead of you.
Reynaldo  Ow! My head!

(Reynaldo reaches out for Mrs. Indyke, who steps aside, and he flops down again.)

Martine  The gun went off by itself. It was an accident.
Indyke  Maybe unconsciously you wanted to kill him because you felt betrayed.
Reynaldo  My head!

(Same business, with Reynaldo and Mrs. Indyke.)

Martine  No, no, I can’t accept that.
Indyke  But you shot him.
Martine  It was a complete accident.
Indyke  That’s what William S. Burroughs said. He claimed it was an accident that he shot his wife. You did the same thing Burroughs did.
Martine  But mother! If I could have an accident like that . . . then maybe . . .
Indyke  Maybe what?

(Mrs. Indyke helps Reynaldo to his feet. Enter Murray and Harlan.)

Murray  What’s going on? We heard a gunshot.
Martine  I shot Reynaldo. It was an accident.
Harlan  Accidents like that happen all the time.
THE BEAT GENERATION

Indkye Of course they do. My daughter is no murderer.
Martine Then maybe I was wrong about Burroughs.
Indkye Wrong about him?

Martine I accidentally shot Reynaldo. It was very stupid of me. But if I could do it, maybe Burroughs accidentally shot Joan. That doesn’t mean I like Burroughs, or accept what he did. But maybe I understand it. For god’s sake, I did the same thing! I made a terrific mistake. I accused Murray wrongly, when I was capable of doing the same thing—shooting someone accidentally. And I may have made my biggest mistake by breaking off my engagement.

(Harlan and Murray exchange a knowing look.)

Indkye Wonderful!
Martine Why is that wonderful?

Indkye It’s wonderful because now we can have a double wedding.
Murray Then, the marriage is back on?
Martine If you can forgive me for being so impulsive.
Murray Of course, my dear.

Martine But aren’t you concerned about how we argue so much? Do you think we’ll be compatible?

Murray Compatibility is overrated. Look at the Beat Generation. They disliked each other’s books. They disliked each other’s partners. They even disliked each other’s philosophy. But they remained best friends forever. Don’t you think we can get over our differences and be faithful to each other?

Martine I’ll be as faithful as a . . . pig to mud.

Indyke (To Reynaldo) You better never talk to me like that.
WILLIAM CANE

Murray And for my part, I’ll be as faithful as a table.
Martine A table?
Murray In existential philosophy, a table is what it is, and it never becomes, for example, a chair. It stays true to itself. The same way I’ll stay true to you.
Martine Oh, Murray! We’ll be like an unbreakable kitchen set.
Murray Martine!
Murray My one!
Martine My only!
Murray My sweet!
Martine My ducky!
Murray My honey pie!
Martine My cupcake!
Murray My butter croissant!
Martine My butter cookie!
Murray My butter pie!
Martine My butter cake!
Murray My butter tart!
Martine Butter tart!?

(Martine slaps Murray.)

Martine How dare you call me a tart! This engagement is canceled!

(Martine steps away and turns her back on Murray.)

Murray Honey, calm down. I misspoke.
Martine How could you be so insensitive?
Murray A mere slip of the tongue.
Martine No one ever spoke to me like that in my life.
Murray I didn’t mean it.
Martine Yes, you did. I had a feeling I couldn’t trust
THE BEAT GENERATION

you.

Murray And from what I overheard you say, I knew I couldn't trust you.

Martine You flirted with my own mother.

Murray Your flirted with an international pen pal.

Martine Your handsomeness draws women to you, and you don’t even try to resist.

Murray Your beauty draws men to you, and you never say no.

Martine I’ve had it with you!

Murray You’ve tormented me for the last time.

Martine I would still love you . . .

Murray I would still adore you . . .

Martine . . . if you had been faithful . . .

Murray . . . if you had been true . . .

Martine . . . but you deceived me!

Murray . . . but you betrayed me!

Martine My heart can’t take it anymore.

Murray My heart has been broken a thousand times by you.

Martine I’m leaving you for good.

(Martine begins to exit S.L.)

Murray I’d like to see you do it!

Martine I wish we had never met.

Murray You’re the unluckiest thing that ever happened to me.

Martine I’m going out the door now.

Murray Good-bye, and good riddance!

Martine I’m leaving you forever!

Murray If I never see you again it will be too soon.

(Martine steps offstage.)
Martine (Offstage) I’m gone now . . . And I’m not coming back.
Murray That’s fine with me!
Martine (Offstage) I’m out here . . . and you won’t see me anymore.
Murray Go, then! Go! And don’t come back.
Martine (Offstage) What? . . .
Murray Excuse me?
Martine (Offstage) What did you say?
Murray Are you saying something to me?

(Martine comes back tentatively, and during the ensuing dialogue slowly gets closer to Murray.)

Martine Did I hear you call me back?
Murray Now that you’re standing in front of me, I can’t help regretting my angry words.
Martine I’m embarrassed by what I said in the heat of the argument.
Murray I never encouraged your mother, or any other woman!
Martine I was never serious about my pen pal! He deceived me by having a professor write his letters.
Murray If I said anything to annoy you, I take it back . . . I retract it . . . I strike it from my vocabulary.
Martine You do?
Murray Yes, my sweet.
Martine You swear?
Murray Yes, my buttercup.
Martine Oh, Murray!
Murray Martine!
Martine I hate arguing with you.
Murray Let’s kiss and make up.
THE BEAT GENERATION

(Martine and Murray hug and kiss.)

Indyke  My daughter has finally met her match.
Harlan  We’ve already begun writing wedding invitations.
Indkye  I’d like to introduce you to Reynaldo, my fiancé.
Murray  It’s a pleasure to meet you, sir.
Reynaldo  (Reading from phrase book) Check please.
Harlan  Congratulations to the happy couples on their engagement.
Indkye  We should go someplace special to celebrate.
Martine  Yes, we should.
Murray  Of course.
Harlan  I know where we can go! I happened to find one more of those cigarettes in my luggage. We can go back and celebrate in Tangier.
Indkye  Forget it!
Murray  Not on your life!
Martine  I’ll kill you!
Harlan  Keep away from that gun, miss!

(Fade to black. When the lights come up, we’re back in 1954 Tangier. From the audience’s perspective, onstage from left to right are Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs, the latter seated at his desk.)

Kerouac  Do you think that guy was really here?
Ginsberg  He couldn’t have been. Time travel is impossible.
Kerouac  Then how come we all saw him?
Ginsberg  We’ve been smoking too much marijuana. We had a group hallucination.
Burroughs  Maybe I should add that time travel guy to Naked Lunch.
WILLIAM CANE

Ginsberg  You can’t add him now. We have only two weeks to deliver the manuscript to Olympia Press. We can’t risk missing that deadline.
Burroughs  But I want to put him in.
Ginsberg  I’m not going to allow it.

(Burroughs gets up and picks up a baseball bat. Ginsberg grabs a broom. They approach one another, but Kerouac gets between them in an attempt to keep them apart. They start flailing away at each other, but Kerouac takes most of the blows, and during the ensuing dialogue, Kerouac falls down and the other two are staggered.)

Burroughs  It’s my book, and he’s going in.
Ginsberg  I’m the agent, and he’s staying out.
Kerouac  Break it up, boys!
Burroughs  He’s going in.
Ginsberg  He’s staying out.

Kerouac  Ow! . . . ow!
Burroughs  He’s going in.
Ginsberg  No, he’s not.
Burroughs  Yes, he is.
Ginsberg  Take that!
Burroughs  I’ll kill you!

(Pause.)

Ginsberg  As the agent, I should have the last word.
Burroughs  Are you out of your mind? The author should have the last word.
Ginsberg  The author can’t be objective. I should have the last word.
Burroughs  I won’t put my name on the book unless I have the last word.
THE BEAT GENERATION

Ginsberg  I won’t represent it unless I have the last word.
Burroughs  I’m going to have the last word!
Kerouac  I took the most blows, so maybe I should have the last word. Whether or not that guy was here, or if time travel is possible, isn’t the point, and we shouldn’t be arguing about it. The point is we have a book deadline in two weeks. And this book will travel in time—straight into the future. It won’t make up for the loss of Joan. Nothing can do that. But it will prove once and for all that we never forgot her, and that despite our differences we never stopped being friends. Isn’t that what the Beat Generation is all about? . . . Now, let’s get back to work.

(Ginsberg and Burroughs dust themselves off. Burroughs heads back to his desk. Ginsberg picks up some pages of the manuscript. Kerouac stands unsteadily and picks up a bottle of liquor.)

Kerouac  I need a drink.

(Kerouac drinks from the bottle.)

Ginsberg  I need a valium.
Burroughs  Friendship is just another form of control that has to be cut up.

(Fade to black.)

THE END