

ACT 1

Scene 1

The curtains and the lights rise on an empty office, bereft of desks or chairs but overflowing with the promise of quick wealth from the Internet age. Stage left is a stylized representation of an office into which we can see everything (which at this point is nothing save for three walls) and stage right is the windowless door to the main office. A clock, which runs in real time, hangs on the back wall. It reads 7:30.

We first HEAR the audio from a newscast over the theater's sound system.

NEWSCASTER

Good morning today is December 30, 1999, the 364th day of the year. There are just two days left not only to the old year, but to the decade, the century, and most significantly to anyone with a computer, the millennium. At this hour the entire world is on pins and needles waiting to see what, if any effect, there will be from the much talked about Y2K bug – the glitch that makes some computers unable to recognize in what century a date is located. So the big question is this: when the world's calendars start rolling from 1999 to 2000, will the Y2K bug cause massive crashes of computers that control everything from nuclear power plants and air traffic control systems to banks? Or will we slip gently, and without incident, into the 21st century. One thing experts say is for sure, there's not much anyone can do now except wait..."

We next HEAR R.E.M.'s "End of the World" as Gil Bates, casually dressed in jeans, carrying a computer carrying case and speaking on a cell phone, enters. He is a short, young man in his very early twenties who, despite his size is a whirling mass of action.

GIL

(On the cell phone) Not acceptable, Manny, not acceptable. We signed a contract last night that requires you to be here with me this morning. *(Pause)* I don't give a damn about Jason Peabody. His web site is not my problem. Let him find another programmer. You're mine, now.

Gil's middle-aged father David enters, unseen. He has an air of authority that comes from someone who has been there, done that, and done it well, but underlying that confidence are premonitions of his own uselessness. David is the only one who wears a tie and jacket. He listens to Gil's tirade with great pleasure.

GIL

- *(Continued)* Yes, there is a provision in your contract that allows you to start two weeks later if something comes up at your last job. But read your contract, Manny. I'm the one who decides if you can do that, not you or Jason. Now I expect to see you here at 8:00. I know it's the day before New Year's Eve. You'll have plenty of time to make whatever party you want to go to. *(Shuts off the phone angrily, sees his father)* What are you smiling about? *(As he dials another number on the cell phone)*

DAVID

Just watching the boss in action.

GIL

I don't get any pleasure out of that, you know.

DAVID

No, of course not.

GIL

I don't! I - *(Turns his attention to the phone)* Howie, it's Gil. It's seven thirty. You hear that echo? That's the sound of an office without any furniture. You said your guys would be here by seven thirty and now it's *(Looks at the clock)* seven thirty-one. Don't give me that 'they'll be here any minute, crap. In less than an hour I've got two highly paid contract programmers showing up and right now they don't have a place to sit. I know it's the day before New Year's Eve. But you're the one who advertises anything, anywhere, anytime. So let's see my furniture here and now! *(Shuts the phone off and takes a deep breath, then dials another number)*

DAVID

You know, in my day before we started a business we made sure we had furniture.

GIL

Well, dad, as we've discussed on more than one occasion, this isn't your day. *(Yells at the cell phone as he shuts it off)* God damn it!

DAVID

Actually, it doesn't look to be yours.

GIL

Would you please...? *(Gil will take his computer from its case and plugs a wire dangling from it into a socket in the wall)*

DAVID

Look, I know a few people. Let me make a phone call and –

GIL

I can furnish my office, thank you very much.

DAVID

(Looking skeptically around the office) Uh huh.

GIL

(Pushes a key on his computer and it beeps. He smiles, pointing at the computer screen) Hear that? As long as I have that, I don't need furniture.

DAVID

Ah, yes, the virtual office. Where virtually anyone can get virtually anything at virtually any price at virtually anytime. And virtually no one has shown a profit.

GIL

Except investors. Like you.

DAVID

Hey, if I won't support my own son's first business, what kind of a father would I be?

GIL

The kind of father who's been banned by the SEC from participating in IPOs?

DAVID

(Gil has clearly pushed the button) That was a railroad job and you know it. They get one sniveling weasel who believed their threats about jail time -

GIL

Dad, please, not again...

DAVID

– no, no, one sniveling weasel who believed their threats about twenty years in prison and they get him to turn state's evidence.

GIL

And how is uncle Jake?

DAVID

Your mother's brother, that son-of-a-bitch, is doing fine. Still one of the richest men I know.

GIL

(Bemused) There is something ironic about the whole thing. He turns you in -

DAVID

You don't need to -

GIL

No, no. He turns you in, finds religion, writes a best-selling book on the evils of the cut-throat eighties, and now he gets fifty thousand per to speak to corporations on ethics.

DAVID

I heard it was only twenty-five.

GIL

No, Mom was sure it was fifty.

DAVID

Son-of-a-bitch.

There is a pause, then a casually dressed pleasant young twenty-something woman appears at the door. Roberta is confident and self-assured, important attributes in a male-dominated industry.

ROBERTA

Hi, I'm Roberta Stafford. Which one of you is Bates?

GIL and DAVID

(Simultaneously) - I am.

Gil and David exchange impatient looks.

GIL

I'm Gil Bates. *(Anxiously)* You got 'em?

ROBERTA

Got 'em right here. *(She pulls a cart loaded with several computers into the office)* You want me to put them on the... *(Looks uncertainly around the empty room)* uhhh...

DAVID

(To Gil) Why don't you have her put them put on your virtual desks?

GIL

(Ignoring David. To Roberta) Just set up one near each jack. When the desks get here -

DAVID

(Smugly) If the desks get here.

GIL

They'll be here.

DAVID

Right. And the pants will be ready Tuesday.

GIL

They can work cross-legged on the floor, for all I care.

ROBERTA

I'm cool with that.

DAVID

(To Gil) For what I'm paying them -

GIL

(Agitated) All right, Dad, maybe it's time we established a few rules. While your loan is greatly appreciated -

DAVID

Investment.

GIL

Investment. Whatever.

DAVID

Not whatever. In-vest-ment. Learn a few things, as long as you have me around, okay? Nobody gets rich from one loan. But one good investment...

GIL

Okay. Fine. Good. You're my investor. But this is still my company. And I'm going to hire people that I want to hire.

DAVID

Did I even ask? (*Pauses to give Gil a moment of satisfaction*) But, you know, I'm probably the only one you know who's actually run a company.

GIL

I appreciate the offer, dad, but the people I'm lining up have plenty of experience.

DAVID

When I say a company, I mean one that had to turn a profit *before* its stock price went through the roof. Of course 'through the roof' has a whole different meaning today, doesn't it? In my day when a company 's stock rose ten percent in a year that was considered a hot buy. Nowadays, what?

GIL

I don't know, dad, why don't you tell us?

DAVID

Nowadays they laugh it off the exchange. You want to know how crazy it's gotten? I was in a coffee shop the other day and I heard this dot-com type complaining that a stock he had invested in went up only 15 percent in the last quarter. Can you imagine that? He was complaining about a yearly growth of *only* 60 percent!

ROBERTA

Sixty percent.

Roberta and Gil share a mocking laugh.

GIL

Well, I know you don't like to hear it but it's a different world.

DAVID

It's an impatient world. We make right turns on red because we can't wait ten seconds for a green light. We don't bake potatoes for an hour in an oven anymore, we stick 'em in a microwave because we've got to have it in five minutes. Your whole generation -

GIL

No, no, no, do not try to pin that "your generation has no patience" crap on me, dad. I took my share of marketing courses. In the sixties Betty Crocker made a fortune selling ready-made cookie dough. In the seventies one of the hottest consumer items were frozen TV dinners. And that microwave oven? It came out before I was born.

DAVID

My point is that building a company used to be a lengthy, nurturing process. We'd present a bank with a ten year business plan that had us losing money until the third year and no one blinked an eye. Because they knew that building a business took time. To build a client base and loyalty.

GIL

So why are you here?

DAVID

Like I said, if a father can't support his son...

GIL

Spare me, Papa Walton. You're here because you can't stand the thought of all of this passing you by. Because you're impatient, too. Always were, weren't you? That's why the SEC moved against you, because you didn't want to take the time to nurture your company, so you cut a few corners, too.

DAVID

A railroad job. They offered immunity to anyone who would -

GIL

Come on, dad. I've seen you take a right turn on red. You want your potato baked in five minutes instead of sixty just like the rest of us. And you couldn't wait to put a stack of hundreds in my hand so I could rent this office and those computers and - *(There is a knock at the door. He crosses to it)* You want it just as bad as we do. Only you just don't want to admit it. *(He opens the door. An attractive, middle-age woman, dressed in business attire, enters, carrying a large bag labeled DONUTS. Gil's face brightens as she enters.)* Hi. You're early.

MAUREEN

Well, it is your first day, and all...

DAVID

(Sees her and scowls) What is she doing here?

MAUREEN

(As she breezes into the office) Nice to see you too, dear.

DAVID

What is she doing here?

MAUREEN

(To David) Still have the annoying habit of repeating yourself, I see. *(to Gil)* Gil, dear, I brought coffee and donuts because I know... because I know... *(Stands in the middle of the empty office, perplexed)*

DAVID

I hope those are virtual donuts.

Gil takes the bag and hands it to ROBERTA, who gratefully opens the bag and grabs a donut.

GIL

Thank you, mom.

ROBERTA

Sweet.

MAUREEN

David, where's your furniture?

GIL

Due any minute, mom.

MAUREEN

You didn't have them delivered yesterday?

GIL

I didn't have a company yesterday, remember?

DAVID

(To Gil) You still haven't answered my question. What is she doing here?

GIL

She's my secretary.

MAUREEN

Administrator, dear.

GIL

Okay, administrator. *(To David, who is stunned)* Hey, you're the one who kept harping on cost containment. And Mom is willing to work for a piece of the profits. Besides, she has tons of experience. She was your administrator at one time, wasn't she?

MAUREEN

I was his secretary, dear.

GIL

(Confused) You were his secretary but you're my administrator. What's the difference?

DAVID

Yea, what's the difference. *(Snidely)* Aside from thirty years.

MAUREEN

Secretaries let their bosses chase them around the desk so they can marry them and stop working. Administrators let their bosses chase them around the desk so they can sue them for sexual harassment, win a lot of money, and stop working.

DAVID

You mean I could have paid you off instead of marrying you?

MAUREEN

You couldn't have afforded it.

DAVID

I still can't.

MAUREEN

(Almost waltzing around the room) So this is what a high-tech start-up looks like. You know I told all my friends about what you're doing. I didn't even have to tell them what you were selling. All they wanted to know is if they could invest.

GIL

Well, by all means have them come by. Just make sure they bring their checkbook.

MAUREEN

Do you mean that?

GIL

Hey, the first job of a company like this is to raise capital.

DAVID

Yea, who needs a product?

GIL

Money talks, dad...

MAUREEN

And he walks.

DAVID

(Crosses to Gil) Why wasn't I consulted about this?

GIL

Because you're my investor, not my personnel director.

MAUREEN

Human resources manager, dear.

DAVID

(To Gil) I suppose you think this is going to rattle me, huh?

GIL

Rattle?

DAVID

You want my money but you don't want me hanging around here.

GIL

Why do you think that everyone has a secret agenda?

MAUREEN

Because he always does.

DAVID

And what was your agenda, my dear? To run just slow enough around that desk so that I'd catch you?

MAUREEN

I would have run the four-minute mile had I known what joy awaited me.

GIL

Thanks a lot.

MAUREEN

(Rushes to Gil's side) Oh, honey, sweetheart, believe me, you're the only thing that made these past thirty years worth it.

DAVID

Thanks a lot.

MAUREEN

Well, look who's suddenly gotten sensitive in his old age.

DAVID

I've always had a heart.

MAUREEN

You have a collection of muscles that pump blood through your body, David. But you don't have a heart.

DAVID

Still so dramatic. You should have been a writer.

MAUREEN

I wanted to be. But I was too busy raising your children while you were out conquering the world.

DAVID

I thought they were our children.

GIL

All right George, Gracie. That's enough vaudeville for one day. Mom, thank you for the donuts. I appreciate your concern but the desks will be here any minute. Dad, Mom is here so tough it out. If you don't like it there are three other internet start-ups on this floor alone that you can bother.

DAVID

Three on this floor alone, huh?

MAUREEN

My God, I think he's drooling.

DAVID

Three. On this floor alone. (*Edges towards the door*) You know, maybe I should just get out of your hair for a while. Stretch my legs. Let you get things sorted out. Desks. Chairs. I'll be back. (*David exits and the door slams shut, the sound echoing in the empty room*)

MAUREEN

How long do you figure he'll be?

GIL

Long enough for us to get some work done, I hope. (*Dials his cell phone*)

MAUREEN

Did you need his money that badly?

GIL

Well, I only got the idea for this company yesterday.

MAUREEN

(*Disappointed*) I know. Two days ago you had a fully paid scholarship to Harvard University. Yesterday you get an idea for an internet start-up company and without a single backer you quit school. Today you're in an office without any furniture.

GIL

The furniture will get here, Mom. Just like the backers, will. (*Dreamily*) They'll be lining up outside the door.

MAUREEN

How is your father going to feel about that?

GIL

He'll get his share.

MAUREEN

But what's important is that he'll have a share of your company. That's why you took his money, isn't it?

GIL

(*Gil smiles wryly*) Did knowing that dad was my first investor stop you from being here? Or was it the reason you came?

MAUREEN

I don't think I like that question, Gil.

GIL

(Before he can answer, his attention is diverted to the telephone. Rudely) Howie? Gil. Desks? Chairs? My office? Not yet. Yea, I can hold.

MAUREEN

You are so much like your father.

GIL

(To Maureen) I am not. *(On the phone)* John? What's that? Your dispatcher says any minute, huh? Yea, and the pants will be ready Tuesday.

MAUREEN

Not much, you're not.

GIL

(To Maureen) Mom, please. *(Back on the phone)* Just get them here, okay? *(Gil slams the phone shut and shakes his head in disgust.)* That's the problem with the nineties. The economy's so good that nobody needs the business. It's like they're doing you a favor.

MAUREEN

Well, maybe things will improve in the next millennium.

(Gil smiles, when through the door storms in a tall, blonde, good-looking young man - Jason Peabody - the essence of patrician manhood. He confronts Gil)

JASON

I just have one question, Bates. Would it kill you to let me have Manny for two more days?

GIL

Hello, Jason. Care for a donut? My administrator brought enough for everyone. Even uninvited guests.

JASON

(As he looks scornfully at David and Maureen and then around the room) Administrator? Administrator of what? Look at this place. You don't even have any furniture.

GIL

But I've got a contract, so this is where Manny will be sitting today.

JASON

Where? On the floor?

GIL

At his desk.

JASON

All I see is floor.

GIL

The point is Manny will be here. On my floor.

JASON

(Stands close to Gil, towering over him) Still the smug little pledge, aren't you?

GIL

We're not at Epsilon Omega, anymore, Peabody. You can't order me to eat dog food for dinner. This is my company.

JASON

Your company. Four walls and a bag of donuts.

GIL

(Bristles slightly. Then, taunting) So how are things at your little start-up?

MAUREEN

(To Jason) You have your own company, too?

JASON

(His whole tone changes to ingratiating charm as he takes out a business card and hands it to Maureen) Yes ma'am, I do. It's called Data Crunchers, and we're going to revolutionize database management on the web, so if you're looking for an investment I'd love to –

GIL

Jason. Do you mind?

JASON

(Sheepishly) Sorry.

Maureen attempts to hand back the card to him.

JASON

(Stage whisper) Keep it.

GIL

So I heard that you haven't gone public yet.

JASON

I've only been in business six months.

MAUREEN

Were you at Harvard, too?

GIL

He was. He quit this past summer to start this company of his.

MAUREEN

My goodness, with all the students starting new companies who's left to go to class?

GIL and JASON
(*Simultaneously*)

Losers.

GIL

(*After a beat*) So you've been in business a whole six months and still no IPO?

JASON

What are you talking about, Bates? It takes a lot longer than six months to go public.

GIL

Six months. Ha! I don't need six months, Jason. I don't need six weeks. Hell, I won't even need six days. By Monday morning this place will be crawling with Wall Street suits just dying to take this place public.

JASON

You shouldn't have dropped out before you took your business cores, pledge. Have you any idea how much paperwork is involved in taking a company public? The due diligence alone -

GIL

And you should have left Harvard before all that brainwashing took hold. This is 1999.

JASON

Trust me, pledge, you're not going public next week. There are rules for this sort of thing.

GIL

Maybe the idea I've got is so big that they'll be willing to bend the rules.

JASON

My gawd, the arrogance.

GIL

They call it arrogance when you fail. When I succeed, they'll call it genius.

JASON

(*Sneering*) I can see the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

GIL

Just what the hell is that supposed to mean?

JASON

How many years did your father get for his arrogance?

GIL

That trial was nothing but a... a railroad job.

JASON

Oh, Bates, please...

GIL

A railroad job. The whole thing happened around the time of the Savings and Loan scandal. The government needed a conviction in one of its cases to keep from looking totally inept. So they trumped up the charges against my father and then scared one of his employees into turning state's evidence.

JASON

Is that what he told you happened?

GIL

I don't have time for this. I've got a company to run.

JASON

For the last time, are you going to give me back Manny?

GIL

Happy New Year, Jason.

JASON

(Seething) This isn't over, pledge. Not by a long shot. *(Nods officiously to Maureen)* Mrs. Bates. *(To Maureen, in a stage whisper, indicating the business card)* Call me.

Jason exits.

GIL

(Waits a beat) Needermeier. *(Crosses to his "office" and shuffles papers.)*

MAUREEN

That was very nice.

GIL

What was?

MAUREEN

Defending your father like that.

GIL

Who did?

MAUREEN

You did, dear, just then.

GIL

That? *(Almost embarrassed)* Look, the last thing I'm going to do is give Peabody any advantage. Even if it means... you know...

MAUREEN

And that's all? That's why you defended your father?

GIL

(Troubled, doesn't want to answer the question) Come on Mom, there's a lot to do.

MAUREEN

Gil, dear, can I ask a question?

GIL

Sure, mom.

MAUREEN

All that stuff Jason said about Initial Public Offerings. He's right, isn't he? I mean you can't really expect to go public after being in business only four days, can you?

GIL

Expect? I don't think anyone knows what's expected anymore. The rules get re-written every day. Ever hear of a man named Jeff Bezos? *(We hear Angels sing a chorus of "Hallelujahs")*

MAUREEN

I've heard of him. Started some Internet company called... oh what was that name?

GIL

Amazon dot com. *(The angels hum)*

MAUREEN

That's it. He sells books, right?

GIL

(With adulation and awe) Jeff Bezos *(Hallelujahs)* is more than just some guy hawking books on the internet. He's a pioneer. Before him no one really knew how to get the general public to buy on line. But Bezos figured it out, and he's already sold millions of dollars worth of stuff – not just books but tapes and CDs and a whole bunch of other things... His Initial Public Offering – Amazon's IPO - was at eighteen dollars. The stock hit 108 this month, and that's after three splits, which means those shares are worth over \$300 apiece.

Maureen whistles. Gil catches his breath.

GIL

But here's the punch line. Amazon lost 350 million dollars this year alone. They've lost over half a billion dollars since they were founded four years ago. They haven't made a dime. Not a single one. In any other time, in any other country, a guy like Jeff Bezos *(Hallelujahs)* would have run out of town on a rail. But here and now? They roll out their projections for huge sales in the next quarter and people line up to buy more stock. *(He catches his breath again)* So let's not talk about what's expected, mom. In the 1980s my dad gets hauled away in handcuffs. Just two weeks ago Time Magazine made Jeff Bezos their Person of the Year *(The angels sing "Time Magazine Person of the Year")*. Half a billion dollars lost, and he's Person of the Year.

MAUREEN

My God, now you're drooling.

Maureen takes in the sight as Gil shuffles more papers, then tests another computer...

MAUREEN

Gil?

GIL

Yea, mom?

MAUREEN

Is this Manny fellow really worth all this trouble? I mean, is he really that good?

GIL

Even if he weren't one of the best he'd still be worth the trouble. With Internet start-ups popping up like weeds even mediocre programmers are hard to find. Legendary ones like Manny are gold.

MAUREEN

But if Manny is so good, why doesn't he start his own company? Why should he work for someone else?

GIL

Because Manny is the sort of guy who doesn't just forget where he left his house keys, he forgets where his house is. In the old days they called them savants and put them in carnivals where for a dime they'd tell you what day of the week April 9 in the year 3022 would fall. Nowadays we put them in front of computers and pay them hundreds of dollars an hour to program web sites. *(Maureen is distressed)* Don't look sorry for him, mom. Manny's been with four start-ups this year alone, and every place he goes they give him a stack of options. All it takes is one to go public and he'll be able to buy and sell both of us several times over.

MAUREEN

That Jason person looked pretty upset.

GIL

Jason was upset because someone actually said no to him.

MAUREEN

Seems like what this Manny fellow was working on for him was pretty important.

GIL

Jason had six months to get his company off the ground. Now it's time for him to get out of the way.

MAUREEN

You mean out of your way.

GIL

Why are you looking at me like that?

MAUREEN

Like what?

GIL

The way I've seen you look at dad.

MAUREEN

Isn't that what you want? To be like him?

GIL

I want to succeed. Is that a crime?

MAUREEN

If you do it the way he did it, it is.

GIL

You don't trust me?

MAUREEN

Of course I trust you. But sometimes I do see a little too much of your father in you.

GIL

Oh, mom, please don't start in with that Biff Loman crap.

MAUREEN

You can't hide how much you admire him.

GIL

Well, come on Mom. Give the devil his due. He did get his picture on the cover of Fortune magazine when he was 27.

MAUREEN

And on the front page of the New York Times two years later. Of course, then he was holding a raincoat over his head as they led him into court for running a Ponzi Scheme.

GIL

Do you think I'm stupid enough to end up like that?

MAUREEN

I never said you were stupid. But it's not about how bright you are or your how bright your father was. You were too young to see it happen, Gil. David became... different than the man who chased me around his desk. Common sense seemed to disappear. He kept insisting he could recover his losses but the only way to get out of the hole he had dug was to take bigger and bigger risks. And there was nothing I or anyone else could do to make him realize the spiral he was going down.

GIL

So he was pushing the limits on risks. Sounds like he was born twenty years too early. He would have done well on the Internet.

Maureen laughs sardonically

GIL

What?

MAUREEN

I love you sweetie, but maybe Jason is right about your arrogance.

GIL

(Actually hurt) Mom...?

MAUREEN

You kids seem to think you invented risk. Men like your father were taking risks long before you were born.

GIL

I know that. But Dad and the rest of his generation had a disadvantage. They had to pay for their failures. These days screwing up just doesn't have the stink that it used to. It's almost a badge of honor, like getting drunk or laid.

MAUREEN

Gil!

GIL

Sorry, Mom. You know what I mean.

MAUREEN

No, I'm not sure I do. Don't members of your generation want to succeed?

GIL

Of course we do, but we want something else even more.

MAUREEN

Which is..?

GIL

Not get blamed for the failure.

MAUREEN

Nobody likes taking the blame, dear. Not even members of my generation.

GIL

Yea, but look at the two enduring symbols of the nineties: O.J. Simpson and Bill Clinton. What generation ever had greater role models for total avoidance? Together they provided us with a mantra for our time: It's not my fault. Even if I did do it, it's not my fault if no one saw. And even if someone did see, it's still not my fault because it was me who was the victim. Of rotten parents. Or bad genes. I dunno, maybe Internet companies are the logical extension of that philosophy.

MAUREEN

Philosophy? Since when is the avoidance of responsibility a philosophy?

GIL

When they started teaching courses on it in B schools.

MAUREEN

So rule number one is...?

GIL

Rule number one is, there are no rules.

MAUREEN

Without rules there is no basis for judgment, dear.

GIL

Which means everybody's right.

MAUREEN

Or everybody's wrong.

There is an uncomfortable moment as Gil digests that statement. We hear the beginning bars to Crosby Stills and Nash's "For What It's Worth"

GIL

Come on Mom, there's a lot to do.

MAUREEN

Okay... boss.

We hear the lyrics "Nobody's right, if everybody's wrong" as Maureen and Gil and Roberta begin setting up the office as the lights fade and the scene ends.

Scene 2

The clock reads 9:57. The desks have been delivered. Roberta and Manny (a modestly dressed, Hispanic man in his early twenties) are hunched over their computers typing away. Gil and Maureen are in his ersatz "office." She is sorting through papers and he is on the phone.

GIL

(On the phone, jovially) I think I can say without fear of contradiction that this is the last great opportunity of the twentieth century. *(Serious)* But seriously, I also know it's going to be the biggest one of the twenty-first. *(Pause as he listens on the phone)* I know tomorrow's the last day of the year but what's an hour out of a millennium that's going to end soon, anyway? Come by and let me show you what we're working on and if you're nice to me I'll let you in. Seriously, we'd be honored to have someone of your stature on our board. *(Another pause. He smiles)* Great. Why don't we say... 12:30? I'll see you here, then. Bye bye. *(He hangs up the phone, turns to Maureen)* Block out 12:30 to 1:00 for Jim Bergen.

MAUREEN

Okay. Don't forget you've got a 10 o'clock with Alice Payson.

GIL

(Glances at the clock) Jeez, and look at the time. *(Walks around to where Roberta is sitting)* Hey Roberta, how's that demo coming along?

ROBERTA

Just a couple of more links and it'll be done.

GIL

Manny, how's the e-commerce portal coming along?

Fuming, Manny ignores him and continues typing

GIL

Come on, Manny. You're going to have to talk to me eventually.

MANNY

You couldn't wait two lousy days? I was this close to finishing my other job.

GIL

So you'll finish it later.

MANNY

Why couldn't I finish your job later?

GIL

Because I need you to work on mine, first.

MANNY

Jason said the same thing.

GIL

But Jason doesn't have you under contract.

MANNY

(Chagrined) Jason wasn't buying me tequila until midnight last night.

GIL

And how great an employer am I buying rounds of drinks for my people?

MANNY

You are some piece of work.

GIL

And I'm going to be a rich piece of work, too.

Gil walks back to his "office" as Manny stewes. ROBERTA has been typing away during their exchange.

ROBERTA

You don't look so good.

MANNY

What a coincidence. I don't feel so good.

ROBERTA

Tequila, huh?

MANNY

Uh huh.

ROBERTA

You get the worm?

MANNY

I don't want to talk about it.

Roberta gets up and pours Manny a cup of coffee.

ROBERTA

Here, you look like you could use another cup.

MANNY

(Gratefully) Thanks. *(He takes a few sips and seems to feel better)* He's some piece of work, huh?

ROBERTA

Who? Gil? I suppose.

GIL

Doesn't he bug you at all?

ROBERTA

Why should he bug me?

MANNY

Because he's so smug. Just like all these internet wonder boys. You've worked for your share of start-ups. You know the type.

ROBERTA

Yea. But what are you gonna do? They are what they are, you know?

MANNY

And you accept that?

ROBERTA

Don't have much choice, do I? I mean they're doing what they do and I get to do what I do.

MANNY

You mean like it's their destiny or something? Their DNA?

ROBERTA

Yea, maybe, I guess. Like some people gotta be sculptors and others gotta be actors -

MANNY

- and others gotta be losers.

ROBERTA

Why are they losers? Because they make money while the sculptors and actors starve? Who are the losers?

MANNY

But acting and sculpting ... that's art, man. This is a business.

ROBERTA

So is it any less creative because the goal is to make money? Is it any less a calling?

MANNY

So there's no difference between Michelangelo and Gil Bates?

ROBERTA

In some ways, no. I mean they each do what they were meant to do.

MANNY

In Bates' case make money hand over fist?

ROBERTA

They been paying my rent for six years now. And you aren't doing so bad, either, from what I hear. So what are you complaining about?

GIL

(On the phone) Once in a Millennium opportunity, Paul....

MANNY

(To Roberta, as he watches Gil with malevolence) I still say he's some piece of work.

Maureen will slowly be drawn by their conversation.

ROBERTA

Ah, he's no different from any of the others. You know, gotta make their first million before they're twenty-four.

MANNY

And why? So they can seed another company and make ten million before they're twenty-seven? And why do they do that? So they can make a hundred million before they're thirty!

ROBERTA

Like I said. It's what they do. It's who they are.

MANNY

100 million won't be enough for him, you watch and see.

ROBERTA

Well, not me, man. I'd make that first million and then I'd be outta here.

MANNY

(Chuckles) Sure, you say that now.

ROBERTA

No, I mean it. What do I need to sit behind a computer all my life for? With a million dollars I could retire.

MANNY

(Derisively) A million dollars. You're a typical engineer. You know a lot of math, but you don't know anything about money. First of all you can't live off a million dollars these days. Second of all, you wouldn't. The moment you got that million in your hands you'd look around at all the things you could buy and realize that a million just ain't gonna cut it, and you'd want two million.

ROBERTA

I would not. I'd put it into T bills or a CD or something and live off the interest.

MANNY

You say that now, but I've seen it before. Once you actually got your hands on that first million you'd catch the fever and want more.

MAUREEN

That's just what Walter Houston said to Humphrey Bogart. And Humphrey Bogart didn't believe him, either.

ROBERTA

Who?

MAUREEN

Walter Houston and Humphrey Bogart.

ROBERTA

Never heard of them.

MANNY

Me neither. Oh, wait, are they the guys who started Yahoo?

MAUREEN

No. They were actors. From the forties.

Blank stares from Roberta and Manny

Come on, you never heard of... All right, look, they were in this movie called The Treasure of the Sierra Madre. And in the movie they had the same conversation you just did about how much money it would take to make them satisfied. Only in the movie they were prospectors looking for gold.

MANNY

So are we, lady.

MAUREEN

(Laughs) I guess you are. *(Suddenly reflective)* And I suppose he is, too.

MANNY

Who? That Humphrey guy?

MAUREEN

No, someone I know.

There is a knock on the door.

GIL

Mom?

Maureen crosses to the door, which she opens. A woman in her mid-forties enters. She is efficient-looking, well-dressed, very businesslike, except that she sports a pair of angel wings which have dollar signs on each wing.

ALICE

How do you do, I'm Alice Payson. I'm looking for Mister Bates.

MAUREEN

Won't you come in. I'm Mr. Bates' administrator... Ms. Cormier.

ALICE

(As she enters) How do you do, Ms. Cormier.

MAUREEN

If you'll just wait here, I'll get him for you. *(Crosses to the "office")* Mister Bates, your ten o'clock is here.

GIL

(Stage whisper) Nice touch... Ms. Cormier. *(He pats her arm appreciatively as he steps back out of his office and crosses to Alice)* Miss Payson? Thanks so much for coming by on such short notice. And on a Friday before the holiday weekend.

ALICE

Don't mention it. Until last night I'd never had an elevator pitch actually given to me in an elevator. Well, your fifteen seconds have earned you five more minutes. Show me what you've got.

GIL

Step this way.

Gil motions for her to follow him behind Roberta, so that they can both see his computer screen.

ALICE

(Annoyed) Y2K? You dragged me up here for a pitch about something that is going to be passé in *(she looks at her watch)* 20 hours?

GIL

(Smiling, confident, despite Alice's continuing annoyance) My company isn't about Y2K, Ms. Payson. Not directly, at least. But it is about what the threat of Y2K has done to the way the world views computers.

ALICE

Uh huh. *(Resigned to hating it)* Well, I'm here. You might as well finish.

GIL

Five years ago the idea of a global shutdown of computers was pure science fiction or James Bond. But here we are on the eve of a new millennium and all around the world the operators of power plants and subway systems are voluntarily shutting their systems down for several hours around midnight. Most domestic major airlines have grounded their flights. Can you imagine a time when no airplanes would be flying over America? Of course you can't. But they aren't. Why? Because the very thing that's supposed to make computers infallible - those rigid, incorruptible ones and zeros - are now suspect.

David re-enters the office, unseen.

DAVID

This building is incredible. You were right. There must be six start-ups on this floor alone –

When he speaks, Gil looks panicked, and he motions to Maureen, who will cross to David and buttonhole him. They hold their conversation without disturbing Gil and Alice.

MAUREEN

Good morning sir. Can I help you, sir?

DAVID

Sir? Maureen, what are you –

MAUREEN

That's right sir, Mister Bates is in a meeting but he shouldn't be too much longer.

DAVID

What meeting? I wasn't told about any meeting.

MAUREEN

(With an urgency that says 'please play along') If you'll just step over here and wait, sir.

DAVID

What's going on? Who is that? Is that an investor he's talking to?

MAUREEN

Let him do his job, David.

DAVID

Screwing me is his job?

MAUREEN

It's always about you, isn't it?

ALICE

You think you can make any money from that? How?

GIL

That's the one million dollar question, Ms. Payson.

ALICE

So it's going to cost me a million dollars to find out exactly on how you plan on doing it?

GIL

No, I'll take your million dollars but still won't tell you what it is.

DAVID

(Cringing. In a stage whisper to Maureen) That's not how you approach an investor - he's going to blow this thing, for sure. Didn't they teach him anything at that college?

MAUREEN

It was a university, dear.

DAVID

Good. I'd hate to think we were spending forty thousand dollars a year on just a college.

GIL

Oh sure, we've had one or two investors who've helped us get started. Bankrolled these offices and equipment and a small staff, but to roll out the web site with a comprehensive marketing and public relations campaign, to buy the dedicated servers -

ALICE

- takes money, I know. How much money?

GIL

Did you know that since the Y2K bug was first identified and made public it is estimated that somewhere around 3 trillion dollars has been spent to eradicate it?

ALICE

And it's your belief that 3 trillion dollars wasn't enough.

GIL

Maybe it was. Maybe it wasn't. As you correctly noted, in about *(checks his watch)* 20 hours we'll get our first real test when the clock strikes midnight in New Zealand. Now who do you think is more nervous about what will happen? The survivalists holed up in underground shelters with their leftover Cold War rations waiting for computer-induced Armageddon? Or the consultants who've charged the world 3 trillion dollars to make sure that nothing happens?

ALICE

And your guess is...?

GIL

Neither. The survivalists will find something else to be scared of, and the consultants have already cashed their checks so they don't give a damn. It's the owners of banks, airlines, manufacturing facilities and other businesses dependant on computers who should be nervous because they're the ones with the most to lose. My company will be the only one positioned for the post-Y2K era to address the very people who've already spent 3 trillion dollars and will - to protect their businesses - be happy to spend another 3 trillion.

DAVID

I can't believe how lame that was. Could this really be my son talking?

MAUREEN

If it's not then I breast fed a total stranger.

DAVID

Does he really think a venture capitalist is going to open up her checkbook after a lame pitch like that?

GIL

All it will take is one glitch, one accident to raise doubts.

DAVID

Frightening her isn't going to work, either.

GIL

And when midnight New Zealand comes and the problems start happening, I can't guarantee that I'll get to your phone call before all the others.

All activity in the office stops and holds its collective breath as Alice ponders Gil's last statement. Alice eyes him one last time, then takes out a magic wand. She taps him lightly on the head.

ALICE

Here's 10 thousand in advance. Assuming planes start falling out of the sky in twenty hours, you'll get two million, and I get a seat on the board and five percent of the options.

We hear angels warbling a glorious sound as a spotlight shines on Gil. He raises his eyes skyward in ecstasy. The angels stop singing, the spot goes out, and he turns back to Alice.

GIL

Deal.

ALICE

Good. *(As she looks disdainfully around the room)* Maybe you can use the ten grand to buy some better furniture.

Gil and Alice shake hands.

ALICE

Good luck, Gil. *(As she exits she puts the wand up to her ear, and uses it as a cell phone)* Jerry? Alice. Cut a check for \$10,000 and have it couriered over to - I know it's the day before a holiday, just get that check cut to that kid we were talking about last night. Yes, Gil Bates –

Alice exits, shutting the door behind her. Gil smiles and crosses to his "office," smiling.

DAVID

I can't believe what I just saw.

GIL

I know. I thought the wings would be bigger.

MAUREEN

Congratulations, Gil.

GIL

Thanks, Mom.

GIL

(As he dials his cell phone) Relax dad, you'll always have the honor of being my first investor. *(Waits for his father to relax)* Though you won't be the biggest.

MAUREEN

(Smirking, to David) Don't tell me the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

GIL

(Into the phone) Jimmy? It's Gil. Consider yourself on retainer. Yea, that's right. Payson is in. I'll email you the specifics. Get cranking on that press release. Cool. *(Hangs up the phone)*

DAVID

Press release? To announce what?

GIL

What do you mean, to announce what? I just snagged my first investor.

DAVID

(Angry) Second investor.

GIL

First investor who isn't related to me. *(To Roberta)* Roberta, are we all set?

ROBERTA

Up and running.

GIL

Great. The press release should hit the wire in a few minutes. *(There is a knock at the door)* Our 10:30 must be early. *(He motions to Maureen and they switch places again)*

DAVID

Just how many prospective investors does he have lined up?

MAUREEN

(As she crosses to the door) You mean how far down the food chain is he pushing you?

DAVID

You know, you're pretty smug for a secretary.

MAUREEN

Administrator, dear.

Maureen opens the door and an attractive woman, in her early twenties barges into the room and slaps Maureen.

JENNIFER

You bastard! (*Horried at an obvious mistake*) Oh, my God! I am so sorry.

MAUREEN

Gil, I believe this is for you?

End Scene

Scene 3

The clock reads 11:43 a.m.

Gil is moving around the office – partly because he has things to do (looking over Manny and Roberta’s shoulders, working at his own laptop, and checking paperwork being shown to him by Maureen, who rubs her face a couple of times) and partly to keep away from Jennifer, who shadows his every move. David is in the “office” rifling through some papers.

JENNIFER

Gil. Gil? Gil, would you stop moving for two minutes and talk to me?

GIL

I’d like to Jen, but I’m really busy.

JENNIFER

(*Holding up a Palm Pilot*) Yes, I know.

GIL

What is that?

JENNIFER

Come closer and I’ll show you.

Gil is frozen in place.

JENNIFER

Come here you little chicken-shit.

He cautiously inches towards her and looks at the Palm Pilot.

GIL

(*Brightens*) Hey, whattya know! Our press release made MSNBC’s financial page.

Cheers from Maureen, Roberta, and David. Grumbling from Manny.

JENNIFER

We had an agreement you son-of-a-bitch.

GIL

Jennifer, please.

JENNIFER

I was going to be your marketing director when the financing came through.

GIL

Marketing Director of what? I didn't have any desks until (*looks up at the clock*) four hours ago.

JENNIFER

But you do now. (*Holding up the Palm Pilot*) And you've already snagged an investor.

DAVID

(*From the "office"*) Second investor.

GIL

(*To David*) All right, dad.

DAVID

She's committed to investing only after the clocks change to 2000.

JENNIFER

The fact is that you're here.

GIL

Working off my dad's money, he'll be the first to tell you.

JENNIFER

(*Holding up the Palm Pilot*) And this?

GIL

Okay. Payson gave us a few bucks up front, yea, but that's going some new computers and a faster server. She didn't give us enough to hire more people. Certainly not someone at a Director level.

JENNIFER

Gil, how many lattes did we drink - lattes which I paid for, by the way - sitting in that Starbucks in the square till all hours of the night talking over ideas for our company?

GIL

My company, Jen. Mine. I'm the one who quit school and found the financing and -

JENNIFER

(*Looking over Manny's shoulder at his computer*) I can read Java script as well as anyone, Gil. Instant messaging for customer service, huh?

GIL

Yea.

JENNIFER

And message board for product update announcements. Very innovative.

GIL

Thank you.

JENNIFER

You're damn right thank me. Those were my ideas, you creep!

GIL

What do you mean, your ideas?

JENNIFER

(Sputtering) What - you - I can't believe... Those are the exact ideas that I came up with -

GIL

(Crosses to her and steps between her and the screen) Look, just because we talked over coffee about some business concepts doesn't make you my partner.

JENNIFER

And just because we had sex at four in the morning doesn't make you my lover, either. But it doesn't mean we didn't have sex.

MAUREEN

(She, and everyone else, have been listening to every word) Okay, that's enough. Break time! Everybody out!

GIL

Mom, please...

MAUREEN

Gil, I'm as liberal as a mother can be, but you and this young lady obviously have some personal matters you need to talk over.

JENNIFER

Trust me, they're strictly business now, Mrs. Bates.

GIL

Sorry, Mom.

Gil gently takes Jennifer by the elbow and guides her to downstage. Maureen sees David rifling through papers in the "office and crosses there to take the papers out of David's hands. This starts a heated conversation between David and Maureen.

GIL

Look, Jennifer, I'll admit we did a lot of talking and we bounced a few ideas back and forth, but as to who came up with which idea, I mean who can say one way or the other which was whose... or whose was what...

JENNIFER

Well I'm sorry I didn't tape the conversation. Maybe I should have. Maybe I should taped a lot of the things you said, you jerk.

MANNY

You go girl.

GIL

Quiet Manny.

JENNIFER

You said I was so easy to talk to. Did you mean that? Or were you just saying things like that so I would tell you my ideas?

GIL

No, of course not.

JENNIFER

You sounds a little defensive to me, Gil.

GIL

Look, Jan –

JENNIFER

Jen.

GIL

Jen. I really liked you.

JENNIFER

Liked?

GIL

Like. Like. You're a great girl.

JENNIFER

You're damn right I am. And smart. And attractive.

GIL

And modest.

JENNIFER

If I were a guy I'd be self-assured or confident. But I'm a woman so I'm what? Self-centered?

GIL

How did we get off on this subject?

JENNIFER

I'm just trying to figure out how we went from constant companions to total strangers.

GIL

Since when did you want to be monogamous?

JENNIFER

What's that supposed to mean?

GIL

Never mind.

JENNIFER

No, I want you to explain what you just meant.

GIL

Jen, the point I'm trying to make is that it – us – just wouldn't work, okay?

JENNIFER

How do you know?

GIL

I just do.

JENNIFER

You can see into the future?

Maureen and David, in the "office," are having a heated discussion.

MAUREEN

In our fifteen years together I could count on two hands the times you made it home for dinner.

DAVID

And I could count on one hand the times you actually cooked dinner.

MAUREEN

Oh, that is so typical of you.

DAVID

What? You mean bringing up the truth?

Maureen throws up her hands and returns to working on some papers. David exits the "office" and crosses back to Manny and Robbie. Gil gives Jennifer an "I-told-you-so" look.

GIL

Yes, I can.

JENNIFER

Gil, just because your parents had a bad marriage...

GIL

My parents didn't have a bad marriage. They just... couldn't get along.

JENNIFER

It's no reflection on you if they did.

GIL

My dad was a very successful man. Successful men are, by nature, driven, and that can put a strain on a marriage. But it doesn't make it bad, okay?

JENNIFER

Okay, okay.

GIL

Because lots of successful, balanced people come from divorced homes.

JENNIFER

You've made your point. I'm sorry. I won't bring it up again.

GIL

Good.

JENNIFER

Now about my job.

GIL

I thought you said you weren't going to bring it up?

JENNIFER

No I said I wasn't going to bring up your parent's bad marriage.

GIL

They didn't have a bad marriage.

MAUREEN

I suppose you think I don't know about the trips to Bermuda with Nancy?

DAVID

We were separated by then.

MAUREEN

But we weren't divorced yet.

DAVID

You threw my clothes into the trash compactor, Maureen. That's a good sign it's going to be a permanent separation.

JENNIFER

(Takes a beat) Well then, there's only one answer.

GIL

You're going?

JENNIFER

No, it's obvious how you feel about me personally –

GIL

Jennifer...

JENNIFER

So the only answer is that you hire me, but we don't date.

GIL

(A bit taken aback) Wow, you are a woman of the nineties.

JENNIFER

A minute ago you were dismissing the night we spent together as meaningless.

GIL

I never said meaningless.

JENNIFER

You don't want to pursue a relationship. It obviously holds no meaning. Therefore it was meaningless.

GIL

I never said... Okay. All right. But you still want to work for me. A minute ago you were all broken up about our relationship and you were calling me a cad.

JENNIFER

I never said cad.

GIL

No, jerk was the word you used, I think. But despite what you say I did or am doing, you still want to work here.

JENNIFER

You said it before. I'm a woman of the nineties.

GIL

A regular Martha Stewart.

JENNIFER

A person could have worse role models. At least she never got nabbed by the S.E.C.

GIL

Leave my father out of this, okay?

JENNIFER

I'm sorry, that was a cheap shot.

GIL

Whatever. Look, can I get to work here?

JENNIFER

(Stews) I could have just as easily taken these ideas and started my own company, you know.

GIL

(Eager for this conversation to end. Crosses to his office) Well, live and learn, I guess. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got a lot of work to do.

JENNIFER

Or maybe I should get a lawyer. *(Gil freezes)* Yea. How many investors do you think will want any part of a day-old company that's being sued?

GIL

And just what the hell would you sue for?

JENNIFER

How about misappropriation of my intellectual property?

GIL

Where's your evidence? A couple of empty cups of latté? 'Your honor, it was over this very cup of double-mocha that I came up with the idea for the instant messaging. Of course I can prove it. That's my lipstick color.' *(Sneering)* Good luck.

JENNIFER

I'm not the one who'll need the luck, Gil.

GIL

Oh, yeah?

JENNIFER

Yeah. Because whether or not I have any evidence, just the threat of legal action will be enough to turn off your investors.

DAVID

She's right, you know.

GIL

Keep out of this, dad.

MANNY

But your dad's right, man.

GIL

You too, Manny.

JENNIFER

A phone call or two... a few well-placed emails to the Globe and CNN, and you'll be back at Harvard cribbing for your accounting 101 exam.

MAUREEN

Gil, you didn't...

GIL

It's just an expression, mom.

JENNIFER

Sure it is.

Gil looks at Jennifer with a mix of frustration – and admiration. He starts a cross to the office. When she doesn't follow, he stops and looks back at her.

GIL

Well, come on Martha Stewart, what are you waiting for?

JENNIFER

(Smiling, very pleased with herself) Coming.... boss.

The lights fade as the scene ends.

Scene 4

The clock now reads 3:10 p.m. David is pacing around the office, looking very displeased. Roberta is at her terminal, containers of Chinese food and cans of Mountain Dew strewn around her and Manny's desks. Maureen and Jennifer are busy at their terminals in the "office." Gil is at the door, beaming to a well-dressed man wearing angel's wings and holding a magic wand, which he gently touches to Gil's head. We hear a heavenly "ping."

GIL

Thank you. Thank you very much. Just have your admin fax over the agreement and we'll see you on Monday.

The "angel" exits. Gil watches him go away down the hall.

And don't you worry about a thing. When midnight 2000 rolls around you'll see there's every reason to come back with that check. Happy New Year to you, too. *(Shuts the door. Looks lovingly at a piece of paper in his hand)* Happy Happy New Year.

JENNIFER

The press release is all ready to go out. You want to proof it?

GIL

(As he crosses to Jennifer and shows her the paper) No, just make sure that you get the amount he committed to correct.

JENNIFER

(Whistles) You sweet talker.

GIL

(Mock defensiveness) No sweet talk. *(As he bustles about the room, checking on Roberta and Manny, and on the papers Maureen is working on in the "office")* Who was it who said you can't sell anything the customer doesn't want to buy?

DAVID

I believe that was me.

GIL

Well, I guess you were right.

DAVID

(Bitterly) It seems I'm right about a lot of things.

GIL

Here it comes...

DAVID

Don't get wise with me, Gil. I see a room full of people, none of whom I had any part in hiring. I see a stack of checks from investors, none of whom I had any role in procuring.

GIL

So what are you complaining about? You've got the easy part. All you have to do is wait for the money to roll in.

DAVID

If all I wanted was to wait for money to roll in I would buy a long-term CD and sit on my porch and do nothing.

GIL

We've been through this already, Dad.

MAUREEN

Have another donut, dear.

DAVID

(To Maureen) Stop feeding me donuts! *(To Gil)* And you, stop feeding me bullshit.

GIL

I'm not feeding you anything, dad. I'm just trying to run my company.

DAVID

On my money. I don't even know how much you're paying these people.

GIL

(Tries to escape into his "office.") That's between me and them, dad.

DAVID

(Trails Gil) It's only showing a little respect, you know.

GIL

It's not about respect, dad. It's just practicality.

DAVID

How so?

GIL

When's the last time you hired an employee? 1980 something? And that was in the finance department. This is technology. When have you ever hired a programmer? Do you even know what the going rate for Java or Flash programmers is these days? And what about the hardware needed to get the company going? You don't know a server from a mainframe. So just sit back and trust me, okay?

DAVID

You kids. You think it's all about bits, bytes, processor speed and RAM. *(Gil registers surprise)* Don't look so shocked. *(Pause)* Computers and the Internet are just tools, no different than cars or lawnmowers or microwave ovens. What you fail to realize is that the public doesn't get passionate about tools. What they do get passionate about is how those tools will make their lives better. The people you hire have to believe that, or all you end up with is a room full of high bandwidth POP 3 servers but no one's logging on.

The room freezes. Gil stares at his father in admiration and disbelief. The moment is broken by a knock on the door.

GIL

We'll talk about this later, okay dad?

David, barely restraining himself, relents, as Maureen assumes her position at the door and Gil prepares for his next conquest. Maureen opens the door. The audience cannot see who it is. Neither can Gil as he grooms himself for the sales pitch.

MAUREEN

Well, hello. This is a surprise.

JASON

I want to speak with your son.

Jennifer hears Jason's voice and bolts upright. She looks helplessly at the door. Maureen notices. It has not registered with Gil who is at the door, yet.

GIL

(Jovially, as he crosses to the door) Mrs. Cormier, let's not have our guest stand in the hallway.

Jason steps into the office wearing a large smirk. Jennifer wears a look of anger and hurt. She can't take her eyes off Jason, who doesn't even realize she is there. But based on the conversation she overhears, Jennifer thinks that Jason is speaking about her.

GIL

What the hell are you doing here?

JASON

I'm here to give a fellow fraternity member a last chance.

GIL

Can the brotherhood stuff, Peabody. I only joined that crummy frat because of my old man. It never meant that much to me.

JASON

Your being a legacy was the only reason I voted to let you in. But let you in we did. And in my world that means something.

GIL

All it means is that we shared a house and a few kegs of beer.

JASON

That is so typical of your type.

GIL

(Dripping with derision) What type is that, Jason?

JASON

The type for whom duty and tradition mean nothing.

GIL

For crying out loud, Peabody, it was a fraternity, not the Marines.

JASON

We're talking about respect for organizations. Stability. *(Sees he is not getting through. Sighs. Sneers.)* Why am I wasting my time? I couldn't make you understand if I had all of next Millennium to try.

Gil laughs dismissively

JASON

But I can make your life hell, Bates. I can. But I feel obligated to offer you this chance. Now, are you going to give me back what is mine?

JENNIFER

(Flush with excitement – she thinks they are talking about her) Oh my goodness.

Maureen catches Jennifer's reaction. Maureen mistakenly thinks that Jennifer knows they are arguing about Manny, when in fact Jennifer thinks they are arguing over her.

GIL

Why can't you accept that the better man won and just move on?

JASON

For the same reason you couldn't move on if the shoe were on the other foot. You can see the work that's being done.

GIL

It's top notch.

JENNIFER

Top notch. *(To Maureen)* You hear that?

MAUREEN

(To Jennifer) Excuse me?

JASON

Right. And one simply doesn't "move on" from top notch.

JENNIFER

But you have to.

Gil hears Jennifer, but Jason does not. Gil turns quickly to Jennifer to speak. Jason, who hasn't taken his eyes off Gil, thinks he is talking to Maureen.

GIL

Let me handle this, okay?

JASON

Tsk. Tsk. That's no way to talk to your mother.

JENNIFER and GIL and MAUREEN

(Simultaneously)

Mother?

JASON

(Suddenly realizes she is there) Wha – Jennifer. What are you doing here?

JENNIFER

What am I? – I work here. You knew that.

JASON

No I didn't.

JENNIFER

Yes you did. You were just... Oh my God. If you didn't... then who have you been arguing over?

Manny enters, holding a can of Mountain Dew.

MANNY

(To Gil, with disdain) Hey boss, you're running low on Mountain Dew, man. *(Sees Jason. Is very happy to see him)* Peabody. All right. You come to bring me back?

JASON

If I can knock some sense into Bates. I don't seem to be having much success.

JENNIFER

(Hurt) Oh, God, I am such an asshole.

GIL

(To Jason) So then why don't you leave alone – *(Suddenly switches his attention to Jennifer)* What are you carrying on about?

JENNIFER

(Angry) Nothing.

GIL

Don't tell me nothing.

Gil can't miss the body language between Jennifer and Jason

GIL

Just what have you got going on with Jason Peabody?

JENNIFER

(Looking at Jason, the hurt still in her voice) Like I said, apparently nothing.

GIL

(To Jason) What did you do to her?

JASON

Nothing. I – now look, Bates, I didn't come here to discuss my relationship with Jennifer.

GIL

(Hurt. To Jennifer) Relationship?

JENNIFER

It was over before you and I met. *(Suddenly defensive)* And since when do you care?

GIL

(Disgusted) When I found out it was Jason.

JENNIFER

So you're upset not because I fell in love with someone else but because it was Jason?

JASON and GIL
(*Simultaneously*)

You were in love with me?

Jason and Gil both seem momentarily off balance. Jason recovers first, shakes off his feelings.

JASON

I don't have time for this.

GIL

Neither do I.

JASON

It's obvious we're not going to get anywhere, anyway. (*To Manny*) I'm sorry, Manny. I'm going to have to ask you to hang in there for a little while longer.

GIL

He'll hang in here until his contract is up.

JASON

(*As he exits*) Just remember, pledge, I gave you a chance.

GIL

Yea, yea, you're a credit to the frat. Semper Fi and all that.

Jason exits. Gil looks at Jennifer.

GIL

(*Incredulous. And a bit hurt*) Jason?

JENNIFER

Grow up, Gil.

Jennifer crosses to the "office" and sits down at a computer. Gil follows her.

GIL

Jason?

Jennifer is too disgusted to respond. Gil is about to press the issue when there is a knock at the door.

MAUREEN

Gil? Honey? It's your 3:30.

Gil grudgingly moves away from Jennifer. He nods to his mother, who goes to the door and greets an investor, another angel with wings. We do not hear Gil's conversation with the investor, as the focus is now on Manny and Roberta.

ROBERTA

Are these guys pieces of work, or what?

MANNY

Yea, fighting over a woman like that.

ROBERTA

No, I mean with all their options and IPOs...

MANNY

Oh, that.

ROBERTA

Not that we - I - got anything to complain about, you know.

MANNY

I suppose.

ROBERTA

I mean they're treating me - us - real well, don't you think?

MANNY

(Stops typing) You getting at something?

ROBERTA

How much are you getting?

MANNY

Whoa, back off, that is not cool.

ROBERTA

I was just asking...

MANNY

You were just asking...

ROBERTA

What are you getting so upset about?

MANNY

Because it's none of your business how much money or how many options I'm getting.

ROBERTA

How many are you getting?

MANNY

Look, 'Berta, this is the wrong conversation for us to -

ROBERTA

No, come on, tell me how many. I'll tell you if you tell me.

MANNY

But I don't want to know how many you're getting.

ROBERTA

(Getting really angry) That's because you're getting more than me, isn't it?

MANNY

How would I know?

ROBERTA

So just tell me.

MANNY

Hey what's gotten into you?

ROBERTA

Nothing. Something. I don't know. I'm just getting tired of watching that parade of venture capitalists kow-towing to someone who hasn't laid his hands on a keyboard.

MANNY

(Snidely) You gonna start your own company?

ROBERTA

Maybe. Maybe. I've had a few ideas of my own, you know.

MANNY

Sure you have. You and every other geek who took a few business courses thinks they're the next Jeff Bezos *(We hear the angels sing.)*

ROBERTA

You don't think I can do it?

MANNY

I didn't say that. But I will tell you that it's a lot harder than it looks. Why do you think I don't start my own company?

ROBERTA

Oh, so now you're saying you could do it, but I couldn't? That that's why you're getting more options than me.

MANNY

I never said I was getting more options than you. Geez. Chill.

ROBERTA

Chill? Don't you tell me to chill. I hate it when I'm told to chill.

MANNY

I think someone needs to cut down on the Mountain Dew.

ROBERTA

Screw this, I am out of here!

Everyone in the office is startled by the sudden commotion. They watch as Roberta gets up and grabs his jacket. Roberta looks at Gil.

ROBERTA

And screw you, too!

ROBERTA exits and slams the door. Gil looks nervously at the investor, who returns his gaze as if to say "now what are you to do about this?"

GIL

(Resolutely) Ms. Cormier?

MAUREEN

Yes, Mister Bates?

GIL

Post Roberta's job on the web. *(To the investor)* My apologies. I put a lot of pressure on my people to deliver and, well, sometimes...

INVESTOR

No need to apologize. I like the fact you aren't letting a bump in the road steer you off-course. *(The investor takes out a magic wand)* Shall we?

GIL

Delighted.

Gil smiles as the investor taps him on the head and hands him a check. Gil hands the investor a piece of paper and he shake hands as David before exiting the room. Meanwhile David has crossed to Manny. As Gil returns to the "office" the two talk.

DAVID

What the hell was that all about?

MANNY

Humphrey Bogart wanted more gold.

DAVID

(Shakes off the momentary confusion) Well, now what happens?

MANNY

What do you mean?

DAVID

We've got a schedule to keep. Don't misunderstand me, I'm sure you're very good at what you do and all that, but you're only one person.

MANNY

It's cool. They've posted the job already.

DAVID

Posted the job. (*Looks up to the "office"*) Already?

GIL

Uh huh.

MANNY

Posted it on the web, man.

DAVID

Of course. A virtual post.

MANNY

It's cool, man. You'll see.

There is a knock on the door. Maureen opens the door. A young, casually dressed Asian woman enters, holding a Palm Pilot.

MAUREEN

May I help you?

YEELI

(*Pointing to a Palm Pilot in her hand*) I'm here about the programming job.

MAUREEN

We posted that job less than two minutes ago.

YEELI

I know. I would have been here sooner but I waited for the elevator from the fifth floor.

MAUREEN

You work in this building?

YEELI

Worked in this building. I just quit.

DAVID

You quit for a job you haven't gotten yet? A job you didn't even know if it had been filled?

YEELI

Yea, I was getting tired of the old place, anyway. You know, getting stale.

DAVID

How long were you at your old job?

YEELI

Like forever. Three months.

David throws up his hands, crosses behind Manny.

GIL

Hi, I'm Gil Bates.

YEELI

Hi. Yeeli Nakamura.

DAVID

Three months?

YEELI

(As if it were forever) ...and four days.

MANNY

(To David) And now the dance begins.

GIL

Java?

YEELI

Yes.

GIL

H - T - M - L Plus?

YEELI

Of course.

GIL

E - Commerce?

YEELI

With portals.

Gil smiles and nods.

DAVID

(To Manny) So this is what passes for an interview these days?

Half an interview.

MANNY

Half?

DAVID

Uh huh. Watch.

MANNY

(Prepares for the offense) Options?

YEELI

2000 up front, 100 at 25 cents for each day you're here.

GIL

5000. And 200 a day.

YEELI

3000, and 125. Who do you think you are? Manny?

GIL

Who do you think taught Manny?

YEELI

Gil looks up at Manny, who nods.

2500 and 150 a day. I'd like you to stick around.

GIL

Then give me the 200 a day.

YEELI

Gil contemplates, then extends his hand.

Manny will fill you in.

GIL

(As she sits down at Roberta's old terminal) Thanks. I read the press release. Made it seem like you - we - are doing everything from post-Y2K compliance to full-scale retailing. Very cryptic.

YEELI

Thank you.

JENNIFER

(Studying the screen. To Manny) Roberta, right?

YEELI

MANNY

Yep.

YEELI

(Smiles) I can spot her code a mile away. *(To David, as she points to the computer)*
Look at the way she uses a recursive structure when a macro would clearly suffice.

Yeeli and Manny chuckle, then both begin to type. David tries to pretend he understands. There is a knock at the door, and Gil and Maureen once again play the door-opening shtick. This time, when Maureen opens the door, a well-dressed, serious, older black man enters. He is a lawyer named Frank Kingston.

FRANK

Good afternoon. I'm looking for Gil Bates.

MAUREEN

Is he in any trouble?

FRANK

I didn't say he –

DAVID

Who's in trouble?

MAUREEN

Gil is.

FRANK

I never said he was in trouble.

MAUREEN

But he is, isn't he?

FRANK

Look, is Mister Bates here?

DAVID

Can I help you?

FRANK

Are you Gil Bates?

DAVID

I'm his father.

FRANK

His father. And I suppose this woman is his mother.

DAVID

And my ex-wife. Thanks for reminding me.

MAUREEN

It's no picnic for me going down memory lane, either.

GIL

All right, that's enough, dad. Mom. Let's be a little more cordial to our potential investors.

DAVID

Oh, I am very sorry. I didn't realize that you were an investor.

FRANK

That's because I'm not.

MAUREEN

Of course he isn't.

DAVID

How do you know?

MAUREEN

No wings.

GIL

Well, who are you?

FRANK

(Exasperated) Are you Gil Bates?

GIL

I am.

FRANK

Finally. My name is Frank Kingston. I'm with the law firm of Stafford and O'Brien.

MAUREEN

What do you want? We haven't done anything wrong.

GIL

Mom? Do you mind?

FRANK

I've been retained by Jason Peabody with regards to your hiring of one Manny Cruz -

GIL

Jason, you son-of-a-bitch.

MAUREEN

I don't understand. What's going on?

FRANK

Mr. Peabody alleges unfair practices with regards to the methods used to secure the employment of Mr. Cruz.

GIL

Unfair practices?

FRANK

(Looking at the papers) Yes, about two quarts worth.

MANNY

(Starts to get up) All right. I am so outta here...

GIL

Not so fast, Manny.

FRANK

According to this complaint, you bought Mr. Cruz a number of drinks with the intent of getting him to sign a contract.

GIL

I was in a bar and bought somebody some drinks. Call the FBI...

FRANK

We would have, but the Boston office number is unlisted. In any case, Mister Peabody alleges restraint of trade –

GIL

Restraint of trade? I was simply going after the best talent that was available.

MANNY

That's the same garbage he was slinging last night, Mister Kingston.

FRANK

Mister Cruz was not in the market for a job.

GIL

Was he under a non-compete clause?

FRANK

You must know, Mister Bates, that coercion is not tolerated in the workplace.

GIL

First of all, it wasn't the workplace. We were in a bar. And drunk or sober, a thousand shares of stock at two cents a share is not coercion, it's a sweet employment package.

FRANK

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that - two cents a share? (*To Manny*) He's given you options at two cents a share?

MANNY

I got a drawer full of options, Mister Kingston. A dollar a share, fifty cents, a dime. All worth about as much as the Deutschmark was in 1919.

GIL

Ingrate.

MANNY

You don't like it? Then fire me.

GIL

You got the best PC money can buy, the best software tools, and the Mountain Dew you can drink. Why should you care who you program for?

MANNY

Because Jason hired me first.

GIL

But I hired you better.

MANNY

Your options are worth no more than Jason's, which at this moment are zero.

GIL

So why do you want to go back to him?

MANNY

Because it's the right thing to do, man.

GIL

Manny, this is 1999. There is no right thing. There's only the best thing.

MANNY

You're some piece of work...

GIL

Sticks and stones, Manny.

FRANK

Mister Bates –

GIL

Call me Gil. As long as you're going to try and bankrupt me you might as well call me by my first name.

FRANK

Nobody is trying to bankrupt you...

GIL

But that's exactly what you'll be doing if you rob me of my most precious resource.

FRANK

A resource that you have locked into a highly inappropriate agreement.

GIL

What's inappropriate about it?

FRANK

I've been over Mister Cruz' contract and it would appear that most everything is back-ended. He doesn't see any real money unless you succeed.

GIL

That's the way the Internet works, Mr. Kingston.

FRANK

Doesn't sound very fair to me, son.

GIL

Oh no? Don't lawyers back end payment when they take a case on a contingency?

FRANK

That's hardly the same thing.

GIL

It isn't? You do a lot of work for little or no compensation all in the hopes of a big score at the end of a case, right?

FRANK

(Indignantly) I wouldn't use the word score. The point would be that we do that when the client is unable to pay up front.

GIL

You do that when the client can make you and your firm big money, counselor.

FRANK

In any case it is clear that Mr. Cruz is unhappy with the arrangement that you have foisted upon him. And we have an expression in the law, Mr. Bates. It's called unfriendly witness, a description that would seem to fit Mr. Cruz.

MANNY

Yea, that's me, man, unfriendly.

FRANK

Now do you really want to go to court and risk losing not only your company but compensatory damages to Mr. Peabody?

GIL

Frank, by the time this case gets before a judge Manny's job will be long completed, my company will have gone public, and any compensatories will amount to chump change.

FRANK

I'm afraid not.

GIL

What do mean, you're afraid not?

FRANK

(As he pulls another sheaf of papers from his briefcase) We have obtained a court injunction that bars you from utilizing Mr. Cruz' talents until the trial.

MANNY

Yes! Free at last, free at last!

GIL

What?

MAUREEN

David, what does that mean?

MANNY

It means I am so out of here...

DAVID

See, here Kingston.

GIL

Dad, would you please? Mister Kingston, you can't do this to me now. We're so close. The web site is almost up and running, and midnight in New Zealand is just a few hours away.

FRANK

Well, I don't see what the time in New Zealand has to do with this complaint...

GIL

It has everything to do with my company. Maybe if you took the time to understand what I'm trying to do here.

FRANK

What your company is doing has no bearing on this complaint. If it doesn't affect the rule of law then it doesn't affect our case, so I don't need to know about it.

Jennifer squeals with delight as she looks at a computer screen.

JENNIFER

Gil, look at this!

GIL

Jennifer, not now.

JENNIFER

But ABC News... they've just posted an article about us on their home page.

GIL

Really? Let me see.

He races over to her computer, followed closely by Frank and the others. Manny is at the door, waiting impatiently as they all study the screen.

MANNY

Hey, Mister Kingston, I'm all packed, man. Can we go now?

FRANK

Just a minute.

Everybody, including Gil and Frank, gathers around the closest computer.

JENNIFER

Right there, look, see?

GIL

Click on the link for the story. Look at that. "The old millennium is just sixteen hours from its end, but not everyone is hunkering down in a bunker waiting for Armageddon. There is at least one entrepreneur who thinks there are still a few dollars to be made in these last few hours of 1999. Headed by Gil Bates -

David, Maureen, and Jennifer cheer. Manny is disgusted

- a brash team of programmers and marketers are attempting to squeeze one last drop from the Y2K bug. If the list of deep pocket investors is any indication – a list, by the way, which includes the famously prescient Alice Payson, whom sources say is in for one million dollars - a lot of folks agree that there is more blood to be squeezed from the Y2K stone. We will know in fifteen hours if they are right."

DAVID

So, son, how's it feel to see your name in print?

MAUREEN

Yea, without the word 'indicted' next to it.

FRANK

I'll say this, it looks like you've been generating quite a lot of interest in your company.

GIL

I have commitments from investors for over three million dollars. All since seven this morning.

FRANK

(Suddenly very interested in Gil's company) Three million dollars?

MANNY

Uhh, Mister Kingston?

Frank doesn't acknowledge Manny.

GIL

(Notices the shift in mood) And I've got five more investors scheduled before 5 o'clock.

FRANK

(To himself) Three million. *(To Gil)* What is it you say you're attempting to do here? Not that it matters, of course.

GIL

Of course.

FRANK

I still have my job to do, of course.

GIL

Of course.

FRANK

But I'm just curious...

MAUREEN, JENNIFER, GIL, and DAVID

(Simultaneously)

Of course.

FRANK

I mean what is it that could generate... how much was that?

The phone rings and Maureen picks it up.

GIL

Three million dollars.

FRANK

(Practically salivating) Yes. I see.

GIL

In just eight hours.

FRANK

(Shakes it off) Nevertheless, I must ask that -

MAUREEN

Gil!

GIL

Not now, mom.

FRANK

Mom? You mean she really is your -

MAUREEN

It's a reporter from NBC. He wants to interview you for a feature on your company -

The door bursts open and a well-dressed woman followed by a man holding a video camera, enter. During the reporter's speech, the phone will ring and Jennifer will answer it.

REPORTER

(To the cameraman) This is it, Steve. Roll it. *(Earnestly)* When we say nobody gets you closer to today's dot-com world than Financial Cable News, we mean it. We're live here at the office of what is certainly the last Internet start-up of the millennium. Barely seven hours old this small Cambridge-based dot-com has already generated a whopping four million dollars in interest from venture capitalists -

GIL

Uh... three million.

REPORTER

And you are?

GIL

I'm Gil Bates.

REPORTER

Ah, the founder and CEO of this start-up. And yet you don't even know the capitalization of your own company?

GIL

Of course I do. I have personally secured each and every dollar -

JENNIFER

(As she hangs up the phone) Gil?

GIL

(To Jennifer) Not now, Jennifer. *(To the reporter)* I have personally secured each and every dollar of investment, which is why I know that -

JENNIFER

But that was Alice Payson. Said she saw the CNN mention and she's upping her investment by a million dollars!

DAVID

(Scribbling on a piece of paper) Another million, which brings your total to...

JENNIFER, DAVID, and REPORTER

(Simultaneously)

Four million dollars.

FRANK

(Salivating) Four million dollars.

GIL

How -

REPORTER

It's my job to follow the money, Mister Bates.

MAUREEN

Gil, the reporter from NBC says he's on deadline and needs to speak with you right away.

Another phone line rings, and Jennifer answers it.

REPORTER

(As she crosses to Maureen) NBC? Who is that? *(Grabs the phone)* Ron? Is that you? Yea, it's Trudy. Why don't you get off your ass out of the newsroom and into the real world for once. 'Cause that's where the news is happening, you loser.

She hangs up the phone and struts back to the cameraman. The phone rings almost immediately and Maureen picks it up.

MANNY

Mister Kingston, what about my case?

FRANK

I haven't forgotten about you...

MANNY

Then why are we still here, man?

MAUREEN

(Phone cupped to her ear) Oh my God, Gil, it's Cliff Radford.

Angels joyfully sing a few bars of “Cliff Radford”

GIL

The most successful Venture Capitalist in Boston?

Angels joyfully sing a few bars of “The most successful Venture Capitalist. (PAUSE) In Boston”

MAUREEN

The same.

DAVID

The one who got his picture on the cover of TIME?

To Maureen, before she can say it...

I know, not wearing handcuffs.

GIL

Remain cool, Mom, and ask him what he wants.

MANNY

Kingston! Are you going to -

FRANK

Not now, Manny.

MAUREEN

Yes, sir, I'll tell him.

GIL

What did he say?

MANNY

Frank!

MAUREEN

He said his watching us on Financial Cable News right now...

GIL

And...?

MANNY

Kingston!

MAUREEN

– And he says his wallet is open.

The scene – and act – end in total bedlam as everyone speaks at once. David tries to assume his protective stance, Manny screams for justice, Kingston lick his lips, and the reporter lunges for a quote from Gil, all as Gil grabs the phone from Jennifer and tries to speak over the din.

End Scene

Scene 5

The clock now reads 11:58 PM.

Strewn about the desks and tables are pizza boxes, Chinese food containers, and cans and bottles of half-empty Mountain Dew. Everybody looks a bit disheveled. Maureen is holding a bundle of magic wands like one would a collection of kindling. She is walking around the room looking for a place to lay them down, and finally settles on a corner of the “office.” Meanwhile, Gil is standing with a print reporter giving an interview.

REPORTER

So let’s see if I have this straight. Stacked up in your office are commitments from investors for over 12 million dollars. You’ve been on CNN, NBC, Fox, CNBC, in fact every major cable and network news network has interviewed you, and there are front page features being readied for the Wall Street Journal, the San Francisco Chronicle –

GIL

And the Boston Globe...

REPORTER

Thank you, yes, and my own paper, the Globe. All this and your company isn’t even a full day old. How does that make you feel?

GIL

Tired, I guess.

David, Maureen, Roberta, and Jennifer laugh. Manny scowls. Jennifer, standing by his side, nudges him.

GIL

But very excited about everything that we’ve accomplished since seven a.m. this morning, when our company started with literally four walls and a dream.

Gil smiles proudly, like a schoolboy who has recited a poem. Jennifer coughs gently and nudges him again.

GIL

And even more excited about the future.

REPORTER

Speaking of which, when that clock turns to midnight, what do you expect will happen?

GIL

Well, nothing, really. You see that clock is set for local Boston time. Midnight here will mean it's only December 31st, 1999, the last day of the millennium. There's still 24 hours to go before it's the year 2000 here in Boston.

REPORTER

And that's when you'll know if your company has correctly identified a post-Y2K market?

GIL

We'll know a lot sooner. The new millennium actually begins along the International Date Line in the Pacific, which is 18 hours ahead of us. So when it's still six a.m. here in Boston it will be midnight, 2000 in New Zealand.

REPORTER

New Zealand?

GIL

It's the first industrialized country to start the year 2000.

REPORTER

Industrialized being computerized.

GIL

Absolutely dependant on them. Phones, power, water, traffic lights...

REPORTER

And your company's software does exactly what?

GIL

The exact nature of my company is under NDA – non-disclosure agreement – of course.

REPORTER

I understand. But the Y2K bug is central to your firm.

GIL

That much I can tell you, yes.

REPORTER

(Skeptically) Y2K. Which most experts believe is fixed.

GIL

The experts claimed the Titanic was unsinkable.

REPORTER

The Titanic is a good example of engineering hubris, I'd agree. But wasn't most of that unsinkable stuff was just marketing hyperbole? Self-promotion by the ship's owners?

GIL

Nevertheless, the ship did sink.

REPORTER

Speaking of self-promotion, there are some in the high-tech community who see you as nothing more than a opportunist taking advantage of lingering paranoia over a much-publicized but essentially harmless computer bug.

GIL

(Taken off-balance – for a moment) Well, I... I don't know how to respond to that. *(Looks at Jennifer, who looks a bit helpless, herself. Gil takes a mental breath)* Except to say that I've given up an awful lot to be here at this moment, and that I believe in this company's mission. Sure we hope to make a lot of money – who doesn't these days? But we also hope to help people through what we think could be some tough times. *(Looks up at the clock, smiles sincerely)* Speaking of time, we have just a few more hours left to finish our work... *(he gets up)* so I hope you don't mind...

REPORTER

Perhaps we can talk more next week.

GIL

Uh, sure. Call us and we'll set something up.

REPORTER

Well, thanks again, Gil. And good luck.

The reporter exits. Frank, David, Maureen, and Jennifer cross to Gil. They speak almost on top of each other.

FRANK

That was very impressive.

DAVID

(Patting him on the back) Good job, son.

JENNIFER

You handled that very well, Gil.

GIL

(To Jennifer) Well maybe I wouldn't have to "handle it" if you had done your job.

MAUREEN

(Shocked) Gil.

GIL

Stay out of this, mom.

DAVID

Don't yell at your mother.

GIL

How many times do I have to tell you not to tell me what to do?

MAUREEN

He's just trying to help, Gil.

GIL

If I need any help on how make bail, I'll call him.

MAUREEN

Gil, I'm no fan of your father's –

GIL

Then butt out, okay, Mom?

There is deadly silence.

MAUREEN

All right, Gil. Maybe I will.

Maureen crosses to the ersatz office.

DAVID

Nice going, Gil. Why send flowers to your mother when a simple "butt out" will do.

Maureen starts to put on her coat. She looks for and finds her purse.

JENNIFER

(Indicating Maureen) Well don't just stand there. Say something to her

GIL

(To Jennifer) It's you I want to talk to. *(Stares at her)* So? How about it?

JENNIFER

How about what?

GIL

How could you let me get set up like that?

JENNIFER

I didn't know what she was going to ask.

GIL

But it's your job to know.

JENNIFER

I'm not a mind reader, Gil.

GIL

You're not much of a marketing manager, either.

JENNIFER

You'd rather not talk to the most influential business writer at the Globe?

GIL

You begged me to hire you.

JENNIFER

No, you begged me not get a lawyer.

GIL

Don't confuse the issue. You wanted in and I let you in.

JENNIFER

This was my idea as much as it was yours.

GIL

Then maybe you should start taking the hits.

JENNIFER

You insisted on doing all the interviews, on getting all the face time.

GIL

One voice, you said. One face. Let the public identify with one person.

JENNIFER

You didn't seem to mind the attention. Until the job got hard.

GIL

How dare you.

JENNIFER

Oh, don't be so dramatic. You get one reporter who asks one good question and you –

GIL

Good question? Whose side are you on? That wasn't a question. It was an accusation. Like I was on trial.

JENNIFER

Welcome to the big time, Gil.

Maureen has by this time gotten herself together and crossed to the front door.

MAUREEN

I'm going now, Gil.

GIL

Fine. *(Indicating Jennifer)* Why don't you take her with you?

MAUREEN

That was uncalled for, Gil. To either of us. This young woman has been working very hard. Everyone has, me included. Maybe it's time you lightened up a bit.

GIL

Is that my administrator's advice, or my secretary's?

MAUREEN

It's your mother's. What these people need right now is your support, not your anger.

GIL

These people are getting a salary and stock options. If that isn't enough to motivate them...

MAUREEN

People need more than that Gil. Even your father, as cut-throat as he was, recognized that.

DAVID

Thanks. I think.

GIL

Nobody here's expecting a gold watch. They just want the gold. *(To Manny)* Am I right?

MANNY

Just call me Humphrey Bogart.

Maureen opens the door.

MAUREEN

(To David) Congratulations, David. I raised him, but you won.

Maureen exits.

GIL

What the hell did she mean by that?

DAVID

She means the pants will be ready Tuesday.

Gil crosses to his "office" and sits down at a laptop.

DAVID

What are you doing?

GIL

What does it look like I'm doing? The business projections Mom didn't finish.

DAVID

(Stunned) It's that easy for you?

GIL

With these macros Manny wrote for us, yea.

DAVID

I meant... *(David stares at his son)*

Gil is typing away when he looks up and sees David staring at him.

GIL

What? What's the matter? What are you looking at?

DAVID

My reflection.

YEELI

Hey Gil.

GIL

(Has gone back to his laptop. Doesn't even look up) What?

YEELI

You said you wanted to check out the new interface at the six hour mark.

The phone starts ringing.

GIL

So?

YEELI

Well, there's less than six hours to go now. And you said I can't move on until you approve it.

There is another ring. Gil looks up and calls out.

GIL

Mom, would you please get... *(remembers Maureen is gone)* Could somebody get that?
(Chagrined, looks at David) Dad? A little help?

DAVID

(As he crosses to the phone) Well, it's something to do.

YEELI

(Anxious) Gil?

GIL

(Snaps at her) What?

YEELI

Don't snap at me. This was your rule, not mine. If we're going to keep to your schedule we have to launch this application within the next fifteen minutes. Now I'm ready to send this live but you said you wanted to check it first.

MANNY

And while you're at it you still owe me answer on this web form, man.

GIL

I'll get to you guys, in a minute, okay?

YEELI

I have the minute, but you have less than... *(Looks at the clock)* 345 of them. Can't I just go ahead and do it?

GIL

No, give me a minute. I'll get to it. You too, Manny, just hold on a few.

DAVID

(On the phone) Gil, you won't believe this.

GIL

What?

DAVID

Guess who this is on the phone?

GIL

Dad, would you please. Just tell me who.

DAVID

Come on. Guess.

GIL

(As he stands up and grabs the phone from David's hands) For Christ's sakes, dad, do you realize what time it is? I don't have time for this shit –

DAVID

(Indicating the phone) Uh, Gil?

GIL

(Puts the phone to his ear) This is Gil Bates. Is there something I can do for you?

Gil's eyes widen into disbelief.

GIL

You're kidding. *(Pause)* You're not kidding. Hold on, okay? Just hold on. *(To Jennifer)* Oh my God, Jen, you're not going to believe who this is.

JENNIFER

(Still pissed) Who?

GIL

Guess. Come on, guess who.

DAVID

Oh sure, when I did it...

JENNIFER

I really don't care.

GIL

You just won't believe it.

MANNY

(Blows up) All right already. Just freakin' tell us.

GIL

(Slowly, like he really can't believe it) It's the director of Dick Clark's Rocking New Year's Eve show.

JENNIFER

(Momentarily taken in) Dick Clark?

There is a chorus of angels – much like those who sang a heavenly chorus earlier at the mention of Jeff Bezos' name – who now warble "Dick Clark"

GIL

He says they have a camera crew up here in Boston for First Night, but they saw one of the cable shows we were on and they want to put us on their show. Isn't that amazing. Jen, how about that, huh? Dick Clark. *(The voices hum)* How many millions of people do you think watch that show? Got to be at least –

Gil looks to Jennifer, who crosses her arms angrily.

GIL

Come on, Jen. You're not going to hold all that stuff against me, are you?

Jennifer just gives him an icy stare.

GIL

Jen, it's Dick Clark *(Voices humming)*

YEELI

Gil, we're running out of time, I really need you to review this page.

MANNY

And this web form, man...

GIL

(Everyone can tell he is desperate) Jennifer... please...

JENNIFER

(Shocked out of her immobility) Wow. There's a word I don't think I've ever heard you say before now.

GIL

Here's another two. I'm sorry.

JENNIFER

(Touched to where she almost has the wind knocked out of her) Please and I'm sorry. *(Suddenly unsure)* Do you mean it?

GIL

(Desperate) Will it get you to talk to that producer?

Jennifer looks as if she is going to react negatively, but just takes a breath and begins a crosses to the "office" and the phone. Manny gets up and blocks her way.

MANNY

Wait a minute. What are you doing?

JENNIFER

My job, Manny.

MANNY

Don't you have any self-respect?

JENNIFER

Out of my way, Manny. If this works, in about five and a half hours I'll be able to buy all the self-respect I need.

GIL

That's my woman of the nineties. Yeeli? Let's have a look at that Java script. Come on Manny, what are you standing around for? There's work to do.

Jennifer finishes her cross to the phone, which Gil hands her. Gil crosses to Yeeli's PC while Manny, disgusted, returns to his and the lights fade.

End Scene

Scene 6

The clock reads 5:57 AM. Everybody sits or stands huddled around Manny's PC, their faces lit by the glow of the CRT. Occasionally someone will turn and look back up at the clock on the wall. At least one cameraman, one TV reporter, and one print reporter stand to the side watching them (NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR: Every extra body should be on stage holding a notepad, a camera, or video camera.) Gil holds a phone to his ear. A TV reporter is cued by his/her cameraman.

REPORTER

Thanks, Matt and Katie. And good morning for the last time in 1999. As you said, we're here in Boston, which is now 18 hours and three minutes away from the new Millennium. But as we've seen from our network of correspondents, the sun – and year 2000 – is already rising on the other side of the globe, in the Pacific.

GIL

Brian? Yes I can hear you just fine. How's the weather in Auckland tonight? *(Slight pause)* Raining that hard, huh? Well, then I don't feel so bad asking you to sit in front of a computer on New Year's Eve.

REPORTER

That was former Harvard University student Gil Bates, the founder of the company whose offices were in this morning. He's given us exclusive access to the inner workings of this amazing Internet story.

DAVID

(To Jennifer) Explain to me again how we hooked up with this guy?

YEELI

My roommate's brother-in-law has a cousin who dated a guy from New Zealand. This guy, Brian Scollay, is her ex-boyfriend.

DAVID

Ex?

YEELI

Yea, she dumped him a few months ago. Something about spending too much time at work.

MANNY

Kind of explains why he's sitting in front of a computer on the biggest New Year's Eve ever. *(Pause)* Course it doesn't explain what I'm doing sitting in front of a computer on the biggest New Year's Eve ever.

REPORTER

This start-up, which literally began with nothing but four walls and a dream early yesterday morning, has already generated world wide notoriety, not to mention over ten million dollars in funding commitments should the dreaded Y2K bug still lurk inside computers around the globe. And, as you can see, Gil and his team are huddled around their computers waiting to find out what happens when the clocks strike midnight in Auckland, New Zealand.

DAVID

(To Jennifer) How did you get the Today Show to come here?

JENNIFER

(To David) Honestly, I just picked up the phone. The media hasn't stopped calling. I could have sold seats to this.

DAVID

(To Jennifer) Oh yea? How much?

GIL

(On the phone) What's your throughput measurement? *(Beat)* Uh huh. Okay, mark that down. I want you to note any decline after midnight there.

MANNY

Assuming there is a decline.

GIL

(To Manny) Would I be here if I didn't think there wouldn't?

REPORTER

That's right, Katie, we do have an NBC correspondent standing by in Auckland, so let's switch there now and see what they're seeing.

JENNIFER

I'm so nervous. I wonder if this is what it's like when you have a baby.

DAVID

Yes, it is.

GIL

How would you know? Mom said you were on a business trip.

DAVID

(Defensively) I was on speaker phone.

JENNIFER

(To no one in particular) This night has explained soooo much.

YEELI

Just one more minute now.

The door suddenly bursts open and Jason Peabody walks in the door.

JASON

Hello, pledge. Happy Millennium.

GIL

Jason, I'm a little busy right now...

JASON

You know, pledge. I was thinking about it, and I've been too hard on you. What you've managed to do in the last two days is really nothing short of remarkable.

DAVID

Watch it, Gil.

GIL

(Trying to concentrate) I know Dad, I know.

JASON

(Grandly) Getting all this equipment, renting this office, procuring the best programmers – even if one of them was mine – I'm very impressed. *(Pauses)* Yea, you've got a lot to be proud of. I guess if I were you the only thing that could make me prouder is if the whole thing wasn't about to crash and burn.

GIL

You have the power to tell the future now, Peabody?

JENNIFER

One minute.

JASON

I know how to read a map.

GIL

Good for you, Columbus. *(To Manny)* Manny, are you sure about that JAVA script?

MANNY

Yea.

GIL

And the pipeline is robust enough to handle the traffic?

MANNY

Uh huh.

GIL

What about the –

MANNY

Would you stop it already? It's going to work, okay? *(Pause. His foot taps nervously)* I think.

GIL

(Smiling) Look at you, You're nervous, just like the rest of us.

MANNY

I'm a professional. Even if I resent the person who hired me I still do my best.

GIL

Come on, Manny, admit it. The excitement. The rush of the adrenaline to beat the clock. The attention. Look at all these reporters just waiting to see what happens. Admit it. This beats anything Jason Peabody had you working on.

MANNY

(Can't help smiling) Maybe a little. *(Gets serious)* But it still doesn't mean that what you did wasn't wrong.

GIL

Whatever. See me in fifteen seconds and tell me how wrong it was.

MANNY

(Aside to Yeeli) Piece of work.

GIL

Sheer conjecture on your part, Manny.

JENNIFER

Yea, but there's plenty of us around with proof.

GIL

You can all bust me as much as you want, but none of you can lie to me. There's no place any of you would rather be at this moment than right here.

REPORTER

That's right, Matt. No doubt about it, tensions are running high here, but who can blame these people as they are seconds away from knowing if all their hard work has been worth it?

Their silence is their agreement. There are a few more moments of quiet as everyone stares at the screen.

JENNIFER

It's six o'clock.

YEELI

Here we go.

REPORTER

(Into the camera) This is it. The moment of truth for Gil Bates has arrived.

DAVID

Midnight in Auckland.

MANNY

2000.

JENNIFER

The new millennium.

GIL

(Into the phone) Brian. What's the good word? Blackouts? Has the water stopped running? Are the street lights off? What? What do you mean nothing is happening?

REPORTER

That's right, Katie. It would seem that Mr. Bates is getting the same report we are.

GIL

(To Yeeli) Refresh the screen.

Yeeli clicks her mouse. The expressions on the faces of those in front of the computer begin to reflect disappointment. The phone rings.

GIL

(Into the phone) Say that again?

The phone rings again.

GIL

(Annoyed) Could somebody please get that? Dad?

DAVID

(Can barely tear himself away from the computer) Uh, okay.

JASON

A phone call. At this time of the morning. Which one of your investors do you think that will be withdrawing their offer for financing?

GIL

Don't jump to conclusions, Peabody.

DAVID

Gil, it's Alice Payson. She doesn't sound happy. She says she's watching CNN and they say everything is running fine down there. No glitches of any kind at all. *(Into the phone)* What's that? Yes ma'am. Yes, I'll tell him. *(To Gil)* She wants to know what you've got to say for yourself.

REPORTER

That's right, Katie. It would seem Gil Bates is getting some bad news –

GIL

(Explodes) Would you quit that?

REPORTER

You invited us, remember?

YEELI

Gil, you better take a look at this.

GIL

What's that Brian? *(Into the phone)* What do you mean everything's working fine?

DAVID

(Thinks David is talking to him) That's what Alice just said.

GIL

(To David) I wasn't talking to you, dad. *(Into the phone)* Brian? Are you sure? No flickering? Nothing?

REPORTER

That's right,

The phone rings again. Gil motions to his father to pick it up.

DAVID

(Into the phone) Ms. Payson, can I put you on hold for just for a second? Thanks. *(He switches lines and talks into the phone)*

YEELI

Gil...

GIL

What?

YEELI

Gil, I've been flipping between the major news web sites. CNN, ABC, CBS. They're all saying that everything is fine in New Zealand.

DAVID

(Holding up the phone) Gil, it's Cliff Radford.

Yeeli points to the CRT, Gil looks as if he's seen a ghost. Even Manny shakes his head a bit sadly.

JASON

Let me guess. And he doesn't sound happy.

GIL

Dad, tell him I'll call him back. Tell Alice, too.

DAVID

Do you really think that's the way to treat your two biggest –

GIL

(Explodes) Damn it, Dad, just do what I ask, okay?

David looks for a moment as if he will respond, but instead he just grimaces and speaks into the phone.

REPORTER

Mister Bates, now that the Y2K bug is not an issue, what does this mean for the future of your company?

GIL

(Has forgotten that the reporters were there) Huh?

REPORTER #2

Can we get your reaction to the events of the last 30 seconds?

GIL

(Looks desperately at Jennifer, who seems overwhelmed herself) I, uh... How can I possibly react to something that's just happened?

Gil looks to Jennifer, but she looks lost. Gil Takes a breath and tries to put on his "game face" but doesn't sound convinced himself

GIL

Look, as far as I'm concerned it's not over. I mean, midnight doesn't hit Australia for another two hours. Tokyo and the rest of Japan in three.

REPORTER #2

But isn't it true that at least two of your major backers have withdrawn their offers for funding?

GIL

Those are unsubstantiated rumors.

REPORTER #1

Uh, we were here when the phone calls came in.

FRANK

Look, folks, we're going to need some time here to assess the situation. Perhaps if you come back Monday –

REPORTER #1

Monday? It won't be a story Monday.

REPORTER #2

Know what? I think we have all we need, now, anyway.

REPORTER #1

Yea. Same here.

All of the reporters chatter amongst themselves as they collect their things and cross to the door. We hear them say things such as "flash in the pan," "another boy wonder who wasn't so wonderful," and "he's no Jeff Bezos." They exit as the phone rings again and David picks it up.

GIL

(Desperate for good – bad – news) Brian, anything? *(His head sinks)* No? Yeeli?

Yeeli shakes her head.

GIL

(Back to the phone) Okay. Look, Brian, you have my number if anything does happen, right? Okay. Thanks. Call me right away.

Gil hangs up the phone.

JASON

Your first clue should have been when his phone still worked after midnight.

Gil stares at the phone, looking a bit numb. He looks again at the computer screen disbelievingly.

JASON

It's over, pledge. They'll be no crisis of confidence. No reason for your company to exist. They'll be no rush of new investors. No cover of Fortune or Time.

DAVID

(As he hangs up the phone) Gil, I'm sorry son but I have more bad news.

FRANK

Worse than 4 million dollars of investments going out the window?

MANNY

Worse than being humiliated in front of Matt and Katie?

DAVID

(Nods his head) Dick Clark won't be coming.

The angels sing Dick Clark's name sadly, as in a dirge. Frank crosses to his things and packs up as Jason walks over to Gil, gently puts his arm around his shoulders and walks him stage right.

JASON

Pledge, it's time for you and I to talk. Yeeli and Jennifer, you can let them go and that's the end of it. Your old man, if I'm any judge of character, will write this whole night off as a charitable deduction...

DAVID

Hey, good idea...

JASON

But you had Manny sign a personal services contract. That means you're obligated to pay him – but after tonight we both know you have nothing for him to do. But I want to help.

GIL

(Knows Jason is full of it) You do, huh?

JASON

(Totally smarmy) Anything for a fraternity member. Here's what I'm willing to do. I'll take Manny's contract off your hands. I'll even pay him the inflated rate you were obviously paying, too, because even drunk, I'm guessing he didn't come cheap, am I right? *(Turns to Manny)* That is, of course, if Manny agrees to come back.

MANNY

As long as Bates agrees, man.

JASON

I'm sure Gil will do the smart thing. Frank, does that sound like something we could do?

FRANK

(Has been packing up and putting on his coat) Don't ask me.

GIL

Where are you going?

FRANK

Home. To get some sleep and to write a letter of apology to my firm. See if they'll take me back. *(Takes out a business card and hands it to Jason, to whom he speaks sheepishly)* I'm, uh, always available on a per diem basis.

Frank slinks out the door

JASON

(Jason smiles as he puts the card in his pocket) God, I love the nineties. Gosh, look at the time. I've got to get to work, myself. Got a con-call with Munich and I don't like to keep my customers waiting.

Starts to exit. Jason has his hand on the doorknob.

GIL

Peabody.

JASON

Yes?

GIL

What's your problem with me? It's gotta be more than me stealing Manny from you. I mean your no angel when it comes to raiding talent. It can't be my father – even you wouldn't make me pay for his sins. So what is it? What did I do to you?

JASON

I'll tell you what it is. Because guys like you are ruining it for guys like me.

GIL

What have I done? Except try to start a business.

JASON

That's the problem with all the others who worship at the altar of Jeff Bezos.

The angels start to sing "Jeff Bezos," but Jason looks up at the ceiling and shouts

Shut up!

The angels warble "Sorry."

You and the rest of your Internet buddies who think a business is about collecting investors first and making a good product second. That's not a business.

DAVID

(From the "office") That's exactly what I said to him.

GIL

(To David) Shut up, dad.

JASON

I also don't like the way you treat people.

GIL

That? Oh, come on Peabody.

JASON

I'm not talking about the way you treat your father. Or your own mother.

Gil reacts

JASON

Yes, I heard about that. Or even about the way you've treat your employees, although your management style could use some improvement. I'm talking about the way you treat... people.

GIL

People. You keep saying that. Which people?

Jennifer and Jason's eyes meet.

JASON

(To Jennifer) I told you that you could do better.

JENNIFER

You never said that meant you.

JASON

That was my mistake. *(As he looks at Gil)* A mistake I've learned from watching other people in action. *(Looks at Jennifer)* But I'm ready to make up for that.

JENNIFER

I'm ready, too.

Jason nods. He and Jennifer look longingly at each other. Jennifer gets her coat and crosses to Jason.

GIL

Jennifer, wait. We still have Melbourne. And Tokyo. And –

JENNIFER

(Stops her cross at Gil, cups his face in her hands) It's over Gil. Consider this my two minute notice.

Jennifer finishes her cross to Jason. Jason opens the door.

JASON

See you around, pledge.

GIL

Wait a minute, Peabody.

JASON

What?

GIL

How did you know?

JASON

Because of the way she looked at me.

GIL

No, not Jennifer. How did you know that nothing would happen at midnight in Auckland? Who told you?

JASON

Not who. Where. Kiribati, to be exact.

Gil's face registers no recognition.

It's an island in the Pacific. And it's one of several that beat New Zealand to 2000 by an hour. It may not be industrialized but they have cell phones and computers and an airport. And a fifth cousin of an uncle's sister-in-law of a fraternity brother who lives there and who called me when the clocks turned. One whole hour before your contact in Auckland. Semper Fi. See you Monday, Manny. Happy New Year, everyone.

Jennifer and Jason exit. David has meanwhile picked up the phone.

DAVID

Howie? It's David Bates. About that furniture you rented us. Yea. We won't be needing it anymore...

Gil looks incredulously at his father.

GIL

Dad?

DAVID

What? It's not 24 hours yet. I can get my deposit back.

Manny has collected all his stuff and ambles to the door, stopping at Gil.

MANNY

Hey man, you gave it a shot, you know. You should be proud for trying.

GIL

(Really touched) Thanks, Manny.

MANNY

But you're still a piece of work.

Manny starts to exit, then stops. He hands Gil a card.

GIL

What's this?

MANNY

My cell phone number. For when you get your next idea.

David is incredulous. Gil smiles

GIL

God, I'm going to miss the nineties...

**Blackout
End Scene**

Scene 7

There are a couple of desks, chairs, and a filing cabinet left in the office which a mover, in overalls, is hoisting onto a hand truck and rolling out of the door. The clock on the wall reads 7:23 a.m. We hear Mr. Mister's "Broken Wings" as Gil strolls around the office, looking forlornly at the strewn pizza boxes, empty containers of Chinese food, and cans of JOLT and Mountain Dew. A pile of broken magic wands and wings sit in a heap. Gil picks up a tattered pair of wings and broken wand, his face awash in the unfulfilled promise of the past 24 hours. Just as the worker reaches the door it opens. David enters, holds the door open, and the worker exits with the a piece of furniture. David surveys the scene.

DAVID

You all right?

GIL

Well, let's see. I have managed, in one day, to lose 10 million dollars, 3 of the best programmers in Boston, one publicity manager, a girlfriend, and my mother!

David laughs

GIL

I wasn't trying to be funny. I was serious.

DAVID

Hey, I lost a few dollars here, too, remember?

GIL

(Stews a bit) Damn it, dad, it was a good idea.

DAVID

Yes, it was. But having a good idea doesn't always guarantee success.

GIL

(Very sarcastic) Thanks for the news flash. *(Pause while David stews a bit)* I'm sorry, dad. Stay. Sit down, please. *(Looks around and realizes the absurdity of the empty room)* On one of my virtual chairs, maybe?

They both share a laugh.

GIL

Want a soda? There's sure to be a few cans laying around here somewhere...

DAVID

No, thanks. I've had enough caffeine to keep me up until the next millennium. What would that be? Y3K?

GIL

(Holding out a can of Mountain Dew he has taken out of a cooler) You sure?

DAVID

Really. No.

GIL

Suit yourself. *(Opens the can and starts to drink)*

DAVID

Never understood how you kids could drink that stuff.

GIL

Well, there's another difference between our generations. You had coffee and speed. We have Mountain Dew and Ginseng.

DAVID

(Sings the John Lennon song) Whatever gets you through the night, is all right, all right.

Gil is shocked.

DAVID

What?

GIL

Nothing. I just never heard you sing before.

DAVID

So?

GIL

So? So I've never heard you sing, that's all.

DAVID

You mean I was never home so how could you hear me sing?

GIL

I didn't mean that at all. Jeez. Lighten up dad. Don't go nuts on me like mom did.

DAVID

Come on, Gil. Your lucky she lasted here as long as she did.

GIL

What did I do?

DAVID

She knows you only asked her to work here just to piss me off. Then when she expresses concern because she sees you making the same mistakes I did, you treat her... horribly. Quite frankly, I don't blame her for walking out.

GIL

But she's my mother.

DAVID

You've got some nerve. Since when did you act like a son?

GIL

This coming from husband of the year.

DAVID

Once again, it's not your fault, is it?

Gil takes another sip. He chuckles to himself.

DAVID

What's so funny.

GIL

Nothing's funny, really. I was just thinking about you and Mom. What a pair. How the two of you ever got together... *(Takes another sip as he enjoys the joke)*

DAVID

It was thanks to Irv Brownstein.

GIL

He fix you up?

DAVID

No, he died.

Gil almost chokes on his soda.

DAVID

Irv was my boss at my first job out of college. Nice enough guy. Took a massive heart attack and died right there at his desk, poor bastard. 52 he was. You'd think I would have gotten the cosmic message from that. What's that old expression, 'on their death bed no one ever wished they had spent more time at the office?' And here was this guy whose death bed was his office. Anyway, the whole company shows up for the burial, which of course is at this Jewish cemetery. So the rabbi says a few words over the grave and then everyone heads back to their cars and we're all talking about what a great guy Irv was and who did we think was going to get his office with the great view and the wall-to-wall carpeting when down along this row of graves I see this woman putting little rocks on top of a tombstone.

GIL

Rocks on the tombstone?

DAVID

Yea. It's this tradition Jewish people have. They put stones on the tombstones to show visitors that the deceased had been visited.

GIL

So this woman was putting stones on the tombstone of somebody she knew.

DAVID

That's I what I thought, at first. But she didn't stop at the one. She's walking down the row, putting rocks on two, three, then ten different tombstones. I can't tell you why but I was fascinated, and kept watching her. When she got to the end of the row, she bent down, picked up some more rocks from the ground, and did the same thing down another row. Then I realized she was going out of her way to put rocks on the tombstones that didn't have any on them. Here were total strangers – dead strangers – whose dignity she felt compelled to preserve. It was weird, but sweet. I mean I just had to meet her. So I went up and introduced myself.

GIL

(Impressed) Just like that?

DAVID

(Hardly believing it himself) Yea. Just like that. We started talking and I asked her out for lunch and before we knew it we were joking how we'd be telling our children how we met in cemetery.

Gil scowls.

DAVID

What's the matter?

GIL

I never heard this story.

DAVID

Oh, well, by the time you were old enough to appreciate it our marriage was already way past being in trouble. Didn't seem worth retelling how we met, you know? Ahhh, I must have been crazy to fall for woman like that. I know I was crazy enough to hire her as my secretary.

GIL

(Incredulous) You were dating when you hired her?

DAVID

It was the seventies, okay? *(Shakes his head)* I really was crazy...

GIL

Well, they say opposites attract, dad.

DAVID

For magnets, maybe. People have to have something in common. I mean here I was eagerly embarking on a life where desire for dignity was a sign of weakness - something to be exploited - and I fell for a woman who gave dignity to the dead. *(He looks sadly at Gil)* Maybe that's all she wanted from you. To show the world some dignity.

GIL

(Eager to change the subject, and very interested in David's story) So when did you know it was over?

DAVID

When I woke up one morning and realized I couldn't live with this woman who was a constant reminder of my own inability to connect with other people. That's when I left her.

GIL

Wait a minute. She told me she left you.

DAVID

She said that because she didn't want her son growing up thinking that his father abandoned him.

GIL

She lied to me.

DAVID

You don't get it, do you? That story was your mother's biggest gift to either of us. She didn't want you go through life hating your father. *(Laughs ironically)* And in the twisted business world I was inhabiting, her story raised my stature among my peers. I became the man who sacrificed his marriage for the good of the firm.

GIL

Christ. And they complain that my generation has no moral center.

DAVID

It doesn't. But look who's writing the textbooks and teaching the ethics courses in your B schools - members of my generation.

The mover is done emptying the room.

MOVER

Which one of you is Bates?

DAVID and GIL
(Simultaneously)

I am.

MOVER

(Holding out a clipboard and a pen) I need someone to sign this.

DAVID

(To Gil) Go ahead. Your last official act as owner.

Gil crosses to the mover and signs.

MOVER

Thanks.

The mover exits. Gil and David look around the office and then start to put on their coats and cross to the door as they speak.

DAVID

So what are you going to do now? Back to school?

GIL

Are you kidding? No way. This didn't turn out the way I wanted it to, of course, but, wow, I I've done anything that's been as much fun.

DAVID

Yea, it's quite a rush. Still, a degree from Harvard is nothing to sneeze at...

GIL

I know. But I can always get my degree. But there's too much happening out there. Y2K is over. Internet use is growing exponentially and computers keep getting faster. The stock market is over 10,000 and there's venture capitalists out there who would kill to get on the ground floor of a promising start-up. And I've got plenty of ideas, believe me.

DAVID

(Proudly) I'm sure you do. Tell you what. If you need some cash to get you going... you know, for desks, phones, that sort of thing, I'd be more than happy to make an investment.

As Gil opens the door and they exit...

GIL

But not a loan.

DAVID

That's my boy. Come on, I'll take you to that Starbucks and you can tell me some of your ideas.

GIL

Okay, sure. But first...

DAVID

What?

GIL

I want to give mom a call.

DAVID

(So proud he could burst) You're a good son.

GIL

Not really. But I figure in the next Millennium I can at least try a bit harder, right?

David smiles at Gil, and exits. Gil takes one more look around the room.

GIL

God, I'm gonna miss the nineties.

He shuts the door behind him and we HEAR R.E.M.'s "End of the World" as the lights fade.

End Scene

End Play