

THE RATTIGAN ROOM

a play by

David Ives

(The vacant former sitting room of a large Victorian house in the South of England. An autumn afternoon. The recent present. The only furniture is a heavy old wooden desk and a couple of functional mismatched metal chairs.)

(At lights-up, a man in an impeccably cut Bond Street smoking jacket sits with his feet up at the desk. He is handsome and soigné and smokes a cigarette in an ebony holder. He looks like a ghost from the 1950's. He is. He is TERENCE RATTIGAN, dead these many decades.)

(Humming idly, takes a couple of well-thumbed magazines from a drawer.)

BRIGGS (O.S.)

This way! Hello? Hello? Mr. Kowalchik...?

RATTIGAN

Oh, damn...

BRIGGS (O.S.)

Down this corridor, please!

(IAN BRIGGS ENTERS, a mousy English real-estate agent. Neither he nor anyone else acknowledges the presence of Rattigan till noted.)

BRIGGS

This might be what you're looking for. Room Number 46 on your plan. The former sitting room. Very spacious, all the original molding and paneling...

(Realizes he's alone.)

Hello? Hello? Mr. Kowalchik? Are you still with me...?

(TIM KOWALCHIK enters, talking on a cellphone. Tim is a harried American personal assistant and general dogsbody. He lugs a hefty plastic cooler.)

TIM

(into cellphone)

... *Adam, Adam*, listen, Adam, you can't get any sushi here. This is *England*. It's the English countryside. It's *Kentucky* right here for sushi.

(To Briggs:)

Adam wants sushi.

(Into Phone)

What, Adam? Uh-huh. Uh-huh...

(To Briggs:)

He says he wants muscular sushi. He wants *ecstatic* sushi.

BRIGGS

Ecstatic sushi...

TIM

What, Adam?

(To Briggs:)

He says he wants the kinda sushi the original Allmann Brothers Band might order on a hot August night after sleeping with every sorority girl at Emerson College. Yeah. Could you find some of that, please?

BRIGGS

Well, I...

TIM

(into phone)

What, Adam?

BRIGGS

(checking his watch)

Um, look... Mr. Kowalchik...?

TIM

(into phone)

So go to Tokyo and stop looking at 150 English country houses if you want fucking sushi! It's not even gonna be ecstatic muscular Allmann Brothers Japanese sushi, it's gonna be tight-assed English Andrew Lloyd-Webber countryside sushi, so forget it.

(To Briggs:)

Is there a sushi place around here, who'll deliver? The sushi doesn't have to be ecstatic.

RATTIGAN

There's nothing around for 20 miles.

BRIGGS

There's nothing around for 20 miles.

TIM

(into phone)

There's nothing around for miles.

(To Briggs:)

He says he saw a sushi place in the village.

(Into phone:)

Adam, I said there is no fucking sushi for a hundred miles!

BRIGGS

Mr. Kowalchik...

TIM

Tim.

BRIGGS

Tim, if he's very far away, maybe we should...

TIM

He's in the limo, he's on his way.

(Into phone:)

What? Yeah, I'm inside the house. What's it like? It's a shithole. Looks totally abandoned. I'm in some kinda...

(To Briggs:)

What is this?

BRIGGS

Sitting room.

TIM

Sitting room. *Sitting* room. Yeah, might work for the sound studio if you tear it apart.

RATTIGAN

The *hell* if you're going to tear this room apart.

BRIGGS

The *hell* if you're going to tear this room apart.

TIM

What's that?

BRIGGS

Nothing. Nothing.

TIM

Adam, what?

(To Briggs:)

He wants to know if it's rapturous.

BRIGGS

I'm sorry?

TIM

Rapturous. If the room is rapturous.

(To Phone:)

Hang on.

(To Briggs:)

He wants to know does the room exhale the spirit of rock 'n' roll?

BRIGGS

Um...

TIM

He says could Zeppelin have recorded their fourth album here if they didn't record it at Headley Grange?

BRIGGS

Um...

TIM

He says does it make you want to lick the neck of Eric Clapton's Stratocaster?

BRIGGS

Is that a kind of guitar?

TIM

(into phone)
He says yeah. 'Bye, Adam.

(TIM hangs up.)

BRIGGS

So as I say, the sitting room. Very spacious...

(Sees magazines on the desk.)

I don't know how these magazines got back up here. Sorry about that.

(Puts them away in the desk and closes the drawer.)

I read them myself sometimes while waiting for prospective buyers...

(Behind Briggs's back, RATTIGAN takes out the magazine he was reading and puts it back on the desk.)

So – the sitting room. Very spacious...

(TIM's PHONE RINGS.)

TIM

(answering phone)
Yeah, Adam. No, I haven't heard from Royceman. Nothing. I'll let you know. 'Bye.

(TIM hangs up.)

BRIGGS

Very spacious. All the original molding and paneling. Quite adaptable, if your employer, Mr....

TIM

Electric.

BRIGGS

If Mr. Electric wanted to use the rest of the house for living quarters and this for a musical recording studio. Tradition has it that this is the room where Terence Rattigan wrote his play *The Browning Version* in nineteen forty-six or seven, something like that...

RATTIGAN

November, 1946.

BRIGGS

November, 1946.

TIM

Wait a minute. Who? What?

BRIGGS

I was saying Terence Rattigan wrote a play here called *The Browning Version*. Or maybe he set it here. I don't know very much about Terence Rattigan myself. Apparently he was once quite famous.

RATTIGAN

He was brilliant!

BRIGGS

He was brilliant! But they say he wrote this room right into the play itself somehow...

TIM

Is this important? Who are we talking about?

RATTIGAN

Terence Rattigan.

BRIGGS

Terence Rattigan.

RATTIGAN

You fucking idiot.

BRIGGS

You fucking idiot. I'm sorry. I'm terribly sorry.

TIM

Did you just call me a fucking idiot?

BRIGGS

I didn't mean to.

TIM

Is “fucking idiot,” like, Cockney rhyming slang for something else?

RATTIGAN

No, it means fucking idiot.

BRIGGS

No, it means fucking idiot.

RATTIGAN

Bloody fucking idiot.

BRIGGS

Bloody fucking idiot. Which I absolutely did not mean, or mean to say.

TIM

Yeah, well, you somehow said it.

BRIGGS

It’s this room, actually. Something sort of *comes over* me whenever I’m inside it.

RATTIGAN

A personality.

BRIGGS

A personality. It’s as if I get Tourette’s or something.

RATTIGAN

Shit shit shit shit fuck fuck fuck fuck.

BRIGGS

Shit shit shit shit fuck fuck fuck fuck. You see?

TIM

Whoa, yeah.

BRIGGS

So Mr., um, Electric is quite famous, is he, as a rock-and-roll singer?

TIM

Writer. Not singer. Not with his condition. Which I’m sure he’ll tell you about in gory detail. Adam’s written for everybody. Everybody who isn’t crap. You don’t know the songs of Adam Electric?

BRIGGS

The name sounds vaguely familiar...

TIM

Heavy-Metal Heart, parenthesis, Titanium Ball Blaster, parenthesis? Sea of Time, parenthesis, What Am I Gonna, parenthesis, Do? Looking-Glass Heart, parenthesis, parenthesis, Reflect Me? The first 56-minute single to make the top of the charts? Sold half a million copies a week for 32 weeks?

BRIGGS

I noticed his name had a number of very interesting umlauts so I presumed he was heavily metallic in some way...

TIM

Nightbird? The third-highest selling album of all time?

BRIGGS

Again, very familiar. So he's quite well placed to buy this wonderful old house.

TIM

Yeah, well, that's a little out of our hands at the moment.

BRIGGS

Out of your hands...?

TIM

How come it sat empty so long?

BRIGGS

I've no idea.

RATTIGAN

Because it's haunted.

BRIGGS

Because it's haunted.

TIM

Haunted?

BRIGGS

Yes, well, you will notice odd events. I have. Things keep appearing and disappearing, for example. This magazine. If I were to place it inside the desk – as I did a moment ago – I'm sure it would reappear very shortly *upon* the desk, as it just did, with no intervening actions on my part. And odd things will sort of pop into your head here. Obscenities like *bloody fucking idiot*, and so on. I'd love to get the house off our hands, actually, as it rather gets me into trouble with my agency. Last week a German couple wanted to buy it.

Lovely people from Frankfurt. For some reason I called them dingleberry-sucking Teutonic mutants. Luckily their English wasn't very good.

TIM

Uh-huh.

RATTIGAN

To tell you the truth...

BRIGGS

To tell you the truth...

RATTIGAN

Speaking on behalf of the house...

BRIGGS

Speaking on behalf of the house...

RATTIGAN

The house doesn't want your type.

BRIGGS

The house doesn't want your type.

RATTIGAN

Which is to say, American barbarians...

BRIGGS

Which is to say, American barbarians...

RATTIGAN

Titanium-ball-blasting what is a very cozy little room...

BRIGGS

Titanium-ball-blasting what is a very cozy little room...

RATTIGAN

And yes, this house may be a shithole...

BRIGGS

And yes, this house may be a shithole...

RATTIGAN

Rather like England these days, in *my* opinion...

BRIGGS

Rather like England these days, in *my* opinion...

RATTIGAN

But it's *my* shithole right or wrong, thank you very much...

BRIGGS

But it's *my* shithole right or wrong, thank you very much...

RATTIGAN

Besides which...

BRIGGS

Besides which...

RATTIGAN

You're planning to resign anyway...

BRIGGS

You're planning to resign anyway...

RATTIGAN

So why don't you just *fuck off back across the pond!*

BRIGGS

So why don't you just *fuck off back across the pond!*

TIM

Dude, you got some serious anger issues.

BRIGGS

Yet I swear to God it's not *me*.

TIM

How did you know I was planning to resign?

RATTIGAN

I'm a playwright, it's my job.

BRIGGS

I'm a playwright, it's my job.

RATTIGAN

"Homo sum!"

BRIGGS
“*Homo sum!*”

RATTIGAN
“*Humani nil a me alienum puto!*”

BRIGGS
“*Humani nil a me alienum puto!*”

RATTIGAN
Translation...

BRIGGS
Translation...

RATTIGAN
“I am a man!”

BRIGGS
“I am a man!”

RATTIGAN
“Nothing human is alien to me!”

BRIGGS
“Nothing human is alien to me!”

TIM
You’re a playwright?

BRIGGS
Not really. I don’t speak Latin, either. I mean, not to my knowledge.

TIM
Well, you gotta have psychic powers to know about me resigning.

RATTIGAN
It’s no great mystery.

BRIGGS
It’s no great mystery.

RATTIGAN
You probably have, what...

BRIGGS

You probably have, what...

RATTIGAN

A wife and a couple of children...

BRIGGS

A wife and a couple of children...

RATTIGAN

You've probably had this job for a dozen years now...

BRIGGS

You've probably had this job for a dozen years now...

RATTIGAN

You have better things to do than play ventriloquist's dummy...

BRIGGS

You have better things to do than play ventriloquist's dummy...

RATTIGAN

For some rock-and-roll Neanderthal...

BRIGGS

For some rock-and-roll Neanderthal...

RATTIGAN

Of course you're resigning.

BRIGGS

Of course you're resigning.

TIM

Briggs, you are one weird dude.

BRIGGS

Thank you. I mean – thank you.

TIM

Well, don't tell Adam about me resigning. I haven't told him yet. Actually, you know, Adam's really sweet. But I do get pretty tired of being his goddamn, what did you call it?

BRIGGS

Ventriloquist's dummy?

TIM

Ventriloquist's dummy.

(Answering phone:)

Yeah, Adam. Adam, *Adam*, don't worry about lunch! I brought along some of that stuff from yesterday. The sandwiches. You *liked* them, Adam. What've I got, let's see...

(Taking wrapped sandwiches out of the cooler.)

I got chopped liver. I got head cheese and avocado. I got salami. I got...

(To Briggs:)

What is that?

BRIGGS

Pickle and pimento loaf.

TIM

I got pickle and pimento loaf. I got two sirloin heroes.

(Takes out wine bottles.)

Plus there's still half a bottle of the Chateau Yquem '77. I got the Riesling you liked.

(Takes out an enormous green plastic jar.)

Yeah, I got the BowelKleen. Extra Strength.

BRIGGS

Tim – *Tim* – if he's very far away...

TIM

Adam, where are you?

(To Briggs:)

He's at the front door, pulling up.

BRIGGS

Brilliant.

TIM

Brilliant, he says.

RATTIGAN

Tell him to fuck off.

BRIGGS

Tell him to fuck off.

TIM

This guy just told you to fuck off. I don't know, he keeps doing that. Dude, I just *told* you we didn't hear from Royceman. I'll let you know when I hear something!

(TIM hangs up and takes some more food out of the cooler.)

Jesus, he drives me crazy...

BRIGGS

(indicating the sandwiches)
Is it quite a lot of people coming, then?

TIM

This? That's just for Adam. He'll only take a bite of this and a bite of that anyhow. He just likes having the options.

BRIGGS

Rather late in the day for lunch.

TIM

Adam spends his life on Eastern Standard Bela Lugosi Time. Five at night is usually breakfast, three in the morning is supper.

(Answering the phone.)

Yeah, Adam.

(To Briggs:)
He's in the house now but he's lost. He's in some room with a pig on the wall.

BRIGGS

Tell him to go out and take a right.

TIM

Go out and take a right.

BRIGGS

Carry straight on.

TIM

Carry straight on.

RATTIGAN

Turn around.

BRIGGS

Turn around.

TIM

Turn around.

RATTIGAN

And piss off back home.

BRIGGS

And piss off back home.

TIM

And piss off back home. That's what he said. *Adam. Adam.*

(To Briggs:)

He still wants sushi.

(Digs bills out of a crumpled wad in his pocket.)

Here. Here's a hundred pounds, is that enough? Could you get us some sushi?

BRIGGS

Now, look, I can't just *produce* sushi. I'm not a sushi machine.

TIM

Adam, I *gave* him money. I *gave* him some fucking money...

(ADAM ELECTRIC ENTERS, still talking to TIM on his cellphone. ADAM has grey hair down to his waist, sunglasses, cowboy boots, and a battered snakeskin jacket that says "ADAM ELECTRIC" on the back. There are umlauts over the second "a" and both "e's".)

ADAM

(into phone)

How much did you give him?

TIM

(into phone)

A hundred pounds.

ADAM

Waldo? Hang on. I'm getting this really weird feedback ...

TIM

I said, *a hundred pounds*.

ADAM

(tossing the cellphone over his shoulder)

Give him another hundred. And call Royceman, I want to wrap that up today. And Waldo, tell Royceman to pay off my bill at Claridge's, they're getting worried. And tell him to set up six hours of studio time in New York so we can fix the B-flat in the *Ball Blaster* reissue.

(To BRIGGS, holding out his hand:)

Hey. Adam Electric.

BRIGGS

Yes, hello. Ian Briggs.

(ADAM embraces BRIGGS, which BRIGGS accepts uncomfortably.)

ADAM

Briggs. Briggs. Briggs.

BRIGGS

Ian Briggs.

ADAM

No, no, no. You're not Briggs.

BRIGGS

I'm not - ? I'm sorry...

ADAM

I'm gonna call you *Marlayna*. Waldo, doesn't he look like a Marlayna?

TIM

Whoa, yeah.

ADAM

(doing Marlene Dietrich from *The Blue Angel*, he sings)

Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss

Auf Liebe eingestellt

Das ist meine Welt

Und doch gar nichts!

This house is *so cool*. This *room* is like, SO. COOL, Marlayna! It just like talks to me somehow.

BRIGGS

Yes, well, it does that sometimes.

ADAM

Hang on...

(Hits a wailing note on an electric air-guitar.)

I'm outa tune...

(He "re-tunes" and does an extended solo with a tour-de-force drum solo finale.)

I love it. It's made for rock'n'roll. It's rapturous. It's *ecstatic*.

BRIGGS

Well, good...

ADAM

And listen to that re-verb! You hear that?

(Imitating Lou Gehrig at Yankee Stadium, complete with microphone echo:)

THIS-is-is IS THE HAPP-app-appiest DAY-ay-ay OF MY LIFE-ife-ife...!

TIM

You gotta stop breaking cellphones, Adam.

ADAM

I couldn't hear out of it anyhow. You know what this room is? This room... This room is Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill* being fucked by Peter Sellars in a fright wig. This room is a glass of Chateau Talbot you drink on a Harley that's about to crash into a brick wall at 200 miles an hour.

BRIGGS

Is that good?

ADAM

Hell, yes, it's good! You don't feel that, Marlayna?

BRIGGS

Absolutely. But listen. I can show you the rest of the house and we could draw up a basic agreement as early as today...

ADAM

If this room was a woman, who would she be? For you?

BRIGGS

I'm only the estate agent, really.

ADAM

Fuck that. Who cares? Who is this room? Anybody. Any woman. Just rock out.

BRIGGS

Emma Thompson?

ADAM

I'm sorry?

BRIGGS

Emma Thompson?

ADAM

Emma Thompson. *Emma Thompson*... I don't get that. Maybe Kristin Scott Thomas...

RATTIGAN

It's Princess Margaret.

BRIGGS

It's Princess Margaret.

ADAM

Princess Margaret. *Yes!*

RATTIGAN

Having it off with Amy Winehouse in a cowshed.

BRIGGS

Having it off with Amy Winehouse in a cowshed.

ADAM

Having it OFF with Amy Winehouse in a cowshed. Absolutely! You see, Marlayna, you were close. You just had to get *inspired*.

BRIGGS

Thank you.

RATTIGAN

Now fuck off home.

BRIGGS

Now fuck off home.

ADAM

Did you just tell me to fuck off home?

RATTIGAN

Indeed.

BRIGGS

Indeed. But I –

ADAM

Indeed. That is so old-world, that is so British.

(Pompous English accent:)

Oh, you bought a six-foot dick made out nipple rings for your flett, did you? Indeed. Oh, and by the way, FUCK OFF HOME, old boy. I really did buy one, you know. A six-foot silver dick made out of interlocking nipple rings? It's like one of those old Chinese puzzles, except it's a dick and it's six feet tall and it's made out of nipple rings.

BRIGGS

I see. And you bought this because...?

ADAM

It's *sculpture*. You know what my nipple dick is?

RATTIGAN

Is it ecstatic?

BRIGGS

Is it ecstatic?

ADAM

It's ecstatic. It's *mythical*. Isn't that six-foot dick what rock'n'roll's all about? Isn't that what ART is supposed to be about? Giving people something they've never seen before, grabbing 'em by the neck till they go –

(Grabs BRIGGS by the throat:)

Goddamit, I'm alive and fuck you, I'm gonna dance till my head blows off or the cosmos decides to rip me off the face of the earth!

BRIGGS

Mm. Yes.

ADAM

I got the nipple dick when we went to the Salzburg Festival this year. I want to convince the Salzburgers to expand their repertory and not do just Mozart.

BRIGGS

I believe they do other people...

ADAM

Right! So maybe it's time they did my nine-hour heavy-metal opera *Mister Motherfucker* based on *Oedipus Rex*. It played for three years in Czechoslovakia and some American producers are interested but they say I have to cut it down to three hours and get Harry Connick Jr. to sing the lead. NO FUCKING WAY. Anyway right outside Salzburg we found this Polish sculptor who makes these gigantic erotic sculptures out of sex toys. You know those lubricated rubber pumps with the--?

BRIGGS

Please. Please...

ADAM

I walked into his studio, I said, *Wrap everything up, I'll take it all*. You'll get to see the nipple dick after I move in. Maybe I'll put it under the pig. Where are my pills, Waldo? And mix me up a BowelKleener so I can have lunch.

TIM

(gives ADAM a large pill case)

Here's the pills.

(ADAM starts heaping multicolored pills on the desk while TIM spoons a green powder out of the plastic jar and mixes an enormous green glass of BowelKleen.)

ADAM

Oh, it's gonna be beautiful. We can put a Steinway grand over there. We put the sound board here. Not the API 1608. Not with all this wood. We go classic with a Neve, the old 5316. We put in a Neumann U87 and a Fairchild 670. These walls will give up songs like the sea gives up plankton for the great white whale. Did you hear from Royceman?

TIM

Nothing, Adam. I'll let you know. All right?

ADAM

(gesturing to the sandwiches on the desk)
What is this, Waldo? I thought I was having sushi.

TIM

Adam, I told you, I can't get you any sushi. And you've got your lunch right here! Look! I even found you some head cheese!

ADAM

(in a rather frightening strangled voice)
I WANT SOME SUSHI, TIM. Sushi, Tim. Sushi, Tim. Sushi. Sushi. Sushi. Sushi.

(RATTIGAN goes into the desk, takes out a menu and puts it on the desktop.)

RATTIGAN

Here!

BRIGGS

Here! Oh, here's a sushi menu. Looks like it's right down the road...

TIM

You said there wasn't any sushi. What's the matter?

BRIGGS

Nothing. That was just rather frightening, is all.

ADAM

It's my *Exorcist* voice. I once stopped a 747 from taking off because I lost a pill.

BRIGGS

Yes, I can believe that.

ADAM

I had four hundred people and the pilot on their knees, trying to find my Halcion. You don't know where I could score some Vicodin, do you?

BRIGGS

I could enquire on your behalf...

ADAM

Is it good sushi from this place?

BRIGGS

Ecstatic.

ADAM

Or is it tight-assed Andrew-Lloyd Webber English countryside sushi?

BRIGGS

No. Very muscular.

ADAM

Good. Got a pen, Waldo? We'll have a triple order of miso soup, five maki, four eels, six tuna... You want some, too, Marlayna?

BRIGGS

No, thank you.

ADAM

You know what? Fuck it. Just order this whole page. Six of each, plus whatever you want. Make it eight of each, Marlayna might want some.

(TIM EXITS.)

BRIGGS

So. Getting back to the house...

ADAM

Would you like a BowelKleen, Marlayna?

BRIGGS

I don't actually know what BowelKleen is...

ADAM

(washing down pills with BowelKleen)

Well, it's not just a laxative. It keeps you regular. If your stool is hard, it makes it soft. If your stool is soft, it makes it hard.

RATTIGAN & BRIGGS

Good Christ.

ADAM

You see, I have this condition. My tongue goes all the way down to my stomach. You've heard of a feral tooth?

BRIGGS

No...

ADAM

Where the root of a tooth curls up through your nostrils and grows into your brain?

BRIGGS

No...

ADAM

I've got a *feral tongue*. My tongue goes so far down, I could lick the inside of my stomach.

BRIGGS

Ah-ha.

ADAM

That's where my song came from, *Lick My Heart, parenthesis, I'm a Fugitive From Love, parenthesis*. Anyway, it's why I don't sing.

RATTIGAN

It doesn't seem to keep you from talking.

BRIGGS

It doesn't seem to keep you from talking.

ADAM

Luckily. Plus I have to spend like six hours a day on the toilet.

BRIGGS

May we talk about the house? I have a brochure if you'd rather read that.

ADAM

No, no, I want to hear you, Marlayna.

RATTIGAN

Well, speaking *on behalf of the house*...

BRIGGS

Well, speaking *on behalf of the house*...

TIM

(stepping back in)
Uh-oh.

RATTIGAN

This house has quite enough problems on its hands...

BRIGGS

This house has quite enough problems on its hands...

RATTIGAN

Without rock-and-roll troglodytes taking over the place...

BRIGGS

Without rock-and-roll troglodytes taking over the place...

RATTIGAN

Striding in here like Oedipus at Colonus on acid...

BRIGGS

Striding in here like Oedipus at Colonus on acid...

RATTIGAN

With your ungrammatical umlauts and meaningless parentheses...

BRIGGS

With your ungrammatical umlauts and meaningless parentheses...

RATTIGAN

And your BowelKleener...

BRIGGS

And your BowelKleener...

RATTIGAN

And your six-foot tongue...

BRIGGS

And your six-foot tongue...

RATTIGAN

And your nipple dicks....

BRIGGS

And your nipple dicks...

RATTIGAN

You couldn't afford this house anyway.

BRIGGS

You couldn't afford this house anyway.

RATTIGAN

So could you please just *go away*.

BRIGGS

So could you please just *go away*.

ADAM

(just ignoring all that)

So anyway, as of today I'll be able to afford this house. I'm selling my catalogue.

BRIGGS

I'm sorry? Selling catalogues?

ADAM

My song catalogue, for like a zillion dollars. Which reminds me. Waldo –

TIM

Call Royceman.

ADAM

Call Royceman. Tell him I'm buying this house and I want an advance on my zillion, so we have to sign off on that deal like today.

(TIM EXITS.)

BRIGGS

Mr. Electric, if you don't mind my asking, is the buying of the house contingent on this deal...?

ADAM

Briggs, *what are you doing here?* Don't you have a family? Don't you have any friends, or a life? You should be in Pago-Pago sipping papaya juice out of a girl's navel. You should be wearing a silver ball gown and riding a red Jaguar convertible down sun-dappled country lanes while you jerk off into the wind.

BRIGGS

So I should.

ADAM

Is it haunted? The house.

Absolutely not.

BRIGGS

Yes, it is.

RATTIGAN

Yes, it is.

BRIGGS

The last tenants died very violent deaths.

RATTIGAN

The last tenants died very violent deaths. Not really.

BRIGGS

They were eviscerated with sushi knives.

RATTIGAN

They were eviscerated with sushi knives.

BRIGGS

Cool!

ADAM

By the ghost of Terence Rattigan.

RATTIGAN

By the ghost of Terence Rattigan.

BRIGGS

And who the fuck is Terence Rattigan...

RATTIGAN

And who the fuck is Terence Rattigan...

BRIGGS

You blithering idiot?!

RATTIGAN

You blithering idiot?!

BRIGGS

Did you say Terence Rattigan...?

ADAM

BRIGGS

A playwright who once wrote a play here, or set it here...

ADAM

Terence Rattigan wrote something *here*?

BRIGGS

Or set it here.

ADAM

Oh, man. That is SO. COOL!

BRIGGS

You're familiar with Terence Rattigan?

ADAM

Are you kidding? *Separate Tables*? *Deep Blue Sea*? Terence Rattigan's plays are like a bottle of Montrachet kept warm between the tits of Deborah Kerr. The times kinda changed and Rattigan got fucked, but he is bound for a comeback. He's immortal. Terence Rattigan was *here*? *In this room*? Now I have got to have this house. Marlayna, give me a paper to sign.

BRIGGS

Yes, but –

ADAM

We'll call this *The Rattigan Room*. We'll put a typewriter there on a pedestal like an altar in his honor.

RATTIGAN

Embrace him.

(BRIGGS does so.)

You wonderful man!

BRIGGS

You wonderful man!

(CLEPSIDRA ENTERS.)

CLEPSIDRA

Oh, wow. Oh, wow. Oh, Adam. YES!

ADAM

Isn't it ecstatic?

CLEPSIDRA

Yes. It's ecstatic.

ADAM

What is this room? Come on.

CLEPSIDRA

This room... This room is Uma Thurman fucking Peter Sellars in a fright wig.

ADAM

SCORE! Didn't I tell you?

CLEPSIDRA

It's Princess Margaret.

ADAM

And Amy Winehouse!

CLEPSIDRA

It's beautiful. You're going to be so happy here. You're going to write so many songs here.

(Kisses him.)

I can just feel it.

ADAM

This is Clepsidra.

BRIGGS

Hello.

ADAM

This is Marlayna.

CLEPSIDRA

Hello, Marlayna.

BRIGGS

Ian Briggs, actually. Estate agent.

CLEPSIDRA

And who's he?

BRIGGS

Who's who?

CLEPSIDRA

(indicating RATTIGAN)
Your friend in the velvet lapels.

(To RATTIGAN:)
Hello.

RATTIGAN

Hello.

ADAM

A little too much happy powder back in the groupie days.

BRIGGS

Getting back to the matters at hand...

ADAM

Stop apologizing for yourself, Marlayna! You sold your house! I'll not only take it, I'll take two of it. As long as the other house is a Princess Margaret/Amy Winehouse house.

BRIGGS

But am I right that you're not quite in funds at the moment?

ADAM

Everything's cool, Marlayna, everything's very cool.

BRIGGS

No, everything is NOT very cool, and the name is BRIGGS, thank you, Ian Michael Briggs, registered and qualified estate agent. WHO LIKES ANDREW-LLOYD WEBBER *and who has reached the end of his nipple-ring rope*. So why don't you take some sushi and swathe it in wasabi and stuff it up your own BowelKleened bum! In short, if you would like to buy this noble pile, if Mr. Royceman and your zillion-dollar catalogue deal comes through, please call me. But somehow I doubt it will, Mr. Adam Umlaut-Umlaut Electric. You *buffoon*.

(BRIGGS EXITS.)

ADAM

What did I say?

CLEPSIDRA

Nothing, babe.

ADAM

I liked him. Why did he get so upset?

CLEPSIDRA

I don't know, babe.

(Pause.)

ADAM

Oh, well. Okay... You want a sandwich?

CLEPSIDRA

No, thanks.

ADAM

What...?

CLEPSIDRA

No, thanks. You go ahead. Go on, eat.

ADAM

Nah. I'm not hungry. Maybe I'll check out the garden or something...

(ADAM looks at the magazines. RATTIGAN and CLEPSIDRA go aside, unheard by Adam.)

RATTIGAN

He's going deaf, isn't he?

CLEPSIDRA

You noticed it, huh.

RATTIGAN

It's sort of my job to notice things. Doctors can't help?

CLEPSIDRA

He hasn't been to a doctor in twenty years. He's afraid they'll tell him he's going to die.

RATTIGAN

He seems to have enough medication.

CLEPSIDRA

It's all black market. Self-prescribed. He doesn't sleep anymore, day *or* night. You see – Adam is terrified.

RATTIGAN

Is he going to die?

CLEPSIDRA

The way he lives? Mixing Percodan with hundred-and-fifty-year-old port? First he's going to go deaf from all those years playing keyboards in front of the speakers when he was fat and fifteen years old. Then he sat up all night one night and wrote a love song called *Sea of Time* and Aaron Epstein of Montclair New Jersey turned into Adam Electric from heaven. Larry Royceman the biggest crookedest agent in the business picked him up and Adam got rich writing these albums that you'd put on late at night under the headphones that made you think you were going to die of heartbreak they were so packed with pain. That's why Adam writes fifty-six minute songs. He wants you to feel alive. Feel like you're a drunk and heartbroken 16-year-old kid wading out into a Kansas cornfield at two in the morning trying to die of too much moonlight. *Rapture*. That's what he wanted, that's what he gave. Then he wasn't so rich anymore because he'd spend a hundred thousand dollars of the company's money hiring an orchestra to fix one measure on an album – and then a hundred thousand of his own when the company stopped paying. Or because he'd invite a dozen people to fly first class to Paris, or to St. Petersburg to see the Kirov with him. And because he won't sue Royceman the way he ought to and because he overpays Waldo then gives him a \$50,000 bonus every year. But maybe mostly because the music business died, and albums died, and Adam's kind of music died. The fashion changed in heartbreak.

RATTIGAN

I've seen it happen.

CLEPSIDRA

Now there's this catalogue deal and Adam's acting like he's flush again. What he really wants is a place where he could have another night like he did when he was 19 and wrote *Sea of Time*.

RATTIGAN

And this house is the place.

CLEPSIDRA

So we're buying it from you? Or are you Marlayna's boss, what are you?

RATTIGAN

Not quite. I'm a playwright. Or was, once upon a time. Terence Rattigan. Hello.

(Holds out his hand and she shakes.)

CLEPSIDRA

Hello.

RATTIGAN

I'm dead now, you see.

CLEPSIDRA

Oh. So how is that, being dead?

RATTIGAN

Like anything, it takes a bit of getting used to. Losing the powers one had. Only getting what other people leave behind. Being in one spot all the time. This is it, you see. My own little plot. Or *sub*-plot. I should hardly complain. This is a remnant of my world. I quite liked my world until it went bust. I do envy your world its wilder raptures. Its cries for more wine and louder music.

CLEPSIDRA

You're a writer, you spent your life handing out rapture.

RATTIGAN

Not really. Loneliness was more my corner.

CLEPSIDRA

Maybe people weren't into rapture so much in your time.

RATTIGAN

Oh, we had our points. In any case, I've come to quite like this room. People say I wrote a play here, but I swear I've never been in this room.

CLEPSIDRA

So how did you end up here?

RATTIGAN

Do you know how *you* ended up where you've ended up? On that little patch of real estate you call your life?

CLEPSIDRA

No.

RATTIGAN

Nor I. I presume there's a purpose to it somewhere.

CLEPSIDRA

Maybe you're here to meet us.

RATTIGAN

I fear our meeting is going to be brief. That deal's not going to go through, is it?

CLEPSIDRA

No.

RATTIGAN

And you're going to go totally bust on what he's spending.

CLEPSIDRA

We're busted already.

RATTIGAN

What will you do?

CLEPSIDRA

What's the difference? I love him. Adam's my best friend.

RATTIGAN

Well, I shall be sorry to lose you, parenthesis, Clepsidra, close parenthesis, and your friend.

(TIM ENTERS.)

TIM

Adam – Royceman's on the line. About the deal.

(ADAM takes the phone from TIM.)

And Adam, I want to talk to you about something when you're done.

ADAM

(into phone)

Larry, hi. What took so long? – Uh-huh. Uh-huh. You sure? No going back? Oh-kay... Listen, I want to finish my lunch. Yeah. 'Bye.

(ADAM hands the phone back to TIM and pours a glass of wine.)

TIM

Well? What happened?

ADAM

We got it.

TIM

The deal?

ADAM

Yeah. It's going through.

TIM

It's going through?!

ADAM

Uh-huh. So what did you want to talk to me about?

CLEPSIDRA

Oh, Adam! You got the zillion?

ADAM

Three zillion. So Waldo, get me Marlayna on the phone! This house is ours and *we are gonna rock and roll!*

(He does an ecstatic air-electric-guitar riff as a DELIVERY WOMAN ENTERS, with an ENORMOUS PACKAGE.)

DELIVERY WOMAN

Did somebody here order some sushi?

(Drops the package.)

OH MY GOD, are you *Adam Electric*?

ADAM

Yes, I am.

DELIVERY WOMAN

YOU ARE MY GOD!

CLEPSIDRA

Well, Terence?

RATTIGAN

Ecstatic.

(RATTIGAN hits a wailing air-electric guitar note.)

(BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.)