

Marty Roberts

A Stageplay

Written By

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ACT I

SCENE 1

Announcement of play starting in X minutes.

Generic music builds, to starting point, house lights dim, then everything goes silent.

Curtain rises.

Full darkness for ten seconds.

Brilliant back light shows long, rectangular box, behind scrim, above head level, center stage.

Laying prone, inside the box, is the nude shadow figure of Kelly Barton. The figure stirs, rubs her eyes and moans. She tries to sit up, bangs her head on the top and the box and drops back prone, rubbing her head.

KELLY BARTON

Honey?

She tentatively reaches up and runs her hands over the roof above her.

Honey? This isn't funny. Turn on the lights. I'm sorry I made you angry. Please...

She rolls around several times, frantically looking for an opening in her small box. Her voice becomes frantic with fear and pain as she realizes she is trapped.

Honey? Jeff, baby, please don't do this. Please...

Her movements become frantic and her voice raises into incoherent screams for a few seconds.

The back light fades to black and her screams echo in a dark hall, then fade a few seconds later.

SCENE 2

Stage-left, lights come on to show a cluttered construction office with a drafting table, chair, desk, computer, rolled plans, etc.

Fred Granger is standing at the drawing board, looking at a plan.

Marty Roberts is working at the keyboard, sighs, shakes his head, and sits back, rubbing his eyes.

He looks up on the wall and stares at a poster of Ginger. She's wearing a bikini and clear plastic heels and standing next to a piece of construction equipment.

He mutters something and Fred looks over at him.

FRED GRANGER

What's that, Marty?

MARTY ROBERTS

Just my new morning ritual, Fred.

FRED GRANGER

It looks like you're obsessing over that damn poster of Ginger. I don't know why you keep torturing yourself with it.

MARTY ROBERTS

I keep it there to remind me that there's no fool like an old fool. That's why.

FRED GRANGER

As long as we're on the subject, what's the latest?

MARTY ROBERTS

Yesterday was another wasted day in court while the damn attorneys suck more blood from the stone. I swear. There are times I think they are working together, just to see how much they can milk from this divorce.

FRED GRANGER

For Pete's sake, what now?

MARTY ROBERTS

Ginger and her attorney have convinced the judge that not only does she get the house, her car and one-half of the company I spent the last twenty years building, but...

FRED GRANGER

But what?

MARTY ROBERTS

She's accusing me of putting her through extreme mental anguish and in order to avoid putative damages, I need to attend divorce consoling sessions with her at about a hundred bucks a session. And it comes out of my pocket.

FRED GRANGER

I can't believe the judge is buying all that shit. What's your attorney doing about it?

MARTY ROBERTS

He's filed several papers over the last month, but I'm starting to think the only side the judges and lawyers are on is their own.

He looks at his watch and stands up.

Damn! I almost forgot. I'm supposed to head over to pick up the final check on the Simpson's project. The last couple of checks barely covered payroll, but that didn't include me. The idea of having your own company is to take home some cash yourself.

Stage lights dim and Marty walks slowly over to set on stage right.

SCENE 3

Lights come up on stage right.

We see an expensive-looking office with William Simpson III sitting behind the desk.

William looks up to see Marty enter. They shake hands.

MARTY ROBERTS

Good morning, William. I know you're busy, but I need to pick up the last check. Payroll, ya know.

WILLIAM SIMPSON III

That is unfortunate, Marty. Have you seen the news?

Marty's eyes narrow suspiciously as William hands him a newspaper.

WILLIAM SIMPSON III

As you can see from the headline article in the financial section, one of my partners cleared out the company coffers and split for parts unknown. We thought we were recovering, albeit slowly, but now it looks like we may just have to close about half our locations. I just don't have the cash resources to cover the last payment.

Marty is obviously barely holding his temper. He tosses the paper aside and folds his arms. He takes a moment to compose himself.

MARTY ROBERTS

You do realize that I'm on the ropes here, too? It seems to me you are just trying to avoid shelling out two hundred thousand dollars of a final payment. I gave you a damn good deal on a million and a half dollar remodeling job on that waterfront mansion of yours.

WILLIAM SIMPSON III

Look Marty. I've no free cash right now, but I have a suggestion. I just foreclosed on a really nice place that is easily worth a half mil or more. The owner left town last year and it's been empty ever since. Let me show it to you. If you like it, we can call it even.

You should be able to turn it over for much more than what I owe. Besides, you've been living in a dump rental every since your separation. You might want to just keep it for yourself.

Marty shakes his head, shrugs, and turns away.

MARTY ROBERTS

Come on then. Show me what you're talking about.

Lights dim as they walk slowly over to stage left.

SCENE 4

Stage left house lights reveal a dump. Marty turns slowly, looking it over. He shakes his head in disgust.

MARTY ROBERTS

This house might have been worth five hundred thousand a few years ago. But now that the bubble has burst, and it's been empty for awhile, the damn vandals have trashed a couple of back windows, spray painted graffiti on some of the walls and plugged up the toilets. Hell William, I would be lucky to move it for a hundred and fifty thousand in the current market.

WILLIAM SIMPSON III

I know it needs some TLC, but it's the best I can do right now, Marty.

MARTY ROBERTS

William, you know as well as I do that this is far short of what you owe me. I'd have to pump at least sixty thousand into making it look good enough to sell. I really would like to have the money you owe me.

William sticks his hands in his pockets and looks sullen.

WILLIAM SIMPSON III

I'm really sorry to hear that, Marty. I checked with my attorneys and accountants and they say it will be at least six to nine months before I'll have that much leeway in my cash flow. Naturally, I'll give you their contact information and you can have your attorney discuss it.

MARTY ROBERTS

You know damn well that I can't afford to wait six months. My divorce settlement is supposed to wrap up in a couple of weeks and I've barely enough to cover my payroll. Even so, I'm going to have to layoff at least four people.

WILLIAM SIMPSON III

As I said, I'm really sorry to hear that, but look at it this way. If you take this place, you can save the twelve hundred a month you're paying for rent right now, live here and remodel one room at a time. In a few months, it will be ready to go and with some new paint and window glass, you should be able to move it for more than I owe you.

Lights dim. William leaves and Fred takes his place.

SCENE 5

Fred looks around the set, kicks over a cardboard box, uses his toe to nudge a ratty-looking sleeping bag.

FRED GRANGER

Man, what an asshole. It's going to take some time to clean this dump up, much less make it livable.

MARTY ROBERTS

Yeah, but I didn't have any choice and that bastard rich kid knew it. I'm the clear owner of this place now and the way the market is going, it will probably be home for the next couple of years.

FRED GRANGER

I must admit, it's in a nice, quiet neighborhood and with five acres, it's considered a mini-ranch. The zoning will allow you to keep a couple of horses.

MARTY ROBERTS

Hah! Right! Can you see me taking care of horses? I actually have a better idea. The back half of the property is hidden from the road and I checked the zoning. I'm allowed to have a machinery shed or up to a four car garage back there. I'm going to convert the unfinished basement into our new office and put in a machinery shop out back. Most of our equipment we can move from site to site and only keep a few pieces here. That way, I can lease our current office and yard to help with the cash flow.

FRED GRANGER

Well now, if the neighbors don't complain, I think that might just work.

MARTY ROBERTS

I've already talked to my immediate neighbors. They each have more horses than are allowed and one has a hot rod shop out back. Nobody is going to make waves.

FRED GRANGER

In that case, old man, let's finish cleaning out the master suite and moving your furniture.

MARTY ROBERTS

What the hell do you mean, "old man"? I can still outwork your punk ass. And besides, I thought you were taking a day off to go fishing?

FRED GRANGER

Well, I figured I could either sit in the bass boat, getting sunburned and bored or I could give you a hand with some of this crap. It is going to cost you, however.

MARTY ROBERTS

Oh? And just what will that cost be?

FRED GRANGER

My darling wife and daughter are going to come by sometime this afternoon, with lunch and a twelve-pack of beer. You and I are going to sit around, drink and trade lies. While they do some cleanup. She's going to drive me home later.

MARTY ROBERTS

That doesn't sound too bad...

FRED GRANGER

Oh! I almost forgot to mention. You're paying for the food and beer.

Lights dim as they are moving boxes and rotten furniture off-stage.

SCENE 6

Lights come up on center stage. It is now a cluttered basement storage area.

Fred and Marty come down the stairs and shake their heads at the mess.

FRED GRANGER

You know, it's kinda strange.

MARTY ROBERTS

What's strange?

FRED GRANGER

Well, the kids did a pretty good job of painting obscene graffiti and breaking stuff on the main floor. Even took care of a few windows and carpets on the second-story, but it doesn't look like they even came down here. I wonder why?

MARTY ROBERTS

Yeah. I noticed that too, but was just counting my blessings. It might be because there was no power in the house and unless they had flashlights, this is a pretty dark and dank basement. I'm going to have to make sure it's well sealed and run a dehumidifier for awhile, before we start storing plans and other paperwork.

FRED GRANGER

Well, you've already got the AC running overtime. Maybe you should cut back a bit and save on the utility bill until we're ready.

MARTY ROBERTS

Now that is weird. It's been comfortable the last couple of days and it never occurred to me to turn it on.

FRED GRANGER

Seriously? Then why is it so damn cold down here?

Marty walks over and checks a thermostat.

MARTY ROBERTS

The HVAC is turned off and the thermometer says it's seventy three right now.

He rubs his arms and gives a shake.
You're right though. It does feel colder than that in some places. Must be some sort of weird draft.

The two friends get busy moving boxes and cleaning up.

Lights dim and curtain falls.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Curtain rises on a cleaned up center stage.

There is a sturdy desk slightly off-center and turned 3/4 view, facing the audience.

The drafting table is partially facing the audience on the other side of center stage.

There is a filing cabinet and an antique coat rack with a couple of hard hats and safety yellow vests.

Fred is sitting on a stool at the drafting table. He is holding a cellphone to his ear.

FRED GRANGER

Thank you. That is good news. [pause] Okay! I'll see you tomorrow, then.

He hangs up the phone and turns to his friend. There! That sumuvabitch is finally done.

MARTY ROBERTS

And just which sumuvabitch are we talking about this time?

FRED GRANGER

I just got a call from the Curtis job site. The building inspector just signed off on the Certificate of Occupancy and the good Mister Curtis confirmed I can pick up the final check in the morning.

MARTY ROBERTS

Now that is some good news. A couple more like that and we might actually start back on the road to being a real company again.

He pauses and frowns at the computer monitor for a few moments, then reaches over, turns it off, and stands up.

Screw it! Let's get a beer. I can finish this first thing in the morning.

Fred grabs his hat and heads up the stairs with Marty right behind him. Marty reaches to shut off the lights at the top of the stairs and then stops. He looks around.

Did you hear that?

FRED GRANGER

Hear what, Marty?

MARTY ROBERTS

I dunno. I could have sworn I heard something just then, when I flipped the light switch.

He shakes his head and turns back to the switch. Must have been some weird bird outside. Let's go grab that beer.

He flips the switch off, lights dim, and they exit.

Kelly's voice is heard to give a whimpering plea for help.

SCENE 2

Marty flips on the basement lights and comes downstairs. He's wearing a different outfit, holding a cup of coffee, and looking chipper from a good night's rest.

He sits at the desk, turns on the monitor, and takes a sip of coffee as it warms up.

MARTY ROBERTS

This damn spreadsheet isn't going to balance itself. I need to wrap it up before Fred and the rest of the crew arrive.

He types a few lines, takes another sip of coffee, then pauses, shivers, and rubs his arms.

He stands up and walks over to the thermostat. What the hell is going on here?

He walks around the set, rubbing his arms and holding up his hands to check for airflow. There has to be some hidden vent. The thermostat says it's 74 in here right now and I'll be damned if it doesn't feel more like 50.

He reaches the corner behind his desk and shivers again. This seems to be where it is coming from, but there are no vents and the AC is turned off. What the hell?

He slowly turns to face the audience and a back-light comes on behind a sheet of scrim. Kelly is nude and cowering against the back corner of the room. She is staring up at the lights and whimpering.

Marty turns, sees her, and freezes in place. He is shocked into silence for a moment, then tilts his head. His voice is soft and concerned.
Miss? May I ask what you're doing here and where are your clothes?

Her attention shifts to him, her eyes grow wide in fear, and her mouth opens in a keening wail of terror.

The back light goes out and she vanishes.

Marty stands gaping for a moment, then slowly walks around the room, muttering softly to himself.
She didn't come down the steps and didn't go up them. Where the hell...?

He stops and stands up straight, then checks the thermostat once more.
It still says 74 and now it feels more like it.

There is the sound of the door opening and Fred comes down the steps.

FRED GRANGER

Mornin' boss-man. How's it goin'?

MARTY ROBERTS

I think I'm getting too old for trying to drink the boys under the table.

Fred pauses and gives his old friend a quizzical look.

FRED GRANGER

You okay?

MARTY ROBERTS

Yeah. Let's just get to work. That should help burn off the leftover alcohol.

Lights dim as they grab helmets and head upstairs.

Marty kills the lights after a pause to stare at the corner of the room.

SCENE 3

Marty flips on the basement lights and comes down the steps.

He's wearing a light robe and slippers. He looks like he just got out of bed.

He's got a cup of coffee and took a sip as he walks around the room, pausing to stare at the empty corner.

This is ridiculous. There is no such thing as ghosts. I'm a grown man that had too much to drink and was way too tired and stressed to be working so early, yesterday.

He shivers, takes another sip of coffee, finishes he inspection, then heads back up the steps.

Just as he reaches to kill the light switch, there is a soft whimper from the corner. He turns and stares.

The back light slowly brightens to show Kelly, behind the scrim. She is holding her hands up to hide from the glare of the light.

Marty remains quite, just watching as if he is trying to memorize her features. After a moment, she blinks as if her eyes have finally grown accustomed to the light and she starts to look around. When her eyes meet his, she freezes in place and they stare at each other for a few moments. Then, she gives her head a slight shake and the back light switches off. She is gone once more.

He shakes his head, shivers and rubs his arms, then turns, switches off the light, and heads upstairs.

SCENE 4

Stage left has been setup to look like a counter at the county clerk's office. An older woman is behind the counter when Marty walks up.

MARTY ROBERTS

Hi there, Marsha.

MARSHA

Well hello there, Mister Roberts. How may I help you this fine day?

MARTY ROBERTS

I called earlier about the names or any other information you might have on the place where I'm living, now.

MARSHA

Oh my, yes. That didn't take too long.

She pulls a folder and sets it on the counter.

It's actually a fairly new home. That development is only about twenty years old and that house was built about seventeen years ago. There have only been three owners, including yourself. When Jeff Barton won some sailing championship, his parents gave him that property. He used his winnings to build the house and it was a party mansion for about five years.

MARTY ROBERTS

Then what happened?

MARSHA

Kelly happened, is what. Best thing that boy ever ran into. She calmed him down and the rowdy parties stopped. For awhile, anyway.

MARTY ROBERTS

They started to party too much?

MARSHA

It usually wasn't there, but it got pretty bad. I don't know all the details, but it was a pretty sad state of affairs. You see, Jeff really liked to drink and when Kelly wouldn't let him have a dozen or so friends over for a party, he would just head down to one of the local watering holes and tie one on. He came close to losing his license with a DUI charge on more than one occasion. One of his good friends and drinking buddies was a pretty good attorney.

MARTY ROBERTS

And what finally happened? Did they get a divorce?

MARSHA

Nobody really knows. They were deeply in debt, the bank was getting ready to foreclose on the place and one day, they left town. A month or more later, Jeff was arrested for DUI, assaulting a police officer, and assault and battery against a female bartender. He spent almost a year in jail before being paroled. It wasn't until a few weeks after his arrest that someone asked him about his wife. He told everyone they had left the state due to financial problems and had a bad falling out. Supposedly she took the last of their cash and left him to return to live with her parents.

MARTY ROBERTS

Is that where she ended up?

MARSHA

That's just it, she never made it home and nobody has seen her since. They questioned him about it, but he just clammed up.

MARTY ROBERTS

Where is he now?

MARSHA

Dead. Just a week out of prison, he got into a bar room brawl and ended up with a knife in the ribs.

MARTY ROBERTS

Does that folder have any photographs of them or of the house when it was new? I'm working on rebuilding it and might want to keep it original.

MARSHA

You're in luck. I've a few.

She pulled some shots and he glanced at them, then froze when he saw one. He held it up for Marsha to see.

MARTY ROBERTS

Are these the original owners?

MARSHA

Yes. That is Jeff and Kelly on their honeymoon. They did make a Lovely couple, didn't they?

Marty just nods while staring at the photo. He's obviously shocked at the image.

Stage lights fade.

Marty puts on a jacket to go with his tie and walks across the stage to the set on stage right.

It has been setup as a court room with a judge on the bench.

JUDGE

It has become blatantly obvious to me that neither side in this divorce has fully come to any sort of agreement.

The judge shakes her head in disgust.
I hereby order both parties back to the bargaining table for a period of ninety days. At the end of that time, you will present this court with a finalized agreement with absolutely no areas of further debate. Furthermore, if this has not been accomplished, I will freeze all assets of both parties and hold all of you in contempt of court. Have I made myself clear?

Ginger's attorney started to open her mouth and the judge pointed the gavel at him.
If I hear anything other than yes, your honor, I will hold you in contempt of this court and you will spend

the weekend in a cell. I said, have I made myself clear?

Both sides echo agreement.

The judge smacked the gavel harder than needed and left the room in an angry swirl of robes.

Ginger turned and gives Marty a withering glare.

GINGER ROBERTS

This is all your fault, you fucking asshole!

Marty grimaces, shakes his head, and tries to walk around her.

She steps in front of him and sticks a finger on his chest to stop him.

All I want is what is rightfully mine. I deserve to be happy, too.

MARTY ROBERTS

I have agreed to most of this game of legalized theft, but I will not pay for your therapist for the rest of your life. You and that ambulance-chaser already had me break up my company as well as agree to let you have the house I built more than ten years before I met you. You have an eighty thousand dollar car I told you I couldn't afford even before the divorce and you still want more?

He slowly shakes his head and pushes her hand away from his chest.

No! Find some other poor sucker to mend your black soul.

Her attorney puts an arm between them and guides her to one side and out of the courtroom.

HIS LAWYER

We're going to let them simmer for the next week. Then, I'll rewrite the same basic package we agreed on two month's ago and present it as a final offer. I think the judge has finally had enough and will order them to accept it.

MARTY ROBERTS

Let me know when we can wrap this up. I am tired of playing games with that bitch.

Lights dim and curtain falls.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Curtain rises and lights come up on the center stage, basement office.

Marty comes down the steps, wearing jeans, deck shoes, and a loose shirt. He's got his usual cup of coffee.

He sits at the desk, turns on the monitor, takes a sip of coffee, then shivers and rubs his arms.

He gets up, walks slowly over to the wall and stares at the corner.

MARTY ROBERTS

Kelly? You there?

His voice is soft and friendly as he pauses before continuing.

Kelly? That is your name, isn't it?

The back light shows the young woman, still nude, but standing with her back towards him and one arm raised, pressing against the back wall. He watches her for a few seconds.

Kelly? You don't have to be afraid. There is nothing to hurt you here.

She stepped back and spins around when he starts to speak.

The second time he names her, she freezes in place. Her lips purse and then move into several, conflicting expressions.

She glances down as if just realizing she is naked and covers her breasts with her arms. Shrinking back against the wall, she shivers as if terribly cold, then just fades away as the back light dims.

That's okay, Kelly. I won't hurt you. Any time you want to... Want to do what? I don't really know. But there is no reason to be cold and afraid.

He stands there for a moment, then something occurs to him.

He rushes upstairs and comes back down a moment later with a garment bag. He unzips it and pulls out a fluffy robe with a beach scene resort logo on the back.

I got this for my soon-to-be ex-wife on our honeymoon.
She thought it was silly and never wore it.

He grabbed the antique coat rack from near the stairs and placed it next to where she had appeared. He hung the fluffy robe on it.

The doorbell rings and he shouts up.
It's open. Come on down.

His lawyer comes down the steps and hands him a letter.
What's this?

HIS LAWYER

It's a restraining order, Unless you are in the presence of attorneys or officer's of the court, you have to maintain at least one hundred feet separation from Virginia Roberts.

MARTY ROBERTS

What the hell is this all about? I've never, ever raised a hand to her. Even when she has threatened and slapped me, I've resisted the urge to throttle the bitch. So why this and why now?

HIS LAWYER

According to her attorney, it is based on your antagonistic reactions to her perfectly reasonable requests for mediation, she feels threatened and is afraid.

MARTY ROBERTS

But... But... That is just idiocy. Why?

HIS LAWYER

This is only a gambit to make you look bad in front of the court. Don't worry, I'll file the appropriate protests and you will probably have to sign a similar restraining order on her.

Shaking his head, Marty follows his lawyer upstairs.

The set lights dim as the back light brightens to show Kelly, hands rubbing her arms, staring at the robe.

After a few moments, the back light dims and the stage is dark.

SCENE 2

Center stage lights come up and Marty comes down the steps. He is dressed differently.

He takes a seat and fires up his monitor, once more.

The doorbell rings.

MARTY ROBERTS

It's open! Come on down.

His lawyer comes down the steps, briefcase in hand.

HIS LAWYER

Have you heard from your estranged wife or her attorney?

MARTY ROBERTS

I thought that is what I was paying you to do? It's been a week since they filed that restraining order, remember?

HIS LAWYER

Well, I don't know what is going on right now. I sent some papers over the first of the week and I've not heard anything back. And, that's not normal. I just thought I would check with you, before I called his office.

He turns away from the audience, taps his bluetooth earpiece and mutters something at the phone.

After a moment, he stands up straighter, his brows furrowing.

My goodness. I'm sorry to hear. Let me get back with you when I return to my office. Yes. Thanks for letting me know.

He hangs up, shakes his head, and turns back to Marty.

Now that was unexpected.

MARTY ROBERTS

Now what the hell does she want?

HIS LAWYER

That's not it. It seems that on Tuesday, they had an afternoon appointment and her attorney took the rest of the day off.

MARTY ROBERTS

So?

HIS LAWYER

His legal aide just read part of the police report to

me. It seems that emergency personnel responded to a call from a hotel on the beach and pronounced him dead upon arrival at the hospital. Turns out they were having a little romantic interlude when he suffered a massive coronary.

Marty takes a few moments to think before answering.

MARTY ROBERTS

All things considered, no one can say I liked the guy, but I wouldn't wish that on anybody. Where does that leave us, though?

HIS LAWYER

One of his partners will have to review the case files and they will probably schedule at least one more meeting with us before the judge's deadline. I have no idea how that will turn out, however. They might ask the judge for an extension.

His lawyer leaves.

SCENE 3

Marty pours himself another coffee. He sits down and stares at the computer monitor for a few moments.

The back light shows up, but there is only a blurry figure in the closet.

He leans back in the chair, eyes focused on the shadows in the back.

Elbows on the chair arms and fingers steeped in front of his chin, Marty decides to give it another try with a soft voice.

MARTY ROBERTS

Kelly? If you'd like to come out, you're welcome. I'm the only one here right now.

He waits a few more seconds, then repeats in the same soft voice.

Kelly? Don't be afraid. You're welcome here.

Barefoot, clutching the robe tightly about her, Kelly walks hesitantly from the closet.

She has a nervous, half-smile and stops as soon as she is in the room.

He motions towards a chair on the other side of his desk.

Would you like to sit down?

She shakes her head.
Can you speak?

The ghost loses her smile and only stares at him.

Just as he starts to repeat himself, her lips
tremble and she replies in a soft, hoarse whisper.

KELLY BARTON

Thank you.

MARTY ROBERTS

You're welcome...

All the lights go out for just a moment.

When they come back on, Kelly is gone, but the
robe is crumpled on the floor.

Marty gets up, walks over, and picks up the robe.
He slowly looks around, then shakes it out and
hangs it back on the coat rack.

You're very welcome, Kelly. I'll leave it here. Feel
free to use it anytime.

Stage lights dim and when they come back up, Marty
has on another shirt, a jacket, and a helmet.

Fred is dressed as if he just came off a job site,
too.

FRED GRANGER

Whew! Another nice hot day. I envy you this nice cool
office.

MARTY ROBERTS

Just remember I've been out running a backhoe most of
the day. And I've still got an hour's worth of
paperwork to catch up on. In the meantime, you pal, are
going home to a hot meal and watching TV with the
family.

FRED GRANGER

Now you know why you are the boss and I'm just hired
help. Good night. Don't stay up too late.

Fred heads upstairs.

Marty hangs his hat and safety vest on a new rack
by the stairs.

Marty pours a cup of hot coffee, pauses for a
moment, then pours a second one.

He places one on the far side of his desk, then sits back and sips his.

Kelly slips out of the closet, the robe is wrapped and tied at the waist.

Come on in. There's something hot if you like.

She takes a few tentative steps towards the desk, then leans over and takes a long, slow sniff. Her eyes close in a real smile.

KELLY BARTON

Hhhmmm... That smells delightful. Thank you."

MARTY ROBERTS

No problem. I'll be sure to make two from now on.

KELLY BARTON

What are you doing this for me?

Marty shrugs and takes a sip before answering.

MARTY ROBERTS

Do you know what happened to you?

The smile leaves her face, she glances down, and clutches the robe tighter.

KELLY BARTON

Yeah. He killed me. I'm dead, is all. Nothing else.

MARTY ROBERTS

To answer your question, Kelly... I've never met a ghost before and you looked like you could use a friend.

KELLY BARTON

I think that friend stuff might work both ways. Perhaps you can see me because you're going through a real rough time right now and need a friend of your own?

The doorbell rings.

MARTY ROBERTS

Who the hell can it be at this time of night? The door is locked. I'll be back in a second.

He runs upstairs.

Kelly steps back into the closet and the robe is tossed back to crumple on the floor.

Marty and Fred tramp noisily back downstairs. Okay, partner. Spill it. What brings you back here?

It's past your bedtime and I don't want your wife pissed at me.

FRED GRANGER

Hi, Marty. I just got some info that I thought you should know. Maybe we should grab a beer.

Marty pulls a couple of bottles from the mini-fridge.

MARTY ROBERTS

So, what is so important it can't wait until Monday?

FRED GRANGER

One of the team is getting married this weekend, so some of the guys threw him a bachelor party.

MARTY ROBERTS

Yeah. I knew he was getting hitched, I've even arranged for a cash wedding present. But how come you're all too proud to invite the boss?

FRED GRANGER

That was my doing. When I heard where they all wanted to go for the party, I knew you wouldn't want to tag along. It was at the Foxy Tail Club.

MARTY ROBERTS

Good idea. That is the topless joint where I met Ginger. No problem there. I hope everyone had a good time?

FRED GRANGER

Maybe too many of us had a good time. Ginger was there. She was partying with some of her dancer friends. They got pretty damn drunk and put on a helluva show for the party.

MARTY ROBERTS

Ginger was dancing? She swore she would never get back on the pole again.

FRED GRANGER

That's what I had heard, too. But maybe losing her legal-eagle boyfriend was too much and she needed some attention?

Fred takes a swallow of beer and Marty takes one, too.

That's not all, either. She was showing off her new car in the parking lot. A couple of her friends tried to talk her into taking a cab home, but she took off in a brand new Porsche. From what she had told some of the guys while lap-dancing, she had bought it for him right before he up and died on her. She couldn't see it going

MARTY ROBERTS

Wow! At that rate, she's going to burn through all the cash she got from me in the first agreement. I mean after paying off bills and breaking up the company, She only got about eight hundred thousand. That would make for a comfortable living, but between the parties, clothing, attorneys and now a new Porsche, I would be surprised if she has half of that left.

FRED GRANGER

Yeah. So, I figured you should know that we can come up with a half-dozen witnesses to her aberrant behavior if your attorney thinks it might help.

Marty's cell phone rings. He answers it and listens in shock.

MARTY ROBERTS

This is he... Yes... Yes, I understand. Thank you, officer.

FRED GRANGER

What was that all about? You look white as a ghost.

MARTY ROBERTS

That was the Sheriff's department. They wanted to inform me that my wife was just in a serious accident and has been helicoptered to the trauma center. I'll have to check with my attorney to see if I should go near her with the restraining order.

FRED GRANGER

Never mind that. I'll be your backup witness. Let's go.

Fred and Marty head upstairs.

Stage lights dim and come back a moment later.

Marty comes downstairs wearing a totally new outfit. He sits at his desk, looking down.

He jumps in surprise when Kelly steps out of the closet and walks up beside his desk. She's wearing the robe.

KELLY BARTON

What's the matter, Marty?

MARTY ROBERTS

Ginger was in an accident late last night. She was drunk and wrecked a hundred thousand dollar car. Fortunately, the airbags save most of her from injury.

KELLY BARTON

Only most of her? How badly has she been hurt?

MARTY ROBERTS

The Sheriff's Deputy told me that some sort of debris had come through the side of the roof and gave her a severe concussion. The doctors fixed up a couple of minor scratches and said there is no other damage, but she still hasn't woken up. They are concerned.

KELLY BARTON

And you, Marty? How do you feel?

MARTY ROBERTS

I feel sad. I am way past loving her after the way she has treated me the last two years, but I would never wish something like this on her. I'm going to just keep watch, pay the bills and hope she recovers. After she's on her feet, we can go ahead and finish the divorce.

Lights fade to darkness with Marty sitting, depressed and Kelly tentatively reaching out, her hand over his shoulder, but not touching.

SCENE 4

Lights come up on stage right. The set shows a hospital bed and Ginger, head bandaged, machines flickering behind her.

Marty walks in and stands looking down at her, his hands stuffed in his pockets.

A doctor walks in, holding a clipboard.

DOCTOR

Mr. Marty Roberts?

MARTY ROBERTS

Yes, that's me, doc. Are you a new specialist? I've not seen you here, before. What can I do for you?

DOCTOR

I have a matter of grave importance to discuss with you.

They sat and the elderly doctor cleared his throat before continuing.

The staff attending your wife have conferred with me. I'm on the ethics board, here at this health facility. You see, your wife has been in a non-responsive coma for well over a week. All of her blood work and vital signs show she is the picture of health.

MARTY ROBERTS

Except she won't wake up.

DOCTOR

Precisely. I've looked at her records as well as her current condition and the EKG is not showing brainwave activity. Even a little wiggle, once in a while, might be a dream or an attempt to wake up. Your wife, on the other hand, has shown no brain wave activity at all for the last five days. The common term is brain-dead.

Marty said nothing, but just stared off, into the distance.

The doctor gave him a moment, then continued. At this point, I must offer the alternative of unplugging her and if we act promptly, the donor card on her license will allow her to live on, while giving life to several other patients.

MARTY ROBERTS

Give us a few more days. I'll make a decision this coming week.

Without waiting for a reply, he walks out of the hospital room.

The lights in the hospital room dim.

SCENE 5

The lights on the center stage basement office brighten.

Marty comes down the steps, pours two cups of coffee and sits down.

MARTY ROBERTS

Kelly? Want some coffee?

She slips out of the closet, wearing the robe, stands over the coffee, sniffs and smiles her appreciation.

KELLY BARTON

Always, Marty. What's the matter, though. You look worried.

MARTY ROBERTS

I need to talk to someone. I don't expect answers, but more of a sounding board. If that's okay with you?

KELLY BARTON

So you decided to chat with a dead woman rather than your best friend or a shrink? I'm flattered, I think.

MARTY ROBERTS

That is because I know they would both tell me the perfectly logical answer and I'm afraid I would have to agree with them. But something just doesn't feel right...

She leans over the cup again and closes her eyes to take another long sniff.

KELLY BARTON

Uuhm... This is ambrosia. This is about Ginger, isn't it?

MARTY ROBERTS

According to the doctors, there is no hope for a recovery. They want my legal permission to pull the plug and let them part her out for organ donation.

KELLY BARTON

So, I'm guessing the question is, do you really want her dead? You have to admit, it would solve a lot of your financial problems.

MARTY ROBERTS

No. I don't want her dead. It would be a terrible waste and besides... There is just something that sticks in my craw about it. And that doctor reminded me of a vulture, waiting for a carcass to ripen. I hate the idea I would be feeding that.

Marty took another couple of sips of coffee while Kelly is sitting, her elbows on the desk, breathing the fumes off the other coffee.

KELLY BARTON

Marty? Will you do me a favor?

MARTY ROBERTS

Sure. What do you need?"

She stands up, opens her arms and lets the fluffy robe drop to the floor. She stands there, nude.

KELLY BARTON

Go ahead. Pick it up, please.

He stares, open-mouthed at the beautiful young woman. Then slowly gets out of the chair and picks up the robe.

MARTY ROBERTS

But why? This has been keeping you warm.

KELLY BARTON

It will be dawn soon. As soon as you can, I want you to take the robe to your wife and cover her with it. Then talk to her about your honeymoon and that you were happy and bought it for her.

MARTY ROBERTS

Do you think it might snap her out of it, Kelly?

KELLY BARTON

Just promise me you'll give it a try, okay?

He is dubious, holds up the robe, and looks down at it.

Kelly quickly turns and disappears into the closet.

MARTY ROBERTS

Okay. But I'll find you another one, just the same.

SCENE 6

The lights come up on the hospital room, stage right.

Ginger is still in the bed, not moving.

Marty walks into the room, spreads the robe over her, looks around, nervously, then starts talking.

MARTY ROBERTS

I know this wasn't one of your favorites, Ginger. But maybe it will remind you of the wonderful time we had in the islands. That hotel had a huge pool and you looked great in your white bikini. I think you'll admit, that was one of the good times.

He sits there for a few moments, then straightens up, stretches and reaches for the door.
I need something with caffeine in it.

One of the machines starts to beep loudly and a red light starts to blink.
What th' hell?

The doctor rushes into the room. He stares at the machines for a moment, then checks some wires.

MARTY ROBERTS

What's going on, doc?

DOCTOR

She is showing some very strong brainwaves. It looks like she should be waking up.

Marty steps up to the side of her bed, stares unbelieving at the monitors for a moment, then looks down and takes her hand.

MARTY ROBERTS

Ginger? Wake up. Come on now. Ginger? It's time for you to wake up...

She opens her eyes. He stares, dumbfounded, for a moment.

Ginger? Can you hear me?

She winces and gives him a half-smile

GINGER ROBERTS

Please don't shout. I can hear you just fine.

One of the nurses picks up the edge of the robe and the pale woman on the bed grabs it back. Please! Don't take it just now.

MARTY ROBERTS

I didn't think you cared much for it. After all, you left it in the stuff you told me to throw out.

Ginger clutches the robe close to her breast.

GINGER ROBERTS

Are you kidding? I've worn this ever since you gave it to me. It's kept me warm for several months now.

MARTY ROBERTS

Wha...? But...? Is that you, Kell...?

She holds fingers over his mouth and stared at him.

GINGER ROBERTS

Stop right there, Mr. Roberts. My name is Ginger and I am your wife. As soon as they spring me, we're going to put a stop to this divorce nonsense, aren't we?

He slowly smiles to match hers and leans in for a kiss.

Lights fade and curtain falls.