

ELAINE. Thanks, we'll pass.

RICK. I want a whisky.

ELAINE. You're driving, dear. It's very risky.

RICK. Okay. I'll settle for a spritzer.
Gimmee a little Schlitz and mixer.

DICK. I hope this isn't cause for tension.

RICK. Nothing that we'd care to mention.

ELAINE. Just a minor marital spat.

JANE. Oh good I'm glad it's only that.
Keeps marriages from going flat.
But take a seat, let's have a chat.

(Dick gets Rick spritzer as the rest move to living room)

ELAINE. I love your stuff! I mean, your clothes --
To speak of them defies all prose.
That brooch, that pendant and that ring!
Handcarved in jade?

JANE. *(nodding)* Yes. From Beijing.

They're very smart with linen suits,
Pleated, over leather boots.

ELAINE. I have my boots hand tooled in Stutt-

Gard. *(Note to Elaine: take a beat before "Gard", as if embarrassed you haven't quite made the rhyme.)*

DICK. You buy German?

ELAINE. Lined in ermin.

JANE. How discreet!

RICK. They really make her look a treat.

JANE. I buy mine on trips to Rome
From a little shop a Zurich gnome
Referred to us.

DICK. It's called "Il Dome"

JANE. But I prefer to call it home.
(sighs) Italy.

ELAINE. *(same tone)* Italy.

RICK. Sure beats Paris!

JANE. French fashions are fashioned as if to embarrass.

ELAINE. They're designs designed for some dowager heiress.

JANE. And that "je ne sais quoi", my God it's passé --

ELAINE. Unless you're bulimic, anorexic or grey.

JANE. It's "La Crap" for "Les Nouveaus" what more can one say?

ELAINE. Oh for Rome, Milano --

JANE. Even Brindisi.
Italy makes one's shopping so easy!

DICK. But small talk aside, let's get clear
Precisely why you ventured here.
No need to be shy. We know you're nervous
Or you wouldn't have enquired about our service.

RICK. *(to Elaine)* Tell them. I'm too ashamed to speak.

ELAINE. *(blurts out)* We live quiet lives of desperate chic.

JANE. Poor dears, that's tragic.

ELAINE. Yes, and bleak.

RICK. We realize in shame, to wit,
That both our lives are full of shit.
We may be bright, successful, rich...
But I'm a bastard!

ELAINE. I'm a bitch!

RICK. Our generation once blazed like a comet,
But now we're adults we make the world vomit.
Wherever you look, we're under attack
Called acquisitive pigs by the media pack.

ELAINE. They've raised the most ferocious rumpus:
Said we've lost our moral compass.

RICK. Okay. We're adult. We can take what they hurl --
But it hurts when their crap hits our little girl.

ELAINE. She's smart, she's cute, she's the best kid alive.

RICK. She has it all. And she's only five.
She can swim, play tennis, ride a pony,

Work a Video-Cam.

ELAINE. She has a Sony.

RICK. She's seen symphonies, operas, David Bowie.

ELAINE. By the way, her name is Chloe.

RICK. Her life was perfect until last May --
I remember it like it was yesterday --
Our angel ran home covered in mud
From a fight at her Daycare.

ELAINE. Kids called her a crud.

RICK. With tears in her eyes and pigtails askew
She sobbed, "Why does everyone hate me and you?
Kids say you're a greedy old bag of worms,
And I'm a rich kid with cooties and booger germs."

ELAINE. We both fell apart.

RICK. Our dreams had derailed
For our babe's perfect childhood.

ELAINE. God, where had we failed?

What made her this target for playground aversion?

RICK. Her ballet classes?

ELAINE. Her French immersion?

RICK. Confused and angry, I started to drink.
And Elaine's nerves collapsed.

ELAINE. I went over the brink.
I took to bed, unable to eat.

RICK. Her shrink called it a psychosomatic retreat.

ELAINE. All year, depressed, we had weeping wailies,
Until last week while reading the dailies
We caught an article in the Lifestyle section
That got Rick so aroused he got an erection.
Didn't you hon? *(to Dick & Jane)* The first one all year.

RICK. You promised you wouldn't mention that here.

ELAINE. The headline said:
"Running on Empty? Make a New Start
For Renewed Self-Esteem Call 'Having With Heart' ".
So we read ahead.

RICK. All about how you promised, no ifs ands or buts,
To give meaningful life to material sluts.

ELAINE. Please help us! What's wrong!

RICK. Are we really depraved?

ELAINE. Tell us what, in God's name, must we do to be saved?

DICK. Good Lord, your esteem's in terrible shape.
It's flat as a pancake.

JANE. No. A crepe.

DICK. But there's no need for angst or material privations,
Your problem's not ethics. It's public relations.

RICK. Sounds artsy-fartsy. We need "PRACTICAL".

DICK. Exactly: our Gold Plan.

JANE. Its objects are tactical.

RICK & ELAINE. The Gold Plan?

JANE. *(nods)* To empower you in Image Restructuring!

(Dick and Jane flip to gold card reading "PLACEMENT")

DICK. All life is buy and sell, a fact well-known to Baby Boomers.
 And what we have to sell is us.

ELAINE. We're fodder for consumers?

JANE. Even a Grinch in a pinch will flinch
 From attacking a certified hero.
 Put a halo in place and your odds of disgrace
 Are reduced to practically zero.

RICK. So what's the deal?

JANE. We'll market you both as two of the faces
 Seen to be seen in all the right places.

RICK. Like where?

JANE. *(very smooth)* Glad you asked. Dick?

DICK. Thank you, Jane.
 For a Teflon reputation you simply can't afford
 Not to be on an arts or social service board.

So, for a fee, we'll place you, through our contacts and channels
On many such high minded boards and panels.

JANE. Soon the activist types who loathe and revile you
Will do handsprings and backflips to charm and beguile you.

ELAINE. Even radical clones who scream no one can trust us --
That we're just greedy pigs out to screw social justice?

DICK. You'll be their closest friends.

JANE. The little principle that'll make you invincible
Is known as means and ends:
Board connections enhance whatever chance
Those radicals have to get their grants.

DICK. Except when dealing with the terminally stupid
Self-interest plays the role of Cupid.

JANE. But to be realistic, no matter the cause,
It won't gain you any acclaim and applause
Without a little well heeled promotion
To stir up interest and public commotion.

DICK. So kids, get ready for --

DICK & JANE. The Platinum Plan!

(They flip to a platinum card. It reads "PROMO")

JANE. According to all of our statistics
Folks believe what they're told by the media mystics.
Our response?

DICK. To make you a hit with opinion makers
Our electronic swamis, gurus, fakes and fakirs.

JANE. And once you get real hotsi-totsi,
To set you up with the paparazzi.

RICK. That's a great spiel, but hey get real,
How will you bring the press to heel?

DICK. If you've access to info you're one of the forces
That newspeople call their "inside sources".

JANE. And Dick and I, we certainly do.

DICK. Because of the nature of our milieu,
We know who's hot, who's not and who's got what.

JANE. Presto! For tips and scoops we get action

An arrangement of mutual satisfaction:
We're helping them help us help them with our work.

DICK. It's called a "Social Circle Jerk"! (*gasp from the others*)
I don't mean to imply our connection's erotic
Just that our needs are "symbiotic".

RICK. Hot stuff! To be quoted in all of the papers!

ELAINE. But what'll we say? You're giving me vapours!
They can be vicious! Mad dogs in a pack!
I'm having a-panic-a-panic attack!!!

JANE. Hold on, Elaine! There's no need to fuss!
For a small added fee leave the thinking to us.

DICK. You'll love it. We call this plan "Platinum Plus"!

RICK & ELAINE. "Platinum Plus"?

(Dick & Jane flip to platinum card reading "POP PUFFS")

JANE. We'll write you a series of appropriate platitudes
Designed to show you've correct social attitudes.
Old sentiments jazzed up to sound new minted.

DICK. With a leaven of hype to make sure they get printed.

RICK. You'll put words in our mouth?

ELAINE. It doesn't sound right.

JANE. My God, Elaine, you're far too uptight.
All public leaders whose speeches are toasted
You'll find, on inspection, have had their lines ghosted.

DICK. With our words, you'll shine as you play to the galleries
Winning respect and far higher salaries.

RICK. Hold on. Did I hear you amiss?
You mean we can even make money on this?

DICK. And how.

DICK & JANE. "The Gold Plan Placement Bonus"!

JANE. Through a number of ethical quirks
Mere placement on boards provides lucrative perks.
Like gold-chip networks.

DICK. These increase your chances
Of landing substantial career shift advances.

JANE. And how about --

DICK & JANE. "The Platinum Plan Placement Promo Bonus"!

JANE. In which we take note of this ethical oddity:
Civic heroes are bought as a market commodity.

DICK. Multi-national thugs who pollute our society
Like to make a big show of their corporate piety.
They need "Good Guys" on staff. Human components
In a P.R. ploy to outflank their opponents.

RICK. If we get praised for our work for the masses
The big buck boys will be kissing our asses?

DICK. Instead of corporate shuffles which might otherwise have chopped you
You'll be fending off big business types attempting to co-opt you.

RICK & ELAINE. Wow!!!

JANE. We know what you think: it's too good to be true.
But you kids deserve it. I mean, it's you !

DICK. It's unique, exclusive. We guarantee
Only "Having with Heart" has THE 7 P.

ELAINE. Gosh yes, and Chloe will love it too.
It sounds so fulfilling.

RICK. And as for the billing?

DICK. According to our specs.
You can pay by VISA or Mastercard.

JANE. Though we also take personal cheques.

RICK. Buzzer the bills, we'll take all the frills
Whatever it costs, we're sold!
The potential is thrilling for making a killing
While keeping a heart of gold!

DICK. Glad to have you on board.

JANE. If it's not untoward:
Tomorrow Kate Hughes --

ELAINE. Who does news interviews?

JANE. *(nodding)* Will be here for a spot
'Bout celebs who are hot
Meaning us.

DICK. Join in if you're able.
 It's a docu/report: P.R. of the sort
 You can't buy.

JANE. And it's network, not cable!

RICK. Just think: you and me, all over T.V.!

ELAINE. How exciting!

RICK. I'm damn near exultant!

ELAINE. It's worth what you pay for the social cachet
 Of having a lifestyle consultant!

(Crackle of bright thunder. Music Chord. Lights change to blue.

*Dick, Jane, Rick & Elaine freeze. A puff of smoke and, in a follow-spot,
George appears in a Magician's tuxedo. He looks at the tableau,
impressed.)*

GEORGE. Oooooo.

*(He looks from them to us and jokingly shields his eyes, feigning
blindness from our sparkling jewellery.)*

GEORGE. Aaaaaaaa! (*He drops his hands and grins. He is absolutely charming, ingratiating -- the perfect host.*)

Dear friends, endeavouring to keep you happy
We've kept our premise short and snappy.
And in verse, as you have heard,
For social masks must be observed.
By the way, I'm George in case you wonder
Who fancies these theatrics: smoke and thunder.
You'll shortly see me dressed in rags
Not featured in the fashion mags,
Provide dramatic complication
To Dick and Jane's high social station.
Like magic, you'll see fear displace
Their cultivated social face:
And verse, the artifice of our elite's aesthetic
Give way to prose, the language of the street's poetic.

*(As George continues to speak, lights fade out on our
"Acquisitors")*

GEORGE. In other words, these rich guys'll speak verse until they
freak out and us poor folks'll talk prose. And here you were worried
you'd be stuck with two solid hours of couplets. Happy? No kidding. So's
our author. Okay. That's the set-up. Let's party!

