Scene One

(A modern house in Ojai, California, early evening, August 1993. CORKY enters polishing coffee spoons, which she sets on a side table. Her husband, NORM, hurried, enters from the bedroom, still in the process of getting dressed.)

(If projection is possible, right before curtain, three separate cards should announce:)

[Ojai, California.]
[August 1993.]
[83°]

CORKY. Norm, they're here in fifteen minutes.

NORM. I'm going crazy. Help me.

CORKY. What?

(NORM is exasperated. He's trying to remember something.)

NORM. I'm trying to think...this book title. It's for Jeopardy...

(Indicates the TV back in the bedroom.)

It's...oh...the tip of my tongue. Something like...Death to the Cuckoo. But not that...com'n...book title. It's like Death to the Cuckoo...

CORKY. To Kill a Mockingbird.

NORM. Thank you! Thank you! How'd you come up with that?

CORKY. I know your brain.

NORM. And yet another reason to be married.

CORKY. You'd repressed it, that's all.
NORM. Yeah. And when I repress something, I push it way down and kick dirt over it. It's not coming back.

(He puts on his pants.)

CORKY. If you don't deal with your subconscious, it will deal with you.

NORM. That's good. Who said that?

CORKY. In that book, remember?

NORM. Oh yeah.

CORKY. You want a pre-wine?

NORM. A what?

CORKY. A pre-wine. A wine before the wine. Doesn't count.

NORM. Doesn't count?

CORKY. Not if it's before the guests come. Doesn't count.

NORM. Then what's the problem?

(NORM takes a sip of wine.)

(Sees the eggplants.) What are these?

CORKY. Eggplants. Arrived this afternoon. No note.

NORM. Must be from the Newmans.

CORKY. Thoughtful.

NORM. I guess.

CORKY. What's she like?

NORM. I don't know her; just him. She was a West Coast editor at Vogue for three years. She seemed fine.

CORKY. You met her?

NORM. She was picking up Gerald after tennis. She's the one who mentioned the meteor shower.

CORKY. Oh.

(Then.) How does a meteor shower come up in conversation?

NORM. She said Gerald wanted to leave town to see this meteor shower, first I had heard of it. So he puffs up - kept calling it a rain of fire, can't miss the rain of fire, once in a lifetime, blah blah, and I said we live in Ojai and he said can you see stars there and I said, “Yeah, shopping on the weekends.”
(CORKY stares.)
And he looked at me like that...

(Points to her face.)

...but she laughed.

CORKY. You liked that.

NORM. Well, yeah. She got the joke.

CORKY. I read people know if they want to sleep with a person within two seconds of meeting them. I believe it. Do you?

NORM. I could see that.

CORKY. (Missed.) Oh yeah well that's fine.

NORM. I didn't mean I wanted to... You said you believed it.

CORKY. I said I read it; you said you believed it.

NORM. No, I didn't say I believed it; I said I could see it.

CORKY. Oh, so you can see the moon but you don't believe the moon.

NORM. What?

CORKY. (Relaxing.) Hey, remember the summer I believed in crystals?

NORM. (laughs a bit.) Yeah. And how about me? In college I had a moment with the power of pyramids.

CORKY. Put a weapon in the hand of a stupid belief and it kills you.

NORM. Wow. That's a thought. Who said that?

CORKY. I did.

NORM. You did?

CORKY. Why?

NORM. It's clever. It just doesn't sound like you.

(CORKY, hurt, steps toward him and enters a "talking mode." NORM goes to meet her. They hold hands and face each other. They've done this a hundred times.)

CORKY. I love you and I know you love me.

NORM. (Quoting CORKY back to her.) You said, "I love you and I know you love me."
CORKY. I understand you probably did not know you hurt me.

NORM. You said, "I probably did not know I hurt you." That's what you meant?

CORKY. Yes. I'm asking you to be more careful with my feelings. They are not playthings.

NORM. Your feelings are not playthings. That's what you meant?

CORKY. Yes.

NORM. I'm sorry that I hurt you in this way. I hope that you understand that I did not intend to hurt you, and I will try to use that particular joking manner less often.

CORKY. I do understand.

(Then.) How come she's not with Vogue anymore?

NORM. No clue. I met her for five seconds.

CORKY. I hope they like our place.

NORM. Are you kidding, this place could be in Architectural Digest. I love the furniture, I love the pillows, I love everything about it.

CORKY. He sounds nice.

NORM. He is nice.

CORKY. I don't like her.

NORM. What? Why?

CORKY. I don't know. The Vogue thing. What was she wearing?

NORM. I can't remember. A top...a black top, pencil skirt...is that what they call it?

CORKY. It is if that's what it was.

NORM. Brunette. Stylish. Big hair. [This description can change to suit the actress.]

CORKY. Sexy?

NORM. Not in the least.

CORKY. So she was.

NORM. A bit.

CORKY. Thank you for being considerate.
NORM. I honor your feelings.
CORKY. And him?
NORM. Him. He's hard to describe, kind of two people. Can be vicious on the tennis court if he's behind, then if he's ahead, wonderful guy. Likes to pontificate. I figure for one night it could be interesting, and he seems very connected. Could be good for us.
CORKY. Your instincts are always good.
NORM. I really appreciate your attitude on this.
CORKY. I acknowledge your appreciation.
NORM. (Picks up his glass.) A bit more wine.
CORKY. Maybe you should wait.
NORM. Good idea. Don't want to peak too early.
CORKY. Or not at all.
(He looks at her.)
I'm so sorry...
NORM. I honor that you're sorry.
CORKY. I honor and cherish you as a person.
NORM. I need to be in my cave now.
CORKY. Yes.
(She exits to the kitchen. He picks up a newspaper from a low table. Looks at a circled column.)
NORM. (Reads aloud, to himself.) ...From the northern sky. Tonight, fifty to sixty meteors are expected per hour. It has been suggested that life on this planet could have been generated by meteors striking the earth...
(Lights fade.)