

A Meditation on The Misanthrope:
10 Years Later

A Play in One Act

by

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Cast of Characters:

CELIMENE	Female, age 30.
ORION	Male, early 30s.
IMOGENE	Female, age 30.
PHILLIP	Male, early 30s.
NARISSA	Female, 40s.
AUSTIN	Male, late 20s.
MALE ASSISTANT	Male, 40s.
FEMALE ASSISTANT	Female, 40s.
WAITER	Male, 20s.
DRUNK WOMAN	Female, 40s.
SQUATTING SUBWAY MAN	Male, 50s.
SUBWAY WOMAN	Female, indeterminate age.
SUBWAY MAN	Male, indeterminate age.

The actor who plays ORION also plays the SQUATTING SUBWAY MAN.

The actress who plays IMOGENE also plays the FEMALE ASSISTANT and SUBWAY WOMAN.

The actor who plays PHILLIP also plays the MALE ASSISTANT and SUBWAY MAN.

The actress who plays NARISSA also plays the DRUNK WOMAN.

The actor who plays AUSTIN also plays the WAITER.

Therefore, this play requires 3 male and 3 female actors.

Setting:

New York City. The present.

Scene 1

(A gigantic Louis XIV sun is visible on the back wall of the set, facing the audience. In addition to lots of bright gold it features between one and three colors, perhaps pink, lavender, tangerine, turquoise or sea-green. The production should have a noticeable color scheme.

Lights rise on CELIMENE seated at her vanity, which is, ideally, on top of a circular hydraulic platform in the stage right half of the set. She is wearing a skirt and a bra, no shoes or shirt, makeup or jewelry yet. It is 7:40 AM and she is performing her morning toilette. The ritual is a dance, imbued with a strong sense of organic rhythm. She is alternately careful and careless in her preparations, as the moment strikes her. CELIMENE applies makeup, selecting primarily natural colors, and perfume. She twists her artificially, yet perfectly highlighted blond hair up into a knot speared on the first try by a hair stick. She pulls on and buttons a button down shirt and ties her most colorful, expensive scarf around her neck. She selects jewelry, perhaps earrings and a ring or two, and steps into shoes, high-heeled pumps. During this process the voice of ORION is heard.)

ORION

Celimene Dupont is a Senior Account Executive with eight years of experience at Melon & Thorpe. Celimene works closely with clients in the development, implementation, media planning, placement and documentation of campaigns. She is the Assistant Treasurer of the Event Committee of the Manhattan Chapter of the American Marketing Association. She holds a BA from the College of William & Mary.

(fairly long pause)

This is her professional biography from our company website. Her name, of course, is changed.

(fairly long pause)

In addition to following, to following the actions of Celimene I am also a poet. Here is a poem I have written about Celimene.

(reads poem)

Celimene, Image of Perfection

Celimene, you are the image of perfection.

A goddess on earth, my muse.

I watch you from the shadows.

I watch you from the shadows, keenly observing.

(pause)

In spite of this accomplishment I have not yet achieved my desired level of literary greatness. I continue to write headlines for advertising.

(CELIMENE regards herself in her mirror. She steps out, down and around the spiral staircase as it lowers, precisely. CELIMENE reaches the ground as ORION announces -)

ORION

Celimene is 30 today.

(CELIMENE pauses to regard her universe.)

ORION

What is she feeling?

(Another pause.)

CELIMENE

I am no longer young.

(pause)

I wake up in the morning as if born into the universe for the first time. The sun slants through my window and I see the objects through which I recognize my life as mine. The signs that I exist. Letters from admirers, secret and open. Imogene and Phillip, my friend, her husband, a framed photograph. The spearmint dug up from my mother's garden, growing in a box on the windowsill, infested with aphids. I wash it, carefully, each time. A cut paper portrait from my little niece. A menu from a café in Aix en Provence. My yearbook. My end table. A box of postcards. This ring. Without them I do not know, and maybe I do not exist.

(pause)

I awoke and dressed for work and applied my makeup, natural day colors with a practiced hand. I rolled up my perfectly highlighted hair and speared it with a hair stick perfectly on the first try. I tied a scarf around my neck in a complex yet simple-seeming knot because I am a scarf-wearing girl. I stepped into my heels which I will wear

until my feet develop corns and my back gives out. My handbag is stylish, new and coordinated to my outfit.

(pause)

I am thirty today, and no longer young.

(CELIMENE stands onstage for a moment and then walks off, leaving for work. As soon as she finishes speaking lights rise on another portion of the stage, revealing IMOGENE and PHILLIP in bed. Their MP3 alarm clock goes off, flooding the stage with carefully selected mellow yet energizing morning music. IMOGENE and PHILLIP's morning routine gives the sense that they are each acting in a different play for which the other person is the audience. They mime a series of actions. PHILLIP stretches in bed. IMOGENE stretches in bed. PHILLIP hits IMOGENE playfully with a pillow. IMOGENE tousles PHILLIP's hair. They kiss, then climb out of bed. PHILLIP enters the bathroom to take a shower. IMOGENE throws the comforter over the bed, then exits to start the coffee and get the morning paper. We hear her open the door, pick up the paper and close the door. She returns and throws the paper on the bed. She selects her outfit for the day. PHILLIP finishes his shower, leaves the bathroom wearing boxer shorts. IMOGENE enters the bathroom to shower. PHILLIP dresses. He asks IMOGENE where his shoes are - silently, and listens to her reply - they are under the bed. He removes his shoes from under the bed and puts them on. He opens the paper. IMOGENE emerges from the bathroom. She begins to put on the rest of her clothes. The coffee pot beeps that the coffee is done. PHILLIP exits and returns with two coffee mugs. PHILLIP silently asks what they should do for their anniversary. IMOGENE silently responds. They drink the coffee while they finish getting ready. They exit the bedroom, and we hear the door to the apartment open, shut, and lock. Both re-enter, face and the audience, standing side by side.)

PHILLIP

I stretch in bed.

IMOGENE

I stretch in bed.

PHILLIP

I hit Imogene playfully with a pillow.

IMOGENE

I tousle Phillip's hair.

IMOGENE and PHILLIP

We kiss. (pause) Then we climb out of bed.

PHILLIP

I go to the bathroom to take a shower.

IMOGENE

I make the bed. (pause) I start the coffee and retrieve the morning paper. (pause) I throw the morning paper on the just-made bed. (pause) I select my outfit, and coordinating accessories.

PHILLIP

I finish my shower and leave the bathroom wearing boxer shorts.

IMOGENE

I, in turn, enter the bathroom.

PHILLIP

I, in turn, get dressed. (pause.) I cannot find my shoes. (pause) I ask Imogene, where are my shoes, honey?

IMOGENE

I answer, they're under the bed!

PHILLIP

Oh. I retrieve my shoes from under the bed. (pause) I open the paper.

IMOGENE

I now emerge from the bathroom. (pause) I begin to put on my clothes. (paused) The coffee pot beeps.

PHILLIP

I get the coffee. I come back, I say, what do you want to do for our anniversary. I think we should go on a trip.

IMOGENE

And I say, let's just stay here and go out to dinner.

PHILLIP

Why does she want to stay here.

IMOGENE

Why does he want to go away?

PHILLIP

We finish our coffee.

IMOGENE

We finish getting dressed.

PHILLIP

We leave our coffee mugs in the sink.

IMOGENE

And then we go away.

(PHILLIP and IMOGENE stare at each other for a moment. Lights fade out.)

Scene 2

(CELIMENE's place of work, an advertising agency. A sea of cubicles. ORION paces about, carrying a pencil and a small notebook. He crosses paths with CELIMENE as she walks towards her desk.)

ORION

Good morning.

CELIMENE

Good morning, Orion.

(ORION exits, scribbling in his notebook. CELIMENE continues towards her cubicle. There are already three bouquets of flowers and a box of chocolates on her desk. Her manager NARISSA is already seated, working when CELIMENE arrives. NARISSA is approximately forty, divorced and plain in both appearance and dress. She is quite annoyed by the display on

CELIMENE's desk but is pretending not to be jealous.)

CELIMENE

Oh, my!

(CELIMENE begins to read the cards and position the flowers. The MALE ASSISTANT enters carrying a fourth bouquet.)

MALE ASSISTANT

These just came for you.

CELIMENE

How lovely!

NARISSA

I had forgotten today is your birthday. Well, congratulations! You're another year older! You remember we have a meeting today to discuss the expresso account. Are you prepared to present the initial section?

(The FEMALE ASSISTANT enters carrying a fifth bouquet of flowers.)

FEMALE ASSISTANT

Just saw these on the front desk. For you.

CELIMENE

Thanks!

(to NARISSA, smiling brightly)
I'm just looking over it.

(NARISSA takes a deep breath. Mutters.)

NARISSA

You've got quite a garden growing there. I wish I had the time required to cultivate so many admirers.

CELIMENE

It's true. It took quite an effort on your part to have the office party cancelled and I hope you are most satisfied with the results. Lot of evenings that could certainly have been used for other purposes.

NARISSA

I'm going to get some coffee before the meeting. See you there.

(exiting, just loudly enough for the other to hear)

Slut.

CELIMENE

(just loudly enough for the other to hear)

Bitch.

Scene 3

(NARISSA, CELIMENE and ORION assemble in the conference room. There is an empty seat for AUSTIN. The MALE ASSISTANT and FEMALE ASSISTANT are present taking notes for their bosses, who would normally attend the meeting but are traveling at present. ORION sits a bit apart from the others. He wears all black and is, in fact, a bit creepy. Social interactions are definitely not his thing. On the conference table there is a teleconferencing device which resembles, in appearance, a miniature Starship Enterprise. NARISSA presses a long sequence of buttons.)

NARISSA

Jack. Jack, can you hear me?

JACK

(voice coming from teleconferencing device)

Faintly ma'am. Faintly.

(NARISSA presses more buttons.)

NARISSA

How's that?

JACK

(voice)

What?

(NARISSA presses more buttons)

NARISSA

How about you Celeste? Celeste, are you there?

CELESTE

(voice)

I don't think I'm connected. I don't know how to work this thing. I don't think I'm connected. Am I connected? Can you hear me?

JACK

What's going on? I've lost you. I think I've lost you. Are you saying something?

(NARISSA pushes more buttons.)

NARISSA

We can hear you Celeste. We can hear you. Can you hear us? People, say something. Say something and see if Celeste can hear you.

CELIMENE

Hello. Celeste?

AUSTIN

Something!

(He thinks this is hysterical and pounds on the table. No one else laughs. NARISSA presses more buttons.)

JACK

(voice)

I can't hear anything. People? Are you there? Can you hear me? What's going on?

(NARISSA presses more buttons.)

NARISSA

Yes Jack. Yes we can hear you. Joining us today by teleconference are Jack and Celeste. Jack and Celeste, we have here myself Narissa and team, Austin, Orion and Jeff and Bill's assistants. Jeff and Bill are stuck meeting with the hardware account and can't be present but their assistants are here taking notes. They are with us in spirit.

(NARISSA thinks this is a joke but no one else thinks it is funny. She stands.)

NARISSA

The subject of today's meeting is our plan for the expresso account, in other words, the nature of the human heart.

(NARISSA sits. AUSTIN stands, and projects an image of the heart organ, or perhaps reveals the image on one of those standing conference tablets. The MALE ASSISTANT and FEMALE ASSISTANT begin scribbling furiously and continue to do so throughout the rest of the scene.)

AUSTIN

As we know the heart is a square-shaped, muscular organ which contracts at frequent, regular intervals, pumping fresh, oxygenated blood out through the body's circulatory system. It beats more than 3.5 billion times in the course of an average human lifetime. There are four heart chambers, the right atrium, the right ventricle, the left atrium, the left ventricle.

(CELIMENE uncovers or projects an additional image, a map of the human circulatory system.)

CELIMENE

The human circulatory system is composed of the heart, the blood and the blood vessels. The view from the heart. De-oxygenated blood enters the right atrium of the heart and flows into the right ventricle of the heart where it is pumped through the pulmonary arteries into the lungs. Freshly oxygenated blood returns to the heart through the pulmonary veins. It enters the left atrium, courses into the left ventricle, and is pumped out through the aorta to the rest of the body.

(NARISSA reveals an image of the heart icon.)

NARISSA

Throughout history the heart has also figuratively represented the source of romantic love and sexual desire as well as the seat of motivation. It stands for one's secret inner person, which can be hidden from or revealed to the world depending upon individual inclination. The spiritual being. The soul.

(The teleconferencing device begins to beep loudly.)

ORION

The origins of the heart icon, as seen on Valentine's Day cards, cheap jewelry and subway tunnels. The origins of the heart icon, and relatedly the question of what, precisely, it depicts, are subjects of considerable controversy. The icon only vaguely resembles the shape of the human, anatomical heart. Some have argued that it represents the heart of a cow, however even this resemblance is merely slight.

AUSTIN

The heart is composed of cardiac muscle, an involuntary muscle tissue that is found nowhere else in the body. The heart is located in the mediastinum, or heart cavity.

(The teleconferencing device's beeping noise dissolves into a static sound, followed by a low hum.)

AUSTIN

It is surrounded by the pericardium, a double membrane structure containing serous fluid which serves to reduce friction during heart contractions.

CELIMENE

The blood travels through a branching network of arteries, arterioles and capillaries. It passes through the kidneys, which filter it, removing waste products for excretion. De-oxygenated blood collects in the venules, then the veins, and returns to the heart.

ORION

The icon may represent some aspect of the human female body, such as the vulva or pubic mound. It may also derive from the shape of the seeds of the now-extinct silphium plant, an herbal contraceptive grown in the ancient city of Cyrene and utilized throughout the Greek Empire. Additionally, the shape may derive from that formed by the back and wings of the dove, associated with the goddess Aphrodite, Greek goddess of love.

AUSTIN

The mass of a normal adult heart ranges from 250-350 grams, or 9-12 ounces. An extremely diseased heart can weigh up to 1000 grams due to hypertrophy.

(The teleconferencing device makes a grating, scratching sound, like nails on a chalkboard, except more metallic.)

NARISSA

Our society today faces an epidemic of hidden hearts. I will continue by cataloguing and dissecting a number of the most common social pretensions visible in the modern urban environment, providing examples from our common acquaintance. Those who try to make themselves look smarter at cocktail parties by relentlessly criticizing popular works of fiction. One example.

JACK

(voice)

What's that?

CELESTE

(voice)

Something about the floor Jack. (pause) I think my speaker just cut out.

(Loud static sound, dull thud.)

JACK

Ow! Ow! Oh my God. There was some kind of wire sticking out and now I'm bleeding all over the carpet. I tried to push that switch but it just skidded and fell on the floor. Oh. Oh. I don't know what to do.

CELESTE

Jack, you need to go get a band-aid. (pause) Come on now, get a grip.

(loud sound of static. NARISSA pushes buttons.)

NARISSA

This really isn't working. (more button pushing.) I think it might be best to go to lunch. All right. (strikes an imaginary gavel on the conference table) Meeting adjourned!

Scene 4

(The office kitchen, mid-afternoon. ORION is standing, eating his lunch at the counter. His private time; there are no people in the kitchen this time of day. AUSTIN enters. He

starts to make himself a cappuccino with the fancy coffee machine. It is a multi-step process.)

AUSTIN

Hey.

ORION

Hey.

(ORION summons the courage to fill the awkward silence.)

ORION

You seem happy today, Austin. What's new?

AUSTIN

(while making his cappuccino)

You know Orion, I had the realization this morning that my life is perfect. I am young, healthy, intelligent, attractive and well-dressed. I attended a prestigious college and am gainfully employed in an illustrious and prominent advertising agency. I have an active social life with the guys and am popular with the ladies. In recent years I have traveled to several foreign countries. I possess a socially acceptable sense of humor and an arsenal of several killer jokes. I am not a bad chef when the desire strikes me and I have been known to visit museums on the weekend from time to time. This is all that is required to be satisfied with life. There is nothing else that I want. Isn't that great?

(ORION nods. AUSTIN exits with his cappuccino, humming a peppy tune.)

ORION

Asshole.

Scene 5

(Back in the sea of cubicles. FEMALE ASSISTANT is working on some kind of mindless project. MALE ASSISTANT enters. Silently, he indicates that AUSTIN is within earshot. AUSTIN is the intended audience for this conversation, and eventually he pokes his head out and then enters fully.)

MALE ASSISTANT

Regard. Regardez dans la cuisine de bureau. Le four de grille-pain est sur le feu et le réfrigérateur a été bourré complètement des gorilles de chocolat.

FEMALE ASSISTANT

Ce n'est pas le défaut de mon chat. C'est votre chat, le petit démon, qui a fait ceci.

MALE ASSISTANT

Mais toujours, le four de grille-pain est sur le feu et le réfrigérateur a été bourré complètement des gorilles de chocolat. C'est un problème, n'est-ce pas ? Qu'allons-nous faire ?

FEMALE ASSISTANT

Pendant un jour, mon pauvre chat diffamé mourra et je lui donnerai un enterrement magnifique, l'enterrement le plus magnifique dans l'histoire des chats. Non seulement mon voisinage entier des personnes, mais tous les chiens, chats, souris et rats de gens du pays marcheront et pleureront et donneront des discours. Il aura un cercueil chat-classé peu avec son nom gravé du côté, Napoleon Louis XIV.

MALE ASSISTANT

Seulement une personne folle appellerait son chat Napoleon Louis XIV.

FEMALE ASSISTANT

Nous l'enterrerons dans le cimetière d'animal de compagnie au dessus d'une petite colline. Sa grandeur vivra dessus pour toujours.

MALE ASSISTANT

Néanmoins, le feu de four de grille-pain écartera jusqu'à ce que le bâtiment entier soit consommé excepté le réfrigérateur bourré complètement des gorilles de chocolat, parce qu'il fait froid et au lieu de chaud. Les gorilles gonfleront jusqu'à grandeur nature et à l'éclat hors du réfrigérateur et puis fondront dans la chaleur des cendres fraîches chaudes. Le bâtiment et tous ses occupants seront d'abord carbonisés à des chips et ensuite enduits dans une couche douce épaisse de chocolat de gorille.

AUSTIN

You're speaking about chocolate and gorillas and cats in French. I don't know why you are speaking in French. Why are you speaking French? I don't like it. I don't speak French. I speak Spanish, and am proficient in Portuguese since my semester in Brazil. And Pig Latin, since third grade. Es-yay, I-way an-cay eak-spay ig-pay atin-lay! It-way ot-nay it-way amazing-way? Ust-jay ell-sway o-tay ave-hay a-way ecret-say anguage-lay. Isten-lay. We used to speak Pig Latin in the back of the bus and the back of the classroom and out on the playground at recess. Those were the days. Then we were cool. You're still speaking French. Anyway, do you have a minute?

MALE ASSISTANT and FEMALE ASSISTANT

Yes.

(An awkward silent moment. AUSTIN exits towards the project and the MALE ASSISTANT and FEMALE ASSISTANT wordlessly follow.)

Scene 6

ORION

(disembodied voice projects)

Celimene and Imogene are best friends, and have been ever since college, college together at the College of William and Mary. Celimene and Imogene are best friends because their names sound almost the same. Imogene, Celimene. Celimene, Imogene.

(A small, yet fashionable bar in midtown Manhattan. IMOGENE arrived moments earlier and is settling herself at a table for two. The DRUNK WOMAN is seated at a nearby table, with one or more invisible companions, drinking. CELIMENE enters. IMOGENE waves.)

CELIMENE

Hello darling!

IMOGENE

Happy birthday!

(They hug and air-kiss.)

IMOGENE

I love that outfit. Especially your scarf. Always admire women who carry that off. Tricky item, scarves.

CELIMENE

Thanks. You look lovely too, as always. Are these the menus?

IMOGENE

Yes.

CELIMENE

Goody, I'm starving. Let's get martinis. And some of these finger foods.

IMOGENE

Mmmm, potato skins. With cheddar cheese and bacon bits.

CELIMENE

Seasonal vegetables with - maybe the ranch dip?

IMOGENE

Yes. And how about, pesto hummus with pita.

CELIMENE

Of course. Now, waiter...

(The WAITER appears, ready to take their order)

IMOGENE

I'd like a dirty martini, shaken with an extra olive.

CELIMENE

I'd like a martini too, dry with a lemon twist.

IMOGENE

And to eat we'll have the potato skins with cheddar cheese and bacon bits and the seasonal vegetables with ranch dip.

CELIMENE

And the pesto hummus with pita. Thanks.

(to IMOGENE)

How is Phillip?

IMOGENE

He's fine. The usual. We have our sixth anniversary coming up. We might go away on a trip, but I don't really want to.

I told him that. Dinner would be fine. I believe in the importance of honesty, especially in affairs of the heart.

CELIMENE

You're too charming. And how was your day?

IMOGENE

Fine. The usual. Nothing too eventful. They are talking about renovating our office kitchen. Fire standards, they say. Not being met. (pause) How was your day, birthday girl?

CELIMENE

Well it kind of sucked. Kind of, but not fatally. Long staff meeting. I can't stand my manager Narissa. She really needs a boyfriend. Or an escort. Some kind of life.

IMOGENE

I have never met this person but from everything you tell me she is a real bitch.

CELIMENE

I'll say.

IMOGENE

Double bitch.

CELIMENE

Triple bitch.

IMOGENE

Heh-heh. Triple bitch.

CELIMENE

Triple bitch with cancer-causing maraschino cherries on top.

IMOGENE

Quadruple bitch.

CELIMENE

Quintuple bitch.

IMOGENE

What - comes after quintuple - sextuple bitch!

CELIMENE

Did you see that news program? Last night, the one about -

DRUNK WOMAN

Sassafras! That's what it smelled like! Sassafras!

(gestures to WAITER)

I have a secret to tell you. Yes, you, you hottie. C'mere.

IMOGENE

That woman is so drunk.

CELIMENE

I know. She's not making any sense.

IMOGENE

And she's loud. I want our drinks and food.

(The WAITER extracts himself, exits and returns with their drinks and food.)

IMOGENE

Finally.

(They dig in.)

CELIMENE

I do not like it that there are fashions to cocktails. Cocktails that are in fashion and those that are not. Like, the cosmopolitan. Who drinks them now? My mother in Virginia. We would never drink that now even though - four years ago? That was all that we would drink.

IMOGENE

You sense that the bartender secretly judges you when you place your order. Or the cocktail waitress. That they find some secret satisfaction in secretly judging you. Your taste. In this as in everything else.

CELIMENE

Yes. Red wine is always safe.

IMOGENE

Yet boring. White wine only in hot weather, or if you have also ordered chicken or fish.

CELIMENE

Beer can be an appropriate choice in certain situations. Not for a Wednesday-night post-work cocktail in midtown.

But on a Friday night with a large mixed group. In some kind of casual or even sports bar. Like those - remember those places we used to go right after college when we lived in the Upper East Side?

IMOGENE

Yes! Those neighborhood joint operations. We used to think we were so cool because it was a sports bar in New York.

CELIMENE

And you could order beer there, especially dark beer, especially dark imported beer from Germany or Belgium.

IMOGENE

Right. And then the guys think, heh heh, it's a girl who drinks dark beer. Heh heh. Heh heh heh heh heh heh.

CELIMENE

Heh heh.

IMOGENE

Heh. Yes. That way, it's cool.

CELIMENE

But for right now, the martini is clearly the best choice. We are to be complimented on our sense of taste.

IMOGENE

Your taste in beverages achieves perfection, Celimene.

CELIMENE

As does yours, Imogene. Impeccable as always.

IMOGENE

Cheers.

(They finish their martinis.)

DRUNK WOMAN

(loudly)

His kidneys! They were burrowing into his kidneys!

CELIMENE

Now we need more drinks. Waiter...

(The WAITER appears.)

IMOGENE

Two more martinis please, just like these.

CELIMENE

There are these places - I've been to some of them - that specialize in martinis, they have all different kinds of organic olives you can request to personalize the flavor of your drink. And order a little bowl of olives on the side to feast on that olive flavor.

IMOGENE

You could have a black olive martini.

CELIMENE

A kalamata black olive martini with black olive juice.

IMOGENE

I don't know if I would like a kalamata black olive martini.

CELIMENE

Or different kinds of gin and vermouth from all over the world. It's very international.

IMOGENE

Wow.

CELIMENE

So many options.

IMOGENE

We should go there, Celimene. Tell me when.

CELIMENE

I'll look up the place.

DRUNK WOMAN

It was the beating of his wretched heart!

IMOGENE

So my sister has decided to follow my footsteps into advertising.

CELIMENE

Cool.

IMOGENE

Yeah. Except, she's been having trouble finding a job. And I think it's her Myspace page.

CELIMENE

No way.

IMOGENE

Way. It's the worst Myspace page to have ever, if you're looking for a job. There are all kinds of pictures of her. At Mardi Gras in New Orleans last year, with her boobs and everything. At frat parties, holding joints. All over her boyfriend. And the whole thing is public. I said, Renee. You have got to take that down. Or hide it, privatize it, whatever. No wonder no one is calling.

CELIMENE

You really think they check that stuff.

IMOGENE

Of course. Wouldn't you, if you were hiring someone? Google takes five seconds and it's free.

CELIMENE

Huh.

IMOGENE

Personally I think you're very brave to have one. And yours is public, too. I saw those new pictures you put up last week.

CELIMENE

Yeah. Bermuda. That was a fun little trip.

IMOGENE

Websites creep me out. The concept of having a personal one, even Myspace page. Did you know there's a site called mydeathspace.com full of links to Myspace pages of people who have died. You die and your page is frozen there forever, like a prehistoric insect stuck in amber or a Jurassic trilobite buried in mud or like gum on a boot that won't come off and is donated to charity, a ring that falls in the crack behind your oven, a penny placed in sidewalk cement, initials carved in a tree, notes scrawled in a library book, trash thrown into the subway track, a heart that has stopped beating.

(CELIMENE has an odd moment.)

He threw it out!

(DRUNK WOMAN pounds on table.)

CELIMENE

It's been ages since I have. Maybe it's turning thirty. Regrets.

DRUNK WOMAN

Away!

CELIMENE

About how he left.

IMOGENE

We tried to prevent that. We tried to prevent that, Phillip and me. But he was determined. (pause) Maybe he found his wild, solitary place; apart from society, in exile from the human race.

CELIMENE

In the dark heart of Africa he is immunizing small children against deadly disease. Smallpox. Malaria. Tuberculosis.

IMOGENE

We should probably go. It's getting late for a Wednesday.

CELIMENE

The check.

(WAITER appears with the check. CELIMENE and IMOGENE each hand him a card, sign a slip of paper, hand the slips back, take their cards, gather their things, and leave the bar.)

CELIMENE

The last time we went out I left, I left and a hole opened up in the sidewalk in front of me. I had too much to drink, I think. A hole opened up and it swallowed the fire hydrant, the restaurant and nearby cars, all of Manhattan and turned it into a poster of Manhattan, except that the poster was represented by millions of tiny bugs, not computer bugs, I mean actual insects. Crawly insects, many different specific kinds. Caterpillars and ants and centipedes and millipedes and inchworms and flies, aphids, ladybugs, locusts, Japanese beetles, spiders, gnats. All kinds. There was no past or future, only the present, which

moved continuously with the movement of the insects. And all of them were making noise, speaking in bug talk, and they had to speak, in bug talk, speak and keep speaking or else they would die and the poster would vanish. I saw its shadow, a shadow of a shade of a shade of a shadow. Then void.

IMOGENE

You've been working too hard, sweetie. Are you taking a cab?

CELIMENE

I am the goddess of trains. Have I ever told you that? I appear and then they appear. Every time. Less than a minute - even nights and weekends. It is my gift.

IMOGENE

Suit yourself.

CELIMENE

Goodnight darling.

IMOGENE

Goodnight, darling.

(They hug and air-kiss. IMOGENE disappears into a cab. CELIMENE descends into the subway tunnel.)

Scene 7

(During the transition to the subway, ORION's voice is heard, reciting another of his poems about Celimene.)

ORION

(voiceover)

Celimene, you are my idol
 Starry, like the heavens above.
 Like a comet you fly through
 The celestial night
 Yes, like a meteor
 You descend to Earth.

(CELIMENE's train rushes by the moment she steps onto the platform. She is not concerned, certain that another will arrive momentarily.)

The only other person on the platform is a SQUATTING MAN. He squats against the wall, smoking and drinking liquor from a paper bag, directly beneath a sign prohibiting both activities. Gradually he begins to stare at CELIMENE. Two minutes pass. A train stops on the other side, traveling in the direction opposite that in which CELIMENE wishes to go. Five more minutes pass. CELIMENE is becoming concerned. A chime is heard, the signal that a subway announcement is about to be made, but the system is malfunctioning and only static follows. The MAN extinguishes his cigarette in a pool of nondescript liquid. SUBWAY MAN runs down the stairs, followed by SUBWAY WOMAN.)

WOMAN

I'm talking to you. You hear me?

MAN

You're talking a lot of shit, that's what I'm hearing.

WOMAN

You just can't act like that. You can't act like that, not in front of them. It's not appropriate. She hates your guts.

MAN

She never says so.

WOMAN

You can tell by the way she acts.

MAN

Who are you to tell me what's appropriate? I'm not going to listen to this. You wear so much makeup I can never see your face.

WOMAN

Yeah, like you don't. Stalker.

MAN

Madam.

WOMAN

What you see through the window.

MAN

Sometimes, your heart.

WOMAN

Sometimes, your heart. Heart.

MAN

Let's start over.

WOMAN

Wait until tomorrow morning.

MAN

Wait until tomorrow morning.

(SUBWAY WOMAN climbs up the stairs, followed by SUBWAY MAN. A train arrives and departs, headed in the opposite direction. Another minute passes. Again, the subway announcement chime followed by static. An unknown liquid drips suddenly from the ceiling into the pool near the SQUATTING MAN. The SQUATTING MAN continues to drink from the bottle in the bag and lights another cigarette. He stares directly at CELIMENE and begins to hum an odd tune. This continues for a while. A train arrives and departs on the opposite platform. Slow fadeout.)

Scene 8

(IMOGENE and her husband PHILLIP, that night in bed.)

IMOGENE

And then she left, talking some madness about holes and web pages on the Internet.

PHILLIP

We must do what we can to change the heart of this unhappy woman.

THE END