

## BECKETT IN INDIA

A one-act comedy by Martin Tucker

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BECKETT IN INDIA is a comic play on the strangeness of technology to a scholar-writer living in the U.S. The play satirizes the appalling breakdowns of a computer as it affects the habits of a man trying to finish a piece of his writing. In the course of attempting a “fix” on the machine, the writer-scholar becomes enchanted with Nalini, his computer-helper in India; he will also have some words with a young male assistant trying to “walk him” through his problems. In the end, the writer will reveal his longings in an old-fashioned monologue.

## CAST

Sam Beckett, a middle-aged writer-scholar working on a new article and having trouble with his computer. He is overweight and somewhat careless about his appearance as he does most of his work (and living) in his apartment.

Nalini, a dark-haired, attractive Indian lady who works as a computer technician in India. She is polite and reserved.

Kirin, an Indian computer technician, young, capable. Probably wiry in appearance.



## Beckett In India

By Martin Tucker

CURTAIN OPENS on middle-aged man at his computer. He is frustrated. He is fussing over his computer, which is not working. He mumbles, frets, keeps pressing the keyboard. He is expectant, then disappointed, then angry. He explodes.

BECKETT

Damn! Damn! Damn! Not again! Not again!

(He lowers head, starts talking to himself, looks up anguished. He hits keyboard again)

It's not going to work. This isn't fair!

(Computer access to Internet fails. A bell rings to indicate failure)

COMPUTER VOICE

No access. Connection Not Working.

BECKETT

What do you mean not working?! It worked an hour ago. I shut it off to eat something. I have a right to eat breakfast, lunch, dinner. I came back in an hour to work. Maybe I shouldn't have shut you off? Maybe I shouldn't have eaten something. I was starving. God, what am I doing? Talking to myself. I mean, to this machine.

(He makes as if to hit the screen)

Stop. Stop. If ever I was tempted to convert to Buddha, this would be the moment. My moment of vulnerability. Stop.

(He hits the keyboard again, he goes wild)

(He draws himself up, takes a deep breath, realizes his desperation. His anger changes to hate. He is all steel now.)

BECKETT

I'll try one more time, you motherfucker.

(He hits keyboard. Bell rings)

COMPUTER VOICE

No connection. Access Denied.

BECKETT

Shit, shit, shit.

(He moves to phone, picks up receiver, puts it down. He goes to his cell phone, which is on tray table, picks it up.)

BECKETT

Oh, God, what's the AOL number? Why is this happening to me? Four times this week. Five weeks of trouble, I couldn't access my email. It's wrong.

It's unfair. Someone's going to pay for this!

(He puts cell phone down, goes to his desk, opens a folder, runs through the pages throwing them around)

I can't find it. Where is that number? I know it was here. Oh, God, where is it?

(Finally he finds a paper with AOL TECHNICAL NUMBER on it. He holds the paper up) Where were you when I needed you?

(He laughs/cries)

What's the point! This will take another hour. I don't have the time. My head is swirling. I must gain control. Control. Control.

(He dials number)

TELEPHONE VOICE

This is AOL. Thank you for ....

BECKETT

I wouldn't mind this crap if it could be done in a few minutes. But now the voice. It's not a real voice.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Please listen to our menu, as it has changed recently. If you are calling for billing, say billing. If you are calling to order a new line, say order. If you are calling for information, stay on the line or say operator. If you are calling for technical support, say Technical Support. You must say Technical Support clearly.

BECKETT

Technical support.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Sorry, I didn't get that. (REPEAT OF MENU)

BECKETT

Technical Support.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Sorry, I didn't get that. (REPEAT OF MENU)

BECKETT

Technical Support. What is the matter with you? Why don't you hear me? I'm speaking clearly enough. I am an English teacher. Or I was one, before I retired. I speak at public libraries.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Sorry, I didn't get that. (REPEAT OF MENU)

BECKETT

(rising to anger) Technical support. Technical Support. Technical Support.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Sorry, I didn't get that. I'll connect you to a personal representative. (Beckett is now visibly angry, upset. He taps his fingers, shakes his head, starts to pace the room)

BECKETT

Another wait. A half-hour? Yesterday it was 20 minutes.

TELEPHONE VOICE

Due to unprecedented demand, your waiting period may be longer than usual. Please accept our apologies. A representative will be with you shortly.

BECKETT

Shortly?

TELEPHONE VOICE

We appreciate your service and ask you to bear with the unprecedented demand on our lines. A representative will be with you shortly. Approximate waiting time is 15 minutes.

BECKETT

Oh, God!

(He paces the room, carrying his cell phone with him)

--LIGHTS OUT—

--LIGHTS ON—

VOICE ON TELEPHONE

This is Nalini speaking.

(A WOMAN IN SARI ENTERS RIGHT STAGE WITH CELL PHONE IN HAND, WALKS TO CUBICLE AND SITS AT DESK)

NALINI

How may I help you?

BECKETT

Help me! Help me! My computer is frozen. I can't get into my email. I click and nothing happens.

NALINI

Nothing? Are you sure?

BECKETT

Are you doubting me? I am frantic and you are doubting me.

NALINI

No, no, sir. Please be calm, sir. We will assist you.

BECKETT

I can't be calm. I am frustrated. Do you hear me. I am frustrated. Frustrated. Frustrated. Do you hear me?

NALINI

I hear you. We will help you. You will no longer be frustrated. Believe me, sir.

BECKETT

Please help me.

NALINI

We will help you. I must ask you some questions first and then we will help you. Believe me, sir.

BECKETT

I want to believe you, but it is so hard. If you knew the anguish I have suffered. The frustration. I can't take this anymore. Night after night—

NALINI

When was the last time you phoned us?

BECKETT

Last week. The machine froze last week. All right, it's only week after week. Five weeks in a row. Would you stand for it?

NALINI

I will help you, sir. Believe me, all will be well.

BECKETT

This isn't the way it's supposed to be. When I bought my computer, no one told me it would be like this.

NALINI

You will see we will fix it, sir. Then you will not be much frustrated. Sir, I must ask you some questions. For security.

BECKETT

All right.

NALINI

Your name.

BECKETT

Sam Beckett.

NALINI

Is this your computer?

BECKETT

Of course it is. Why would I call about someone else's computer?

NALINI

Is it a personal computer or a laptop?

BECKETT

How should I know? Aren't all computers personal? As far as a machine can be personal.

NALINI

These are necessary questions. I do not mean to intrude on your privacy.

BECKETT

Well, you are.

NALINI

Have you been satisfied with your service so far?

BECKETT

(PAUSE) I prefer silence.

NALINI

We must ask these questions, and then we will make it right. You will see, sir.

BECKETT

Am I talking to someone in India?

NALINI

Yes, sir.

BECKETT

Last week I spoke to someone in India.

NALINI

Yes.

BECKETT

Are you in Bombay? Mumbai, I mean. I spent a week there years ago.

NALINI

New Delhi.

BECKETT

Spent a week there, too.

NALINI

That is nice.

BECKETT

Fascinating country, India. Multicultural.

NALINI

Thank you. Now I must ask you to do some thing for me.

BECKETT

All right, but I don't have faith. I no longer have faith in computers. I did once. I thought they were potentially wonderful machines. I couldn't see myself understanding them but I admired and respected them. I no longer do. I think they are manipulations, they are dumb, stupid manipulations. If you press one wrong key, the whole system breaks down. Imagine being dependent on one mis-stroke in a hundred possibilities.

NALINI

Yes, sir.

BECKETT

I'm not blaming you. You're doing your job. I appreciate your help.

NALINI

Thank you, sir.

BECKETT

I don't like complaining, but what else can I do? The terror of the blank screen—the frozen screen, I mean—is more unbearable than the terror of the blank page. Do you understand that?

NALINI

I am trying, sir.

BECKETT

Perhaps this is a Western cultural manifestation, terror of an object. A blank, forbidding object. Conrad, Joseph Conrad, said that. Do you read Conrad? Joseph Conrad.

NALINI

He is an American writer?

BECKETT

It doesn't matter. I'll go on.

NALINI

We must all go on. In my country we continue going on and on.

BECKETT

I know your birth rate is high. Phenomenally high.

NALINI

I am not allowed to talk of such things on company time, sir.

BECKETT

I apologize.... I like talking to you. You are calming me. Thank you.

NALINI

This is what we want to do.

BECKETT

You have a charming voice.

NALINI

Thank you.

BECKETT

It seems strange to be talking to someone in India. You sound as if you're next door to me.

NALINI

We are all next door to each other. Now it is technologically possible as well as in the spirit.

BECKETT

I would like to believe that, but sometimes I feel I am isolate. I don't feel connected. I'm not connected sometimes. (He laughs) Like my Internet connection.

NALINI

You see, you are less frustrated now. Is that not so?

BECKETT

Yes.

NALINI

Soon all will be well, and you will have your screen back.

--LIGHTS OUT—

--LIGHTS ON—

(Same setting. Nalini is dictating to Beckett. Beckett is at computer)

NALINI

Click left, sir.

BECKETT

Right. Got you.

NALINI

Click left again, sir.

BECKETT

Right.

NALINI

You see the square, Processes?

BECKETT

No. Wait. Please wait.

NALINI

I will wait sir. Please do not fear, sir.

BECKETT

I found it. What do I do?

NALINI

Please to scroll down. You know what scroll means?

BECKETT

Of course. I read the Dead Sea Scrolls years ago when Edmund Wilson published an account in The New Yorker. I don't suppose you've read Edmund Wilson?

NALINI

He is an American writer, sir?

BECKETT

Never mind. I'm scrolling now. Where do I scroll to?

NALINI

Please, to...

BECKETT

That's not on the list.

NALINI

Please to look again, sir.

BECKETT

It's not on the list. Oh, where is it?

NALINI

Be calm, sir. We will fix it, sir.

BECKETT

Fix what?

NALINI

You must not frustrate, sir. Frustrating is bad for you.

BECKETT

I found it. I am sorry. I do not usually behave like this. If you knew the agony I have undergone. The time I have wasted...

NALINI

I—and all of us in the company, sir—are sorry for any suffering you have suffered. Here in India we have a saying. No time is wasted if you do something with the memory. Have you heard this saying?

BECKETT

No. I have heard many things, but not that. You say it very nicely.

NALINI

Thank you, sir. Now you see, we are getting this right, sir. You have permitted me to enter your files and see the screen here in India as you see it there in your country in your own home. I am happy we are no longer frustrated, sir.

BECKETT

What is your name?

NALINI

Nalini. I told you a half-hour ago.

BECKETT

I had not realized time had passed so quickly.

NALINI

Now click on.... Right click this time, sir.

BECKETT

All right.

NALINI

Do you see... please click on... Left double-click, sir.

BECKETT

All right.

NALINI

No, left, sir.

BECKETT

Right. I got it right.

NALINI

Left.

BECKETT

Right so.

NALINI

It must be left, sir.

BECKETT

Yes, I understand you. Left. I said right to indicate I was going left. Doing the left thing, so to speak.

NALINI

How interesting is the American language.

BECKETT

It is an Americanism to say right when you do the left thing. Like calling the Republican party a Red State party.

NALINI

I do not understand.

BECKETT

I do not, either. These are Americanisms.

NALINI

Someday I will visit America.

BECKETT

I hope so. I hope you'll visit me when you're here... (he blushes, is flustered)

NALINI

(she is embarrassed) ...Now you see, you can enter your Internet. Please click on the Internet icon.

BECKETT

(he clicks) I've done so.

NALINI

Are you there? On your Internet?

BECKETT

Yes.

NALINI

Then I must bid you farewell, sir. You are no longer frustrated.

BECKETT

No longer... I've enjoyed talking with you.

NALINI

We like to serve our clients, sir. It is company policy.

BECKETT

I should like to talk with you again.

NALINI

Any time you have problems, please to ring us. If I do not answer, someone else will assist you. We are all experienced here. It is one small world in a big world.

BECKETT

Yes. (sadly, sweetly) Goodbye, Nalini. (He turns to screen, begins working)

--LIGHTS OUT—

--LIGHTS ON—

(Beckett is at his desk. He is working at his computer, happily.)

BECKETT

That's it for today. Good day it was, too. I'll switch off now.

(He switches computer off, watches screen. His face turns to alarm. He gasps)

BECKETT

No, it can't be! You're frozen again. (He begins hitting keyboard, goes wild. He opens his hutch drawer, searches for page with phone numbers. Frantic, he finds page. He goes to cell phone)  
(Business of phone connection—repeat lines).....

--LIGHTS OUT—

--LIGHTS ON—

(KIRIN, a young Indian man, walks to right stage, picks up phone)

KIRIN

This is Kirin. How may I help you?

BECKETT

(angry) You certainly may.

KIRIN

What is the problem, sir?

BECKETT

The problem?! I've waited 20 minutes for you to come on the line. I've had to listen to canned music for 20 minutes. I've had to waste my time...

KIRIN

May I help now?

BECKETT

You certainly may. If you knew how insufferable this is. I do not believe in wasting time. I cannot go through life living this way. God did not put us on earth to lose connections with the Internet. I would like to strike down all your icons.

KIRIN

We have a problem, I see. Sir, anger does not help to solve problems. I am here to help solve your problem calmly.

BECKETT

I am frustrated, do you hear? I am frustrated beyond any doubt of reason.

KIRIN

You must not despair, sir. We will solve your problems. Believe me.

BECKETT

Are you talking from India?

KIRIN

Yes, sir.

BECKETT

Are you in Bombay? Mumbai, I mean.

KIRIN

No, Bangalore.

BECKETT

Bangalore. I was there once.

KIRIN

Yes.

BECKETT

For a week. I spent a week in Bombay, Mumbai I mean, a week in Delhi, and then a week in Bangalore, Madras and Goa. I don't suppose you want to hear about it but it was a good trip. I was there with my sister and her husband. We were happy.

KIRIN

Yes.

BECKETT

India is a fascinating country.

KIRIN

Yes. Your problem, sir?

BECKETT

My problem. Yes, my problem. I cannot get out of my computer. The screen is frozen.

KIRIN

Are you now on the desktop screen?

BECKETT

I am on the Internet. It will not let me exit.

KIRIN

This sounds like a connection problem.

BECKETT

If you knew what agonies I have gone through, the frustrations with connections. All my life I have had problems with connections.

KIRIN

I am sorry for your frustration. We will help you repair your frustrations. Sometimes life is full of frustration. We learn to live with it.

BECKETT

I want to live without them.

KIREN

We will do that, sir. Believe me.

BECKETT

You sound so Indian. Years ago if I said I was making a phone call to India, if I said I was taking a telephonic passage to India, with or without a foster relative to guide me, it would have gleaned up images of silk and sari, beads and trinkets, jangles of gold and pyramids of blue incense flame, beautiful princesses and glittering princes. Now it is all wires and cubes, cubicles and wireless sets. You are now in a cubicle, aren't you?

KIRIN

This talk will only delay us.

BECKETT

Yes, of course. My apology.

KIRIN

We want to remove your frustration. That is our crucial focus. Your suffering matters to us, and we will do our best to delete it.

BECKETT

How much time will it take?

KIRIN

Sir?

BECKETT

It's not I'm being unfair to you. You are trying to help me. I want you to know I also respect and admire your country and its customs. I am a retired professor of literature, and I have always admired the literature of classical India. The Bhagat Vita. The Upanishads. I think, too, the Kama Sutra as an expression of a point of view in the same way Lady Chatterley's Lover is an expression of a way of being, a philosophy without a dogma to it.

KIRIN

Sir, I would like to work on your computer problem.

BECKETT

My apologies. I live alone. Once I get talking...

KIRIN

Let's try disconnecting. Then connecting. Sometimes going off is a way of getting back on.

BECKETT

But my problem is that I cannot get off. The email screen is frozen. I told you that.

KIRIN

I see.

BECKETT

Weren't you aware of that? Have we been talking all this time and you did not know that?

KIRIN

Please, sir, I will solve your problems. I do not want you frustrated.

BECKETT

I am frustrated. If you knew....

--LIGHTS OUT—

--LIGHTS ON—

(Beckett is at his computer, working. It is working. He seems calm.)

BECKETT

So much spam and trash. How do I get through it? Anyway, dear machine, you are working today. You have been working for three whole days. Will you be working tomorrow?

(Phone rings. Beckett picks it up)

BECKETT

Oh, hi. I haven't heard from you in ages. Everything's fine. I'm enjoying retirement. And you? You don't say. He died. She died too. God, what good is retirement? I suppose I should be grateful I'm in good health. Except for frustration. The computer. Oh, no, they answer. I speak to India regularly. Never thought I would. My sister, yes. She married an Indian. A Hindu from New Delhi. They went back to India. I mean, he brought her back. It's an old quarrel. I didn't mind her forsaking her Christian faith. I didn't mind her getting involved in foreign politics. I rather liked my month in India. My passage to it. With a brother-in-law so intelligent. What I minded, I admit it, is he became her prime consultant. I was no longer important. No, I was important, but I wasn't crucial. Eight thousand miles away. Or is it 9,000? 10,000? What does it matter, a thousand miles or two? Of course I think of her. She's my sister, even if we're estranged. Twenty years. Would I go back to India? What a question! She hasn't asked me. Would I go back without being asked. I don't think so. Still, it's funny, I've been thinking about India. I spoke to an Indian woman last week, two weeks ago. Such a warm, nurturing voice. No, it's not romantic, we've only spoken to each other. We've never met, how could we be intimate...chat room?...I don't engage in chat rooms. They're all pornographic, aren't they?...she was fixing my computer. Helping me to fix my computer. Yes and no. She fixed it, then it went haywire again. I mean, my connections to the Internet. Someone else fixed it after her. A man. Another Indian. Polite but not supportive like...what was her name? Nalini. Lovely name. no, I don't have a crush on her. How can I have a crush on her at my age? I've never seen her. She might be a crone, a hag, a wreck like me.... Yes, she might be young and beautiful. What would she want with me then? ...no, that's not a feasible plan. I do not want my Internet service to break down just to talk with her. I'm perfectly happy to be alone. Yes, she was a delight to talk with. I don't have to go to India to speak with her. Not today. Not in this age. Or, and, my age! If I had the opportunity to meet her—what a fantasy. Of course I'd like to meet her. Actually I would like to meet her. But fantasies are fantasies. We're living in a world of real wires, maybe you don't see them but they're really there. They're virtual reality, just the way we're becoming. Pretty soon there won't be any virtue to reality....would Wednesday be okay for lunch? I have no plans for Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, so

I think it is safe to say I'm free Wednesday. But I'd better check. You remember Ed Olson, our brightest physicist? No one knew he was losing it till he started writing checks for everything, adding zero digits to every amount. Turns out he wrote ten checks for \$50,000 by adding the zeroes to everything and then writing the amount out in longhand. Very rigid, he saw the figure 500 but he wrote five thousand, when the amount was supposed to be 500. All in one afternoon. Wiped him out. He's in a rest home now. Good thing he has insurance. One of the checks was for long-term nursing home insurance. The one good thing about it. The check paid his bills for a few months advance. Yes, I suppose he was always eccentric, but losing it has nothing to do with being crazy. Or eccentric. I don't want to go that way, but I get so frustrated sometimes with my computer I think I'll have a stroke and I'll lose it. Life wasn't so complicated when we were young, even when we were middle-aged, and we had our marbles. Yes, the computer's working now. Been working for days. I don't have faith in it though. Every day I hear of someone who has a computer problem. I suppose we could form a computer club, check with each other by email, but how could we reach each other if our email was down? That's the problem—there is no solution if the problem is how to find the solution. What kind of club would that turn into? All right, I'll see you Thursday....Wednesday, you say. I was sure you said Thursday. Well, if you say I said Wednesday, it'll have to be Wednesday. I'm not going to quibble....Yes, take care.

(he puts down phone, walks to computer).

Guess I'll end early today. Can't believe I'm ready for a book and a cool drink. Or a hot tea? What's the difference at my age?

(He sits at the keyboard, clicks the button to exit. The machine is frozen)

BECKETT

NO! NO! NO! Please don't freeze up on me again. I can't take it. You're frozen, aren't you. What have I done to deserve this!

--LIGHTS OUT—

--LIGHTS ON—

BECKETT

(on phone, sitting in front of computer)

Please, get me Technical Support. Technical Support. I need help. Please connect me to Nalini. I want to speak to Nalini. I must speak to Nalini.

Please. My computer is broken. I must speak to Nalini. I don't know her last name. We're on a first-name basis only.... All right, I don't care if my computer gets fixed. I want to speak to Nalini. This fucking computer can go fuck itself. I want to speak to Nalini. Will I ever find her?  
(He is astounded at what he has heard himself say. His face changes. He has realized SOMETHING)

BECKETT

Nalini, are you there?

NALINI

I do not know what you want, sir. I am Nalini Varma. Are you sure you want to speak to Nalini Varma? There are many Nalinis in our country.

BECKETT

I have something to repay to Nalini.

NALINI

How, sir, to repay? Why, sir, to repay?

BECKETT

Perhaps you are not my Nalini.

NALINI

I am not your Nalini, sir. I will report this conversation to my supervisor.

BECKETT

Please. Please. Whoever you are, whichever Nalini you are, please listen to me. I want to repay. I've taken so much and not repaid. All my life I've taken. I never served in World War Two. I was too young. I was too old for Korea, or maybe I was in graduate school. It comes to the same thing. I was a failed grandfather for Vietnam. That is, I failed to be a grandfather. My wife and I never had any children.

NALINI

I cannot speak for your wife. I do not know what happened to your wife.

BECKETT

How should you know what happened to my wife? Strange question to ask me, after all these years. She left me. Twenty years ago, she walked away. Didn't even tell me. I was working on a thesis—an important moral question in the work of Thackeray and when I got home there was only a note. She left dinner with the note. She was thoughtful in the meanest of circumstances. She said I took her for granted. She was peculiar. I don't mind talking to you about her.

NALINI

Please, sir, this is not right.

BECKETT

No, it's all right. I don't mind. It was a long time ago. After a while it's easy to talk about it. You don't remember the person so it's easy to dig up the facts. She was a decent sort. But uptight. You know, Nalini, I feel better talking to you. I don't know why. Maybe it's because you were so kind to me last week. Even now I don't want to go near a computer again only your kindness has made me feel I can, I should go on with technology. I feel I could do it with you beside me.

NALINI

I must disconnect if you continue in this way.

BECKETT

I am certain you have heard worse. Some men would get angry with the way my computer continually breaks down. I don't hold you personally responsible, mind. It is your company, but that association tars you until I remember how sterling you've been.

NALINI

It is not the computer, sir. It is the service program. I do not work for the computer company. Manufacturer, I mean. I serve the service.

BECKETT

These are details. Perhaps that is the reason I like talking with you. You take care of the details. I once loved details. I was good at them. Very good, and then, then it all went. The feeling.

NALINI

I am signing off now.

BECKETT

Please don't. Please, Nalini.

NALINI

I will have to report this conversation, I am sorry to say.

BECKETT

I've done nothing wrong. Filth is in the mind of the beholder.

NALINI

It is in the words of the mouth, sir. Our conversation is shocking me.

NALINI

I did not think you would have this reaction. Not you, Nalini. In any case, I've done nothing wrong, and I regret nothing. If you are so unable to understand me, then go ahead. Hang up.

(NALINI HANGS UP RECEIVER)

BECKETT

Maybe she's right. Maybe it's my computer that's at fault. Isn't that what she said? Or was it the other way round? Who knows? It's like the shoes I once repaired. Those beautiful Italian shoes my wife gave me. One hundred dollars. I couldn't wear them. Each time I put them on, the thought of losing part of that hundred dollars, of that hundred dollars wearing away, it didn't seem right to me. Why do I remember those shoes? So beautifully crafted, by hand, not like this machine. This age. I wore them once after Brenda left me. Somehow it seemed right. Twenty years after she gave them to me. I was on a plane to California. To a conference on Thackeray and Vanity Fair. I sat next to a man who admired my beautiful shoes. A special coloring of tan, the color you only find in Italian business suits. Trim, stylish. The man next to me had boots on. Beautiful leather but not elegant. Brash. Still, I complimented him. I was kind. I said your boots are impressive. That was all. We parted as the plane deplaned, each one of us looking again at the other's footwear. My beautiful shoes. His beautiful, but not elegant, boots. And I walked to the baggage wheel inside the terminal. I heard flapping sounds, and I thought it odd. Some new kind of floor, I thought. They should do something about these new kinds of flooring. I

walked on and then I saw the glue had dried up on my shoes. The outer sole of the shoe—there were two soles to the shoe, two soles glued together, the inner sole and the outer sole, and they had come apart on my right foot. The outer sole of my right shoe was flapping in the wind, only there was no wind, just the stale air of the terminal, which perhaps had been the agent in the unglueing, for stale air, like any chemical compound, can unglue a mighty oak as well as a tiny envelope. Every time I lifted my foot to walk to the baggage wheel, the sole flapped. I carefully lifted my foot, put it down so the flapping would go unseen, unheard, but of course people heard, people saw. People see such things. That beautiful shoe, worn once only in twenty years, and it was coming undone. I had saved the shoes for a special occasion, for a talk on Vanity in Vanity Fair, and the right occasion was slipping from me. Too late I realized the irony of life.

I could try to talk to Nalini again. If the Nalini I talked to was the Nalini I had talked to. I think the Nalini I talked to, the first Nalini, and the second Nalini if she is also the first Nalini, would understand. This computer business has unhinged me. No, perhaps she would not understand. Why don't I understand it's too late? Everything is too late. I thought I could understand an Indian woman who was kind and understanding, who understood me in her kindness. A Brahmin of understanding. It is perhaps the illusion formed by my sister marrying an Indian man. She went off to India and left me. After my wife left me. Everyone left me that year. They all tend to leave me.

I'll try the computer again. Without Nalini's help. I can do it, I suppose, if I try hard enough. I've done it before, done it without others' help.

You know, I do wonder sometimes what happened to my wife.

LIGHTS OUT  
END OF PLAY

