

# PAUL NORA

## SLEEPING INDOORS by Jim Holt

### ACT I

#### Scene 1

*(A nice, warm living room, decorated for Christmas. Artwork and bookshelves indicate a cultured/cluttered environment. Stairs toward the rear, a front entranceway and an exit to the kitchen.)*

*(NORA BAREFIELD enters from the stairs. She is forty- or fifty-something, attractive. She carries a cat and calls out for another.)*

NORA. Pushkir! Come on now. It's time for you guys to be outside.

*(She exits through the kitchen with the cat and reenters quickly. She rummages through gifts under the Christmas tree and pulls out a package. She rips off the card and tears into the wrapping revealing a shoebox and a pair of expensive hiking boots.)*

*(She rushes up the stairs with the boots. She returns quickly with a nasty, battered pair of boots that she holds away from her nose by the tips of the laces.)*

*(She carries the boots out through the kitchen and returns just in time to hide the shoe box and wrappings behind the sofa as her husband PAUL enters from outside.)*

*(PAUL is dressed as a college professor might dress and carries a bag full of new books which he dumps on the coffee table.)*

START

PAUL. Bloody hell!

*(NORA pushes the box and wrappings under the sofa with her foot.)*

NORA. What's wrong?

*(She takes his overcoat.)*

PAUL. I forgot the new Michael Caine biography.

NORA. I thought you reviewed it already.

*(She takes his scarf.)*

PAUL. Yes, I reviewed it. Now I'd like to actually read it.

NORA. We need to talk.

PAUL. Uh huh.

*(She fluffs a cushion as he sits on the sofa.)*

NORA. I have some interesting news.

PAUL. Oh, great.

*(She places a cushion behind his back.)*

NORA. Why do you say it like that?

PAUL. Interesting is never good.

NORA. Why not?

*(She helps him loosen his tie.)*

PAUL. If it were good news it wouldn't be "interesting." Did you find another cat?

NORA. Not exactly.

PAUL. What does that mean?

NORA. You said four cats were enough even though we have five cats and you've never bothered to learn their names.

PAUL. We have five cats?

NORA. Fushkin, Puss, Pissant, Paul and Pauly.

PAUL. You named a cat after me?

*(PAUL removes his tie.)*

NORA. Two cats. Paul and Pauly.

*(NORA takes his tie.)*

PAUL. I don't like cats.

*(PAUL slips out of his shoes.)*

NORA. I know.

*(NORA picks up his shoes and carries them off right.)*

PAUL. They're users.

NORA. Right.

*(NORA enters with a glass of scotch.)*

PAUL. They don't care about anything but their own gratification.

*(PAUL extends his hand and NORA hands him the drink.)*

NORA. Uh huh.

PAUL. I can't believe we have four cats.

NORA. Five.

PAUL. Five. That's crazy. Where do you find these things?

NORA. I've told you. You don't really care.

PAUL. Where do they come from?

NORA. Off the streets. People abandon them.

PAUL. And you have to adopt every one you see?

NORA. They need help.

PAUL. Better you should adopt some homeless person.

NORA. You've said that before.

PAUL. Do something to help your fellow man.

NORA. You have emphatically stressed that before, on numerous occasions.

PAUL. Right, well why don't you try that sometime? Try extending a little comfort to a member of our own species.

NORA. There is real merit to that argument. You are so wise and compassionate sometimes. I mean, really, why not do something to help someone less fortunate?

*(There is a pause. PAUL slowly notices the silence and looks up from his books.)*

PAUL. Oh, no.

NORA. Look at what we have. This big house. Bigger now that Nick's away at school. A whole floor upstairs that we never even use.

PAUL. Nora?

NORA. We don't need all this space to ourselves. We wander about—

PAUL. Nora.

NORA. It's a waste of energy. It's a crime really.

PAUL. Please don't do this.

NORA. And food. We end up throwing out more than we eat. When Nick was here there were never any leftovers.

PAUL. Nora...

NORA. Three empty bedrooms...

PAUL. Stop! You do not intend to adopt some homeless person.

NORA. It was your idea.

PAUL. What? You've invited some homeless person over here for Christmas dinner or something.