



BEAUTIFUL WOMEN IN TERRIBLE TROUBLE

DARREN CALLAHAN

Three Plays about Hollywood

SOURCES

DESPERATE DOLLS

WITNESS TO AN ACCIDENT

SOURCES

1970s L.A.

The Lymans are a happy family living in Hollywood. When the middle daughter, Sienna, a budding starlet, performs a strange magic trick at a family party, their lives are turned around. A few days later, Sienna vanishes, her father dies, her older sister has a miscarriage, and her mother loses her memory. Knowing a curse has befallen the Lymans, Katherine, the mother, goes searching for her missing Sienna, leading the family deeper and deeper into a haunted past and a nest of violence.

This horror-noir features a mostly female cast, some stage combat, mature themes, and brief nudity.

DESPERATE DOLLS

1960s L.A.

After auditioning for a low-budget film producer, three beautiful young actresses become tangled in a nightmare of hypnosis, killing, and apparitions. Sunny Jack Fennigan has the best intentions – to make female-led independent feature films that make a quick buck at the box office. A powerful agent known only as “Captain” calls with a proposition that may turn his life around. His three best prospects – girls with handpicked nicknames – seem ripe for stardom. Soon then Hollywood becomes a dark parade of seedy motels and murders that threaten to wipe out all three of the girls and Sunny Jack, too.

This horror-noir features a mostly female cast, blood and media effects, mature themes, and brief nudity.

WITNESS TO AN ACCIDENT

1950s L.A.

Agatha Moll is a rising young star who suddenly finds herself locked in “The Hotel” – an all-female sanitarium. But, she’s not crazy. What secrets does she know that trapped her in this fate? Could it be something about Ray Pendarsky, a film executive, whose daughter was committed to The Hotel one year before? Or is it regarding Dean Foster, her director, whom she’s entangled with in a torrid affair? At the mercy of a sadistic orderly and a failed ingénue named Lillian, will she ever find her way out of The Hotel?

This horror-noir features a mostly female cast, blood and violence effects, mature themes, and brief nudity.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

“Beautiful Women in Terrible Trouble” is about the darker side of Hollywood. I intended to create an experience, with a high-blend of artistry and visceral excitement. On the surface, stage plays about films may appear to be an unorthodox idea. Despite the hybrid, I consider these wholly theatrical while also appealing to audiences bred with the expectations of movies. My hope is that these plays are considered entertainment, of a type that keeps audiences talking and returning, and provides an experience not quite seen this way before in live theatre.

“Sources” is a story of amnesia and snuff films; **“Desperate Dolls”** is about hypnosis and auditions gone really, really wrong; **“Witness to an Accident”** is about lost identity and sanitariums. Sex and violence are important to these plays. I didn't write them to appeal to baser instincts, but these elements are central to illustrate the desperation of the characters. In a storefront or fringe space, potentially at close quarters, certain things could make an audience squirm. My hope is that the material transcends pure exploitation. Men and women are treated equally badly, and, as women are most often the heroes, I hope no one thinks these are too risky to do with integrity. They're plays for adults, for certain, but are not pornography.

Each play can be produced separately. Packaging them together in this way is intended to give a “region-wide” or “city-wide” immersive experience of simultaneous productions with different theatre companies, or a really interesting season or festival for a troupe. The plays are not sequels or prequels and do not share characters. These are stand-alone, only bound by a few repeating lines of dialog, similarity of theme and structure, and the idea that evil is ever-present, particularly in Tinseltown, the center of smashed dreams.

Darren Callahan

PLAYWRIGHT BIOGRAPHY

Darren Callahan has written drama for the BBC, The SyFy Channel, National Public Radio, and Radio Pacifica New York. He is winner of NPR's National Radio Drama award. His play "Horror Academy" debuted in Chicago, IL in autumn 2007, produced by Babes with Blades and directed by Jeremy Wechsler. Polarity Ensemble Theatre of Chicago produced his surrealist mystery "The White Airplane" in 2009, directed by Susan Padveen. Polarity Ensemble Theater Books published both plays in 2009. Works for stage include "Water Pressure" (published by Smith & Kraus), "The Double Negative," "Mass Grave," "Sub-Genre," "Sources," "Desperate Dolls," and "Witness to an Accident." His website is darrencallahan.com.

SOURCES



CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

(14 actors)

KATHERINE LYMAN, *an older woman*

SIENNA LYMAN, *a younger woman*

ZOEY LYMAN, *a younger woman*

REBECCA LYMAN, *a younger woman*

CONNOR LYMAN, *an older man*

JOHN HARBOUR, *a man*

DAISY DILLINGER, *a younger woman*

CHURCHYARD, *an older man*

ARCHIE ANDERS, *an older man*

DAVID WOLFF, *a man*

CARBON COPY, *referring to two individuals who are nearly identical*

TWO FILM VAMPIRES, *females*

The following may be combined for a smaller cast:

(7 actors)

SIENNA LYMAN | DAISY DILLINGER | COPY

CONNOR LYMAN | CHURCHYARD | DAVID WOLFF

JOHN HARBOR | ARCHIE ANDERS

ZOEY | VAMPIRE TWO

Others would be the same as in the larger cast listing.

THE SETTING

Hollywood, California in the mid-1970s.

THE SCENE

The home of the Lyman family, a bedroom, an office, a pier, Daisy Dillinger's apartment, the home of Archie Anders, David Wolff's apartment, and a warehouse.

Exits stage right and stage left.

A NOTE ON FILM AND MEDIA

There are several films shown during the play. It is the director's discretion as to whether these are shown realistically or abstractly.

ACT I

SCENE 1

A film plays against a screen in the empty living room of the Lyman home. It is of a family vacation in the 1960s: pleasant contentment between a man, woman, and three young girls.

As the film plays, the LYMANS enter from various points. They are older now than at the time of the film’s creation.

The girls are grown and each dressed as smartly as their parents.

The mother, KATHERINE LYMAN, wears a white dress and reclines in a chair. She smokes a cigarette through a long filter.

REBECCA LYMAN sways; she is pregnant.

SIENNA LYMAN lightly pats her hair-sprayed ‘do. She wears a tight sweater and Capri pants.

ZOEY LYMAN blows bubbles with her chewing gum.

And the father, CONNOR LYMAN, mixes a cocktail at the bar.

The film holds on a young blonde named SIENNA, as a child. She is luminescent.

The film switches off.

Lights rise.

CONNOR

Tahoe?

The women groan.

CONNOR (Continued)

Don't you...? I mean, Katherine, help me here.

KATHERINE

I'm out.

CONNOR

On a mission.

KATHERINE

You drag that machine from the closet every holiday.
I have limits.

ZOEY

Bravo, Mother!

KATHERINE

Nostalgia is never good, or have you forgotten?
What's past is past. I like focusing on 'now.' To be
reminded that I was young, and that you all have grown
up beyond my reach, is too depressing.

SIENNA gives KATHERINE a warm hug.

SIENNA

Not beyond your reach, Mother.

KATHERINE

Please, Sienna, all that hair spray.

SIENNA

I like watching those old movies. Don't ever stop,
Dad. When I see them, I have the best memories. I
remember things that aren't on the screen, things that
happened off of it. Things that weren't caught, but
were good, and should be remembered. All those
possibilities.

CONNOR

Possibilities. You're twenty. You've got an abundance of possibilities.

SIENNA

I know. It's just that I want to remember everything, everything...everything.

ZOEY

You like watching them because you're beautiful.

KATHERINE

You're *all* beautiful.

CONNOR touches SIENNA's shoulder.

CONNOR

Your mother's right. You are and forever will be beautiful.

REBECCA

Only one of us is in the movie business.

SIENNA struts.

SIENNA

(Southern accent)

"I beg pardon; I didn't know it could get so hot in Tennessee this time of the year. Perhaps Mr. McGillicutty can spare a drink of his cool, cool water."

The girls laugh as SIENNA stretches for a drink at the bar, showing her legs.

KATHERINE

Eh, eh... Remember: you are being watched.

SIENNA

(Southern accent)

Can't an ingénue have a little ol' drink?

Sienna giggles and puts down the drink.

CONNOR

I like my daughter away from the Devil.

REBECCA

Here in California? You should know by now, father, that's just not possible.

KATHERINE

When a brassiere becomes too quaint, and there are films about real life and real problems, you know trying to protect Sienna from *anything* is pointless. I've taught you well, Sienna. One small role as a southern trollop won't turn you to salt.

SIENNA

We should all go together to the red carpet.

ZOEY

How many tickets did they give you?

SIENNA

Two. But I can get more. My agent has a connection. He wants me to take a handsome boy, but I'd much rather take all of you.

CONNOR

Better stick with the boy. Papers can be cruel.

SIENNA

They won't even care. I doubt they'll know to try and take my picture. They'll think I'm one of the crew. The jezebel is a small part. You oversell my success.

KATHERINE

We just know the way the wind blows.

SIENNA

I've seen you be a little grand, mother, from time to time. But now you claim clairvoyance?

KATHERINE

(Dramatic)

Alas, I have no magic. I am a mere mortal on this fatal plane, looking for answers, just the same.

SIENNA is considering.

SIENNA

Say. Speaking of magic... Do you want to see something? I wasn't going to show you this, *but...*

(Pause)

Well, do you want to see or not?

REBECCA

What is it?

SIENNA

Something I learned.

REBECCA

Show off.

ZOEY

Shhhh. Let her do it.

CONNOR

No more summersaults on the lawn. That old man next door enjoys it too much.

SIENNA

Not a summersault.

KATHERINE

As long as I don't have to move from this chair...I'm sotted and comfortable. I'm in a cocoon. You around me. On a Sunday before dark. When there's just a little light in the air and everyone is just as they should be.

(Catching herself)

Like I said: nostalgia is never good.

SIENNA crosses to the table. She removes objects from the table and sets them on the floor.

KATHERINE (Continued)

I hope you are planning to put those back.

SIENNA smiles sheepishly and continues her preparations.

She places a hand flat over the table, but then stops suddenly.

SIENNA

Wait, wait. I forgot something.

SIENNA dims the lights.

REBECCA

Grrr, no, not another Super 8.

SIENNA returns to the table with a dismissive wave.

SIENNA

Okay, promise you won't laugh.

Hand across the table, SIENNA slowly opens her fingers.

A light emanates from under her hand. Though it looks simple, the trick is stunning.

SIENNA closes her hand and the light dies, like she's snuffed a candle.

The room holds in darkness.

SIENNA goes to the switch.

Lights on, SIENNA notes the expressions on the faces of the others.

SIENNA (Continued)

Did you like it?

ZOEY snatches SIENNA's hand.

ZOEY

(Excited)

How did you *do* that? Let me see.

There is nothing in Sienna's hand.

SIENNA

It's a trick.

KATHERINE rises and stubs out her cigarette, thoughtful.

KATHERINE

How was it done?

SIENNA

It's a trick.

KATHERINE

Yes, you said that. Tell us what you did.

REBECCA

She's not supposed to give away the trick. That's bad magic.

SIENNA looks to her father.

SIENNA

Dad. It was just a trick. Didn't you like it?

CONNOR

Who taught you that?

SIENNA

I thought you'd be amused.

ZOEY

It was wonderful! Will you teach me?

SIENNA

I promised I'd keep it to myself.

REBECCA

It was a little creepy.

SIENNA

Oh, come on. It was a trick!

(Defensive)

Well, I'm sorry I showed it to you now.

KATHERINE

It's something simple, right? Something we'll laugh about. A mirror and, and a flashlight.

REBECCA crosses to SIENNA and inspects her pockets. She examines the underside of the table.

REBECCA

Mom's right. Isn't she? It's something easy.

SIENNA

I didn't mean to scare you.

SIENNA starts to put the items back on top of the table.

KATHERINE

I'm not scared. I don't think. I don't want you to do that ever again.

SIENNA

Mom, it's just a trick.

KATHERINE

(Quiet)

I know, I know.

An awkward moment passes. CONNOR
downs his drink. ZOEY looks
confused.

SIENNA checks the time.

SIENNA

Oh, shoot. Look, I have to get going.

SIENNA gathers her things.

SIENNA (Continued)

I wasn't kidding about red carpet. I'll see what I
can arrange. My agent -- he has to do me favors,
right? That's part of the job. I can't do *all* the
work. He has me running around Hollywood meeting the
craziest people. He owes me. Will you come?

KATHERINE

For certain.

SIENNA

Great.

(Pause)

Really. It was just a trick. I thought you'd laugh.

KATHERINE

It was a good trick.

CONNOR

Yes. A good trick. But I don't want to see it again.

SIENNA

Okay. I love you.

SIENNA exits with awkwardness.

Lights down.

ACT I

SCENE 2

KATHERINE LYMAN's bedroom. She is sleeping. She wears a black dress.

ZOEY enters in the darkness.

ZOEY

(Soft)

Mom. Mother. You have to get up.

KATHERINE

Sienna?

ZOEY

(Disappointed)

No. It's Zoey. You have to get up. They're starting to arrive.

KATHERINE

What time is it?

ZOEY

It's almost two.

KATHERINE

Did I fall asleep?

ZOEY

Yes. For just a few minutes. I thought you were fixing your makeup.

ZOEY gently pulls her mother out of bed and draws her from the bedroom into the living room.

Lights rise as she enters.

REBECCA stands at the bar, drinking. She is no longer pregnant. She wears a black dress.

Two others are in the room...

JOHN HARBOUR: tall, in a black suit.

DAISY DILLINGER: blonde, in a black dress.

KATHERINE

Who are these people?

ZOEY

Mom...

KATHERINE

Who are they?

HARBOUR

We met several times, Mrs. Lyman. First by phone. You saw me earlier this morning. The cemetery?

KATHERINE looks blank.

HARBOUR (Continued)

I'm John Harbour.

ZOEY

(Whisper)

Sienna's agent.

(With gesture)

And Daisy.

DAISY fans an uncomfortable wave.

ZOEY (Continued)

(Embarrassed)

Mom. You met these people. You *know* who they are.

KATHERINE

We met at, at the cemetery?

KATHERINE, lost, wanders her house.

KATHERINE (Continued)
Where's Connor? Where's my husband?

HARBOUR comes forward and takes Katherine's hand.

HARBOUR
I should go. Please know, Mrs. Lyman, that if there's any help you or your daughters need, anything at all, you can reach me at my office. Here's my card. I don't believe you've ever been to my address, but I'm there most days after three o'clock. And I will certainly let you know if there is any word from Sienna.

KATHERINE
Where is she?

Awkward gazes pass.

HARBOUR
Good day, Mrs. Lyman. My deepest condolences.

He exits.

DAISY, without asking, starts a drink at the bar.

KATHERINE
No! Don't! My husband makes the drinks around here.

DAISY stops, but on a gesture from REBECCA continues.

KATHERINE (Continued)

Please, someone tell me. I've woken from a bad dream.
Or maybe I'm still in it.

REBECCA

Mother! How dare you! After everything! How dare
you lose it like this!

KATHERINE

After WHAT? After WHAT?

(To ZOEY)

Tell me, Zoey. Please.

REBECCA runs from the room.

ZOEY comes forward and, for a
moment, looks sympathetically to
her mother.

KATHERINE (Continued)

What happened to Rebecca's baby?

ZOEY quickly exits.

DAISY remains. She shows no
emotion; she drinks.

DAISY

I was Sienna's roommate. She never mentioned me. You
didn't even know where she had been living. You told
me that bit at the funeral. You're losing it, aren't
you?

KATHERINE

Who has died? Tell me. Please.

DAISY

You really don't remember?

KATHERINE

The last thing I remember... We were watching home
movies. Just a few hours ago. Sienna had to leave.

DAISY

Sienna's been missing for five weeks.

KATHERINE

What?

DAISY

Yeah. The police are trying to find her.

KATHERINE

Five weeks?

DAISY

You filed a report. A missing persons.

KATHERINE

I did?

DAISY

Sure. What, you go and lose your mind or somethin'?

KATHERINE retreats to her bedroom
and lies down. After a moment,
DAISY puts down her drink, thinks,
and then follows.

DAISY

You think you're in a dream? You're not. I don't
want to be mean. This sounds mean, doesn't it? I
just want you to know the score.

(Pause)

Listen, I'm going...

KATHERINE

(To pillow)

Get my husband. Please.

DAISY

He's dead.

KATHERINE

Connor?

DAISY

You were there. You said stuff at the church. You dropped a flower in the hole.

KATHERINE

FUCK YOU, YOU CUNT!

DAISY

Look, I didn't even want to be here! I had plans.

KATHERINE

Then *get out!*

DAISY returns to the bar. She drinks.

KATHERINE rises, limp, and props herself against the bedroom door.

KATHERINE (Continued)

If it's true...then why can't I remember? It is like there's a big, blank spot I can't see around. I... I don't easily forget things... but I've forgotten so much...

DAISY

Did you take a pill? You've been drinking. Something to calm the nerves. Maybe they don't mix.

KATHERINE

But how can I not remember five weeks? A kind of drug like that. I feel like I've been hypnotized. Are you acting? Are you all playing a joke? Tell me that's true. I need to hear it. How can I forget everything so completely?

DAISY

Crazy business, isn't it? Well maybe it's best to forget. You just go and lie down, Mrs. Lyman. I'm sure someone will be back for you soon.

(Pause)

Go on. Lie down. I didn't come to baby-sit.

KATHERINE

I don't need a stranger to tell me my husband's dead.

DAISY

I saw the notice in the paper. And I guess I wondered if Sienna was gonna surprise us. Her dad's funeral - you would think that'd be worth an appearance. People don't vanish that much. At least not in my life. I guess I was kind of curious.

KATHERINE

Sienna was here, this afternoon. Just a few hours ago.

DAISY

Was she now?

KATHERINE

She was, she was! It, it COULDN'T have been five weeks. She was here. And she did some sort of a magic trick.

DAISY

Ha. She couldn't tie her shoes. I doubt she was any good with rabbits.

DAISY thinks on this. At last, she pours a second drink and hands it to KATHERINE.

DAISY (Continued)

Get drunk.

KATHERINE

I'm scared.

DAISY

I know. Get drunk.

KATHERINE

Do you know what's happened to my daughter? You must.
(MORE)

KATHERINE (Continued)

You... you know what happened. If she walks into the room now, I'll think it was a good joke. I won't be mad. I know actors like to play pranks.

DAISY

Got a cigarette?

KATHERINE

I think so...

KATHERINE finds a pack. For the first time, she notices she is wearing a black dress.

KATHERINE (Continued)

There is mud on my shoes.

DAISY

Yes, it was raining at the grave.

KATHERINE swallows her drink.

DAISY (Continued)

That's it. Get drunk.

KATHERINE fumbles with her cigarette. Daisy holds out her lighter, strikes it.

KATHERINE

I need my filters.

DAISY

Doesn't matter.

The cigarette is lit.

DAISY (Continued)

Here. Another drink.

KATHERINE

What was your name again? Daisy?

DAISY

That's right.

KATHERINE

Zoey and Rebecca abandoned me. Why are you being kind?

DAISY

Sienna said you were worth it.

KATHERINE

How long did you know her?

DAISY

A couple months.

KATHERINE

Were you friends?

DAISY

I'm not sure you could say that. We lived together to stretch the rent. It was an arrangement.

KATHERINE

Do you know where she is?

DAISY toasts KATHERINE's glass.

DAISY

I do not. But I know where she isn't.

KATHERINE

Where's that?

DAISY

Anywhere near the obituaries.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 3

JOHN HARBOUR's office.

Desk and a chair.

A film poster hangs on the wall:
"HUNT HER, KILL HER" (a woman in
the woods, half-naked, sweaty -
obviously an exploitation film; no
text other than the title.)

HARBOUR compulsively straightens.

SOUND: A soft knock at the door.

HARBOUR listens, paces. He
answers the door to find KATHERINE
waiting.

HARBOUR

Mrs. Lyman!

KATHERINE enters.

HARBOUR takes her arm and escorts
her to the chair.

HARBOUR (Continued)

You came. That's terrific. Please. Be comfortable.
Sunday you didn't seem yourself. Not that I'm blaming
you. Terrible day. Funerals! But I'm glad you're
here. I should have warned you: this place is *below*
respectable. Did you spot the drunks down the street,
in front of the liquor window? I come here to answer
the phone and check messages. Rest of the time I'm at
the lots, or auditions. So. Are you feeling better?

KATHERINE

Better?

HARBOUR

I understand. It's a relative state. You're probably not anywhere near your capacity. But are you better than the last time we spoke?

KATHERINE

I've lost my memory.

HARBOUR

Hmmmm. Mem-mor-ry...

KATHERINE

I remember Sienna's visit to the house five weeks ago. Then... Sunday.

HARBOUR

Oh... Christ. That's terrible. Have you seen a doctor?

KATHERINE

I have. He was no help.

HARBOUR

Well. Jeez. Tragedies like you've been through. Piled up and up. Memory gives you a break. Maybe not the one you wanted. Suppose it's like... going into a coma. Self-preservation of a sort.

KATHERINE

That was the doctor's theory. Do you want to hear mine?

HARBOUR

...Of course.

KATHERINE

I was drugged.

HARBOUR

(Taken aback)

Heh... Well. Well, well, well. I-

KATHERINE

Nothing "well" about it. Between a few conversations,
(MORE)

KATHERINE (Continued)

I've been able to piece together what has happened. Sienna vanished two days after I last saw her. I spent the next few weeks putting up posters, driving up and down Sunset, making telephone calls. I don't remember doing any of this... but I've learned it. And, you've been helping as well.

HARBOUR

As I could, yes. Sienna was one of my rising meal tickets. But it's not all mercenary; I liked her, too. She was a real doll.

KATHERINE

And then my oldest, Rebecca, had a miscarriage at near-term. Just about four weeks ago. And then my husband of twenty-two years dies of a massive heart attack. He didn't even have a heart condition. Isn't that strange?

HARBOUR

Like I said. Piled up, up... up. You're due for a turn in luck.

KATHERINE

Do you believe she's alive?

HARBOUR

I do. Sure. Certainly.

KATHERINE

That's the most optimistic reply yet.

HARBOUR

You and I see Sienna the same, Mrs. Lyman. A little girl wearing put-on costumes and makeup, mugging in front of the mirror. I pushed her onto the callback lines. Held her sweaty palms and listened to her nervous laughs. And when she got that part in "Southern Rhapsody," we both knew it was the start of something. Dreamers don't stop. They keep going, despite the odds. Despite rejection. Am I making you uncomfortable?

KATHERINE

What?

HARBOUR

It's just that you look nervous.

KATHERINE

That movie. The poster.

HARBOUR eyes the poster for "Hunt Her, Kill Her."

HARBOUR

Was a gift.

KATHERINE

Is it a real film?

HARBOUR

Sure. Why not?

KATHERINE

I've never heard of it.

HARBOUR

Lots of films never get heard of. This town makes a hundred a month. The public sees about a tenth of those. The others get buried. Never seen this one myself. Buddy of mine pushed me to make my crappy office more Hollywood and that's what he could spare. I'm just glad it wasn't a comedy. Hate comedies. Dramas. Thrillers. Westerns are okay. You like movies, Mrs. Lyman?

KATHERINE

I used to.

HARBOUR

Holy Moses. Stand up.

KATHERINE

I-

HARBOUR

Stand up.

She obeys. He circles her.

HARBOUR (Continued)

Let me think. Thinking here. Matron. Possibly a church. I'm seeing a church. Is that right?

KATHERINE

I don't know what you're talking about.

HARBOUR

A scene. From a film. Getting flashes. No, wait, wait. Not a church. A museum. You played... I can see it. The tour guide. Yes, that's it, the tour guide at the Metropolitan Museum in one of those Archie Anders films. See: my special talent!

KATHERINE

I'm not an actor.

HARBOUR

You're kidding me. You see, I have this crazy mind. I see something once and it sticks with me. Never forget a face. You sure you weren't in the Anders flick?

KATHERINE

I'm certain.

HARBOUR

Oh. Then I made a boo-boo.

KATHERINE

So you have no special talents?

HARBOUR

You're the first one I've gotten wrong. But I'm gonna check your resume, Mrs. Lyman. I think you're pullin' my leg.

(Considering)

Am I talking too much? I haven't even asked why you've come to see me. Here, making you stand! I'm such a jerk. Here, be comfortable. Ah, I don't have anything to offer you. Water? You want water? There's a fountain in the hall. I think I've got some paper cups...

HARBOUR rifles the desk.

KATHERINE

Mr. Harbour: what do you know about magic tricks?

HARBOUR stops cold.

HARBOUR

Magic tricks?

KATHERINE

Yes.

HARBOUR

Knowing faces - that's not a magic trick.

KATHERINE

I'm talking about something with light.

HARBOUR

Light? What's this got to do with-?

KATHERINE

Sienna, she did a magic trick. She held her hand over a table and her hand glowed. It was very real. We were all there. It was the last time I saw her. None of it made any sense. We don't know how she did it.

HARBOUR

I don't handle any magicians. I'm sorry. Did you tell the police about this trick?

KATHERINE

Apparently I didn't. Not at first. I checked. I just told them this morning and they didn't believe me.

HARBOUR's hand has not left the desk drawer.

KATHERINE (Continued)

Did you teach her this trick?

HARBOUR

No. No, I didn't.

KATHERINE

Do you know who might have?

HARBOUR

I didn't know all Sienna's friends, Mrs. Lyman. Only some.

KATHERINE

Were any of them magicians?

HARBOUR

I don't think so. No. I don't think so... not... not that I can rec-

KATHERINE

Have you found that paper cup yet?

HARBOUR looks at his arm, in the desk. His face twitches, nervous.

Slowly, he pulls a pistol from his desk.

He points it at KATHERINE for just a second, his face turning serious; he then has a change of heart.

HARBOUR

Prop gun. Doesn't even work. Did I scare you?

KATHERINE stands.

KATHERINE

I should be going.

HARBOUR, with the pistol, comes around and blocks the door.

HARBOUR

Look, I'm an agent. That's all. That's all I was for Sienna. I got her work. "Southern Rhapsody." That was me. I got her that audition.

KATHERINE

I've got to go.

HARBOUR

You can't go. I can see it: you don't believe me.

KATHERINE

It's not about believing you. You seem strange. I don't think I should stay.

HARBOUR

My reputation is built on trust. People trust me. Lots of people. You can ask them. You can use the phone. I'll. I'll give you the number for the head of casting at Warner's. He'll vouch for me. He will. Heck, he probably can vouch for you, too... Warner's made that museum picture, didn't they?

KATHERINE

I told you: that wasn't me. Now get out of my way. Please.

HARBOUR

You can use the phone.

(Pause)

See? It's right there.

Long pause. KATHERINE looks behind her to the phone on the desk.

KATHERINE

(Cautiously)

All right.

She backs to the phone.

KATHERINE (Continued)
What's the number?

HARBOUR chews on the barrel of the
pistol, nervous.

HARBOUR
(Through teeth)
Six two three...

KATHERINE dials. Pause.

HARBOUR (Continued)
Eight...

KATHERINE spins the eight.

HARBOUR looks a wreck. He rests
the gun at his waist.

HARBOUR (Continued)
I don't know anything about any trick.

KATHERINE
Then who does?

Pause.

HARBOUR
(Quickly)
Four two seven seven eleven.

Katherine finishes dialing.

An audible ring on the other side.
A second ring.

HARBOUR comes forward and presses the cancel.

Their eyes meet.

He grabs her and puts the pistol in her stomach. His face is ticks and twitches.

She does not fight him.

KATHERINE

(Soft)

Mr. Harbour? Mr. Harbour? John. *Is that a prop gun?*

He fires until the pistol is empty.

KATHERINE stands before him, unharmed.

Realizing it is, in fact, a prop, KATHERINE falls over the desk and runs at the door.

HARBOUR catches her.

They fight.

KATHERINE's hand finds the telephone. She hits HARBOUR over and over on the head until he is still.

SOUND: The phone's off the hook signal buzzes, insistent.

Blood empties under HARBOUR's head.

Lights and phone's signal fade.

ACT I

SCENE 4

HARBOUR's office, later.

Lights rise to dusk.

KATHERINE looks out the window,
smokes a cigarette, her back to
the audience.

HARBOUR's body lies on the floor,
just as before.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 5

HARBOUR's office, even later.

Lights rise to barely lit/night.

KATHERINE remains at the window,
her cigarette now down to its
filter.

HARBOUR's body is unchanged.

SOUND: A knock.

KATHERINE goes to the door,
unbolts it, and then thinks better
of it.

KATHERINE

Who's there?

REBECCA

(Through door)

It's us, Mom.

She opens the door to REBECCA and
ZOEY.

The two daughters immediately
assess. ZOEY covers her mouth;
REBECCA bends towards HARBOUR's
body.

REBECCA

That's John Harbour!

KATHERINE

He attacked me.

ZOEY

Is he dead?

KATHERINE

Yes.

REBECCA rolls HARBOUR over and inspects. When finished, she stands, shaking. She wipes her bloody fingers on her skirt.

KATHERINE (Continued)

What do we do?

REBECCA

You don't know?

ZOEY

We call the police.

KATHERINE

What if they don't believe us?

REBECCA

Us?

ZOEY comes around the desk, sees the gun.

ZOEY

Is that a gun?

KATHERINE

It's not real. It's a prop. What if, what if they think I killed him in confusion? I mean, maybe if the gun was real-

REBECCA

Confusion? I mean, do we honestly know what happened here today? He's an agent, Mom! He got Sienna jobs. Why would he attack you?

KATHERINE

Stop. I know what you're implying, Rebecca. You didn't see his eyes. He wanted to shut me up. He wouldn't let me leave.

REBECCA

But why?

KATHERINE

Because I told him about the trick.

REBECCA

Oh, *Christ*, Mom. It was a stupid trick Sienna picked up on the set.

KATHERINE

It wasn't some stupid trick! Everything was lovely until that trick.

REBECCA

Everything was lovely. But you'd have found a way to screw it up. You did before and did again tonight.

KATHERINE

Shut up. Don't talk to me in that voice.
(To ZOEY)
You don't know how Sienna did that trick.

ZOEY

No, but it's not IMPORTANT!

KATHERINE

It is!

(To REBECCA)

You don't know how she did it either! What's to say it wasn't *more* than a parlor game? He wanted to kill me. He did. He wanted to kill me because I mentioned it.

REBECCA

What did he say *exactly*?

KATHERINE

I don't remember.

REBECCA

Oh, come ON, Mom!

KATHERINE

It's been two hours!

REBECCA

You only phoned us an hour ago. How could it—

KATHERINE

So blame me, then. I. I didn't know what to do.
Rebecca — you always expect so much of me.

REBECCA

No — I expect very little.

ZOEY

Please! Stop fighting. Let's get out of this first.
You two can pick at each other like crows another day.
Should we — should we call the police?

REBECCA

No, wait a minute. Let's think about this. You come
here and ask him about the trick, he pulls a gun on
you. The gun's not real. Did he know that?

KATHERINE

I think so. He was very disturbed. I don't think he
was right in the head. He seemed fine at first, but
then got stranger and stranger.

REBECCA

He attacks you and won't let you leave.

KATHERINE

Yes. I, I hit him with the telephone and he stopped
moving.

ZOEY

He must know *something* about Sienna.

ZOEY opens desk drawers.

ZOEY (Continued)

Did you search in here?

KATHERINE

No, I didn't want to touch anything.

ZOEY pulls items from the desk.

ZOEY

Photographs.

KATHERINE and REBECCA come around to inspect the stack. ZOEY fans the photographs on the desk.

KATHERINE

Actors. Probably clients.

ZOEY

(Finding)

Sienna.

KATHERINE holds up the photograph. After a long moment, she gently sets it back down. She notices something: another picture.

KATHERINE

Do you recognize her?

REBECCA

Isn't she-?

ZOEY

That girl from Connor's funeral.

KATHERINE

Daisy.

(Reading)

Daisy Dillinger. Name and address. She didn't mention she was an actress.

REBECCA

(Thumbing pictures)

I don't recognize the rest. Do you?

ZOEY

(Pointing to a photograph)
What about her?

KATHERINE

I've never seen her before.

ZOEY

(Pointing to "HUNT HER, KILL HER")
She's in that poster.

KATHERINE holds up the photograph.
She hesitates then decides.

KATHERINE

Take the pictures. All of them.

REBECCCA

Are we going to call the police?

KATHERINE

No. I'm beginning to think we shouldn't. If I see
doubt in my daughters, how do you think the police
will look at what's happened?

REBECCA

Let's get out of here. I'm getting the creeps.

ZOEY

(Pointing to HARBOUR)
What about him?

KATHERINE

Leave him. Leave him where he is.

REBECCA

Maybe we can call the police later. From a pay phone.
Tell them there's a body. Did you touch anything?

KATHERINE

What?

REBECCA

We should fix anything we've touched.

KATHERINE

The window.

ZOEY

I have a handkerchief.

REBECCA

I touched his clothes.

ZOEY dusts the room.

KATHERINE watches and then unhooks
the telephone from the wall.

REBECCA

What are you going to do with that?

KATHERINE

We'll throw it off the pier.

REBECCA

Did you tell anyone you were coming here?

KATHERINE

No one.

REBECCA

Not even that Daisy?

KATHERINE

We should be okay.

REBECCA

Did anyone see you come in? Did anyone pass by in the
corridor?

KATHERINE

No. Wait. On the street, but that was after. I saw
two people across the way.

ZOEY

Did they notice you in the window?

KATHERINE

I don't think so. They were wearing coats. They just stood there and when I looked again they were gone.

REBECCA

(To ZOEY)

Hurry up. I want to get out of here.

ZOEY

(Looking out window)

Street's clear.

REBECCA

Come on, Mom.

KATHERINE gazes a last time at HARBOUR's body, the blood, then to the telephone clutched in her arms.

REBECCA (Continued)

Mother, come on!

KATHERINE snaps out of it. They leave with ZOEY wiping the door.

Lights out.

ACT I

SCENE 6

The stage is clouded with fog.

In lowlight, KATHERINE, ZOEY, and REBECCA cross.

Over a railing, KATHERINE heaves the telephone.

SOUND: A splash of water.

KATHERINE

Do phones float?

ZOEY

What if we didn't clean good enough?

REBECCA

Too late now. We need to think of an answer to every question.

KATHERINE

I'll say I went to his office, but that I left before anything happened.

REBECCA

No. You'll say you met me for dinner.

ZOEY

Where?

KATHERINE

(Thinking)

The Reese Hotel.

ZOEY

Yeah. Yeah.

SOUND: Faraway police sirens, distant car horns.

REBECCA

(Turning KATHERINE to her)

Tell me mother: what's your memory like now?

KATHERINE

I wish I could forget everything about tonight.

REBECCA

Me, too.

ZOEY

(Awe)

You killed a man.

KATHERINE

I killed a man.

KATHERINE collapses on the street.

Her daughters rouse her.

ZOEY

Mom! Mom!

KATHERINE weeps.

ZOEY (Continued)

Listen, listen, listen. It's okay. Mom, it's okay.

KATHERINE can't look at her daughters.

KATHERINE

We're never going to get away with this.

ZOEY

No, no, we are. We are.

REBECCA

I'm a young woman. I want to have a baby. I don't want to go to jail.

ZOEY

Shush!

REBECCA

The world doesn't revolve around the great Katherine Lyman, you know. I have a life! Why is it always your stupid choices that wreck us? First breaking dad's heart and now-

ZOEY

Rebecca -- John Harbour attacked mom!

REBECCA

Did he? You know what she's like.

KATHERINE looks up.

REBECCA (Continued)

You know what I'm talking about.

KATHERINE tries to slap REBECCA,
but she catches her hand.

KATHERINE

Your father has just passed. Respect him.

REBECCA

Where was all your respect when he was alive?

ZOEY

Rebecca!

KATHERINE

I don't want your help. Go to the police.

REBECCA

No. I'm going to help you. I'm going to help you so much it will hurt you. And you will owe *me* for all the lies I've been through as your oldest. What's one more lie, Mother? Zoey and Sienna knew about you and your men, but they think it was a phase and it's done. I know you better. This is just a lull.

KATHERINE

One day, you'll understand. I'm a better woman than you think, Rebecca.

REBECCA

Prove it.

KATHERINE climbs to her feet.

KATHERINE

What about how you got that baby, then? You're not perfect. You're no stranger to men, either. You fallen for anyone who tells you there's something better. You'll learn. Nothing's true in this town.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 7

Blackness.

SOUND: Katherine’s voice on a telephone.

KATHERINE

(Over phone)

It’s Katherine Lyman. I’m coming to see you. I’ll be there at eight o’clock. I’m sorry if that’s too early. You’ll understand when I get there. I’m bringing my youngest. Zoey. You met her on Sunday. I wasn’t in the best condition Sunday, but I’m better now. I won’t be a burden. But I have to see you. It’s about Sienna. Please be home.

SOUND: Disconnect, fading into a retro pop song.

Lights rise on DAISY’s apartment in morning-time.

It is spare, with sofa and a switched-off television with “rabbit ears.”

Clothes pile on the floor, a brassiere drapes across a chair, which sets near a makeup table.

DAISY sits with her back to the audience, listening to the song on the radio. She wears only her cotton panties. She pulls on hosiery, a blouse, at last her mini-skirt.

SOUND: Polite knocking.

DAISY answers to find KATHERINE and ZOEY outside.

DAISY
You're twenty minutes late.

KATHERINE
I couldn't find the door. There's no number.

DAISY
It fell off.

KATHERINE
All these apartments look the same.

DAISY
Built for cheap, not for convenience. Come in.

They enter.

DAISY
Pardon the mess. You're Zoey?

ZOEY
Hello.

DAISY
I only have a few minutes.

KATHERINE
Have we made you late for work?

DAISY
No.

She lets the comment hang.

DAISY (Continued)
I don't have any coffee made. I'm sorry.

KATHERINE
I've been up all night. I don't think I've slept
in... in... I'm not sure.

DAISY

Still the forgetful type, huh? Can you help me with the buttons?

DAISY turns. Her blouse needs buttoned in the back. ZOEY steps forward.

DAISY (Continued)

Sienna used to do this for me. I knew I could count on a Lyman.

ZOEY finishes.

KATHERINE

I hope we can count on you, Daisy.

DAISY

A favor, huh? I knew it. I wondered how you got my name and number. You must have good sources. First I thought you were comin' to tell me some bad news about Sienna. But then neither of you were cryin' when I answered the door. Must be my face. People can't hide a thing - they break like babies with stubbed toes when it's bad news. Look - I'd be happy to chip in. Did you bring extra posters or something? I could tack 'em up at the grocers.

KATHERINE

It's not about canvassing...

KATHERINE pulls DAISY's actor photograph out of her purse.

DAISY

Oh, *she's* cute.

KATHERINE

Is this you?

DAISY

Partially.

KATHERINE

How do you mean?

DAISY

That's the old me.

KATHERINE

Did you used to be an actress?

DAISY

No, I used to be a waitress.

(Pause, a wink)

I suppose I know how you got my address. Only three people in the world have that mug shot. The other ninety-seven copies are in a box in my closet. I gave one to my mother. A lousy ex-boyfriend stole the second. That's not all he took. And he's married. I doubt you asked his chick-a-dee for a peek-a-boo.

KATHERINE

Why didn't you tell me on Sunday that you were an actress?

DAISY

Because I'm not. I'm a girl with a pretty picture.

ZOEY

In a film agent's drawer!

ZOEY regrets saying this.

DAISY

Ah. It's the copy I gave John Harbour.

KATHERINE

I wish you had told me you were an actress.

DAISY

It doesn't matter.

KATHERINE

It's a connection. Did Sienna go on auditions with you?

DAISY

Sometimes.

KATHERINE

Do the police know this?

DAISY

I'm not so proud of my auditions.

KATHERINE

Every person Sienna had contact with is important to finding her. Look, the last time we saw Sienna she did something.

ZOEY

She did a trick.

KATHERINE

Yes, she did this magic trick. She, she put her hand out and there was light - this bright white light from the palm of her hand. And-

DAISY

Not much of a trick.

KATHERINE

It wasn't the- I mean, it looked easy. It was just light. But there was no source. It was like it came from *inside* of my daughter. It was like it was *hers*... And she did it like a kid putting on a show. She did it without any sense, like she was stripped there naked and didn't realize it until she saw our faces. Please. Did Sienna know anyone who could have taught her this trick?

DAISY

I don't see what a silly trick has to do with-

KATHERINE

Please.

DAISY

We didn't know any magicians, if that's what you're asking. We never auditioned for any magic shows or variety hours or anything. If she were up for someone's assistant or something, she would have told me.

(Thinking)

Wait a sec...

ZOEY

What? What?

DAISY goes towards her dressing table. She combs through a drawer.

DAISY

There was this one guy. He was off to the side during this one audition. He chatted up Sienna pretty good. I think he gave us a coupla cards. Here-

DAISY hands the card to KATHERINE.

KATHERINE

(Reading)

"David Wolff, Master Technician." I don't understand.

DAISY

Guy who makes flying saucers fly and stuff. Blows things up. Film effects.

KATHERINE

Yes. Yes. He sounds promising.

DAISY

I can't vouch for him or anything. Seemed a little quiet. Cute. But a bore. Took more of an interest in Sienna than me.

ZOEY

Did she ever see him again?

DAISY

I don't think so. I'm not sure. He never called our apartment, so...

KATHERINE pockets the card.

KATHERINE

Thank you.

DAISY

You're welcome.

KATHERINE drifts, unsure of what to say. She spots a doll on a shelf. She approaches it but does not touch it.

KATHERINE

(Lump in throat)

This is Sienna's.

DAISY

Uh-huh.

ZOEY

Is that Princess?

KATHERINE

I thought... I thought she threw this away. When she was a girl.

KATHERINE strokes the doll. She pulls the doll from the shelf. She holds it. Slowly, she wraps it in her arms. Finally, she puts it back on the shelf.

DAISY

You can keep it if you want.

KATHERINE

No. It should be here for her when she gets back.

KATHERINE turns against the wall,
hiding.

ZOEY puts her hands on her mother.

ZOEY

Let's go, Mom. I think we're done.

DAISY

It must be nice to be loved.

ZOEY

Where're your parents?

DAISY

I'm an orphan. They died in a fire when I was three.

ZOEY

That doesn't mean you're not loved.

DAISY

Right. Not necessarily. But in this case it does.

KATHERINE hugs DAISY.

KATHERINE

I wish Sienna had introduced us. She was always so secret about her Hollywood friends. But you've been very nice.

DAISY

I try.

ZOEY

Thanks.

They open the door to leave.

ZOEY (Continued)

Oh. One more thing. Have you ever heard of a movie called "Hunt Her, Kill Her?"

DAISY

You mean that horrid poster in John's office?

ZOEY

That's the one.

DAISY

Don't mention that. I just missed getting that part. One of my many, many rejections.

KATHERINE

Did you know the girl who starred in the picture?

DAISY

I don't know if you could say, "starred." It was pretty low budget picture, far as I could tell. Bunch of creepy men in a room looking at your legs. I doubt they could afford a star. But I know what you mean. Did I know her the same way I knew Sienna? No. She was just some girl. Never saw her again.

KATHERINE

So she was a stranger?

DAISY

To me.

KATHERINE nods. She exits with her daughter.

DAISY (Continued)

I'll call if something big comes up, okay?

DAISY shuts the door and resumes dressing. She sits at the makeup table.

From behind her, quietly, the front door opens again...

Standing in the door is a PERSON wearing a trench coat, with a hat, face covered by a mask.

DAISY (Continued)
(Over shoulder, joking)
Well I haven't heard anything yet!

She dabs powder on her nose.

The PERSON enters fully.

A SECOND PERSON appears in the doorway – identical in stature and dress (trench coat, hat, mask.)

These two combined are known as CARBON COPY.

DAISY (Continued)
Change your mind on taking “Princess”?

DAISY turns and startles.

DAISY (Continued)
(Panicked)
Please. Please.

A fight breaks out.

DAISY is knocked unconscious.

CARBON begins to arrange the apartment...

COPY goes to the shelf and tugs SIENNA's doll. COPY stares the doll down, as if it were an alien thing. In the end, COPY snaps the doll's head before lazily tossing

the parts aside, then returns to the work at hand.

CARBON pulls from a pocket a hangman's noose and begins to string it from the rafter of the apartment.

They lift Daisy, reviving, towards the dangling noose.

At last - she SCREAMS! It's doubled and screeching through the room.

Blackout.

Lights up again, low. Another plan.

DAISY is dismembered behind the sofa by CARBON, parts thrown as the work is done.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 8

The LYMAN house.

REBECCA paces, and then sits.

KATHERINE and ZOEY enter.

REBECCA bolts from the chair and to the door, a panicked look on her face.

KATHERINE

(Noticing)

What is it?

REBECCA

(Rushed, in a whisper)

Go, go.

ZOEY

What's wrong?

REBECCA

You have to go. Quickly. He won't leave.

SOUND: A toilet flushes.

KATHERINE

Who is it?

REBECCA

A policeman!

REBECCA shoves the two back towards the door, but it's too late, a man stands in the main room.

He is stooped, in ratty brown suit and Fedora hat.

This is DETECTIVE CHURCHYARD.

CHURCHYARD

Good afternoon.

He approaches the bar, fixes a drink (very slowly) then points to the sofa.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

Please.

KATHERINE

You're in my house.

CHURCHYARD again points to the sofa.

CHURCHYARD

Please.

REBECCA, ZOEY, and KATHERINE are seated.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

In the next ten minutes... I will know everything about you. I will know how many lovers you had, which of you was abused, all about your failed careers, missed appointments. Your drinks of choice...or if you're all teetotalers.

(Eyes the bar)

See - I already know an answer and it's been ten seconds. The Lymans' drink. Lots. Gin and whiskey, it seems. No beer. No wine. Martinis for the ladies, brown from the men. Have I got it?

KATHERINE

The bar is my husband's.

CHURCHYARD

Is? The present tense. Interesting.

(Drinks)

Denial is common.

KATHERINE

My daughter tells us you're a policeman.

CHURCHYARD

Detective. As I said, in ten minutes... I'll know everything.

KATHERINE

Do you have some information about my daughter?

CHURCHYARD

She's twenty-seven and lost a baby a month ago when near term. She doesn't like you much and wishes you behaved more like a mother than a cat-in-heat. She's never seen you work. She knows she's not your favorite and you've recently had a severe argument that she regrets.

KATHERINE

(To REBECCA)

How long was he here before we arrived?

CHURCHYARD

Five minutes - two of them lost to pissing in your toilet.

KATHERINE

I doubt she told you all that.

CHURCHYARD

She didn't have to. I could tell. She's like one of those magazines with large print and lots of pictures. The kind you buy in the grocery line and read in the toilet.

KATHERINE

You must not be that smart after all. My question: do you have information? *That* question was about my other daughter, Sienna.

CHURCHYARD

The one who is missing.

KATHERINE

Yes.

CHURCHYARD

I'm not here about her. I'm here about her agent.

KATHERINE

(Smooth)

Is that the man who was at Connor's funeral? See, I'm not in denial, Detective Churchyard.

CHURCHYARD

(Indicating REBECCA)

She told you my name?

KATHERINE

There's a laundry tag hanging from your coat.

CHURCHYARD looks down. He snaps the tag with his name from his sleeve.

KATHERINE (Continued)

Is it possible, Detective, that in ten minutes I'll know everything about you..?

CHURCHYARD smiles. He gulps his drink, sets it down on the bar, and pulls a chair in front of the sofa.

CHURCHYARD

You think you're a clever girl.

KATHERINE

I'm not a girl. I'm a woman. And I'm not trying to be clever.

ZOEY

(Injecting, nervous)

Really, she's not that smart.

KATHERINE quickly smacks ZOEY's leg. ZOEY gives a slight "ow."

CHURCHYARD

Well... I suppose I know now which one of you is abused.

KATHERINE

What do you want?

CHURCHYARD

Haven't you guessed?

KATHERINE

I have no idea.

CHURCHYARD

Yes. You. Do.

Long pause.

KATHERINE

Is this a staring contest? Or are you going to say something?

CHURCHYARD

John Harbour, your daughter's agent, was found this morning, murdered. Someone had beaten him to death in his northside office. Probably with a club or a pipe. Though his telephone is missing, so there's a case for that.

KATHERINE

(Giving away nothing)

Wow. That's terrible.

CHURCHYARD

I've seen your films. Yes, that's right. Six films in eight years and then you stopped. It's a shame they don't cast you any more. I don't think you've gotten ugly or anything. In fact... Yeah, if I was making a movie, you'd be on my list. Your husband was in the business, too, wasn't he?

KATHERINE

He was a set painter.

CHURCHYARD

This is a nice house for a set painter.

KATHERINE

The money is mine.

CHURCHYARD

I don't believe your contract with the studio could have paid for all this. I suppose I know how many lovers you had, then.

CHURCHYARD makes a checkmark in the air with his finger, marks the time sarcastically.

KATHERINE

You know exactly nothing. If you were any good at detecting, you'd tell me where Sienna has gone.

CHURCHYARD

What makes you think I don't know already?

KATHERINE slaps CHURCHYARD.

REBECCA

Mother!

CHURCHYARD

(Holding cheek, smiles)

No worries, girls. I'm not going to bring your mother up on assaulting a policeman.

CHURCHYARD stands, goes to the bar, and fixes another drink. Deliberately, he over-pours his whiskey, splashing the bar, winking as he does so.

CHURCHYARD

Ooops.

KATHERINE

You must go.

CHURCHYARD

Don't you want to hear it? You wouldn't want this fountain of knowledge to dry up, would you?

KATHERINE

You've told us nothing.

CHURCHYARD

(Sly)

So you knew about Mr. Harbour's murder, then?

KATHERINE

Well... No. That was news.

CHURCHYARD

I'll tell you what else is news. You girls are out of your depths. You're going to get swept into the Pacific if you're not careful. I can already tell there's a curse. Missing daughter, dead husband, dead baby... and now another body turns up. Death is trying to get in your panties. I wouldn't want to be within three miles of you.

ZOEY

That's fine by us.

CHURCHYARD

So bubble gum girl speaks. Good for you. I love a mix of false courage and desperation. Makes the game more interesting.

REBECCA

Isn't your ten minutes up?

CHURCHYARD

So the baby comment riles you, huh? The Lyman's have rallied for another round, another set of blows... another... go with... gloves off... Well... Here's to fool's courage...

CHURCHYARD finishes this latest drink.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

May I use your telephone?

KATHERINE

No you may not.

CHURCHYARD crosses to the phone. He lifts the receiver, and then thinks. He bends. He puts the heavy receiver to the top of his head, as if administering an imaginary, slow motion blow. He knows the three are watching him assess this possibility. He smiles.

CHURCHYARD

These things are heavy!

KATHERINE

Are you going to make a call or not?

CHURCHYARD hangs up.

CHURCHYARD

I'll do it from the corner.

KATHERINE

If you're trying to intimidate us, or if you think we killed Mr. Harbour-

CHURCHYARD

You know what I think?

CHURCHYARD crosses to KATHERINE,
moves close to her face.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

You know what I *know*? That you are a goddamned liar.

He waits for the slap. When it
doesn't come, he backs away.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

You all are. And I'll be back when I can prove it.

CHURCHYARD goes to the door, tips
his Fedora.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

Have a super swell day.

He exits.

The three let out an audible
breath.

KATHERINE

That man was no policeman.

Lights fade to curtain.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Lights rise on TWO VAMPIRES,
females scantily clad in black.
It is a scene of seduction. They
kiss on a bed before the audience.

This ends with dismemberment, a
geyser of blood, and a freeze
frame.

Lights out.

Lights on.

From the audience, ARCHIE ANDERS
storms the stage. He looks at the
blank screen before him. He
touches it, thinks, and then
paces.

A woman appears in darkness --
KATHERINE, barely seen.

KATHERINE
People aren't going to like it.

ARCHIE
Why does it have to be liked?

KATHERINE
Because if no one likes it, it won't last.

ARCHIE
Then how do you explain wars?

KATHERINE comes forward.

KATHERINE
Too smart for me, Archie Anders. Your pretty
secretary told me to come on in.

ARCHIE
She *is* pretty, isn't she?

ARCHIE gives KATHERINE an embrace,
lets it linger.

ARCHIE (Continued)
She's too young.

KATHERINE
Trouble.

ARCHIE
Wants to be an actress.

KATHERINE
Double trouble.

ARCHIE
She recently got picked up for some small potatoes
deal. Stays out late at night and comes in with bags
under her eyes.

KATHERINE
Ah, youth. Wasted.

ARCHIE
You're got a secret. I can tell. It's keeping you
preserved. What kind of witchcraft are you involved
with?

KATHERINE
Do you make her run the projector?

ARCHIE
I have to. I'm getting arthritis. It's the Devil.
Ol' Archie Anders isn't want he used to be. I can
barely smack around the actors anymore.

KATHERINE
Your hands don't seem to be an issue tonight.

ARCHIE breaks.

ARCHIE

I thought I'd never see you again. You cut me off at the knees, you know.

KATHERINE

You can take it. You're a big boy.

ARCHIE

How's Connor?

KATHERINE

Connor died. Seven days ago.

ARCHIE

Holy crap. I'm sorry, Katherine. I liked him.

KATHERINE

So did I. It just took me a little long to realize it.

ARCHIE

One of the best painters I ever had. What happened?

KATHERINE

His heart.

ARCHIE

Shame. How are the girls taking it?

KATHERINE

The girls, the girls. My life isn't as perfect as it looks to the neighbors. I've lost control of everything. You know what being lost in the woods must be to a blind person? A nightmare. A complete and total nightmare.

(Pause)

I need someone I can trust.

ARCHIE

Don't you trust your daughters?

KATHERINE

I do. But I've realized in the past few weeks that

(MORE)

KATHERINE (Continued)

we're all very weak. In different ways. It's kind of a shock. I always thought I was good at things. Now I know I'm not. The only thing left for me is to protect my children. It's the only thing that really matters.

ARCHIE

I'm happy to do any-

KATHERINE

I'm in a lot of trouble, Archie. Sienna's been missing for more than a month. And I've lost my memory.

ARCHIE

What are you talking about?

KATHERINE

I can't remember anything before last Sunday. I only remember the last time I saw Sienna. I can't even remember Connor's funeral.

ARCHIE holds up a finger. He goes to a telephone Rolodex, pulls a card, and hands it to KATHERINE.

ARCHIE

Doctor Hans Renner. Best headshrinker in town. Just have him send me the bills, care of the production office. Guy's a genius. Got me to quit smoking, if you can believe that.

KATHERINE

I need help, but not that kind. I need information.

ARCHIE

Sit down.

They are seated.

ARCHIE (Continued)

You look like you're gonna cry.

KATHERINE

I forgot: you hate it when women cry.

ARCHIE

That's because it's usually my fault.

KATHERINE

(Smiles)

Not this time.

ARCHIE

Why come to me?

KATHERINE

You know people.

ARCHIE

I used to. I made some great movies, didn't I?

KATHERINE

You did. You do.

ARCHIE

I bet you haven't seen my last few pictures. Limited releases. Exploitation, they call them in the trades, because of the content. But they're wrong. It's not the content that's exploitive. It's what they're doing to my name. I used to be top tier. Be glad you haven't sunk to this. You got out with your dignity intact.

KATHERINE

All actresses have to choose. You have talent and push through, grow old. Or you find a way into the bed of someone with power who can take care of you when the carousel stops. Those are the only choices.

ARCHIE

Katherine, I could have made you a star, if you'd have let me.

KATHERINE

Don't remind me of your silly promises.

ARCHIE

You thought I was up to no good, but it's not true, doll. I wanted to do right by you. I saw you in that little part and I thought, "Wow." It was greatness, wasn't it? That's what I saw.

KATHERINE

There wasn't anything great about me.

ARCHIE

Bullshit. There was plenty great about you.

(Laugh)

The way you kissed, for one...

KATHERINE

Please. It's embarrassing.

ARCHIE

So now you're here. You came alone.

KATHERINE

I did. No one knows, Archie. No one knows.

ARCHIE

No one suspected? All those years.

KATHERINE

They suspected. But no one knew.

ARCHIE

Then why'd we stop?

KATHERINE

Two years ago Sienna told me she wanted to be an actress. So I found myself trying to talk her out of it.

ARCHIE

I saw that southern picture. I thought she was real good. I hoped to give you a call after its run, see what she was doing next.

KATHERINE

Put her in exploitation?

ARCHIE

No, no, see you got it wr-

KATHERINE

Did she look like me?

ARCHIE

Absolutely.

(Pause)

So why are you alone? Katherine...

KATHERINE

Rebecca and Zoey are out looking for Sienna tonight. Checking the places where only the young can go without glares. I, I snuck away. If they saw me with you, it'd be undone. They'd know. They're not dumb. They know I've not been faithful, but if they knew it was you and just you... That's another matter. Children don't like to know that a mother could love two men.

(Pause)

Do you know a movie called "Hunt Her, Kill Her?"

ARCHIE

Oh, why you want to go talking about that?

KATHERINE

Have you heard of it?

ARCHIE

Yes. But I wish I hadn't.

ARCHIE stands, uncomfortable.

KATHERINE

Is it exploitation film like the ones you've been making?

ARCHIE

I've never made *anything* like that one.

KATHERINE

But you've seen it?

ARCHIE

No. No, I haven't. Wouldn't want to. Listen, is this about Sienna?

KATHERINE

The woman who starred in that movie had the same agent as Sienna.

ARCHIE

Christ, Katherine. It's one of those movies that... is really, *really* underground. Doesn't play in theaters. Gets shown in basements. Sometimes in private estates owned by rich weirdos from old Hollywood who let all that glitter go to their heads. It's extreme.

KATHERINE

How extreme?

ARCHIE

Like I said, I haven't seen it.

KATHERINE

Can you get a copy of it?

ARCHIE

Oh, God, come on, Katherine. You don't want to watch that stuff.

KATHERINE

Do you know the people who made it?

ARCHIE

It's all fake names.

KATHERINE

So you've looked?

ARCHIE

Movies like that...they come up in conversations.

KATHERINE

Conversations with whom?

ARCHIE

Exploitation films attract... all kinds of people. New talent, kids just wanting a break, but there's also a... fringe element. I don't ride that far out. I make women gladiator films with tits and blood. I

(MORE)

ARCHIE (Continued)

make titles like "The Grave Robbers" and "Castle Von Death." I stay clear of "Hunt Her, Kill Her." That's a different league.

KATHERINE

Is it pornography?

ARCHIE

Listen, Kath. I don't want to scare you.

KATHERINE

I want to see it.

ARCHIE paces.

ARCHIE

This is a helluva favor.

(Thinking)

Okay, okay. I, I might have a connection. Let me see what I can do. But it's a bad idea, Katherine. A bad idea. You escaped it; you don't know what this town is like. And when you were in front of the cameras, you saw the good years. You missed what the last ten years have been like.

KATHERINE

There was reefer back then, too, you know.

ARCHIE

I'm not talking about-. This town's got a side that's lies just beyond the disappointments. A blackness. Horrors that are like deep cuts in the skin. People you wouldn't want to know in a million years. Have you heard about Carbon Copy? No? They've been around since Christmas. Two thugs in trench coats and hats - - right out of a Cagney film. Twins or something wearing Halloween masks. Done some killings around town. Brutal. Massacres. You don't hear it on the news because it's like reporting on the Flying Dutchman. Rumors and gossip. But everyone knows they're out there. And there are cults and there are maniacs and there are sects of all kinds of unholy violence-

KATHERINE

You're scaring me.

ARCHIE

Good. You should stay away.

KATHERINE stands.

KATHERINE

I have to find Sienna. I have to find out what happened.

ARCHIE

Okay. Aside from this big favor, and believe me, it's a big one, you got any easy requests?

KATHERINE

Do you know any special effects people?

ARCHIE

Some.

KATHERINE

David Wolff?

ARCHIE

No.

KATHERINE

Someone taught Sienna a magic trick.

ARCHIE

A disappearing act?

KATHERINE goes for the door.

KATHERINE

Yes. Something like that. This trick is connected to her disappearance.

(Pause)

Do you know any magic, Archie?

ARCHIE shakes his head sadly.

KATHERINE (Continued)

You have my number.

ARCHIE nods.

Blackout.

ACT II

SCENE 2

Dark.

A bare apartment, razor of light.

SOUND: Flies buzzing.

Enter ZOEY through a window.

Once inside, she helps REBECCA
over the ledge.

ZOEY

(Whisper)
It smells awful. I can't see anything.

REBECCA

(Whisper)
Find the switch.

ZOEY gropes the wall.

ZOEY

(Whisper)
Found it.

Pause.

REBECCA

(Whisper)
Well, turn on the lights!

ZOEY

(Whisper)
The switch must be broken. Get the flashlight.

REBECCA pulls a flashlight from
her bag.

ZOEY (Continued)

(Whisper)

I told you we'd need it.

REBECCA

(Whisper)

This is stupid, I feel like a robber.

REBECCA lights the flashlight and scans the room.

She quickly settles on:

A dead body, tied to a chair,
covered in blood.

The two scream.

ZOEY

(Whisper)

Oh my God, oh my God, oh my God.

REBECCA

(Whisper)

Is that him?

REBECCA approaches the body, shines the light.

ZOEY

Look at his throat.

They back away.

REBECCA

So much for David Wolff.

ZOEY

We're leaving.

She backs away, trips.

When Rebecca reaches for her,
CARBON leaps from behind the sofa
and snatches ZOEY.

REBECCA
(Screaming)
Zoey! Zoey!

The flashlight follows as ZOEY is
dragged behind the sofa.

The light goes out then comes back
on.

A bruising fight erupts in the
dark.

REBECCA makes it to the window.

COPY grabs REBECCA's face to stop
her call for help.

In the struggle, REBECCA pulls off
COPY's mask. Though REBECCA
doesn't see the face, it is
clearly SIENNA.

SIENNA is zombie-like,
unmistakably her, but without
emotion.

COPY/SIENNA chokes REBECCA, who at
last gets free. She makes it to
the door, throws it open, and
runs.

COPY/SIENNA replaces her mask.

ZOEY has fallen behind the sofa,
her legs showing, but not moving.

CARBON stands up.

CARBON COPY looks to each other.

Lights fade.

ACT II

SCENE 3

KATHERINE is asleep, wrapped in a robe.

REBECCA enters, winded, goes straight to her mother, weeping.

KATHERINE holds her daughter.

KATHERINE

It's okay. It's okay. Rebecca, it's okay.

REBECCA

(Through tears)

No, it's not. It's not.

KATHERINE

Where's Zoey?

(Pause)

Where's Zoey?

KATHERINE pulls REBECCA away. She sees the cuts on her daughter's face from the struggle.

REBECCA

We went to David Wolff's house.

KATHERINE

You stupid girls.

REBECCA

Mom. Mom. It was awful.

KATHERINE

Tell me what happened.

REBECCA

He was dead, Mom. Someone had killed him. With a knife. He was tied in a chair. And then we were attacked. These two... people. Wearing these masks, and-

KATHERINE

Oh, Lord, no-

RECECCA

They got Zoey. It was dark. I ran away. She was on the floor. I don't know if she was all right. I left her. I left her. Oh, God, Mom. I ran away.

KATHERINE

(Shaking REBECCA)

Was she alive?

REBECCA

I don't know. I don't know.

KATHERINE

You should have helped her?

REBECCA

I had to get away! Mom, I had to.

KATHERINE

We've got to... We've got to phone the police.

REBECCA

Okay, okay.

KATHERINE stands and goes for the phone.

SOUND: Knocks at the door.

The two freeze.

Knocks.

Turning to pounding.

KATHERINE

(In a whisper)

Did they follow you?

REBECCA

(Mouthing)

I don't know.

REBECCA silently sobs.

KATHERINE moves towards the door.

REBECCA tries to warn her away,
but is shushed.

CHURCHYARD

(Through door, singsong)

Mrs. Lyman! It's Detective Churchyard.

Long pause.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

(Through door)

I know you're in there, Mrs. Lyman.

(Pause)

I brought a present for you.

(Pause)

I know you're gonna like it.

KATHERINE

Go away!

CHURCHYARD

(Through door)

You *are* there, Mrs. Lyman. I'm a good detective.
Don't you want to see my present?

KATHERINE

I said go away!

CHURCHYARD

(Through door)

If now's a bad time, I could just leave it at the
door.

KATHERINE

I don't want *anything* from you.

CHURCHYARD

(Through door)

That's too bad, Mrs. Lyman. I thought you'd enjoy my present. As a matter of fact, I *know* you'll enjoy it.

KATHERINE

I'm calling the police!

CHURCHYARD

(Through door)

That's funny. We're already here.

KATHERINE

You're not the police.

CHURCHYARD

(Through door)

I'm not? News to me, Mrs. Lyman. News. To. Me.

(Pause)

I'll just leave it by the door. Goodnight, Mrs. Lyman. And goodnight, Rebecca. Take care of that pretty ass.

SOUND: Footsteps. Long pause.

KATHERINE peers outside.

KATHERINE

(Soft)

I think he's gone.

REBECCA

Call the police.

KATHERINE puts her hand on the door.

KATHERINE

I will.

REBECCA

Now, Mother, now!

KATHERINE opens the door.

She sees something on the ground,
reaches down slowly, embraces it,
rises with an object clutched in
her arms, hidden until she
turns...

It is the telephone she used to
kill JOHN HARBOUR. She quickly
pulls inside and bolts the door.

KATHERINE

The telephone.

REBECCA

He knows, he knows!

KATHERINE

Maybe it's—

REBECCA

Look at the dent.

KATHERINE throws down the phone.

KATHERINE

I can't call the police.

REBECCA

Please, Mother. You've got to. Zoey! Please,
Mother!

KATHERINE stares at the murder
weapon. She can't take her eyes
from it.

KATHERINE

How did he find this? We threw it off the pier.

REBECCA

I don't know! We have to call THE POLICE!

REBECCA stands.

REBECCA (Continued)

I'll call them!

KATHERINE moves between the house's phone and her daughter.

KATHERINE

Just wait, just wait.

REBECCA

Mom, it's Zoey! It's Zoey!

REBECCA tries to barrel past her KATHERINE, who struggles with her.

REBECCA (Continued)

You don't think I couldn't claw my way through you? Are you going to kill me with that phone, too? I'm CALLING the POLICE! We need HELP! We need HEEEELLLLLLLLLLP!

REBECCA's scream startles KATHERINE out of something.

KATHERINE

You're right. We should, we should...

REBECCA

Get out of my way.

REBECCA rushes to the phone. Just as she's about to pick up the receiver, it rings.

The two women stare it down.

REBECCA grabs it.

ARCHIE

(Over phone)

Hello? Is anyone there?

(Pause)

Katherine? It's Archie Anders. Hello?

REBECCA turns, gives her mother a look of supreme disappointment before handing the phone over.

REBECCA

I knew it. He was one of them.

KATHERINE

You're wrong.

REBECCA

I'm not.

KATHERINE takes the phone.

KATHERINE

(Into phone)

Archie.

ARCHIE

(Over phone)

Katherine! Good. I've learned something tonight. I wanted to tell you right away.

KATHERINE

David Wolff's dead.

ARCHIE

(Over phone)

He is? That's the effects man you mentioned? How do you know?

KATHERINE

I read it.

ARCHIE

(Over phone)

Oh. Well, it's not that. You mentioned a magic trick. I've seen something, Katherine. You have to see it, too. It's that movie. "Hunt Her, Kill Her." I've got it. I think you should come over right away. There's something in this film you should see. But I have to have the print back by midnight or I'm a dead man. You must hurry, Katherine.

KATHERINE

Tell me, Archie. Tell me now.

ARCHIE

(Over phone)

Can't. You have to see it. Hurry or you'll miss it.

SOUND: Click.

KATHERINE looks to REBECCA.

KATHERINE

Can you drive?

REBECCA

What?

KATHERINE

Archie's found the film.

REBECCA

What film?

KATHERINE

“Hunt Her, Kill Her.” I asked him to find it. It’s an underground film. Something we’re not supposed to see. He has it for just another two hours.

REBECCA

We can’t go see a MOVIE!

KATHERINE

He mentioned magic.

(Compelling)

You *know* it, Rebecca. You *have* to know this. Everything bad started with Sienna’s trick.

REBECCA

We need the police. Not a film director.

KATHERINE

I trust Archie.

REBECCA

He doesn’t know about Zoey. She comes first.

KATHERINE

The police can’t help Zoey. Only we can save her. If it’s magic, then there’s a chance. We have to find the source.

REBECCA breaks. She goes wild,
breaking things, throwing things.

KATHERINE

We’re wasting time, Rebecca.

REBECCA

Everything we do just gets us in deeper.

KATHERINE

You’re right.

REBECCA

I’m so mad at you. At Sienna. At Zoey. At Dad. Everyone leaves.

KATHERINE

I'm here.

REBECCA

You screwed around.

KATHERINE

I did. But I loved your father. I gave Archie up two years ago because I realized that. I love all of you so very much. And I've let all these terrible things happen.

KATHERINE turns away, crying.

REBECCA considers.

REBECCA

One stop... then the police station.

KATHERINE nods, wipes her eyes.

KATHERINE

We don't have a pistol, do we?

REBECCA

You killed a man with a *phone*, Mom. I think we'll be okay.

Lights fade.

ACT II

SCENE 4

ARCHIE ANDERS' home.

ARCHIE, KATHERINE, and REBECCA sit
in dim lights.

ARCHIE

Before I run this, I want to be sure.

KATHERINE

I'm sure. How long is it?

ARCHIE

Forty-one minutes. Short, but effective. And
disturbing. Black and white. Parts are violent.

(Pause)

I'm going to run it on from the booth. But I won't
come back into the room. I don't want to see it a
second time.

ARCHIE exits. After a moment, the
film begins...

The scene accelerates -- collages
of sound, flickers, and images.
Bright red lights overlap black
and white strobes.

KATHERINE and REBECCA are
transfixed.

At a point, Rebecca shouts over
the screams emanating from the
film's soundtrack:

REBECCA

Sienna! It's her...

KATHERINE can only nod.

The film turns into blaring white light that holds the room in a noisy haze, which is overtaken by red.

The film whirls to climax then stops.

SOUND: Clop, clop, clop of a finished film reel slapping the projector's feeder, slowing to end.

ARCHIE returns, carrying a film can.

KATHERINE

(Soft)
Did you see it?

REBECCA

I did.

KATHERINE

She does the trick in the film.

REBECCA

Did you see what it did to those people with her? It cut them all into little pieces.

KATHERINE

She had no idea what she did in our living room that day. If she had let it continue, it would have killed us all.

ARCHIE

Like a child with a new toy.

KATHERINE

In the film, it's not *really* her.

ARCHIE

Of course it's her. That's why I wanted you to see it.

REBECCA

Mom's right. It's not her. She's...under a spell.

KATHERINE

Like *I* was when I lost my memory.

ARCHIE

Is it witchcraft? Possibly. It's a snuff film for certain. Films are tricks. Everything about them is a lie. People die, people live, but not really. It's all fake. But there's one thing you can't fake: the look on those people's faces when they died. That's for real. I know it in my gut.

(Pause)

The two in the trench coats, in that one decapitation scene...

KATHERINE

Carbon Copy.

ARCHIE

That's right. Not a myth. Characters in a snuff film brought to life.

KATHERINE

I feel like I've just watched one of those accident films they show you in driver's school, to frighten you. Sienna's not a murderer. She's an actress. She wants to be a film star.

ARCHIE

Katherine. Stay away from...from, whatever this is. This thing that Sienna's involved with, it's eaten her alive. No one in his or her right mind would do those things and then come to a family gathering. She's lost.

KATHERINE

Do you know what you're saying? This is my *daughter*.

ARCHIE

I know what I'm saying.

KATHERINE

I'm her mother. I'm her mother. The spell can be broken.

ARCHIE

It's too dangerous.

REBECCA

We were going to go to the police.

ARCHIE

The police?

REBECCA

Zoey's been taken by those two in the coats.

ARCHIE

What? Why didn't you tell me this?

KATHERINE

There's a man who is following us. He says he's with the police. We don't trust him. He may be dangerous. We decided to come her first and see the film.

ARCHIE

But if they took your youngest child-

KATHERINE

She may even be dead.

(Pause)

Who gave you this film?

ARCHIE

A friend of a friend of a friend of a friend. I don't directly know the man. Runs a prop shop on the west side. If you want me to tell the police about him, I will. I will do anything to help you, Katherine. If you want to go to the police from here, I understand. But I must return the film tonight.

KATHERINE

We're not splitting up. I can't lose anyone else.

REBECCA

Turn the film over to the police.

ARCHIE

If I do, I'd be jeopardizing everyone who helped me find it in the first place. And we might need those sources. There may be more films out there. This

(MORE)

ARCHIE (Continued)

prop man -- he's established. He's not going anywhere. He's probably just a middleman anyhow. But if he's important, the police can locate him later this morning. Please... I have to be there before midnight. Let's go. My car is outside.

Lights out.

ACT II

SCENE 5

A warehouse.

Crates, racks of clothes.

SOUND: The door rattles with pounding.

No answer.

The door opens. An arm shows.

Enter ARCHIE ANDERS clutching the film.
Behind him are KATHERINE and REBECCA.

ARCHIE

Hello...

(No answer)

I'm back. I've brought the film.

ARCHIE sets the film down on a crate.

ARCHIE (Continued)

I'm leaving it here. Okay? Thanks for the loan.

(Turning to the women)

Come on...

A MAN steps from behind one of the costume racks and blocks the exit. He wears the same mask as CARBON COPY.

The women startle.

ARCHIE (Continued)

(Making light)

Okay. I'm impressed with your props and costumes. But my friends and I really have to leave.

(No answer)
We have to leave.

Slowly, THE MAN removes the mask.

It is CHURCHYARD.

ARCHIE
Funny joke. There's your film. Thanks for the loan.

KATHERINE
No, Archie, not him!

CHURCHYARD takes his hand from his side. He holds a pistol.

ARCHIE
Come on, I've had enough of the props, buster.

CHURCHYARD waves his hand over the gun.

CHURCHYARD
(Sarcastically)
Abraaaaaacabraaaaaa...

CHURCHYARD shoots ARCHIE in the leg and he goes down. KATHERINE dives to help him.

KATHERINE
No!

ARCHIE
Jesus Christ!

KATHERINE
Leave us alone!

CHURCHYARD

You were right, Mrs. Lyman. I'm not a policeman. But I'm one helluva actor. And I've made some real inroads into other skills popular in this town. I'm an auteur. Couple underground classics. But I've got a good feeling about this next one. Real potential at the box office. Smiles for the cameras, girls...

From behind crates, CARBON appears, wielding a film camera. COPY is alongside, holding a boom microphone.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

It's a little tough to work unscripted, but it yields spectacular results. I like my climaxes bloody. Get the audiences worked into a nice frenzy. And you know what else works magic in the last reel?

CHURCHYARD shoves aside a costume rack and reveals ZOEY tied up and gagged. ZOEY struggles through her bindings.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

(Dry)

Surprise...

(To CARBON)

Get in close. Real close.

CARBON puts the camera's lens tight to KATHERINE's eye.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

I like to see this: real emotion. You can't get that from an actor. Not usually. Not unless they're pushed. But cliffs aren't very cinematic. Oh. Mrs. Lyman. Mrs. Ly...*man*. You used to be pretty. In fifteen minutes, that, that porcelain grace, that, that film star shine, that glow which you have passed down through your drowning gene pool, will be forever

scarred. You will have to watch your children lose their beauty. That will be hard for you.

KATHERINE

You're the Devil!

CHURCHYARD

Not true. Though we've been run in the same social circles for years.

(To CARBON)

Get it all on film. We can do the cutaways later. I want...her face. The mother will tell the story.

CHURCHYARD crosses to a crate. He opens it. He pulls out a short sword. Then another. Then another, slightly longer.

CHURCHYARD (Continued)

Which one of these would have the best effect on an audience? Or...

(Turns to ZOEY)

...a young girl's cheek.

REBECCA

It's not real!

CHURCHYARD

Oh, yes. Everything in my films is real. Even the magic. I could do card tricks all day. But I prefer things a bit more black.

CHURCHYARD, with gun and sword, crosses to ZOEY. His hands are full so he must put down the pistol to cut the tape covering her mouth.

It that moment, KATHERINE goes wild and attacks him.

A fight breaks out:

The masked CARBON COPY, armed with boom microphone and camera,

CHURCHYARD's gun firing,

ARCHIE crawling on the floor,

KATHERINE, REBECCA, ZOEY, and CHURCHYARD...

It is chaos, with weapons and props used viscously.

The lights go out – the fight continues in the dark, they flicker back on.

CARBON is killed.

COPY drops the boom and picks up the camera.

In retaliation, CHURCHYARD shoots REBECCA.

KATHERINE

No!

CHURCHYARD begins to do a magic trick with his hand, the power rising and rising – the amplified version of SIENNA's trick.

KATHERINE cuts off CHURCHYARD's hand with a sword to a gush of blood. He screams and collapses. KATHERINE, short sword in one hand, pistol aimed, shoots CHURCHYARD dead.

At last, she turns to COPY, who films it all, mask still on.

The film runs out of the camera and it stops. COPY looks at the camera dumbly, at last setting it aside. COPY reaches in a trench coat pocket.

KATHERINE fires and COPY falls.

Five bodies are now on the floor.

KATHERINE cuts ZOEY loose.

ARCHIE crawls to CARBON and takes of the mask.

Oh, Christ...

ARCHIE

What?

KATHERINE

It's my secretary.

ARCHIE

KATHERINE bends to REBECCA, who is bleeding, but alive. She takes ZOEY's hand and folds it into REBECCA's, for comfort.

Slowly, she approaches COPY. She removes the mask and immediately and despairingly begins to weep.

It's SIENNA.

No, no. Sienna. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

SIENNA

(Weakly)
It's okay.

We're going to get help. We're gonna get help.

SIENNA

Okay.

I can't lose you.

KATHERINE

Stay with me.

SIENNA

Yes-

KATHERINE

SIENNA

I've done bad things.

KATHERINE

It's all right. I saved you.

SIENNA

You did?

KATHERINE

Of course. I've saved you.

SOUND: Distant sirens.

KATHERINE (Continued)

See? They're coming. They're coming.

ZOEY

What if they're not for us?

KATHERINE

They are. They're for us. I know it.

SIENNA

No. It's Hollywood.

Music and sound, the flickering of a film
running through a projector.

Blackout.

Final curtain.

DESPERATE DOLLS



CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

MATCHBOX, a young woman

THE VIL (also known as "VIL"), a young woman

PRETTY SEXY, a young woman

CAPTAIN, an older man

SUNNY JACK, an older man

THE SETTING

Hollywood, California in the late 1960s.

THE SCENE

A motel room that also doubles as an office, with one entry door, one bathroom door, a filing cabinet, a telephone, and a double-bed.

A NOTE ON MEDIA AND EFFECTS

The motel room should be able to change appearance through subtle light and other effects. Meaning, sometimes it will be bright and perfectly livable, other times a dingy hovel, while remaining the same static set.

Sound design has a featured presence in the script and these have been indicated by "SOUND:" proceeding, for ease of review. Some sound effects are practical, others recorded.

Photographs and flashes are used to represent filmed media, but it is the director's discretion on the best approach.

ACT I

SCENE 1

MATCHBOX, an attractive young woman dressed in revealing nightclothes, lies on a bed in a darkened motel room. Above her, a mirror hangs. The reflection makes her look oddly distorted and more visible to the audience.

MATCHBOX

Look at you. You pathetic bitch. Look at you.

She opens then closes her legs.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

You'd like that. Wouldn't you? Look at you. You're as bad as the rest.

SOUND: A knock on the door.

MATCHBOX covers her exposed body with the white sheet.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

Come.

The door opens by itself. No one enters.

After a pause, MATCHBOX sits up, holding the sheet in place.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

Is that you? Captain? Is that you?

She rises, wraps the sheet around her shoulders, goes to the door, and slowly shuts it.

SOUND: Another knock.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

(To door, in whisper)

Is that you?

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 2

Lights rise.

THE VIL (VIL) is on the bed now,
alone, sleeping. She is a
beautiful brunette wearing a black
cocktail dress, above the covers.

MATCHBOX is behind the bed now.
Only the top of her is visible.
She looks wild in her eyes.

THE VIL awakens and looks into the
overhead mirror, stretches.

She sees MATCHBOX's reflection in
the mirror. She startles! But
stays put on the bed.

THE VIL

You're back.

MATCHBOX

(Cowering, scared)

He's here.

THE VIL

He can't be. You know that.

MATCHBOX

He's here.

THE VIL

Captain. He's here? You know that's impossible.

MATCHBOX

He's. Here.

THE VIL

Where?

MATCHBOX

He's in the lobby... and he's waiting for you. Just like he waited for me.

MATCHBOX comes out, moving strangely, snake-like, inhuman.

THE VIL curls on the bed.

THE VIL

You need to go away. I don't like seeing you.

MATCHBOX

Get off. The bed.

THE VIL

No.

MATCHBOX

You have to find a way out. Are you scared of me?

THE VIL

No.

MATCHBOX

I'm your friend. I came to warn you.

THE VIL

How did you find me?

MATCHBOX

One motel room is quite like another. He's downstairs waiting. He thinks you have to leave sometime.

THE VIL

Jack's coming to rescue me.

MATCHBOX

Are you sure? He didn't come for me.

THE VIL

Jack loves me.

MATCHBOX

Are you absolutely *certain*?

MATCHBOX disappears.

THE VIL stays in a curl. She spots her bathrobe across the room. Her teeth chatter. Quickly, she races to the hanger, grabs the robe, runs back to the bed, just in time for-

SOUND: Knock at the door.

THE VIL

(Soft)
Come in.

The door opens slowly.

No one is there.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 3

SOUND: A retro bubblegum pop song plays loudly, distorted, as if through terrible loudspeakers.

Strobe lights begin.

The motel room is empty.

Enter PRETTY SEXY, an equivalent beauty to the others, but different - blonde, all-American. She wears a short skirt and tight sweater.

PRETTY SEXY trembles in the strobe, oddly moving and frightened. She gropes the wall and furniture, blinded.

PRETTY SEXY

(Screaming over music)

Jack! JACK! Help me, Jack!

Sudden blackness and silence.

ACT I

SCENE 4

Lights rise on SUNNY JACK, alone.

He knots a necktie. Finished, he grins and then bends to check himself in the mirror.

Meticulously, he arranges two folding chairs to facing.

Satisfied, he goes to the door and opens it.

SUNNY JACK

(Calling offstage)

You can send the first one in now, Paul.

SUNNY JACK bobs back, slicks his hair, and then waits.

MATCHBOX enters slowly, but with confidence. She wears a happy sundress, carries a small handbag, and holds a large manila envelope.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Come. Have a seat.

MATCHBOX sits in one of the chairs. SUNNY JACK does *not* take the opposite chair.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Let me see that.

MATCHBOX hands over the envelope. SUNNY JACK examines the contents - an actor's resume and headshot.

He reads in silence, a last
pointing to something on the
resume.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

You know I'm never going to remember that.

MATCHBOX

My name?

SUNNY JACK

Have you thought about changing it?

MATCHBOX

What's wrong with my name?

SUNNY JACK

Too... Anyway, you should think about changing it.

MATCHBOX

I'll think about it.

SUNNY JACK

Says here you were in your high school's production of
"Annie Get Your Gun." But it doesn't say who you
played.

MATCHBOX

Annie.

SUNNY JACK

Then you should say that.

SUNNY JACK finally takes the
second chair and hands her back
the materials.

SUNNY JACK

You had any work in L.A.?

MATCHBOX

I've just arrived.

SUNNY JACK

Just?

MATCHBOX

Tuesday.

SUNNY JACK

Green. Who got you this audition?

MATCHBOX

Someone on the street. Said he worked for you. Paul.

SUNNY JACK

Did you recognize my name when he said it? Any of the pictures I've done?

MATCHBOX

No, we didn't talk about you. He gave me a card with your production company name on it. Though he said he worked for someone important.

SUNNY JACK

I am important. I'm a triple threat. Producer, director, writer. I'm probably better at the first one than the others, but I'm not trying to win an award.

MATCHBOX

Paul just said that he liked my face and, if I wanted to, if I thought I could cut it, I could come here this afternoon at 1 PM, and that you would give me a shot.

SUNNY JACK

Were you worried I make adult films?

MATCHBOX

Do you make them?

SUNNY JACK

(Smiling)

Not anymore.

(Pause)

I'm joking. You should laugh.

MATCHBOX

Like I said: Paul gave me a card. I figured adult film producers don't carry cards.

SUNNY JACK

You'd be right. They carry guns.

MATCHBOX

I'm not scared of guns.

SUNNY JACK

Ah, that's right. You were Annie.

(Pause)

Twenty-six other girls are in that lobby. Not all of them Paul met on the street. Some are from agencies. Are you better than those twenty-six others?

MATCHBOX

Paul said you had a type. You favor a certain girl.

SUNNY JACK

Can you confirm that by looking at the faces in the motel lobby?

MATCHBOX

I can. They're all young girls with a figure.

SUNNY JACK

I need more than that.

MATCHBOX

I can sing. I can dance

SUNNY JACK

Can you act?

MATCHBOX

Absolutely.

SUNNY JACK

You had any training?

MATCHBOX

At an academy?

SUNNY JACK

Yeah, any kind of lessons?

MATCHBOX

Back in Ohio, I had-

SUNNY JACK

Tap classes. Ballet. Little girl in a tutu.

MATCHBOX

Lots of classes. And I outgrew my tutu years ago.

SUNNY JACK thinks. He takes out a cigarette and a large box of matches from his jacket pocket. He taps the cigarette on the box, never taking his eyes from the girl.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

If you want I can...sing for you, or do a monologue. This is an audition, right?

SUNNY JACK

I like to know a girl first. I like a little foreplay.

MATCHBOX

Are you looking for a special audition? This is a motel room.

SUNNY JACK

I told you, I don't make those kind of pictures.

MATCHBOX

Casting couch. Isn't that what they call them?

SUNNY JACK

Do you see a sofa here? No. That's not me.

MATCHBOX

So you want a monologue then, or is this still foreplay?

SUNNY JACK

Okay. Mah-no-log. From what?

MATCHBOX

You like Williams?

SUNNY JACK

You a Stella or a Blanche?

MATCHBOX

Ste-

SUNNY JACK

(Overlapping)

Stella, of course.

He sits back, again staring at her. She smiles, stands, poses, as if that's what he wants to consider.

He lights his cigarette and waves her back down into her chair.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Do you smoke?

MATCHBOX

Yes. I smoke.

SUNNY JACK

Have one.

He does not offer her one of his.

Getting wise to the signal, she reaches into her purse, withdraws a pack, and, excruciatingly slow, pulls the tip of a cigarette until it's out of the pack. She pouts her lips, lightly puts the cigarette between them, slides the pack away, and leans forward.

MATCHBOX

Got a light?

Pleased, he holds out his box of matches.

SUNNY JACK

Keep the box. Two left.

She reaches in, strikes one, never dropping her cool façade.

MATCHBOX

Never before seen a man carry a whole box of matches around. Most people carry packs. You a pyromaniac?

He laughs.

SUNNY JACK

You never know when you're going to need a whole shitload of matches.

MATCHBOX takes the box from him, with its one last match rattling, and tucks it in her handbag.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Forget your name. I'm going to call you Matchbox.

MATCHBOX

That wouldn't look very good on a marquee.

SUNNY JACK

It's a trick I have. Name the girls you like with something weird. These days, names all blend into a pile of mush. Janes and Jennifers. That's why the world invented nicknames, you know? To keep us better separated. Right, Match...Box? See: rolls off tongue.

MATCHBOX

Okay. If I have one for you. I'll call you...Sunny Jack. For that tan. And that sunshine smile.

SUNNY JACK

I do have a good smile.

SUNNY JACK circles her in her chair. She remains unfazed.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Any other desperate dolls down there in that lobby?

MATCHBOX

Twenty-six you said.

SUNNY JACK

Any of them you dig?

MATCHBOX

Depends on your definition.

SUNNY JACK

I'm talking about who you might have some chemistry with on screen. You talk to any of them? Or is everyone milling around like cats?

MATCHBOX

I talked to two girls. I liked them quite a bit.

SUNNY JACK

They new to town, too?

MATCHBOX

One is from Seattle. Like being off a boat, I suppose, right, Sunny Jack?

SUNNY JACK

Do me a favor, Matchbox. Go down. Get them. Tell them I want to audition all three of you at the same time. Then tell the rest to beat it, go home.

Blackout.

ACT I

SCENE 5

SOUND: Another retro bubblegum pop song, distorted, loud, then fading.

Dim lights rise on the bed where THE VIL lies, covered up to her eyes.

The mirror above is now a changed, more like a funhouse mirror than a clear reflection. She looks at her body, transfixed. Without removing the sheet, she raises and lowers her legs, then turns her face from side to side.

At last, she sits bolt upright and SCREAMS at her reflection, then says:

THE VIL

(Spiteful)

One room is quite like another!

The room's door opens slowly by itself. THE VIL turns.

After a pause, in walks a man wearing a strange costume party mask and suit and neck tie that's draped in clear plastic.

THE VIL turns her head slowly and looks at the man. This man is known as: CAPTAIN.

THE VIL (Continued)

Don't come any closer. I know who you are now, and,
(MORE)

THE VIL (Continued)

and, and I'm sorry. I told you, I'm sorry. I want to go home. I'm sorry. I'll go home, and I won't say anything to anyone.

CAPTAIN crosses to the filing cabinet on the other side of the room. He pulls out three photographs - the actor headshots of THE VIL, MATCHBOX, and PRETTY SEXY. He returns with them to the bed and lies down beside THE VIL. She is terrified.

He looks at MATCHBOX's picture, shows it to her, holds it up to the mirror so it distorts. He does the same with PRETTY SEXY.

At last, he inspects THE VIL's headshot - smiling, perfect. He holds it up to the funhouse mirror and looks straight at the real girl.

Lights fade to blackout.

ACT I

SCENE 6

SOUND: A film projector with la-la-la music.

A flash of a photograph hits the corner of the motel room. Another flash elsewhere. This repeats, turning the motel room into a mini-theatre of quickly revolving still photographs. The images are of the three girls, in sunlit shots, happy together, playing parts.

When the flashes stop:

A blare of lights erupts on PRETTY SEXY as she stands downstage.

SOUND: Light street traffic.

She speaks to someone unseen.

PRETTY SEXY

Is it always so bright in this fucking town? I'm going to go through a whole pile of sunglasses, I can tell. I buy cheap ones, 'cos I lose them. Where I'm from, it rains all the time. Of course I'm an actress. This is Hollywood, isn't it? No, nothing yet. But soon. Fingers...crossed. Do you have a stick of gum? No. Okay. What did you say your name was again? Paul. Gotcha. And what's that other guy's name again? Jack Fennigan. No, no I haven't. What kind of pictures? Girl pictures. Ah. Things where girls get- Oh, okay, good. I'm not quite ready to show my tits on camera. Not just yet. My grandmother's still alive. Yes, when she's dead the world can see my tits. Ha ha. Yes, people have called me sexy before. Right before they tried to touch my leg under the dinner table. So I'm used to it, yes. But I got talent. Yes, Paul, I am pretty
(MORE)

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

sexy. I know, I know. Remind me not to go to dinner with you any time soon. You'd be all over me like a cheap wig. Uh huh. Yeah. Uh huh. One o'clock today? Uh huh. Okay. No plans. Why a motel? Oh, that's common? Okay. What should I wear? I mean, what's the part? What will impress this Jack F.? Be myself. Pretty. Sexy. Gotcha. Thanks for the card. Yes, I'll be there. I know. I'll be there. But if it's squirrely, I'm leaving. I'm a good girl. Don't want involved in that stuff. Okay, Paul. Okay.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 7

Rise on the motel room, sun
through the window.

THE VIL is dressed in a bikini and
sits on the edge of the bed. She
sighs a big, bored sigh.

She stands and approaches the
cabinet. She flips through files,
reads.

SOUND: The telephone rings.

She quickly puts away the
materials and answers the call.

THE VIL

Jack Fennigan Productions. Oh, hey. Well, I just
thought I better sound official. Yes, I'm wearing it.
Of course it fits, Jack. You know this body well.

(Looks to the watch)

Two more hours? But the sun will be starting to go
down. No, I'm *going*. I said I wanted to go to the
beach and damn it... Yeah, I could call them, I
guess. Okay. I will. So I'll see you tonight. Yes,
baby, I'll smell like *sand*. I know you love it.
'Bye, Jack. Don't work too hard.

She hangs up.

She dials another number.

SOUND: Rings through telephone, an
answer.

MATCHBOX

(Over telephone)

Hello?

THE VIL

It's me. I'm going to the beach. Jack stood me up for some meeting at the lot. Want to come and distract silly boys on surfboards until they drown?

MATCHBOX

(Over telephone)

Should I call our favorite blonde?

THE VIL

If you don't mind the competition.

MATCHBOX

(Over telephone)

Maybe I'm hers, you ever think of that?

THE VIL

I'll meet you at the usual.

MATCHBOX

(Over telephone)

Did Jack buy you a new bikini?

THE VIL

Of course he did. Kisses!

THE VIL hangs up. She starts to pack a bag for the beach. She starts to put on a skirt.

As she does, the door comes open!

Standing there is CAPTAIN. He wears no mask this time but still has plastic over his suit. He holds in one hand a toolbox, in the other, a key.

Startled, THE VIL gives a short yelp and yanks up her skirt.

CAPTAIN

Mr. Fennigan told me before he left that I could come and inspect your shower.

THE VIL
Oh. Are you with the motel?

CAPTAIN
People call me Captain.

THE VIL
Captain? You the owner then?

CAPTAIN
I just...fix things that are broken.

THE VIL
Okay. Well, come on in. I'm leaving in a sec. I just have a few more things to get together.

CAPTAIN enters. He goes to the bathroom and sets down his toolbox.

THE VIL, back turned to him, rubs on deodorant.

THE VIL (Continued)
What's with the plastic?

CAPTAIN
So I don't get wet. I hate being wet. What about you? You hate being wet?

THE VIL
No, I'm wet a lot. This town's too hot.

CAPTAIN takes out a radio from inside his toolbox. He places it on the cabinet and turns it on.

SOUND: Retro bubblegum pop emits from the radio.

CAPTAIN
I like music.

THE VIL

No problem. It doesn't bother me.

CAPTAIN

You been in L.A. long?

THE VIL

Ah, just about three months. Longer than some.
Longer than my friends. I'm an actress.

CAPTAIN

Mr. Fennigan makes movies. He told me. Cheapies.

THE VIL

Cheapies? He's not Louie B. Mayer, if that's what you mean. I was in "Girls from Venice Beach." Did you see that? No. I figured. I played the bad girl. I was the villain. That's how I got my nickname. My friends call me The Vil. Or Vil, for short. I need to get my beach towel. Excuse me.

CAPTAIN flattens against the wall and she slides past and reaches to pull a towel from the unseen rack. As she does so, CAPTAIN tugs her bikini string and her top unties. She catches the bikini top just before it falls.

THE VIL (Continued)

What the fuck are you doing?

Still holding her top, she grabs her towel.

THE VIL (Continued)

Better be a goddamn accident.

CAPTAIN

I'm not with the motel. I'm a friend. I can help you. I wanted to meet you, but Jack wouldn't let me.

She turns to leave the bathroom,
but he blocks her, stays in close.

THE VIL

Move.

He lays his hand on her hand that
holds the bikini.

THE VIL (Continued)

I will hit you so hard that you will shit your plastic
pants.

SOUND: The radio changes,
distorts, becomes an alien sound.
Now, the CAPTAIN's voice comes out
of it.

CAPTAIN

(Over radio)

I want you to listen to what I say. I want you do
what I tell you. I'm not wearing this because I'm
afraid of water.

THE VIL

You're not afraid.

CAPTAIN moves his hand down and
her hand comes with his, revealing
her skin beneath.

CAPTAIN

(Over radio)

I'm not what you think I am. You are right to be
scared of me. You think you're a villain?

THE VIL

You're the villain.

CAPTAIN

(Over radio)

That's right...It's me.

SOUND: Radio turns to blindingly
loud static.

Blackout.

ACT I

SCENE 8

Strobes.

SOUND: Busy signal from a telephone plays throughout...

The "movie" from before plays, only now, it's a bit more disturbing. The photos flashed are not of three girls in the sun, smiling, but a darker, more violent texture.

The movie stops suddenly, but the telephone continues on.

PRETTY SEXY comes out of the bathroom and looks down at the buzzing motel telephone.

She is hesitant but, at last, she picks it up and puts it back in its cradle. After a moment, she picks it up again.

SOUND: Retro bubblegum pop plays over the telephone.

Confused, she hangs up.

Enter SUNNY JACK, who is startled to see PRETTY SEXY in the room.

SUNNY JACK

Why hello.

PRETTY SEXY

Hi ya, Jack.

SUNNY JACK

What brings you to my neck of the woods?

PRETTY SEXY

Let's be honest, Jack. This isn't your woods at all.

SUNNY JACK

What are you talking about?

PRETTY SEXY

Paul's got loose lips.

SUNNY JACK

Oh, really. That was almost your nickname.

PRETTY SEXY

Dirty boy.

SUNNY JACK

And that was almost mine.

(Resigned)

So what did Paul tell you? He tell you about Bel Aire?

PRETTY SEXY

Bel Aire and Amelie. From your French excursion. Thinking of making "Girls from Riviera Beach" now, Jack, or did you just tell her that to get her to fly to Hollywood? She could be the kind of girl you like.

SUNNY JACK

You don't know what I like. Not at all.

PRETTY SEXY

Maybe you're right, maybe you're right. I'm a dummy. But The Vil isn't. Technically, she was my friend before you were. Only by, say, an hour in a motel lobby, but an hour's an hour.

SUNNY JACK

I'm not knifing Vil. She's my girl. Amelie's just an actress I met and liked. She's in town on her own motor and I gave her a place to stay until she finds a place.

PRETTY SEXY

You know, it's weird, Jack, that you have permanent residence in this crap motel when you have a nice

(MORE)

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

place for a nice girl in Bel Aire. How come The Vil doesn't get the sweet accommodations? She gets the dirty mattress.

SUNNY JACK

You're funny.

JACK takes PRETTY SEXY gently and guides her, somewhat against her will, to sit on the mattress. He lays her down. He lays down himself. They both look up at the mirror.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

The mattress is just fine.

PRETTY SEXY

Makes for nice casting, doesn't it, Jack?

SUNNY JACK

You tell me.

(Points to mirror)

What do you see there, Sexy? You know what I see? I see a beautiful woman. I see a woman with talent. I see someone who came to this town from rainy Seattle thinking one day, one day... And it was me who found you. Via Paul, of course, my trusty field agent. So I cast you. Two pictures. In the second one, you got to rob banks and you liked it, I think. You're not as dangerous in real life as you were on that screen. But you're pretty sexy in both.

PRETTY SEXY

I'll tell you what *I* see. Here lies a man who likes women. Young ones. He likes them so much he makes movies just to have them in his company. And, one day, he thinks he'll discover a star. And that star is *not* me. It's Vil. So you keep her close. Not because you're jealous, but because she may be worth a lot of money one day.

SUNNY JACK

Matchbox is the only one of you three that can act.

PRETTY SEXY

But would she do this?

PRETTY SEXY undoes his belt then
lays back down.

SUNNY JACK

You think I'm going around Vil's back? Look at you.

PRETTY SEXY

Maybe I'm just showing off how good I am with belts.

SUNNY JACK

Maybe.

PRETTY SEXY

Want to see how good I am with buttons?

PRETTY SEXY slowly pops the top
button on her sweater. Then the
next, then the next, then the
next. She opens her blouse and
reveals the bra beneath.

SUNNY JACK

What about your grandma?

PRETTY SEXY

What about your girlfriend?

SUNNY JACK

Last time you and me were like this...Vil wasn't my
girlfriend. She was my audition. And think about it.
I'm old enough to be your father.

PRETTY SEXY

Or my boyfriend. What to see how I am with zippers?

She unzips his pants.

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

Where is she?

SUNNY JACK

I don't know. She disappears sometimes. Past few months.

PRETTY SEXY

Will she be coming home in the next hour?

SUNNY JACK

And if she does?

PRETTY SEXY

Lock the door.

SUNNY JACK

She has a key.

PRETTY SEXY

Does it really matter if she finds you with me or with the French slut?

SUNNY JACK

You heard about Amelie so you thought I'd go for you, too. You want to be a star?

PRETTY SEXY

I want to be a star.

He quickly, roughly pins her to the bed.

SUNNY JACK

Tell me you want it.

PRETTY SEXY

I want to be a star.

SUNNY JACK

Say it again!

PRETTY SEXY

I want to be a star!

She worms her legs around him. He pins her, but doesn't go in for her yet. She writhes.

They kiss.

SOUND: The telephone rings.

They don't stop.

After a moment, SUNNY JACK breaks away from her. He goes to the ringing telephone.

PRETTY SEXY undresses beneath the sheets.

SUNNY JACK picks up the line.

SOUND: Retro bubblegum over the receiver.

SUNNY JACK

Hello?

He slowly hangs up.

She's waiting for him.

He drifts then dives into bed.

Blackout.

ACT I

SCENE 9

SOUND: Running water.

THE VIL sits on the end of the bed, doll-like, in the dim motel room.

SUNNY JACK enters.

SUNNY JACK

You're back.

He crosses, puts his stuff down then hears the running water. He investigates.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

How long's the water been on? You taking a shower?

She doesn't answer him.

He goes inside the bathroom and shuts off the water.

Back in the room, he leans against the wall and crosses his arms.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Where you been?

(No answer)

Didn't used to be like this. First few months. I could count on you.

(Pause)

You got another guy?

(No answer)

What's wrong?

(No answer)

You can go, you know. Not like we're married. Do people even get married anymore? This town. What's the point? Vil? Are you listening?

THE VIL

I think something's wrong with me. I'm not myself when I'm away from you. But some things don't change. Does every motel in L.A. look like this one?

SUNNY JACK

Is that what you do? Go to other motels? Hell, doll, if you need a change of scenery, I can-

THE VIL

When are we going to make another movie, Jack?

SUNNY JACK

I'm working on it. Paul wants to direct. I'm close on the money.

THE VIL

Who do I play this time? I want to be someone different than me.

SUNNY JACK

No script yet. I...wasn't sure if you were coming back. There are a few girls in line so far. French girl. And Pretty Sexy wants a piece. Might be something for you if you stick long enough.

THE VIL

Jack...why didn't you take me to the beach that day?

SUNNY JACK

What?

THE VIL

Last summer. Why didn't you take me to the beach?

SUNNY JACK

Jesus, that was months ago.

THE VIL

If you had come home on time and we went to the beach. Oh, God. I'm so scared all the time.

SUNNY JACK sits with her.

SUNNY JACK

Listen. You need what I call "movie therapy." Let's go see a few flicks. Something old. Something stupid and light. A musical.

THE VIL

Matchbox is dead.

SUNNY JACK

Is that a joke?

THE VIL

She's dead. Last night. She was found in her apartment on La Cienega. Someone cut her up in the shower and then reassembled her on the bed using stitches you'd find in a rag doll.

SUNNY JACK

That's terrible. These things don't make the papers? How'd you hear?

THE VIL

I found her.

She breaks down, holds him.

THE VIL (Continued)

Jack, Jack. Sometimes, I don't know who I am. I can't remember things. I can't remember you. I don't know where I live. It scares me. I go to a motel and walk up the stairs and into the room and it's not this room, it's someone else's, and they come home and say, "How did you get in here?" And I can't explain, because my key worked. It worked. But I can't remember opening the door. Something is happening to me, Jack.

SUNNY JACK

Vil, calm down. You're fine. Doll, you're fine. All this - this is about Matchbox. What you saw. Did you go to the police? We'll go to the police. I'll take you right now.

She shakes her head, buries herself in him.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

You'll get better, you will. You'll stay here. With me. I won't let you leave my side. You'll never disappear again.

THE VIL

I don't want to leave you.

SUNNY JACK

Stay. I love you. Stay.

She pulls away.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Don't look surprised. Of course I love you. You're my star. You know, I've had a lot of girlfriends, it's true. But I've never told any that I loved them.

THE VIL

I'm your star.

SUNNY JACK

The brightest. I'm holding onto you until I burn.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 10

SOUND: Mechanics.

Strobes.

CAPTAIN, in mask, enters, walking stiffly, slowly. He heads for the cabinet.

MATCHBOX can be seen just behind the bedpost, but only her eyes and the top of her head.

CAPTAIN opens the cabinet, takes out files, and spills them on the floor. He picks up photographs of actresses and places them on the bed.

MATCHBOX's eyes watch as CAPTAIN rips the photos up on the bed and then begins to lean into them, sexually.

MATCHBOX comes around from the bed, screaming, only there is no sound except for the roaring mechanics.

CAPTAIN sees MATCHBOX for the first time. As she screams, CAPTAIN leaves the bed, enters the bathroom then locates his toolbox and returns. He throws MATCHBOX on the bed and begins to tear at her the way he tore at the photographs.

Just as she begins to come apart...

Blackout.

ACT I

SCENE 11

Lights rise.

SUNNY JACK, alone in the motel.

SOUND: The telephone rings.

He picks it up on first chime, as if waiting for it.

SUNNY JACK

Yes, I'm here. Come on up. Sixth floor. You'll have to walk, I'm afraid. Okay, then.

He hangs up the telephone.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 12

Lights rise.

MATCHBOX is again behind the bedpost.

THE VIL sits on the mattress.

PRETTY SEXY is in the bathroom with her back turned.

SOUND: Dull voices from other rooms.

THE VIL

This isn't my motel.

PRETTY SEXY

(Offstage)

No. It's mine.

PRETTY SEXY exits the bathroom.

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

She comes to see me, too, you know.

THE VIL

Is she here now?

PRETTY SEXY

I don't see her.

THE VIL rises and inspects behind the bed. Even though MATCHBOX actually *is* there, she's apparently invisible.

THE VIL

No. No, I don't see her either.

PRETTY SEXY

Maybe she's hiding from you. When she comes out, she scares the shit out of me. Never believed in ghosts. Never believed in much besides movies. You know, I met an agent. Jack introduced us and we hit it off. He's a strange pet. But I hear he's connected. He tells me he's seen our stuff and he liked what I did. He's coming to the set next week. What can I do to sabotage the French flower?

THE VIL

Just do your best performance.

PRETTY SEXY

I show my tits in this one. Didn't take as much convincing as I thought.

THE VIL

I want to act again.

PRETTY SEXY

Then do it.

THE VIL

Most days I don't even know where I am.

(Long pause)

Have you ever been...hypnotized?

PRETTY SEXY considers before answering.

PRETTY SEXY

Well, well. Okay. I saw this one show in Seattle. At a club. I was pulled up by this old man who said he could put me in a spell of suggestion and the audience would give me a command later in the show. He goes through his whole bit with a pocket watch and then, at the last second, he leans into my ear and whispers, "We're going to have some fun with them tonight and, if you play along, there's a hundred dollars in it for you." I'm an actress, right? He must have seen it. Knew that I'd perform the hell out of it. So I pretend to be under his spell and he gets

(MORE)

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

the command from the audience. Most in the crowd are men who want me to take off my bra and wave it in the air when the old man says the word, "Shocking!" I wasn't very comfortable with the idea of waving my bra, but I liked the idea of a hundred dollars for so little effort. Twenty minutes later in the show, he says "shocking," but I wasn't paying any attention. He kind of gives me a harsh look and repeats the word. Like a zombie, I stand up, I unhook my bra, ease it down off my shoulders, and wave it like it was the American flag. The men cheer, he wakes me up, and I sit down, pretending like nothing at all happened. I just happen to have no bra on now. At the end of the show, a woman meets me as I exit. She asks me to follow her backstage, that the old magician needs to "un-hypnotize me" so at every mention of the keyword from that night forward won't affect me. I suppose she's not in on the hundred bucks. So, backstage...everyone's gone and I'm waiting for the old man. After what seems like forever, he comes in behind the curtain and I say, "Where's my hundred dollars?" And he...claps...twice, like this, very fast. Midnight, I wake up in a motel room...a room much like this one. I'm in a chair. My clothes are on, but buttoned wrong. My panties are missing. There's a hundred dollar bill on the bed. And I'm alone.

THE VIL

Oh, my, God.

PRETTY SEXY

A little while later, I got real sore between my legs, and later I got a very bad yeast infection that took a month to cure.

THE VIL

Did you tell the police?

PRETTY SEXY

The motel room was registered in my name and paid for by me. I had no evidence anything had happened. But I'm pretty certain I was raped.

(Pause)

So what makes you ask about hypnosis?

The light in the bathroom begins to grow brighter and brighter.

SOUND: A growing electrical hum, matching the light.

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

She's here.

Lights fade to blackout as MATCHBOX lifts from behind the bed.

ACT I

SCENE 13

Dim lights rise.

MATCHBOX, as at the start of Act I, lays on the bed, alone, looking at the mirror.

MATCHBOX

Look at you. You pathetic bitch. Look at you.

She opens then closes her legs.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

You'd like that. Wouldn't you? Look at you. You're as bad as the rest.

SOUND: A knock on the door.

MATCHBOX covers her exposed body with the white sheet.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

Come.

The door opens by itself. No one enters.

After a pause, MATCHBOX sits up, holding the sheet in place.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

Is that you? Captain? Is that you?

She rises, wraps the sheet around her shoulders, goes to the door, and slowly shuts it.

SOUND: Another knock.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

(To door, in whisper)

Is that you?

SUNNY JACK

(Through door)

It's Jack.

MATCHBOX

How did you know where to find me?

SUNNY JACK

(Through door)

Vil told me. Can I come in?

MATCHBOX starts to dress.

MATCHBOX

Just a moment.

At last, she opens. SUNNY JACK stands at the door. She pauses then gestures for him to enter.

SUNNY JACK

Did you meet him?

MATCHBOX

(Weighing words, a bit weary)

I did.

SUNNY JACK

Did you like him?

MATCHBOX

Oh...I've been thinking about him a lot.

SUNNY JACK

Did he like you?

MATCHBOX

He did.

SUNNY JACK

Then why didn't you come and talk to me? Did he offer you a contract?

MATCHBOX

Yes. He says that I will live forever.

SUNNY JACK

I suppose congratulations are in order. "Annie Get Your Gun," two of my films, and you're off to bigger and better.

MATCHBOX

How come you didn't introduce him to the other girls?

SUNNY JACK

Oh, I dunno... Sexy might get her shot. She's willing to do a lot to move up. Vil is my girl. I want to make sure the circumstances are right for her.

MATCHBOX

You never thanked me. For introducing you two. I was the one who held her hand in that...what do you call it? Audition.

SUNNY JACK

It was an audition.

MATCHBOX

You have a peculiar style of such.

SUNNY JACK

What do you care, you got the part? And now look at you. I'll bet you'll be on *The Mod Squad* before then end of the summer.

MATCHBOX

Did your last "finds" go on to such legitimate heights?

SUNNY JACK smiles and thinks.

SUNNY JACK

Well. You're in good hands now. Better hands. I just wanted to make sure you were all right. I didn't hear from you since the introduction. So I assumed it went bad and you were pouting. You're too talented to pout. Next time pick up a telephone.

He crosses to exit.

MATCHBOX

Sunny Jack?

He stops.

MATCHBOX (Continued)

Got any matches?

He holds then wrestles out a box and tosses it on the bed.

SUNNY JACK

Keep 'em. Good luck, Matchbox. I always liked you.

He exits.

MATCHBOX lights a cigarette.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 14

Lights rise on the empty motel room.

SOUND: Bubblegum pop music.

From the bathroom, CAPTAIN enters, wearing mask. He comes and stands before the audience, very still behind his mask.

Strobes.

SOUND: The projector runs. The music and the mechanics compete for dominance.

A movie begins, more flashes and pictures, this time more violent than ever, with nudity, almost like a psychotic fugue.

THE VIL enters into the cacophony.

She covers her ears and screams at intervals, staggering around the motel room, tearing at it, taking out the files from the cabinet, taking pillow and bed sheets off the bed, screaming.

All the while: CAPTAIN stares.

Sudden stop to blackout.

Curtain.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Lights rise on the motel room.

It is cleared of the destruction from the previous Act I. However, the mattress remains bare, without bed sheets.

A key is heard in the door and SUNNY JACK enters. He walks in a daze. He sits on the bed, strokes the mattress, and becomes teary-eyed.

SUNNY JACK

I'm sorry. I couldn't do anything. I tried to save you, doll. If you're anywhere but heaven or hell, know that I, I love you. I'm trying to reach you. I love you. I love you.

He thinks he hears something. At last, quickly, he exits.

Long pause.

Slowly, THE VIL crawls out from under the bed as...

SOUND: Low beats and hissing.

She goes to the motel room door.

She pulls the knob, tries to get it open. She bangs on the door.

She backs up, turns to the audience, and for the first time we see that her face is covered in stitches.

She continues scratching at the door, animalistic.

Lights and sounds fade.

ACT II

SCENE 2

Lights rise on the motel room.

PRETTY SEXY stands alone, flipping through photographs.

SOUND: The telephone rings.

She doesn't answer.

SUNNY JACK

(From offstage)

You going to get that?

The ringing stops.

She continues inspecting photographs.

SUNNY JACK steps out of the bathroom, wiping his hands on a towel...

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

You didn't answer?

PRETTY SEXY

You don't live here anymore. We shouldn't be answering the telephone.

(Indicating photographs)

Why do you keep all these?

SUNNY JACK

You never know when someone will come walking back through my door. Also, I want proof of age. Un-agented girls must be eighteen or older to audition.

Lazily, she discards the photographs.

PRETTY SEXY

Can you do hypnosis?

SUNNY JACK

Hypnosis? Hell no.

PRETTY SEXY

Do you know any hypnotists?

SUNNY JACK

Nope.

(Gestures to photographs)

What did the cards tell you?

PRETTY SEXY

No, sorry. Hypnosis wasn't listed as any special skills. Lots of dancing and singing. Pity you never did a Broadway show. One girl claims can stand still for long periods of time. Not sure if that's a skill, though, or just weird.

SUNNY JACK

I don't know. Could be a skill. Depends on what kind of movie you're making. Is that why you wanted me to come back here? To look at old headshots and resumes and find yourself a hypnotist. I think there's an easier way. L.A. Times has dollar advertisements for just that kind of kook.

PRETTY SEXY

Last time I saw Vil, she said she thought she had been hypnotized.

SUNNY JACK

Did she now.

PRETTY SEXY wanders, saying nothing.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Do believe in that? I don't. I believe in drugs.
(MORE)

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

I bet a person can be drugged into believing something, anything. People are schmucks. Why do you think there's a rocketship effects department? Fool people into thinking there are aliens up there. But mesmerism - I always thought that was a crock of crap.

PRETTY SEXY

(Shrugs)

It's what she told me.

SUNNY JACK

(Doubtful)

Vil...was hypnotized?

PRETTY SEXY

A few weeks before she died, she told me she suspected that she had been hypnotized.

SUNNY JACK

How could she be hypnotized without her permission or her knowledge?

PRETTY SEXY

She didn't know *how* it happened. But...she thought she knew *when* it happened. She told me you and her had made some plans to go to the beach. On that day, you telephoned and said you would be late. That's the last thing in her head. She never hooked up with me and I thought she was flaky. I teased her later. But after that...lost day...she started blacking out. She'd be in the middle of a thing, lose track, then hours later, or days later, wake in a strange motel rooms across Hollywood with no idea how she got there or whom she had been with.

SUNNY JACK

She slept with other men?

PRETTY SEXY

I asked her that. She couldn't remember. She did feel, though, that she had done something awful. I'm sorry. I'm sorry I have to tell you that. Do you know what else she said? That Matchbox came to visit her...as a ghost. She warned Vil that she was going to die.

SOUND: The telephone rings.

SUNNY JACK looks to her. She doesn't move. At last, he answers.

SOUND: Retro bubblegum over the telephone.

SUNNY JACK pulls the telephone from his ear and turns to PRETTY SEXY.

SUNNY JACK

Come here.

PRETTY SEXY

Who is it? No one knows we're here.

He holds out the telephone and she listens, takes it.

SUNNY JACK

This has happened before on this phone. I thought it was a crossed wire.

Saying nothing, she hangs up.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Some kind of joke.

PRETTY SEXY picks up her purse and goes into the bathroom, out of sight.

He drifts back to the telephone, considering.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

I mean, don't you think that's odd? That tune, over and over on this line?

The bathroom door shuts.

Pause.

Jack sits at the desk.

SOUND: The telephone rings again.

SUNNY JACK picks it up on first chime, as if waiting for it.
(This is a repeat of Act I: Scene 11's start.)

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Yes, I'm here. Come on up. Sixth floor. You'll have to walk, I'm afraid. Okay, then.

There is a sudden knock on the motel room door and SUNNY JACK answers it. CAPTAIN, without mask and with briefcase rather than toolbox, stands expectant.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

What did you do, fly?

No answer.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

You just called.

CAPTAIN

I was in the lobby.

SUNNY JACK

I know. But. Jesus, okay, come in.

CAPTAIN enters, looks around the room.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Have a seat. Here, I'll get you a chair.

He unfolds one of the chairs against the wall and, satisfied, gestures.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Sorry. Not luxury, I know, but you should have seen my last office. And they say there're no basements in L.A. Place was a cavern. Safe in an earthquake, though, if we ever get the big one. I still have the lease for just that possibility.

CAPTAIN sits.

CAPTAIN

One motel room is quite like another.

SUNNY JACK

I suppose you're right.

CAPTAIN

Are we alone?

SUNNY JACK

Sure.

CAPTAIN

I like doing business in confidence.

SUNNY JACK

So you said.

CAPTAIN opens his briefcase, pulls out some papers and inspects them.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Contracts? So soon. We haven't even started to talk turkey.

CAPTAIN

I come prepared. It steers the conversation.

SUNNY JACK

Now I see why they call you Captain.

CAPTAIN

I saw your last film, Mr. Fennigan. "Devil House."

SUNNY JACK

Good flick. I can do better.

CAPTAIN

I rarely go to the cinema much anymore. I used to see them all the time, but I got very bored. All of them were beginning to look the same.

SUNNY JACK

I know your type. In the business, but hate the product.

CAPTAIN

I could tell just from the posters that there was a growing desert in the imagination. But lately, I've taken in a few shows and it's got my juices flowing. I particularly like seeing ones when there are very few people in the theatre. Maybe just one or two.

SUNNY JACK

Sounds like "Devil House," all right. It wasn't a great smash.

CAPTAIN

Oh, but it was. It was to me.

CAPTAIN reviews his paperwork. At last, he smiles, sets the papers aside, and pulls a photograph from the case.

CAPTAIN (Continued)

Do you know this girl?

SUNNY JACK

That's Cindy Valentine.

CAPTAIN

Have you seen her movies?

SUNNY JACK

One or two. She's good. Where's she been lately?

CAPTAIN

She's under contract to me.

He takes out another photograph.

CAPTAIN (Continued)

Do you know her?

SUNNY JACK

Amanda LaSalle. She auditioned for me about two years ago, when she was seventeen.

CAPTAIN

But you didn't hire her?

SUNNY JACK

No. But now I wish I did. She really blossomed.

CAPTAIN

She's under contract to me.

He takes out another photograph.

CAPTAIN (Continued)

How about her?

SUNNY JACK

No.

CAPTAIN looks at the picture
himself, surprised.

CAPTAIN
You don't recognize her?

SUNNY JACK
No. But I don't know every face in town.

CAPTAIN
Scarlet Raines.

SUNNY JACK takes the picture into
his hands, surprised.

SUNNY JACK
No shit. She looks young. I didn't- Wasn't she mur-

CAPTAIN snatches back the picture,
puts it in the case, and shuts it.

CAPTAIN
She would have had a bright future.

SUNNY JACK
I agree.

CAPTAIN
I think you're going to have a bright future.

SUNNY JACK
Are you a fortune-teller?

CAPTAIN
I know talent. I like talent. I think you can help
me. Those actresses in "Devil House" were all
very...talented.

SUNNY JACK
I'm sorry. I don't understand what kind of
arrangement you're proposing.

CAPTAIN

I want you to be my scout.

SUNNY JACK

I have a scout. His name is Paul.

CAPTAIN

Ah, Paul.

SUNNY JACK

Paul tells me you have a lot of sway in this town. You can get movies made. You know people with money.

CAPTAIN

I do have sway. I'm thankful that Paul has arranged this meeting so I can...sway.

SUNNY JACK

But I thought you wanted to talk about production funding. I didn't realize you were after my girls.

CAPTAIN

Your girls? Do you have contracts?

SUNNY JACK

Just per picture. I'm not a studio with central casting.

CAPTAIN

You make it sound so nefarious. Mr. Fennigan. I can do you a great many favors. You have an eye for actresses. And your eye is similar to my eye.

SUNNY JACK

Similar eye for recognizing talented girls?

CAPTAIN

That's what I'm saying

SUNNY JACK

Uh huh. What if it's it not talent we similarly recognize?

CAPTAIN

I wouldn't suggest presuming my taste in anything.

SUNNY JACK

No, sure. Sure. And I don't mean to imply you're...what'd you say, nefarious? This town's got a side that's lies just beyond the disappointments. A blackness. Horrors that are like deep cuts in the skin. People you wouldn't want to know in a million years.

CAPTAIN

Do you not *want* to know me?

SUNNY JACK

I'm considering.

CAPTAIN stands, picks up his case and his paperwork.

CAPTAIN

I can't spend my days looking for just the right girls. I need someone. Someone who wants to be successful. You help me acquire some talent, I will make sure they become something more. It's great to have a name in your picture, right? One of these actresses could go onto television and that makes the rights to your film worth much, much more. More theatres. More work. A bigger crowd. Imagine how much money Marilyn Monroe would have made her early champions if she had started in independents and then moved to the majors? That's possible now. The era of the smaller picture. You sign girls to a picture-by-picture deal because you never know where the money's coming from. But now you'll know. The good ones will go on. And the others will stay in your stable of players, acting in films that can now more readily find funding. Your scripts. Your choices. Your rewards. I think this sounds like a very wonderful bargain for you, all in exchange for just a few introductions. After all, the girls are not forced into contract with me. It's a two-way arrangement, Mr. Fennigan. Or should I call you Mr. DeMille?

SUNNY JACK

(Smiles)

Now you're just being hurtful.

CAPTAIN precisely rests the paperwork on the now empty chair.

CAPTAIN
Here is my contract. I'll be here tomorrow at this same time to retrieve the signed copy.

SUNNY JACK
Doesn't it require two signatures?

CAPTAIN
I've already signed it.

SUNNY JACK
So you're that sure there are no changes?

CAPTAIN
There will be no changes. I'm sure you'll find everything to your liking.

SUNNY JACK
And if I don't?

CAPTAIN
I'll be here tomorrow regardless.

SUNNY JACK picks up the paperwork, thumbs it.

SUNNY JACK
I need to show it to my lawyer.

CAPTAIN
But of course. Still, there will be no changes. Goodbye, Mr. Fennigan.

SUNNY JACK tips his head to the man as CAPTAIN steps out.

Returning, SUNNY JACK paces with the contract in his hand. At last, he gets an odd look, a

nervous look. He stuffs the contract quickly into the cabinet and shuts the drawer.

He rests by the phone.

Behind him, the bathroom door slowly opens.

Unseen by SUNNY JACK, PRETTY SEXY appears in the motel bathroom doorframe. She wears a terrifyingly plain mask that covers her face.

SOUND: A pulse sound, low in frequency.

SUNNY JACK

Have you ever had heard that song, Pretty Sexy? I mean—

He turns and startles.

She stands completely still.

He reaches out to take the mask off her face when—

SOUND: The pulse builds, stronger, more mechanical.

From behind the bed, MATCHBOX's face appears.

SUNNY JACK sees this ghost and freezes.

Slowly, from under the bed, crawls THE VIL, covered in blood all over white clothes.

SUNNY JACK backs towards the door.

PRETTY SEXY steps out of the doorframe, towards the telephone.

SOUND: The telephone begins ringing. No one answers.

SUNNY JACK opens the motel room door and bolts.

The three girls vanish inside the scene and the sound quiets.

Lights down.

ACT II

SCENE 3

Slow rise on THE VIL as she lays flat on the mattress. She still wears her blood-covered clothes. She seems to be waking from a nightmare. Suddenly, she jumps out of bed, shaking.

She looks down, sees the blood. She starts to examine it, pulling the hem to her eyes. This is not her blood, but someone else's.

She exits into the bathroom.

SOUND: Running water.

From the motel room door, CAPTAIN quietly enters and sits on the mattress. He sets his toolbox beside him. He opens it and takes out his radio from within and switches it on.

SOUND: White noise.

THE VIL hears this, turns off the water, and then emerges from the bathroom, freezing when she sees CAPTAIN on her bed.

CAPTAIN's radio speaks to her through the static.

CAPTAIN

(Over radio)

I'm impressed with your talent. I read about you in the newspapers today. Six this time. I thought it may be too many. You're very skilled. As I knew you would be.

THE VIL

Go away.

CAPTAIN

(Over radio)

Why would I do *that*?

CAPTAIN approaches her. He lifts her bloody dress up over her panties, stopping at just below her breasts, then lifts it fully off. He touches the center of her chest, where there's a bit of splatter left.

CAPTAIN (Continued)

(Over radio)

Go take a shower.

She exits to bathroom.

Lights fade. The white noise continues, until...

ACT II

SCENE 4

Flash: a picture on the wall.
Another. Another, in another
spot. Faster and faster, to
strokes.

Sudden stop to blackout.

Blazing white light accompanied
by:

SOUND: A woman screaming offstage.

Sudden stop to blackout.

ACT II

SCENE 5

Lights rise to PRETTY SEXY in the motel room, sleeping.

She wakes up suddenly, shakes off a dream.

She goes to the corner and turns on a lamp.

She sits near the bathroom and stares out. After a long pause...

PRETTY SEXY

I know you're here. I can tell when you come. I've always had a sense for that. Why do you wear a mask sometimes? I get the feeling that it isn't your face. It's the face of another. Who am I supposed to be afraid of? Somehow...I don't think it's you.

(Pause)

You can come out.

(Pause, then singsong)

Come out, come out, wherever you are...

SOUND: Vibrations, continuing.

Out from under the bed, comes THE VIL. She is covered in blood, only in panties.

PRETTY SEXY turns and sees her friend. She does not seem frightened by this event.

THE VIL

I miss you.

PRETTY SEXY

I miss you, too. You're dead, right? This isn't some kind of fucked up dream?

THE VIL

Matchbox warned me...that I would die. I came to warn you, too.

PRETTY SEXY begins to cry.

PRETTY SEXY

I'm going to die? Why?

THE VIL

You signed a contract.

PRETTY SEXY

I didn't sign anything.

THE VIL

Yes. You did.

PRETTY SEXY

You mean with Captain? But you didn't sign with him?

THE VIL nods.

THE VIL

I wanted it. I signed it. We all wanted it. I just didn't tell you.

PRETTY SEXY

I didn't come to Hollywood to die! I came here to live *forever!*

SOUND and LIGHTS: Sudden swell of cacophonous jazz horns to complete blackout. Horns fade into car horns and traffic.

Lights rise on PRETTY SEXY, wandering lost in upstage spotlights, hysterical.

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

Don't leave! Don't leave me! I didn't sign a contract! I'll tear it up!

(Aside)

Fuck you -- I know, I know. It's MY street, too. Fuck YOU!

(To the air)

Fuck you, Hollywood! Do you want to see my tits! My grandma's dead! Everyone I know is deeeeeaaaad!

Blackout.

Long pause in total darkness.

In a nearby corner, a flashlight comes on. It shines on the face of the person who holds it: PRETTY SEXY, eye makeup smeared and running in tears. She continues to weep and listens to the silence.

SOUND: Rattles.

PRETTY SEXY (Continued)

Please go away...please. I want you to go away. Please...please...please...please...

SOUND: Softly, bubblegum pop.

She cries fiercely and quickly. Suddenly, the flashlight is swept from her face and covered by her hand.

Long pause.

When the light comes back to her face, she wears a distorted mask, a horrific image, funhouse and strange.

The flashlight goes out.

SOUND: A hissing; Music fades.

ACT II

SCENE 6

Lights rise on the motel room.

The doorknob turns. Pause. A key in the lock.

Enter SUNNY JACK.

He considers leaving the door open. At last, he shuts it. He paces, wanders.

SUNNY JACK

I regret running. I should have stayed with all of you. It was a missed opportunity, to see the three of you all together in one spot. Even if...like that. I think you were trying to tell me something.

(Pause)

I'm across town now. If you're listening. Hyatt West Hollywood. To be honest, it's...not for me. Full of junkie musicians from the Strip. But, I suppose one motel room is like another.

(Pause)

Are you here? Are you?

SUNNY JACK bends and, hesitantly, inspects under the bed. Then behind it. Nothing, no one.

The bathroom door is shut.

He walks towards it.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

You're not going to jump out and scare me, are you? You *like* old Sunny Jack, right? I'm counting on that. Vil? Match? Sexy?

No answer.

Slowly, he approaches the bathroom door.
Gaining courage, he opens it slowly to
reveal...

A rope around her neck, PRETTY SEXY dangles
several feet of the ground.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

No, no, no!

He struggles and brings her down. He lays
her on the bed and unwraps the rope.

He checks her pulse.

She's dead.

He pulls away.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

You did it. You did it. You fucking idiot! You were the last
one who could help me. Were you too scared? *Goddamnit!*

(Breaks down)

Oh, girls, girls, girls. I let you down, didn't I? I ruined
you. I opened the door to this motel room and let you all...

(Shakes her body)

Wake up! Wake up! This isn't a goddamn audition!

(Collapsing)

Wake up! Wake up! Wake up...

(Whispering)

Please let me wake up.

Pause.

SOUND: A knock at the door.

Pause.

SOUND: Another knock.

The door opens on its own.

For a long moment, no one is there, until...

CAPTAIN steps from the darkness of the unseen corridor into the doorway. He wears no mask, carries no briefcase or radio or toolbox.

He enters, each step a slow, agonizing drawl.

He sees PRETTY SEXY, dead on the bed. He sits with her and caresses her hair.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

Get your fucking hands off her.

CAPTAIN smiles. He reaches between her legs.

SUNNY JACK grabs CAPTAIN's hand and shoves it away.

SUNNY JACK (Continued)

She's dead! She's dead, can't you see that, you fuck!

(Pause)

What are you? No. I want to know. You're not a man. You show me all your goddamn photographs. The people you handle. You don't handle them at all. You do *this*. You tricked me. Your fucking contract. What are you! Stand up. Get up. What are you, you fuck! Are you the Devil? Answer me!

CAPTAIN

I'm not the Devil, Mr. Fennigan. But we do run in the same social circles.

CAPTAIN begins to softly sing the bubblegum pop song.

SUNNY JACK

Shut up! Shut up! Your shit doesn't work on me. I see through you. I see right through your head! This is my motel room!

CAPTAIN

Is it?

SUNNY JACK

I'm calling the cops.

SUNNY JACK crosses to telephone, picks up the receiver.

Suddenly, PRETTY SEXY jumps up from the bed and screams, straight upright.

SUNNY JACK fumbles and drops the phone. He stares at her.

CAPTAIN stands.

CAPTAIN

Kill him.

(Pause)

Kill him.

(Pause)

Kill. Him.

PRETTY SEXY takes a step.

Another.

Another.

SOUND: The telephone's off-the-hook signal starts.

PRETTY SEXY looks infinitely sad.

At last, she moves forward and starts to choke SUNNY JACK. With great strength, she pushes him against the wall, the telephone still in his hand.

SUNNY JACK, at first, does not resist. He doesn't want to hurt her; he's too stunned at what's happening. But slowly, he comes to realize...

He frees a hand and wraps the phone cord around PRETTY SEXY's neck and pulls and pulls. After a moment, she slackens and slides to the floor, dead again with the phone around her, still buzzing.

SUNNY JACK hangs up the telephone just to stop the sound.

CAPTAIN

Who's killed her now, Mr. Fennigan? You. Call the police.

Flashes of light begin. The film is starting once more. The images are severe, awful, increasing in speed and frequency.

SUNNY JACK

I want out of here. I want out.

CAPTAIN

This motel is yours. You said it yourself. Outside that door is motel after motel after motel. And they all look like this very room.

SUNNY JACK

You're telling me...what's out there is the same as what's in here? No.

CAPTAIN

It's all the same. It's Hollywood.

SOUND: A building, blazing noise.

Strobes, blackouts, strobes again.

In the darkest seconds, CAPTAIN is gone from the room.

SUNNY JACK runs to the motel room door. It is shut, locked; he can't escape.

He runs to the bathroom door. It slams in his face.

He circles around, trapped, panicked.

At last, in the noise and blare, resigned,
he sits on the bed. Lays down.

He pulls a box of matches from his jacket.

From the wall, PRETTY SEXY rises from the
dead. She crosses in the noise and crawls
onto the bed.

SUNNY JACK welcomes her beside him.

From behind the bed, MATCHBOX emerges. She
lays at SUNNY JACK's feet.

At last, THE VIL emerges from underneath the
bed and, with a look between her and SUNNY
JACK of resignation, she joins him on the
bed, coming close and sleeping softly.

Flashes turn red, the color of flames,
orange and...

SOUND: A fire overtakes the other noises.

Blackout.

Final Curtain.

WITNESS TO AN ACCIDENT



CAST OF CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

LILLIAN, a young woman

NURSE KISSUM, a young woman

DR. FREDERICKS, a woman

AGATHA MOLL, a young woman

RAY PENDARSKY, an older man

DEAN FOSTER, an older man

THE ORDERLY, a young man

NANCY 1, a girl

NANCY 2, a girl

Plus a number of females to portray DINNER
GUESTS, PATIENTS, A FILM CREW, and FIGURES.

THE SETTING

Hollywood, California in the late 1950s.

THE SCENE

"The Hotel" (a hospital), also: a film
executive's office, a film lot, an apartment
(without furniture), a doctor's office, a
corridor, and various implied rooms.

Exits stage right and stage left.

ACT I

SCENE 1

LILLIAN, in a yellow dress, sits at a simple table, surrounded by female DINNER GUESTS, all wearing white gowns.

Outside, there is a rainstorm, distant.

As LILLIAN speaks, she mimes eating and drinking.

LILLIAN

I said, Mr. Bogart, Mr. Bogart, I know that you like your *sailing* and your *scotch* and *acting*, but to imagine that you *like* me as well! I can't believe it. He's watched me grow up. I would draw pictures of him wearing funny hats and slip them under his door of his guest bungalow. He never said a word about them. Perhaps the drawings got picked up and thrown out by a thoughtless maid. But as I got older, my drawings were getting more and more ribald. He'd come to visit us about twice a year at that point, to drink with my father and talk about the movie business. I could hear them through my own bedroom door, late into the night, over aromatic cigars and strong drinks. I'd press my ear to the door and hear Bogie's soft rumble of a voice, like distant thunder to my father's quicker lightning, as they made plans for vacations where everyone, including me, was invited, and he'd take us *sailing*, and teach me, little Lillian, what was required in a beautiful and soft first mate.

Enter NURSE KISSUM, in white, interrupting.

NURSE

Lillian...

The DINNER GUESTS break off, moving to distant corners, each

with their own ticks and affectations. These are not guests at a party, but PATIENTS in a sanitarium.

NURSE (Continued)

Enough stories. Why don't you take a nap? It's raining.

LILLIAN nods.

The NURSE passes to exit.

One by one, the PATIENTS gather back where they began, LILLIAN a magnet. When they are all seated again...

LILLIAN

So it's spring, perfect sailing weather, and-

Enter DR. FREDERICKS, in white.

With her is another young woman, who wears cocktail dress and a large, fashionable hat.

This is AGATHA MOLL.

DR. FREDERICKS

Hello, everyone. We have a new guest at The Hotel. Her name is Agatha. She'll be in Room 11. Please make her comfortable. Agatha, these are our other guests. Introduce yourselves. Lillian: I want you to be nice.

DR. FREDERICKS exits.

Agatha enters the fold, taking a few great, confident steps.

AGATHA

Would one of you tell me where the ladies' powder room is located?

LILLIAN

Down that corridor.

AGATHA

Thank you.

AGATHA exits.

LILLIAN

I don't suppose any of you recognized her? You've been in here so long you've not kept up with the papers. But. That... is Agatha Moll - star of "Beach Fun," out just recently, with Rodney Rubisio, who changed his name to Rod Robinson. Also known as: Rod the Bod. And still I see no recognition in your faces. Do you even know who Humphrey Bogart is?

AGATHA returns.

AGATHA

(Gesturing back)

There are no mirrors.

LILLIAN

But of course. We don't want a breakage. Glass can be dangerous. Your face is perfection, dear. Come here. Have the chair beside me.

AGATHA hesitates then sits.

LILLIAN

I like your hat.

AGATHA slowly removes the hat.

AGATHA

I forgot that I was wearing it.

LILLIAN

You're very fancy today.

AGATHA

Yes. I know. I was to meet someone special. And I thought this was appropriate. But, now that I look at myself, it is a bit much.

LILLIAN

Don't feel self-conscience, my dear. The dress and hat fit your polished shine. You've studied elocution. And manners. Can you balance a book on your head? Your back is so straight. Former model is my guess. Before other adventures. Twirling in hemmed dresses outside ladies' boutiques at Hollywood and Highland. Spotted by someone? Someone important? Someone who thinks they can help you. And they *do*. Has a conversation with your mother about a job in the secretarial pool. Or perhaps wants to speak with your father, but can't because he's gone off to Texas the year before in the hopes of striking oil. The man gets you a job at the studio, a personal assistant to a charming executive... Am I getting warm?

AGATHA

You know me.

LILLIAN

I do. I'm Lillian.

AGATHA

Have you not been here long?

LILLIAN

Actually, I have. I have a friend who sneaks me magazines. I dabble in the Hollywood editions.

AGATHA

You must like it here, since you stay.

LILLIAN

They call it The Hotel. But hotels let you check out.

AGATHA

I'm going to leave. Don't worry about that. This is just for a few days.

Pause. LILLIAN shoes away the others. When they're gone from earshot, she continues.

LILLIAN

What put you here? You can tell me. I'm an actress, too, you see? Actually, we're all ladies of stage and screen at The Hotel. It's the specialty of this place. And you can share all about yourself with me. I'm discreet. Discretion is not normally part of an actor's trade, but in this case—

AGATHA

What were you in?

LILLIAN

Great debt. It's hard to survive in this town when you're not Agatha Moll.

AGATHA

Your estimation is exaggerated. I've only done one picture.

LILLIAN

One that did very well, if I believe the publicist gossip that made it into the trades. May I ask you a question? I'm pretty, yes? Prettier than you? Well that wasn't enough. And don't tell me you can act. You've had no training. Those not trained cannot act.

AGATHA

I never wanted to be an actress. I was sort of... forced. But I wasn't terr—

LILLIAN

I can't get in the door by forcing a shoulder and they've opened it for you with smiles on their faces. Life is like that. Some people just have it handed to
(MORE)

LILLIAN (Continued)

them when they know nothing. Those in power have special detection abilities; they can put to the curb anyone, with nothing more than a subjective dismissal, when they know nothing, *nothing*, of what is true. In this town, no one knows anything. Keep that in your head, if there's room.

(Pause)

You haven't answered my question.

AGATHA

You are pretty.

LILLIAN

Another: are you insane?

AGATHA

Ins-

LILLIAN

Because you are *here*. And you wouldn't be here if you weren't a cuckoo. Am I right?

AGATHA

As far as I know, my head is on straight. I the most reasonable and rationale person I know. Is everyone here a, a cuckoo?

LILLIAN

Yes. Cuckoo. But I don't want to prejudice the new girl on the degrees. You'll have to detect that in your own conversations with the ladies. But. Agatha Moll. If you are not... troubled... are you a spy? Or a reporter? Or something as cheap as studying us to portray a far cry version from us in a palpable way to a very general public?

AGATHA

I'm not here for a character. But. Okay. I hear your question. Why am I here? You're sizing me up. Wondering about my own degree of cuckoo.

LILLIAN

I size up everyone. You're doing it, too, I think.

(MORE)

LILLIAN (Continued)

(Gesturing)

Which of these girls is the most unhinged? Which might just bore me with babble; which might try to strangle me with a bedsheet? Take a guess. You're looking for the ones that drool, or the ones that masturbate? It's harder to detect than you might think. It takes years of practice.

AGATHA

So which one are you? A strangler?

LILLIAN

(Laughs)

But of course! Of course. Of course.

(She reaches out her hands then pulls back)

AGATHA

I like to stand on shoulders. You're the giant here. You tell *me* who is whom.

LILLIAN

But my guesses are all wrong? You'll learn about things in your own time. What's fun in life if not discovery? Eh hem. So. Why are you here? Are. You. A. Spy?

AGATHA

What do I get for spilling beans? If I give you stories of how I made scenes in restaurants, there must be some reward. Tit-for-tat.

LILLIAN

You will have an interesting time here. Film lots don't usually teach pretty girls street smarts. You're already trading sexual favors for cigarettes. I have met my match. Maybe we should switch places for a day and see if anyone notices. Okay, Ms. Agatha Moll. If you tell me. If... you tell me *why* you have checked into this place...I will give you something in return. A treasure. Beyond your wildest. It's a clue. This clue leads to the great secret of The Hotel. The great, dark, very, very important, very *secret* secret that only *I* know...

AGATHA

(Assessing)

Well. Lillian, is it? That *is* a temptation. I will take your clue. And raise you one of mine. Who goes first?

LILLIAN

You. Tit-for-tat.

AGATHA

I never trust a stranger.

LILLIAN

Well in this case... you kinda have to...

AGATHA

I am not insane. I am in this place for one reason: to keep me from talking to anyone in this town. Including you. I know something that no one else knows... And instead of going to meet someone special, I find myself here. Where I will, for a time, stay quiet.

(Pause)

I'll let you chew on that a few days.

(Pause)

Do you understand? How was my elocution?

LILLIAN

I wonder, little starling, if you've studied elocution... or electrocution. Because I can see the future. I can predict who will be applied certain therapies. Shock, for example. And, I think...it will be you...who will be shocked.

AGATHA

I can take it. I'm used to shock.

LILLIAN

We'll see.

AGATHA

So what it is you're going to tell me in return for the tip of my iceberg?

LILLIAN

All right. Yes. Here.

(Long Pause)

Find. The. Witness. And you shall be free.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 2

The office of RAY PENDARSKY.

Ray leans back in his chair. A telephone receiver is balanced on his shoulder. He puffs an unlit cigar.

At last, someone rejoins him on the phone line...

RAY

(Into phone)

Yes, I'm still here. Yes, I know. I understand. I realize it's important. This is my number one priority. Yes. I've been meaning to. Yes. Is that so?

AGATHA enters carrying a pad and a pencil.

RAY motions her down into the chair across from his desk.

RAY (Continued)

Uh huh. Okay. Yes. Thank you for the call. I'll consider it. Let me phone you...day after tomorrow. Yes, I've got a lot of important meetings. Not a problem? Good. I'll be in touch. Goodbye.

(Hangs up, unconcerned)

That was the damn hospital.

AGATHA

Oh. How is she doing?

RAY

Worse. They want me to come down.

AGATHA

What did she do now?

RAY

You don't want to know.

AGATHA

I'm sorry, Mr. Pendarsky.

RAY

Forget it. You're too young to be bothered with my family trouble. One day she's your little girl, in knee socks and drawing pictures at the kitchen table; you never think the girl's gonna have a bad day in her life, with all she has - between me and her mother, the ex-. And then a couple years pass and you go a place you never knew existed. People change. Opportunities come and others pass you by. Divorce. We all change in time. But to...

(Snaps fingers)

Snap. Overnight. You just don't want to see your little baby suffer. But like I said... you're too young to be burdened by my family trouble.

(Pause)

Say, doll. With Shirley, you know, in her condition, I am at a tipping point... There's a decision I've needed to make for some time, and it's time to shit or get off the pot. I need a new body for that beach picture. Was at the casting office all day yesterday looking at kids under contract, few who weren't, and I really didn't see any with promise. Wasted the whole day arguing with that goddamn *Foster*. Good director, but a pain in the ass! I'm glad you weren't here when I got back. I was in a mood. But then last night. Drinking a whiskey at my place and looking out at the twinkling lights of the Hollywood Hills, I thought of a solution...

AGATHA

Oh, no-

RAY

You wanna be in pictures?

AGATHA

I've never acted. Not even the high school play. Only just the modeling.

RAY

Can you sing?

AGATHA

Not really.

RAY

Dance?

She shakes her head.

RAY (Continued)

I still believe the picture needs an unknown face. On that one point alone, Foster and I agree.

AGATHA

I hear Dean Foster can be difficult.

RAY

He's an ass. But Shirley liked him. Foster's got a reputation for decent comedies, so I feel, in that regard, at least, we've got some credibility for the poster and with the critics. Mostly, see, I'd back a name actress. I'm usually the one shoveling casting down my directors' throats. Tellin' them they can't hire some cigarette girl they met the week before. But this time, I just don't feel right about it. That's why I told him to hire my little girl. She needed a break. She'd been hitting every audition in town. And she was good. She really wanted to be in pictures. But now this thing with the hospital. I can't hold the shoot any longer. Cameras gotta roll or I'm out six-hundred thousand on a goddamn *beach* movie!

AGATHA

I'm sorry, Mr. Pendarsky. I wish I could help.

RAY

Come on! Every girl under twenty-one in this town can act. Or at least lies and tells me so.

AGATHA

I never really thought about it. I like doing this work.

RAY

So you tell me. Every day. You've made your choice.
(MORE)

RAY (Continued)

You're always so damn confident, aren't you?

(Smiles)

I didn't think you'd be this way after these few months. Thought: give it time. She takes five hundred pots of coffee and types a thousand memos and she'll be asking me what I can do for her and how soon. Because this - this! - is a waste of time and talent. Being my secretary. No glamour. No glamour at all. Hell, you work at a *studio*! Haven't you caught the bug yet? Every secretary I've ever had - good or bad - has lobbied for scrap in the worst pictures this studio has ever made or considered making! This, this, this job is not a job of integrity. It's a jumping off point. You know this, Agatha, *you know this*! It's a ladder and you're on the first rung. The first! You've got to get up there so we can look at you.

AGATHA

I just want to be honest.

RAY

More money in lying... Listen...

(Starts writing)

What do you want, Agatha? What do you want?

AGATHA

I'm a very private person. I have parts of myself that I don't feel comfortable with. I don't think the public will want to know all that.

RAY

Skeletons in your closet? Baby at fourteen? What is it?

AGATHA

Nothing like that, Mr. Pendarsky.

RAY

Are you worried about being judged?

AGATHA

Yes. But it's more than that. I am Agatha Moll and I am your secretary. This I know. I know where I live, what kinds of foods I like, everything about Agatha Moll. I, I like being grounded in a certain reality.

Even when I model, I am Agatha Moll modeling. Acting is different. I'm not me.

RAY

Didn't you ever play dress up when you were a kid?

AGATHA

Not really.

RAY

You're mother ever make you a princess costume? You ever have a tea party with your dolls? You ever kiss Fabian's picture or call yourself Mrs. Presley?

AGATHA

I prefer Harry Belafonte.

RAY

Well, he lives down the street from me, so I will have to introduce you. Point is this: you have got to, have to, musta wanted to pretend something, someone, anything, anyone. It's who we are.

AGATHA

You make a compelling case.

RAY

What you have is a common fear. Common problem. It's not about identity. It's about judgment. But I have to ask... if fear being judged, whether you recognize it or not, why do modeling? It's nothing but critical eyes.

AGATHA

My sister told me I should try it.

RAY

Maybe you should ask your sister about this?

AGATHA

I'm a very private person.

Long pause.

RAY finishes what he's writing.
He folds the paper, places it in
an envelope and seals it.

RAY

I'm going to send you to the lot with a memo. Don't
open it. Take it to Dean Foster. Tell him it's from
me and then do whatever he says.

AGATHA

I really don't think I should—

RAY

No, forget the acting. You've convinced me. This is
something else. Just be a good girl and get it done.

She takes the sealed memo.
Slowly, she stands.

AGATHA

I will... get it done.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 3

A film set. AGATHA enters.

DEAN FOSTER answers quiet questions from his FILM CREW, a few women surrounding him.

AGATHA waits patiently for a signal.

FOSTER spots her out of the corner of his eye and turns, annoyed.

FOSTER

You here for me?

AGATHA

I'm from Ray Pendarsky's office.

FOSTER

You his secretary?

AGATHA

Yes. I have a message.

She holds out the memo. He takes it, opens the envelope, and reads.

FOSTER

Is he kidding?

AGATHA

I'm sorry, I-

FOSTER

I said, is he kidding?

AGATHA

(Nervous)

I'm sorry. I don't know what the note-

FOSTER
Is he trying to get me thrown in jail?

AGATHA
Jail?

FOSTER
How old are you, kid? Seventeen?

AGATHA
Nineteen-

FOSTER
'Cos I'm not going back to jail for that.

He winks at the crew, paces.

AGATHA doesn't know what to do.

AGATHA
I'm sorry. He didn't tell me what it said in the memo.

FOSTER
(To FILM CREW)
Out. Out. Everyone out. Clear the set, please.
Thank you. Goodbye.

FOSTER shoos everyone offstage
until he is left with only AGATHA.

FOSTER (Continued)
Remove your shoes.

AGATHA
What?

FOSTER
Lose the heels.
(No compliance)
Ray said you had to do whatever I said. He wrote it
down. Said he'd fire you.

AGATHA

Fire me?

FOSTER

I'm not making this up, sister. You have to do it.

Long pause.

AGATHA

Take off my shoes?

FOSTER

Simple request.

She slowly takes off both of her high-heeled shoes.

FOSTER

The hose.

AGATHA

My pantyhose?

FOSTER

Come on, dummy. Off.

AGATHA

I don't know if—

FOSTER

You want to keep your job, don't ya? I hear Ray pays pretty well. Better than the local grocery store.

She debates, nervous.

At last, she rolls her eyes, with a look of “get it over with” and discreetly slips down her pantyhose.

FOSTER comes forward. He gets on his knees in front of her and stares at her bare legs.

FOSTER (Continued)

On your toes.

AGATHA

Can I get a 'please' this time?

FOSTER

No.

She holds.

FOSTER (Continued)

Fine. Please!

Like a ballerina, she rises onto her toes.

FOSTER continues to stare at her legs. He reaches out like he might just caress her calves, but abruptly stands up.

FOSTER (Continued)

Okay.

She comes down off her toes. He turns his back on her, thinking.

Quickly, he turns and gives her the memo.

FOSTER (Continued)

Oh, what I wouldn't do to be a fat executive in this town. Know nothing about making a picture. But knows what makes me tick.

(Pause)

You smell good. What's that perfume?

AGATHA

Diorissimo.

(Reads memo then folds it)

Oh. I see.

FOSTER

What matters most in this beach picture are the legs of the love interest. They're mentioned about fifteen times in the script and it's the reason the boy notices her on the beach. We can make giant bugs attack the capitol, but we can't make a girl with perfect gamms. We have to *find* her.

AGATHA

And how are mine?

FOSTER

Nice. You must have been a model.

AGATHA

I was.

FOSTER

Everyone in this town was a model at some point. I don't suppose you can act?

AGATHA

I've never done it before.

FOSTER

Hmmm.

(Pause, warming)

Listen, I'm sorry about... barking at you. These fucking executives! Ahhh! I had three girls yesterday I thought were great, but the big guy wouldn't bless 'em. It was a volcanic day. Look, all I want to do is get this picture finished so I can move on to the next. It's an assembly line, see. And I had the whole thing moving and, and - WHAM! - a big ol' kink. I roll with punches, but not much can roll without a girl.

(Pause)

Get back to that chicken coop you work in. Tell him I'll think about it.

AGATHA

I'm not an actress.

FOSTER

I know. You're a secretary.

AGATHA

I mean, not even on the side. I've never acted. Only the modeling.

FOSTER

Who gives a shit about acting in this town? Certainly not Ray Pendarsky.

AGATHA

But—

FOSTER

I'm looking for faces. I'm looking for voices. I'm looking for legs. I don't care if you want to be the next Brando. I don't make those kinds of pictures. You want an Oscar, go charm Elia Kazan.

AGATHA

(Not convinced)

I see...

FOSTER

What's the matter? Afraid you'll lose your secretarial chops?

AGATHA

No.

FOSTER

Afraid of a fat paycheck?

AGATHA

No.

FOSTER

Then why the cold feet at the end of those hot legs?

AGATHA

I'm afraid of losing myself.

FOSTER

Does that have to do with being judged? Because Ray says— In the memo. Says go easy on you and don't be a judge.

AGATHA

But you did do just that.

FOSTER

Well. I don't have a habit of completely listening to the brass, if you know what I mean. So, basically... I'm not afraid of anything. But you are.

AGATHA

I'm afraid of lots of things. Like becoming someone I'm not.

FOSTER

Don't worry. Fame changes nothing but who pays for lunch.

(Pause)

Maybe I still don't understand. Look, just tell Pendarsky I'll think about it. Nothing's set in stone. It's not like you've signed a contract.

AGATHA

Okay.

FOSTER

Let's get you a script. Do a test. There're some steps ahead, so you've got plenty of time to break my heart.

AGATHA, at last, smiles then exits.

FOSTER (Continued)

(To himself)

Diorissimo.

(Calling)

Where the hell is everyone!

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 4

Dim lights rise.

NURSE KISSAM walks past a series of doors – the rooms of patients, peering in and checking off a list on her clipboard.

Enter THE ORDERLY – a young man dressed in white clothes with an outwardly friendly, but somehow strange smile on his face.

The NURSE startles and appears a little frightened.

THE ORDERLY

Don’ be scared. It’s me.

NURSE

I’m not scared.

THE ORDERLY comes forward and peers in a small window cut in the door.

THE ORDERLY

New arrival?

NURSE

Just before supper. During the storm.

THE ORDERLY

What if I wake her up?

NURSE

When are you going to see her?

THE ORDERLY

Why? You the mother hen?

NURSE

Just curious.

She starts to move past him.

THE ORDERLY

You in a hurry?

NURSE

Dr. Fredericks wanted to see me when I was finished.

THE ORDERLY

She doesn't want to see you.

NURSE

She said that she-

THE ORDERLY

She didn't say nothin'. So... why you in such a hurry?

NURSE

I...I don't know what you want me to say.

THE ORDERLY

Just... say what you always say. Say it.

He suddenly grabs her around the waist and pulls her in.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

(Soft and severe)

Say it.

The NURSE leans forward to his ear and whispers something unheard.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

I love it when you say that.

THE ORDERLY waves a hand in front of her face, then smiles, lets her out of his arms, and exits, slapping the NURSE on the behind as he moves past to offstage.

The NURSE continues down the dark corridor. She slows when she hears...

SOUND: Soft music coming from one of the rooms. It's a retro bubblegum pop song.

She puts her ear to the door and listens. After a moment, she moves along, exiting.

Pause.

THE ORDERLY enters again. He, too, hears the music. He comes to the door, smiles, frowns, smiles again, and then knocks.

ACT I

SCENE 5

AGATHA sits on her bed. There is a knock at the door. She sits up. She wears only her undergarments.

AGATHA

Just a moment...

AGATHA sees her cocktail dress over a chair and begins to slip it back on.

While she is doing so, the door slowly opens to reveal THE ORDERLY.

AGATHA (Continued)

I asked you to wait.

THE ORDERLY

This ain't your door, lady. This is my door.

AGATHA

This is my room.

THE ORDERLY

I've been in this room a thousand times. You been in it one night.

THE ORDERLY enters and slowly inspects the room. He sees the source of the music: a radio sits on the night table. He walks to it and switches it off.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

No radios.

AGATHA

I found it under the bed. When I stored my bag.

THE ORDERLY

Then it was smuggled.

He unplugs the radio from the wall and, business-like, wraps the radio in its chord and sets it on the bed. Then, going to the closet, he takes down a gown from a hanger.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

You have to lose your fancy dress.

He tosses the gown at her and she catches it.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Gown's the rules after first day. Go ahead. Can't keep wearing that bit of black. Start to smell. Diorissimo can't cover that forever.

AGATHA

I'll...change in a minute.

THE ORDERLY

You'll do it now.

AGATHA

Who *are* you?

THE ORDERLY

I'm the orderly. I keep things ordered. Orders say you wear a gown.

AGATHA looks down at her dress, then the gown.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Look, we got off on the wrong foot. Rules, rules, rules. Place runs on rules. Everyone wears the angel white. Hotel feels like heaven. Girls in white, all Cherubic. Pretty girl like you can pull off a potato sack so don't feel shy about losing your party hat.

(No response)

Look - tell you a secret. I love the white myself. Never looked better, never felt better, than when I'm in the white. Wear it well, don't you think? Check out the buttons. Oops, missed one. There. I'd pass an inspection.

(Pause, then gesturing)

You gonna wear it, or do I have to get physical?

AGATHA

I want to see the nurse.

THE ORDERLY

You think she'd reverse my decision? No appeals here. This ain't a court of law. Gotta wear a gown, new girl. Now chop-chop. Schedule to keep. It's past lights out.

AGATHA

Fine. Would you please step outside while I-?

THE ORDERLY

No. We've reached an impasse. You know what that is, don'tcha?

AGATHA

Yes.

THE ORDERLY

We're at a point of distrust in our relationship. I walk out, get distracted, don't come back for ten or fifteen, and then I see you still lounging in your puffy skirt. Maybe put back on your fancy hat. Everyone here wears a gown.

AGATHA

Why?

THE ORDERLY

A questioner. Great. Love those.

AGATHA

You're to work on my head, not my body.

THE ORDERLY

Not your body? Hmmm. Gowns provide a consistency to the proceedings. Uniform. Like you're becoming a soldier in the U.S. Army. One size fits all.

AGATHA

Am I an angel or a soldier?

THE ORDERLY

Is there a difference? And don't get smart with me. If you think this makes it better, consider you're like a newborn babe in swaddling clothes. Strip away the past.

(Moves forward)

Plus... *new girl*... I happen to think gowns is sexier than skirts. You put it on. Show you I'm right. I wish gowns were S.O.P. throughout this fair state of California. Hell, throughout the whole country, sea to shiny sea. Gowns is beautiful.

AGATHA

What's your name?

THE ORDERLY

I'm the orderly. Like I said. Just call me that. And stop dragging your pretty toes.

He stares at her. She doesn't move. He steps into her and pins her to the wall. He roughly pulls down the shoulder of her dress.

AGATHA

You'll rip it!

THE ORDERLY

I will. I'll rip off the whole goddamn thing! Or you can slip it off and hand it to me and I'll put it in a box for you. It won't be touched the whole time

(MORE)

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

you're here. Not by anybody.

(Pause)

This isn't a point of debate, this gown! It's the rule!

Pause. He backs up, like he might take a swing at her.

She straightens. Almost daringly, she strips out of her dress and puts the gown on over her head.

When she's finished, he steps forward and pins her once more to the wall. He reaches up under her gown, fondling her.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

(Breathless)

See? I told you gowns were sexier than skirts.

She screams and he covers her mouth.

He continues touching her to the point of audience discomfort then suddenly breaks away.

He picks up the radio from the bed and exits, firmly closing the door behind.

Blackout.

ACT I

SCENE 6

An apartment without furniture.

DEAN FOSTER reclines on the floor, shirtless. He’s smoking and stubs it out.

After a moment, AGATHA enters wearing a man’s robe.

FOSTER

Am I dreaming?

AGATHA

What do you mean?

FOSTER

I mean: here you are.

AGATHA

You’re not dreaming. It’s me.

AGATHA comes closer then crawls into him, snuggling.

AGATHA (Continued)

I meant to ask. But you distracted me. Where’s all your furniture?

FOSTER

Sold it in a moment of panic.

AGATHA

Panic?

FOSTER

That I was no longer fashionable.

AGATHA

You don’t seem to be the type to panic about fashion.

FOSTER

I live in L.A. Of course I panic about things fashionable. It may not always be clothes, though, or furniture. Just don't want to become obsolete.

AGATHA

You'll never be obsolete, Herr Director.

She kisses him.

FOSTER

Are you sure this isn't a dream?

She kisses him again, longer.

AGATHA

It *is* a dream. None of this is real. You've had a dream that after a hard day of shooting me in water, you've let your fantasies get the best of you. You asked me out for dinner to discuss my performance. You given me too much table wine and told me funny stories about people I don't know - some of them seated only a few tables from us at the restaurant. And then, before you wake up, you decided to kiss me, just to see how things might play out. I let you do it, because I've realized suddenly that you're not the bull you've been all day, shouting at cameramen and boys and girls in beachwear to do this, do that, stand here, do it better, or you're fired-!

FOSTER

I didn't threaten anyone.

AGATHA

Not today.

FOSTER

Do I do that a lot?

(Reads her face)

Shit. I hope no one takes me seriously.

AGATHA

You fired me once.

FOSTER

I did?

AGATHA

The second day of shooting. Because I couldn't hula hoop. You said, "That hoop better stay right at your hips at least once today or don't bother showing up for makeup tomorrow."

FOSTER

Ah... That was not a part of my dream. This is. So what happened next?

AGATHA

So after dinner, you walked me back towards your private car, holding my hand. And then you paid the driver fifty dollars to go home and you drove me down Sunset to this room, which you say you own, but seems strangely like the where a transient would squat for a night. And you kissed me up the stairs, onto the floor, and here. Then you told me to wash up. And it's in the bathroom that I find any evidence of domesticity. This robe. Your tooth-brush. Coconut shampoo. A razor.

FOSTER

You forgot the full ashtray.

AGATHA

Do you take many girls here?

FOSTER

Take them? You make it sound predatory.

AGATHA

You know what I mean. But... I suppose... if this apartment is a love nest, you'd need at least a mattress.

FOSTER

Which is more revealing: an empty room with a single mattress, or just an empty room?

AGATHA

Is it true about your un-fashionable furniture?

FOSTER

What's true is that you are beautiful.

AGATHA

Don't change the subject.

FOSTER

That's the only subject I want to discuss. You haven't been to the rushes.

AGATHA

You haven't invited me.

FOSTER

You are going to be a star.

AGATHA's face changes. She sits up, rubs his chest.

AGATHA

A star.

FOSTER

Yes. Don't you want that?

AGATHA

Why do actors like death scenes?

FOSTER

Pardon?

AGATHA

Death scenes.

FOSTER

Do you want a death scene? You've seen the latest pages. No one goes out like Scarface in a teen picture. Unless you count West Side Story. But this isn't that.

AGATHA

If you're an actor, you will probably die.

FOSTER

I got news for you, kid. Everybody dies. Think of it: as an actor, you get the chance to get adjusted to dying more than the average person. You think about drowning. What it would be like, how to "act" that. You figure it all out before film rolls. You've thought of how the face will look bloated in sea-salt, you think about running out of breath. Maybe you hold your breath for two minutes to get some pain in your lungs.

AGATHA

You think we must all really prepare like that—

FOSTER

You consider how your character would react to drowning... Surprise? Inevitability? Shock?

AGATHA

There's a difference between shock and surprise?

FOSTER

Sure there is. Show me surprise.

AGATHA makes a face.

FOSTER (Continued)

Now show me shock.

AGATHA does the face.

FOSTER (Continued)

That's the same.

AGATHA

That's what I'm saying.

FOSTER

Here's a motivation. Just now, I got you pregnant.

AGATHA

Am I doing surprise or shock?

FOSTER

All right. I suppose you would know if it was a surprised based on your time of the month. It would have to be shock. Let me choose another one. Okay here. You have just won a million dollars in the California lottery.

AGATHA does a face.

FOSTER (Continued)

Perfect surprise. Now you've just heard that your sister is dead.

AGATHA

I *would* be shocked.

FOSTER

Coming to my side, huh?

AGATHA

I'd be shocked because she's already dead.

FOSTER

Shit.

AGATHA

She died when I was sixteen. In a car crash.

FOSTER

Oh. I'm sorry. I feel like a jerk.

AGATHA

I don't remember much of how I felt in that moment when I heard the news. Probably a mix of both surprise and shock. Shocked that she was gone so suddenly; surprised that it wasn't me, too, as I was supposed to be in the car. I had a sudden call for a modeling job at a department store. So she dropped me off at the spot and went on into the Valley and... rolled six times.

FOSTER

Fate. Modeling saved your life. Of course. You're beautiful. Like I said.

(Pause)

You're manifesting neither surprise nor shock on your face when I compliment you. So you must know that that part is a little bit true.

AGATHA

All that matters is that you think so.

FOSTER

I'm sorry about your sister.

Pause.

AGATHA

(Changing subject)

Tell me more about shock.

FOSTER

Shock. Shock. You like shock. Okay. Let me show you something very, very shocking...

He rolls over and her and begins kissing her passionately on the floor.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 7

The Hotel.

AGATHA sits on her bed, in darkness. She cries softly. She’s having a bad dream. She twists in the sheets, protesting something unseen.

At last, she springs up - SCREAMING!

Lights blast in the corner of the room, revealing two women wearing plain, featureless masks over their faces.

This is NANCY 1 and NANCY 2. They look very similar, but are not identical.

AGATHA notices the two and jumps.

NANCY 1 | NANCY 2

Is that shock?

AGATHA pulls the sheets up, petrified.

NANCY 1 | NANCY 2

Don’t you recognize me?

AGATHA

Yes... But you’re dead. Nancy.

NANCY 2

I wanted to pay you a visit, but the front desk has such strict policies about guests.

NANCY 1

Who was that man? The one in white. He was cute.

AGATHA

He's ugly. And you're a dream.

NANCY 1

I'm real. Just ask her.

NANCY 2

She's real. I vouch for her.

AGATHA

My sister Nancy died four years ago.

NANCY 1

I didn't die, kiddo. I just split in two.

NANCY 2

Re-grown parts. Arms. Legs. Boobs. Everything.

AGATHA

This is a nightmare. I'm in a strange place. When that happens, I dream weird dreams. I want you to go away now.

NANCY 1

I'm here to help you, Agatha. So you shouldn't be scared of me. I came to tell you a secret.

NANCY 2

Yes. That Lillian is just outside the door. She's listening to this conversation. She can only hear half of it. *Your* half.

NANCY 1

So you should keep you voice very, very low.

AGATHA rises and steps to the door.

NANCY 2

Don't open it. We're going to play a little trick on her. I want you to repeat after me, so she hears what we want her to hear.

NANCY 1

Say: I know how you got your yellow dress.

AGATHA

I know how you got your yellow dress.

NANCY 2

Louder.

AGATHA

I-I know how you got your yellow dress.

NANCY 1 and NANCY 2 look at each other, smile.

NANCY 1

Tell her: I know the name of the witness.

AGATHA

I know the name... the name of the witness.

NANCY 2

The Orderly knows my secret. But he won't tell you.

AGATHA

The Orderly knows my secret. But he won't tell you.

NANCY 1

Get back to your fucking room, bitch.

AGATHA

Y-you should go back to your room.

Pause.

On the other side of the door,
there is movement in the corridor,
the light under the door shifts.
A shadow, leaving.

Pause.

AGATHA

How did you know? How did you know she was out there?

NANCY 1

We know quite a bit about this place.

NANCY 1 | NANCY 2

It brought us here.

AGATHA

The hospital brought you here.

NANCY 2

The Hotel. This place is like no other place on the earth.

NANCY 1

And this place keeps secrets tighter than any twelve year old girl's diary.

The two NANCYs laugh.

AGATHA

You... you said... something about a witness.

NANCY 1

Yes. It doesn't matter if the things you said aren't true; just that you said them, and that Lillian thinks they're true.

NANCY 2

She's very threatened by you. I suppose she's a lesbian.

AGATHA

You used to think every woman was a lesbian. I remember that about you. You... used to judge women very harshly. You never liked girls... women. You liked our father, but not our mother. There are certain girls, I'm told, that prefer the company of boys.

NANCY 1

And you are not one of them. Are you?

AGATHA

Dean. I liked his company. But I'm not like you were. Men wanted you. Boys *and* men... desired you. They like me, but not with the same desire. If a boy showed interest, you would cut females from your life by the dozens until it was just you and him. You had no use for them. You weren't safe around women. Women were out to get you, to compete with you. You told me this over and over.

NANCY 2

I thought you said I was just a weird dream.

AGATHA

I. I know what I said. You just look so real. I want to touch you. Can I touch you?

AGATHA reaches out her hand-

NANCY 1 | NANCY 2

Are you perhaps confused?

-and then retracts.

AGATHA

Not me. I'm not confused about anything.

NANCY 2

Are you in love?

AGATHA

Who could love that monster?

NANCY 1

The boy in white.

NANCY 2

Are you going to report him?

AGATHA

He didn't do anything that hasn't been done before.

NANCY 2

Do you love him?

AGATHA

Don't talk like that.

NANCY 1

We're not talking about the orderly, silly.

(Pause)

Do you—

NANCY 2

—love him.

AGATHA

I can't love someone that's dead.

NANCY 1

Who says Dean Foster is dead?

AGATHA

The papers.

NANCY 2

Sources say otherwise.

AGATHA

What? What is that? Dean's— Tell me what you know!
Tell me what you know!

A sudden loud screeching and she
covers her ears.

Blackout.

On rise, NANCY 1 and NANCY 2 have
vanished.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 8

RAY PENDARSKY is in his office, shuffling through papers and gathering his things, as if he is anxious to find something.

There is a knock at his door.

RAY

Who is it?

THE ORDERLY

(Through door)

I'm sorry to bother you, Mr. Pendarsky. It's important that I speak with you.

RAY

Please make an appointment with my secretary for another day. I'm very busy.

THE ORDERLY

(Through door)

Sorry to burst your bubble, sir. But there's no one out here. And it's kinda urgent that I speak with you.

RAY

Not today. Not today.

RAY continues his searching.

THE ORDERLY

(Through door)

Looking for your last will and testament?

RAY looks up, angry.

THE ORDERLY

(Through door)

I've come from The Hotel.

RAY
(Laughs, huffs)
Which one?

THE ORDERLY
(Through door)
The *only* one, Mr. Pendarsky. Or, I guess I should say, the only one you care about.

RAY stops cold. He puts away the stacks of things he's been searching; composes himself.

Slowly, he goes to the door and opens it.

THE ORDERLY stands there, in white hospital uniform.

RAY
You look familiar. You're from The Hotel? Maybe I've seen you.

THE ORDERLY
(Sarcastic)
Sure, for all those times you stop by. That's right. May I come in?

RAY
Sure, sure.

RAY gestures and THE ORDERLY enters.

RAY
You have news about Shirley?

THE ORDERLY
She sent me to see you.

RAY
Sent you? Are you one of her doctors?

THE ORDERLY

Not exactly.

RAY

I'm sorry about my secretary. I forgot. I sent her on an errand. You timed this perfectly. How'd you get on the lot? I don't like having visitors from the hospital. A lot of people around here with big mouths - Shirley grew up with a lot of them. Saw her from a young age... playing ball in the lot. Trying on makeup with the powder girls. Saw some of her behavior, too. I've made excuses. A few think she's with her mother in Santa Clarita. If you had to register at the desk, I hope you showed discretion.

THE ORDERLY

Don't worry 'bout it, sir. I'm good with secrets. And getting in places without being noticed. Not a soul knows I'm here.

RAY

Good. Thank you.

THE ORDERLY

Wait. I should amend that.
(Dreaded pause)
Not a soul but Shirley.

RAY

What about Dr. Fredericks?

THE ORDERLY

Just Shirley.

RAY

Oh. She, she sent you? Are you treating her?

THE ORDERLY

I'm kind of a... mentor, I guess you could say.

RAY

God, I'm hope for your sake you're not more than a mentor. I...I think you better get to the heart of it.

THE ORDERLY

May I sit?

RAY

Sure. Here. Take this chair.

THE ORDERLY

Say - I don't mean to impose. But do you think. Well, this is just for a laugh. Do you think it'd be all right if I sat in your chair? My back is killing me. That's a little wooden chair with a hard back. You've got the leather. I love leather.

RAY

Uh. Be my guest.

THE ORDERLY crosses and drops into RAY's chair, letting out a healthy sigh of pleasure, fondling and admiring the leather.

THE ORDERLY

Good chair. Good chair!

RAY

Thank you.

THE ORDERLY

I feel like making a movie!

RAY

Well, I suppose that chair does inspire that. A few producers were in that seat before it came to me. We've got a lot of pictures completed in my reign, and the reign of executives that preceded me.

THE ORDERLY

Can I tell you about my movie? I've got one that's surefire.

RAY

I don't think it's appropriate—

THE ORDERLY

Starts like this. Close up. Little girl; normal
(MORE)

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

little girl. Pretty little girl. She has a dream to be in the movies, like most pretty little girls in California consider. This girl takes tap dance, takes all kinds a' lessons. Learns to sing and play the piano. This can be a montage you understand. I don't want to bog down the movie with ten years of this stuff at the beginning. But it's important to understand her character. She's worked. Real hard. She's worked her little perfect ass off, pardon my leer, and now she's ready for the big time. Then, it is revealed that her father actually *makes* movies. He's got all the, all the *power*. All the money. He's got an entire studio. *This* studio. And he could throw the little girl a bone. Get her a job. Like a nice daddy should. But when the little girl comes to him, he says no. He says a bunch of things that make them both really uncomfortable. And says— Can you guess where I'm going with this?

RAY

Who are you?

THE ORDERLY

He says he'll get her a starring role. Not because she's been practicing and she's learned to sing and learned to tinkle the ivories and learned to actually be all natural in front of people and play a part. But he's going to make her a star if she does just this one... little... thing.

RAY

Did Shirley put you up to this? She's a liar! You shouldn't trust a thing she says! If you, you think... this is some sort of, of blackmail, well you've got another thing coming—

THE ORDERLY

I don't want to blackmail you, Mr. Pendarsky. No. I came here to tell you that I admire you. I really do. You're the bee's knees. First, I thought that last Miss Randy Turner picture was killer. Saw it three times. I love the bad girls. And she was *bad*. And second, that whatever games you want to play with your little girl, I'm really fine with it. I really am!

RAY

Get out! Get out of my chair! To insinuate that I-

RAY leaps across the desk and
grabs THE ORDERLY by his face.

RAY (Continued)

(Cold)

Get out.

THE ORDERLY

(Calmly)

This town's got a side that's lies just beyond the
disappointments. A blackness. Horrors that are like
deep cuts in the skin. People you wouldn't want to
know in a million years.

(Pause)

I'm one of those people.

RAY considers what he's doing and
releases THE ORDERLY.

RAY

You think I can be intimidated by a poverty wage thug?

THE ORDERLY

Yes. You are. You don't know what I'm capable of
doing to Shirley. And, even though you... did what
you did... you still have a' soft spot for your little
girl. Even if you find her a tad... embarrassing.

RAY

I thought you were here to protect her. To confront
me. Gallant white knight.

THE ORDERLY

No. Actually I'm here to fuck you and then fuck her.

RAY punches THE ORDERLY and he
falls out of the chair.

Slowly, he rises, holding his jaw.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Interestin'. Been watching too many boxing movies?

RAY

What's your name? I'll report you to Dr. Fredericks.
What's your goddamn name?

THE ORDERLY

You call the doctor. You do that. Me and the doctor.
We're tight. She's got my back, see? And she owes me
lots of favors. Lots. But it's not my ass that needs
savin'. It's yours.

RAY

You can't threaten me.

THE ORDERLY

Oh kan-*trare*. Threatening's what I do. But this
isn't about your daughter and the ol' Hotel. This is
about you. This isn't about what you done to her, or
what' you'll do to her when she's out and cured. *If*
she's cured! This is about a certain... beach movie.
It's about boys and girls in the sun. It's about how
things get done in this town. It's about who has the
power. Tomorrow, I want you to fire the director.

RAY

Foster's on contract. The picture's nearly through
its shoot.

THE ORDERLY

Doesn't matter. I've got friends want him gone.

RAY

Did Shirley put you up to this?

THE ORDERLY

Shirley don't know nothin'. Yeah, she used to roll in
the sheets with him. But that's not why I'm makin' my
request. You replace Foster and then give him a
message. You tell him. Tell him you know the
witness.

RAY

I'm not doing anything. I'm calling the police.

THE ORDERLY

Don't do *that*. If one cop shows up at The Hotel, I'll stick a knife up Shirley's cunt.

RAY

I'll have you arrested before you leave the lot. I'll, I'll drive there and get her out myself tonight.

THE ORDERLY

What you have to make this so difficult? You just have one simple thing to do. Hell, you don't even *like* the guy. Look - I'm leaving. You can do what you want. You make a call and they stop me at the gate. Just know that if you do, and a part of me really hopes you do, you will be in so much trouble you won't be able to shit for a month. You'll be up to here in the stuff. I'm with interested parties who don't like it when things don't go there way. Just release Foster from his contract-

RAY

On what grounds?

THE ORDERLY

Don't care. Make it up. You release him and give him my message: you know the witness. And then you're square. Mum's on Shirl and she stays safe at The Hotel. Scouts. Honor. But if you don't...

THE ORDERLY makes a rising tide of shit gesture, reaching climax at his neck, where he motions a slice of the throat.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Let's see what you decide...

THE ORDERLY exits.

Lights fade.

ACT I

SCENE 9

DR. FREDERICKS is seated across
from AGATHA in session.

DR. FREDERICKS
There's test we give. Shall we begin?

AGATHA nods.

DR. FREDERICKS (Continued)
Have you ever talked to yourself in a mirror?

AGATHA
Yes. But—

DR. FREDERICKS
Have you ever been seriously depressed to the point of
considering suicide?

AGATHA
Yes. Right after my sister Nancy died.

DR. FREDERICKS
As a child, did you ever feel one or both of your
parents did not like you?

AGATHA
Are the questions all this personal?

DR. FREDERICKS
It's the nature of the treatment.

AGATHA
What is the test supposed to indicate?

DR. FREDERICKS
If you're a danger.

AGATHA
To me or to others?

DR. FREDERICKS

Do you need me to repeat my last question?

AGATHA

No.

DR. FREDERICKS

Your answer?

AGATHA

My parents loved me.

DR. FREDERICKS

Just yes or no.

AGATHA

No. I never felt one or both did not like me.

DR. FREDERICKS

Did you ever run away from home prior to the age of fourteen?

AGATHA

I packed my bags a few times.

DR. FREDERICKS

Did you ever doing something seriously wrong and felt zero regret?

AGATHA

No.

DR. FREDERICKS

Has your understanding of what are “normal feelings” changed over the years?

AGATHA

What do you mean?

DR. FREDERICKS

Example: your beloved dog is hit by a car. You are sad for the loss and angry with the driver.

AGATHA

Yes, of course.

DR. FREDERICKS

But this happens on the street to a neighbor who is neither sad nor angry. When you were young, this made little sense to you, but now that you are older you understand that it is normal to not show sadness or anger in certain situations, like grief, but to be something altogether.

AGATHA

Death should always make one sad and angry. But I understand. Walk a mile in someone's shoes. What is normal? Is that what you're getting at?

DR. FREDERICKS makes a note.

DR. FREDERICKS

Have you ever deliberately caused harm to someone and then claimed it was an accident?

Long pause.

AGATHA

(Stalling)

You mean emotional harm?

DR. FREDERICKS

Physical.

AGATHA

How many more questions are there in this test?

DR. FREDERICKS

The test has thirty-six questions.

AGATHA

I don't want to answer any more.

DR. FREDERICKS

We can...pick it up later...

(Puts down her question sheet)

Did anyone ever tell you about subjective loss? Early life experience? Depressive reactions?

AGATHA

I've heard those phrases. You've already diagnosed me, haven't you? I didn't have to finish the test.

DR. FREDERICKS

I'm not *presuming* anything.

(Pause)

One presumes they remember how they got to their destination. What do you remember about arriving here, at The Hotel?

AGATHA

You mean the feeling of walking in the door?

DR. FREDERICKS

Sure, that, too, if you'd like. But I meant, more specifically, what do you remember happening to you just before your check in?

AGATHA

I remember... reading a newspaper. I saw a notice that, that I can't remember, but... It's all black. Then I'm driving on the Hollywood Freeway.

DR. FREDERICKS

Which direction?

AGATHA

The Basin. I'm driving fast. But it feels very, very slow to me. And... And... I've got this address in my glove box and I think... To be imprisoned for a long time. I think about escaping and what escape must feel like. Must feel very strange.

DR. FREDERICKS

You're talking about escape from reality?

AGATHA

I don't know what I'm talking about. You tell me. Somehow... I thought I would discover something. So right up until I pulled into the circle outside, I felt panicked and, and constricted, and then, crossing into the lobby, a sense of weight coming off my shoulders.

DR. FREDERICKS

And what about when you registered?

AGATHA

I thought... I'll never be found again.

DR. FREDERICKS

Did you like this feeling?

AGATHA

For about twenty minutes. Now I want to go home. And then, every moment, like last night, when I wanted to rush out of this place, I felt that to do so would be a mistake.

DR. FREDERICKS

You're here to get healthy.

AGATHA

No. No, not that. That would be very rational, wouldn't it? I need to stay here to get better.

DR. FREDERICKS

Then what are you here for?

AGATHA

I need to stay here to stay safe. But it's a strange dichotomy. In the moment, even now, I don't feel safe at all, as if any second someone come through that door and try to hurt me.

There is a knock at the door.

The two look at each other.

DR. FREDERICKS

I'm certain that whoever is behind that door, they only have the best intentions for you. Come in.

NURSE KISSAM enters.

DR. FREDERICKS (Continued)

Yes, Nurse?

NURSE

There's someone to see you, Doctor.

DR. FREDERICKS

I'm in the middle of a session.

The NURSE looks uncomfortable.

NURSE

We have a surprise visitor.

DR. FREDERICKS reads between the lines.

DR. FREDERICKS

All right. Ms. Moll, would you please wait here in my office. I won't be long.

NURSE KISSAM exits, but DR. FREDERICKS stays at the door a moment longer.

DR. FREDERICKS

I want you to think about what you read in that newspaper, before getting on the freeway. Can you do that for me?

AGATHA

It's not much of a memory.

DR. FREDERICKS

It's a start. I'll be back in a moment. Just be calm. There's nothing to fear.

DR. FREDERICKS exits.

After a pause, AGATHA rises and begins to look around the doctor's office. She picks up books and inspects things without purpose.

She stands at one of the walls,
staring at a plaque posted there.

Suddenly - the wall moves
backwards a few feet.

AGATHA jumps!

The wall holds. AGATHA reaches
out her hand.

The wall moves backwards again.

Then again.

The voice of NANCY 1 and NANCY 2
can be heard behind the wall.

NANCY 1

(Off stage)

Someone is here to see you.

NANCY 2

(Off stage)

He won't be let in. He'll have to sneak in a special
way.

AGATHA

Who is it?

NANCY 1 | NANCY 2

(Off stage)

Wouldn't you like to know?

AGATHA

Don't tease me.

(No Answer)

If you know you should tell me.

NANCY 2

(Off stage)

It would just confuse you.

AGATHA

I'm already confused.

NANCY 1
(Off stage)
You’ll know soon enough.

The wall moves backwards again.

AGATHA
How are you doing that?

NANCY 1
(Off stage)
There are secrets in this place. This is one of them. The entire building can change shape. There are doors where there once were none. There are closets where before there was a sink. On some days—

NANCY 2
There is a basement. On other days—

NANCY 1
Nothing.

AGATHA
Lillian. She said there was a secret. Is that it?

NANCY 2
(Off stage, breathy)
There is a secret bigger than this Hotel being alive.

The wall opens to reveal a black room behind.

AGATHA looks behind her.

NANCY 1 | NANCY 2
Come and join us, sissssster. We can help you find your beautiful boyfriend Dean.

She considers.

AGATHA
What if I say no?

The wall moves back in a few inches, closer to its original position.

AGATHA runs forward—

AGATHA
No, no. Wait. Wait. This path leads to Dean.

NANCY 1
Trust us.

NANCY 2
Trust us.

At last, AGATHA enters the void.

The wall shuts behind her.

Curtain.

ACT II

SCENE 1

DEAN FOSTER sits in a director's chair in an open space.

Surrounding him, unidentifiable FIGURES.

FOSTER

It happens. It's the business. People are fickle. Tastes come and go. I don't like the decision, but it's not one I can fight. After all, it's their money. What's that? No. This is a first. I've completed *every single picture* I've started. Never had any complaints. Well, I suppose that's not true. My shenanigans have been written up in the trades. I've butted a few heads with the execs - well, one exec in particular - but I thought we had moved past all that. Nope - on time and on budget. There was no apparent reason for the shutdown except that those in power had a change of heart. Speak up a bit. That's a great question. One that I asked straight out, soon as I got the axe. To my knowledge, they're not looking to recast. I don't think they had a problem with either Rod or Agatha. Only me. Which is ironic when you think about it. Because what you see on film, even the things that they told me they like... it's all me.

Blackout.

ACT II

SCENE 2

AGATHA rides FOSTER on the floor in the furniture-less apartment. He turns her over and, angrily, thrusts into her. At last, he relaxes and falls over her, breathing heavy.

AGATHA

(Exhausted)

Well... that was different.

FOSTER

How do you mean?

AGATHA

A little rough.

FOSTER

Sorry.

AGATHA

Something happen? You're not yourself.

FOSTER

Nothing.

He gets up, sweeps his clothes and using his shirt towels the perspiration from his chest.

FOSTER (Continued)

I need to wash up.

He exits to the bathroom.

SOUND: Water running.

AGATHA sits up, dresses.

FOSTER (Continued)

(Off stage)

Your dad's a real prick, Shirley.

AGATHA

What did you say?

FOSTER

(Off stage)

He fired me. Today. Last shot of the day was it for me. I'm not back tomorrow. The production will shut down for two weeks while they find my replacement. They're making an announcement at call time tomorrow. I've already given interviews.

AGATHA

Did you just call me Shirley?

Pause. FOSTER appears in the bathroom doorway, toweling off his face.

FOSTER

Well, that's your name, isn't it?

AGATHA

I'm Agatha.

FOSTER

Ok, sure.

He smiles and returns to the sink.

FOSTER (Continued)

(Off stage)

You're as nutty as your daddy. The film's eighty percent in the can. And he goes and cocks it up. You know what he told me? He calls me up to his office with that cold-ass secretary of his and says, "Mr. Foster, I'm removing you from your current assignment. The word's come down and it's final. We'll be

(MORE)

FOSTER (Continued)

assigning another director to take it from here and making a full completion payment on your contract." "That's it?" I say. "Just like that?" "Just like that." And then he mumbled something about a witness, like I had done something wrong. Something really wrong. Not like just fucking his daughter. Like I had been seen *in flagrante delicto*.

(Pause)

But I don't know. It happened kinda fast. I should have smashed his goddamn face. But I left. Hell, Shirl, the press was waiting for me downstairs and I had to play it all cool. It's just so fucking *embarrassing*, you know! I'm never, ever, ever, ever been fired.

SOUND: The water shuts off.

He's again at the doorway, shirt off. AGATHA stands opposite. She's mute.

FOSTER (Continued)

What's the matter, Agatha? You look like you've seen a ghost.

AGATHA

Agatha?

FOSTER

Well that's your name, isn't it?

AGATHA

Did you have an affair with Shirley Pendarsky?

FOSTER

That's a little private.

(Pause)

So maybe I did.

AGATHA

Do you screw all your leading ladies?

FOSTER

Not when I did that horse picture. Shack up with a mare and the whole town gossips. I'm joking. What's wrong? Shirley and I are ancient history. Why you bringing this up now when it's going so good?

AGATHA

You told me just now you were fired today.

FOSTER

I hope not! I've just started casting. I don't want to get fired from two pictures in a row. Then I'd be dead meat. Never direct again. No, thank you. One time's enough.

He crosses to her, tries to hug her, but she moves away.

FOSTER (Continued)

Tell me what I did and I'll fix it.

AGATHA

You called me Shirley.

FOSTER

What? No!

AGATHA

Just now?

FOSTER

I didn't even speak. Look, are you drunk? No more martinis—

AGATHA

You just told me about the day you were fired from "Beach Fun."

FOSTER

Ah, you're tight.

He waves her off and returns to the bathroom, shutting the door.

After a pause, there is a knock at the other door. AGATHA startles. Another bang, harder. AGATHA looks to the bathroom. FOSTER doesn't emerge.

The front door of the apartment comes open by itself and hangs there.

AGATHA walks to the opening and peers outside.

AGATHA

(Changing voice, tougher)

Are you coming in or are you just going to stand in the hallway?

Hesitantly, RAY PENDARSKY enters.

He looks around the empty apartment, hat in hand, surveying, pacing.

RAY

Where is he?

AGATHA

He's not here.

RAY

Is this where he takes you?

AGATHA

He takes me lots of places.

RAY

I knew it had gotten bad. But I didn't know this bad. I don't need to call a doctor, do I?

AGATHA

For what?

RAY

He hasn't gotten you pregnant?

AGATHA

Daddy. We're careful.

RAY

(Smirks)

Careful. You mother said she was being careful, but here I am... Look. You're nineteen. You can do what you want. Screw it up. See if I care. I got you what you wanted and this is how you repay me?

AGATHA

You don't know what I want.

RAY

I do. Or at least I thought I did. Look, kid. Actress fall for their directors all the time. It happens. You're not the first. And I can tell you... it always ends like a damn train wreck.

AGATHA

I'm glad you still continue to know the outcome of everything. If that were so true, you'd be doing better at the box office this season.

RAY

Put it this way: it's like summer camp. You fall in love, neck in the bushes, and it's all dangerous and weird and surprising. But it's not love. Shirley. It's not love.

(Pause)

You'll see when the show's over. When that final overdub is done ten weeks from now and he's onto the next project, the next leading lady... you'll know I'm right.

AGATHA

It's important to be right.

RAY

No. It's more important to be sane.

The bathroom door opens. Instead of FOSTER, THE ORDERLY emerges.

He wears his white pants, but his shirt is off and he's using it to towel his face.

RAY (Continued)

Who the hell is this? Shirley. Who the hell is this?

THE ORDERLY comes forward, hand outstretched.

THE ORDERLY

I'm a good friend.

(Pause)

I'm fucking your daughter.

RAY backs away.

RAY

(To AGATHA)

I don't know you anymore. You don't behave like this. You don't have *men* like this. You're not my little girl.

RAY exits.

THE ORDERLY goes and shuts the door RAY left open.

When he turns, his face is distorted, maniacal. He starts to laugh.

AGATHA joins him, laughing and crouching. The two move strangely, laughing, until they are in each other's arms. They begin to ravage each other.

Lights fade.

ACT II

SCENE 3

DR. FREDERICKS and NURSE KISSAM,
in the doctor's office. They sit
very still, almost doll-like.

Enter THE ORDERLY.

As he enters, they turn their
heads and follow him slowly about
the room. He circles. He cups
their breasts, each, just for a
lingering second, then he leans
against the wall and lights a
cigarette.

THE ORDERLY

I've confirmed the matta'. Dean Foster's been kicked
off'a the movie. So that is that. Ray's found
someone new to take over. He's a Pollock. He's
shooting with that new girl Agatha Moll right now.
She's cute. You'd like her. A lot. Maybe we'll get
a chance to meet her someday. You can keep playing
your parts, good as you do.

(Pause)

Look, I know you think... well, you think I'm taking a
lot of chances lately, but... I just want you to know
I've, I've never felt better about things. For once,
I kinda feel good about the way things is going. This
place can get a man down. Like I'm pinned under a
truck that's turned over on the highway, and I'm
screamin', screamin', "Help, help! Come and, and pull
my arm, and..."

(Pause)

You two is a bad influence. Yeah, I know what you're
thinking. I'm the influence. Man, I know about
influences. But before I got here, I was into more
than makin' mischief. I wanted to really take over
the world! Now I just want everything to, to turn out
the way it oughta. The way it's all lined up ta be.
It's like a work of freaking art.

He turns, eyes the two women.

THE ORDERLY

Look at you. Like girls in a painting. Don't let
your oils run. Daddy's here...

He moves towards them.

Lights fade.

ACT II

SCENE 4

A cluster of female PATIENTS in the day room surrounds LILLIAN, who gossips in a whisper.

Enter AGATHA.

LILLIAN shoos away the others when she sees THE ORDERLY enter and cross the room.

THE ORDERLY sees her and ambles over.

Hey.

THE ORDERLY

Hey.

LILLIAN

Long time.

THE ORDERLY

No see.

LILLIAN

I've been busy.

THE ORDERLY

Oh?

LILLIAN

THE ORDERLY
You don't want to know all the dirty details.

He shuffles next to her, real close.

LILLIAN
I've been busy, too.

THE ORDERLY

You know I rely on you from time ta time. You're good in a corner. I like that about you. Ya don't complain much neither.

LILLIAN

I'm made to take direction.

THE ORDERLY

I bet you are.

He caresses her hair.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

That dress looks good on you.

LILLIAN

Why, thank you.

THE ORDERLY

You remember the plan, don't you? I've made a change. Shouldn't be too hard to wrap your head around. Why don't I come to your room tonight and insert where required?

LILLIAN

You're the Devil.

THE ORDERLY

No, but we do run in the same social circles. So I can come 'round?

LILLIAN

Okay.

THE ORDERLY

Okay? That's it?

LILLIAN

Okay.

THE ORDERLY shrugs, bemused.

THE ORDERLY
Why you wanna be my friend, Lil?

LILLIAN
Don't you know? I'm using you.

THE ORDERLY
(Smiling)
Oh, really? Is that the truth?

Dismissive, he breaks away and
smacks her rear.

THE ORDERLY
See you tonight.

THE ORDERLY crosses and exits,
cutting a swath through the
PATIENTS.

After a pause, NURSE KISSAM enters
with AGATHA. The NURSE drops her
off in the room and exits.

LILLIAN
Agatha! Come here!

AGATHA
I'm tired. I don't want to talk.

LILLIAN
That's the drugs.

AGATHA
I'm not taking any drugs.

LILLIAN
Oh, yes you are. It's in the air. Wafts through the
ducts like a fog.

AGATHA
Have you been diagnosed with paranoia, Lillian?

LILLIAN

I have a long list of ailments, starting with you. I want to hear your explanation. Who told you? How do you know?

AGATHA

What are you talking a-?

LILLIAN

Was it him? Did he tell you? The other night. So cruel. You say you know the name of the witness. Are you lying? After I gave it thought, that was my conclusion. You've been here too short a time to discover anything.

AGATHA

Is this a confession that you were listening at my door the other night? Should I report you to the orderly?

LILLIAN

Don't you wonder how I get to move about? Don't you wonder where I go from time to time, when you don't see me?

AGATHA

No. What I wonder about is why you get to wear a yellow dress when our mouths are stuffed with white? I can't imagine that orderly let you skirt the rules without some little taste. Someone told me you're a lesbian.

LILLIAN

Someone told me it doesn't matter. The focus is on you. I'm the most *human* thing in this hotel and don't think for a second, one *second* that I don't prize that very highly. You should be nicer to me. I can do things for you. I've been here longer than any of the others. I know all the ins and outs.

AGATHA

Do you know about the secret passageway from Dr. Frederick's office?

(Pause)

Cat got your tongue?

LILLIAN

Who showed you that?

AGATHA

I found it myself. It leads outside of the grounds.

LILLIAN

Did you go out?

AGATHA

No. I didn't. I didn't have much time.

LILLIAN

You're a patient here. You have nothing but time.

AGATHA

Maybe one day I'll go missing and no one will be able to find me.

LILLIAN

I don't think that's what you want. You want to be found.

(Pause)

You didn't answer. Don't you want to know... where I've been..?

AGATHA

You've been with him. He's your lover, isn't he? That's why you get the special privileges, know how to get out of The Hotel, get to wear your own dress, know the *secret* secret of this place.

LILLIAN

Sounds like you are right behind me on most counts. Do you want a yellow dress, too? Or perhaps a blood red one? You know the name now, so you say, so figure it out yourself.

(Moving in)

I want to play a little game. Will you do that?

AGATHA

I hate games.

LILLIAN

Look...

She points to the other PATIENTS in the room. While they were speaking, all have turned their backs turned to LILLIAN and AGATHA.

LILLIAN (Continued)

One of these patients is not what she seems. If you pick the right one, you'll have a nice shock. If you pick the wrong one, status quo. Do you want to see what's real?

AGATHA

I. Hate. Games.

LILLIAN

But this is a good one.

(Long pause)

Last chance. You won't regret it.

AGATHA, half-heartedly, picks out a PATIENT.

The PATIENT turns. She's wearing a mask, one different from the two NANCYS, but one that robs her of her features.

AGATHA

Why is she wearing that?

LILLIAN

That's her face.

AGATHA

But it a-?

LILLIAN

Pick another.

AGATHA gestures to another PATIENT, who turns, with no

indication how she knows she was the patient who was chosen.

Again, the PATIENT wears a mask.

LILLIAN (Continued)

Third time is the charm.

AGATHA, a bit spellbound, stands dumb, before slowly raising her finger and pointing to one more candidate.

When this patient turns, we see it is DEAN FOSTER.

AGATHA races to him.

AGATHA

Oh, Dean, I thought, I thought— How did you get here?

FOSTER hugs AGATHA. Slowly, the remaining PATIENTS turn towards the lovers. They all wear masks.

LILLIAN

(Satisfied)

Good game.

After a moment of affection between AGATHA and DEAN, she looks away.

AGATHA

Speak, Dean! Is it really you?

FOSTER

It is.

AGATHA

Well, how, how—?

FOSTER

Calm down. Lillian arranged it. She phoned me and told me you were checked in here, and gave me directions, and met me at the passageway, and, well...

AGATHA

(Joyous)

I don't believe it! I don't believe it!

FOSTER

You didn't think I'd let you rot in a place like this, did you? When I found out you were here, I got so angry. Keeping you in here just to shut you up. It's not right! What kind of—?

AGATHA

There's nothing wrong with me. There's nothing wrong with me.

FOSTER

I know that, doll. You're perfect. Perfect.

They kiss. As they do, the others exit slowly.

FOSTER (Continued)

Look, I've got some bad news.

AGATHA

No news can dampen me. You're here!

FOSTER

They've... recast the part. It's going forward with another girl. She's your father's secretary. I didn't approve. I fought it. Hard. But, Christ, Shirley, he gave me no choice.

AGATHA

(Stunned)

What did you say?

FOSTER

We start up in ten days. She's already had her wardrobe fitted. She's a sweet girl, she really is. But she can't act. She's a virgin. No, I, I don't mean in that way - I mean never been in a picture before. You would have creamed her. I tried to stall them as long as I could, rejecting every actress they threw at me. But you know how these things go, Shirl. They're like great, big machines and a little guy like me can't stop them.

AGATHA

My name is *Agatha*.

FOSTER

What?

AGATHA

My name is Agatha Moll.

FOSTER

No. That's her name. The actress who replaced you in the picture. Did someone tell you this already? Did you sneak in a newspaper or something?

AGATHA

No, Dean! *I* am Agatha! I'm Agatha Moll!

FOSTER

Calm *down*, Shirley.

AGATHA

Shirley Pendarsky disappeared. You told me that the last time I saw you. You said that you knew something about her from Ray Pendarsky, but you wouldn't tell me what it was. You were going to set it all right. You left me on the lot and didn't say anything more, but you, you were strange that night. I could tell. You were disturbed. And the next morning, it was in the papers. That you were dead. You were found dead. "Film Director Dies in Accident" and it had your photograph. And I decided, that, that I had *no other choice*, but to come here, because that's the only part you told me. You said that Shirley Pendarsky was no longer in the hospital. I knew the address. I knew because *I was his secretary, Dean*.

FOSTER

Stop talking. I'm clearly not dead.

AGATHA

I know, I know. People don't talk much around the dead. Especially with their mouths. It was Nancy who told me you were alive. She was right. You aren't dead after all.

FOSTER

Nancy. Who's Nancy?

AGATHA

My sister.

FOSTER

You don't have a sister.

AGATHA

Agatha Moll's sister!

FOSTER

You sure know a lot about Agatha Moll.

AGATHA

Because she's me, Dean! Jesus Christ, don't you-?

FOSTER

Shirley. I don't know what you're talking about. But it's scaring me. I thought you being committed as a cruel trick of your father's. People think I'm a jerk, but he's... you don't lock up your daughter for falling in love with her director. I came to get you out. Either I was going to sneak you out that passageway, or I was going to sign you out legit.

(Pause)

But all this you're saying...

AGATHA

The papers were wrong. You're alive, but, but you've got something into your head, Dean. Did you get in an accident? Did you lose your memory? Do you not recognize my face? We've been lovers for two months. Since that day you saw me in water. How do I know all this if I'm Shirley; how do I know all this if it hasn't happened yet?

FOSTER

I'm getting help.

FOSTER debates. AGATHA weeps.

AGATHA

(Hysterical)

Don't go, Dean. Stay with me. Don't leave me!

FOSTER

I'm getting help! I'm getting help!

He pushes her away, roughly, and then exits quickly.

Lights flare behind the walls.

NANCY 1 and NANCY 2 are buried in the scrim.

NANCY 1

You've done it now.

NANCY 2

You can't stop them.

NANCY 1

They're onto you. He'll be back with a whole mess of trouble for our little sister.

AGATHA

Sister! Sister! Yes, yes. You're my dead sister Nancy. You're Nancy. You're both Nancy. And if you're my sister, I'm Agatha. You prove it. Don't leave. Stay. Tell them who I am. Tell them who I am!

Lights behind the scrim fade and AGATHA screams just as THE ORDERLY, with DR. FREDERICKS,

NURSE KISSAM, LILLIAN, and FOSTER
re-enter.

THE ORDERY is the first and he
roughly holds AGATHA, who writhes
and screams at the top of her
lungs.

THE ORDERLY
It's the shocks for her, Doctor. You can see it's
time, like I been tellin' ya.

DR. FREDERICKS
I'll decide when it's time.
(To FOSTER)
How long has she been like this?

FOSTER
Just a few minutes. She's thinks she's someone else.

LILLIAN
She's been erratic all day, Doctor. I tried to settle
her, but it was no good.

AGATHA
I'm not crazy! I'm Agatha.

DR. FREDERICKS
Shirley, please calm down. You'll give us no choice.

AGATHA
You gave me treatment, Doctor! I told you about my
sister Nancy. You know who I am. You know who I am!
Tell me who I am!

She's out of control. THE ORDERLY
binds her arms with his grip and
carries her out of the room.

DR. FREDERICKS

(To FOSTER)

This is why we don't have *visitors*, Mr. Foster. It upsets them. Now I want you to leave immediately. I don't know who snuck you in here or how, but we have a strict policy. Get out. She's in good hands.

DR. FREDERICKS exits. NURSE KISSAM turns to follow, but FOSTER catches her arm.

DR. FREDERICKS (Continued)

(To NURSE)

What are they going to do to her?

NURSE

We have a treatment. I'll be back to show you out in a moment. You shouldn't have come, Mr. Foster. You should have listened to us and stayed away. Whoever snuck you in... did the wrong thing. Please wait here until I come and get you.

The NURSE exits.

LILLIAN and FOSTER stare at each other.

FOSTER

Why didn't you tell me she was so bad off? You sneak out, make me a rescuer. What's wrong with you? She needs this place.

LILLIAN

I'll watch out for her. I do like her. And I want her to be well. We have a lot in common. I'm an actress, too.

FOSTER

Great! Another crazy fucking actress.

LILLIAN

Got a part for me in your picture? I'm very good.
Very, very, very good... with parts.

LILLIAN slithers up to FOSTER.

FOSTER

Give it a rest.

She moves even closer, touching
his inseam.

LILLIAN

(Soft)

What if I told you she was right... that you are going
to die? Would that scare you?

FOSTER

She's been jabbering about that to you, too? That
story about me in the papers? "Film Director Dies in
Accident." Don't believe a word of it.

LILLIAN

(Soft)

But you should. I saw it happen. I am *the witness*.

Blackout.

ACT II

SCENE 5

The shock room.

AGATHA receives brutal shock treatments.

ACT II

SCENE 6

AGATHA's room at The Hotel.

AGATHA lays on her bed, calm,
under covers that go up to her
eyeballs.

Beside her, seated on a chair, is
THE ORDERLY.

THE ORDERLY

You have a great face. I'm sorry we broke a few blood vessels. You'll understand more in a coupla hours. This place is built to house delusions. Not necessary to house the delusional. There's a' difference, you know? I like to think of this ol' Hotel as collecting all the rage, disappointment, fear, let-downs, come-downs, come-ons, and despair that this town grows in its garden. Gardens of the Midwest, big fertile gardens. I've been out there, you know? I've been all over. I love those farm girls. Those girls wit' the big eyes and curves who get stared at by everyone in the corner store and know, know, know for *certain*, deep down, that they're too pretty for that farm. They need to be shared with everybody. Passed 'round like a bottle of whiskey at a hobo rail-yard bonfire. I'd like to think (and so would their mothers and fathers, I bet) that these girls have talent and want to share that talent with the rest of the world. But it's more physical than that. It ain't about sharing talent. It's about just plain exposure. You've got to be seen. You've got to be of consequence. And Hollywood, for all its wrecks and its poisons and its drift... one thing it does have is plenty of opportunity to be noticed. For the bad shit as much as the good. And all this applies to the boys, too. They're no better. They don't get off any lighter.

(Pause)

I betcha I could get noticed. I have some powers. You look like you don't believe me. I'm more than an orderly at a lousy sanitarium. I've got connections;

(MORE)

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

I get orders, sure, but I give 'em, in this world and the next. I'm not someone's dog.

(Considering)

Well, if I am... I'm one that can bite your face off.

AGATHA starts to take off her covers. THE ORDERLY sets them right and tucks her in so tightly she can't move.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Go to sleep. I won't touch you. I've got a date, anyways. What's that look you're giving me? Is that disappointment? Does baby want some? Or is that look 'cos you're scared to be alone? You'll even take me over the empty room.

THE ORDERLY stands.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Do you want to see your sister? Yeah, that's right. Do you want to see your Nancy? Two cracked little dolls, each with half a head. The dead twins you remember, but remember all wrong. I could call 'em, with a snap. Call 'em. Just a snap. Want me to do it? It looks like you need a break. And I've got plans. I'll have to send out the ding-a-ling, yoo-hoo for them another night.

He opens the door to leave.

THE ORDERLY (Continued)

Tell you what. I'll do you a favor. You're pissed at that Foster now for calling in reinforcements. I can understand that. I'll do you one right. When he gets going on his movie, I'm going to get him fired. And then, you know what I'll do? I'll fucking kill him and make it look like an accident. Would that make you happy, Agatha? Or Shirley? Or whoever the hell you want to be...

He slams of the door.

Lights fade.

ACT II

SCENE 7

RAY PENDARSKY's office.

RAY and FOSTER sit across from each other.

RAY

I'm as surprised as you are. I didn't think you'd come. We left this peach a little bruised.

FOSTER

Technically, I'm still under contract to the studio.

RAY

Business. That's why you came? I saw some of the rushes from your latest. Not bad. Funny. I hope you keep the bit in with the moving staircase. That was good. How did you get the steps to do that?

FOSTER

Lots of union guys.

RAY

Ah. Of course. Well... it was funny. I hope when it's all cut together that it does good box office and we can put that whole beach picture business behind us. I think Ryczyk did a good job picking up for you, but I've always wondered what the end result would have been if it was you who had finished the shooting, and the cut, the print, et cetera.

FOSTER

I would have liked to have seen it through, too. It was coming together. Coming together.

RAY

Don't think I don't have regrets about our decision, Dean. I was under tremendous pressure from forces you don't understand. It was strictly—

FOSTER

I know Hollywood. You're in; you're out. In and out. It's how this town functions. I'm not bitter. At least not about that.

RAY

All right. Now I see. And this is a good transition to why you are here.

RAY pulls a memo from his desk and hands it to FOSTER.

FOSTER reads. When he's done, he looks a little stunned. He sets the memo back down on the desk.

FOSTER

Is that true?

RAY

What do you think?

FOSTER

Lots of memos come out of your office. Not all of them are true.

RAY

This one is. Everything in there.

FOSTER

Do you really think she'll show up on the lot?

RAY

No. But I needed to take precautions. Shirley could have gone anywhere. Hell, she could be headed to Broadway, start a new career as a chorus girl.

FOSTER

You don't really think that.

RAY

I thought she was improving. She'd been receiving treatments and, from my last report from Dr. Fredericks, she was doing better.

FOSTER

I'm glad for that.

RAY

But something told me the reports were lies. I don't like the caliber of employees at that hospital. I wanted to ask a few questions. So I went to see her. When I arrived, that Dr. Fredericks wouldn't let me see my little girl. Said she was in a state. Not a very... clinical... appraisal. I thought I had full rights to visit her—

FOSTER

Though you rarely did.

RAY

(Agreeing)

Though I rarely did. A nurse stopped me in the lobby. She called the doctor who told me Shirley had deteriorated over the past several days and was, at that moment, in a session and it... would... be... *bad* for me to see her.

FOSTER

That is that.

RAY

But again, I didn't believe them. So I left. And I circled the building on foot. And I got mud on my shoes—

FOSTER

Poor baby.

RAY

It was a wet day and there was that ivy, covering everything, and the hedges, and the red brick of the place. I couldn't see in any of the windows. They were all boarded or fogged. And high. I'm not that tall. I looked a little ridiculous jumping at windows, in the misty rain, in mud, in my suit and necktie, hoping to catch a glimpse of a daughter that long ago left me. But I kept looking. And the more I was in a proximity to that place... the more I kept, kept walking in its presence, the more... The place just gave me... the most horrid feeling. Like it was...

FOSTER

I've never told you this. But I visited Shirley. One time, a few months back.

RAY

Oh?

FOSTER

She was worse than I could have imagined. I think she had split personality or something.

RAY

She's never been diagnosed with that.

FOSTER

I'm no doctor. What I mean to say is: what she told me, and the way she behaved... That wasn't Shirley. Not the Shirley I knew. Oh, sure, there were glimpses. But that was all. But I'm telling you this, not to make you mad, you see. I know you didn't like her and I seeing each other, thought it would be bad for her career and the picture and for you and all that jazz. I'm telling you this because I felt it, too. But never said anything. That place...

RAY

That place...

FOSTER

The place she's now vanished from.

RAY

Is not a hospital.

FOSTER

It's not. I even feel, real deep down in my stomach, that that place not even be a real building.

(Pause)

You never saw the place before checking her in?

RAY

No. It was recommended by a producer I know. Small time fellow. Good man; I'd trust him.

FOSTER

Trust him with your daughter?

RAY

I did.

FOSTER

Where is he now?

(Pause, no answer)

I bet you didn't even drive her out there. I can tell by your face that that's right. Probably had your secretary do it. Why you put Shirley in that hospital, Ray? Was it because I was sleeping with her?

RAY

I didn't like you. I never liked you. But I didn't put her away because of you. I'm not a monster. She, she... She started saying all sorts of foul things. Lies. They'd just come out. Did she ever do that around you? She'd just lie and lie. And she told me she'd, she'd go to the papers with these lies and I knew that she was better away, somewhere quiet, for just a little while. Until she was better. I'd rather have her somewhere safe than saying things at parties and to reporters or anyone who would listen to gossip and consider printing it, unsubstantiated. It was just rambling. A little rebellious teenage girl. I didn't think it would be forever. You know *this town*, Dean. Grrr! This town! Can't give you a break; can't take a moment to find out the truth.

FOSTER

What is the truth, Ray?

RAY

That she was my daughter! And that she had some problems. And I wanted to get her some goddamn help.

FOSTER

Quiet help.

RAY

Don't - don't look at me like that. This wasn't a snuff job. This was and *is*: my daughter. My daughter who is missing.

FOSTER

(Lazy)

So you put out a memo to all the gates and building chiefs to be on the lookout, that she might try to charm her way in, and that she had friends here, but that she wasn't to be allowed on the lot and that, if anyone saw her, to call Ray Pendarsky's office, day or night. Whose phone number is on there? Yours at home or that redhead out front? All right, I get it. I get it. You invited me to your office not for business. But because you wanted me to know she, what, escaped from the hospital and she might try to contact me? That it? And if I see her I, what?, try to get her to come to you, or drive her back to that place—?

RAY

No. She's not going back. Now that she's out, I want her out. I don't like the people there, not a one, not a one. I would have gotten her out sooner if I didn't think it would disrupt the treatments. Whatever they thought was working was not. They've failed her. She's out by her own accord and I'll find her a better way.

FOSTER

But you're going to send her somewhere.

RAY

I'm not sure what I'm going to do! I, I don't think that far ahead when it comes to Shirley, Dean. I've made a lot of mistakes as a father. I don't think. I don't think. Now I'm asking you for *help*. You don't owe me a thing, nothing. Nothing. But you are Shirley were an item. The last item before putting her in that place and I think she'll go to you first.

FOSTER

Do you know a girl named Lillian.

RAY

I probably know a few Lillians.

FOSTER

She is a patient with Shirley. She snuck me in the

(MORE)

FOSTER (Continued)

time I visited; they stopped me in the lobby, too, but then I had a little help. As I was leaving, Lillian told me something I didn't understand at the time. Something about a witness. Then, when you fired me from "Beach Fun," you said you knew the witness.

RAY

I did? Strange thing to say.

FOSTER

Yes, I thought so, too.

(Pause)

Witness to what?

RAY

I don't remember.

FOSTER

No, no. You were very clear about it. You told me I was out and that you knew this witness. I figured it was something about Agatha Moll. That you had someone spying on us.

RAY

Should I have been spying on you?

FOSTER

No. I still thought I was being fired as payback for Shirley. Not only did you not like me dating Shirley, you hated it even worth that I was seeing Agatha Moll. But, too late, I remembered Lillian's comment. She was to be a witness to something very important.

(Pause)

What did you mean, Ray, about the witness?

RAY

I don't know what you're talking about. I don't know any nuts named Lillian. We're talking about Shirley here. Let's keep our focus. Will you help me, Dean? Will you help me put Shirley on the right path? I know that she'll come to you. She'll find you. And when she does... call me. Day or night.

Lights fade.

ACT II

SCENE 8

FOSTER's empty apartment.

FOSTER enters the dark room, looks about. He notices a light under the bathroom door.

He approaches the door, resigned. He lifts his hand to knock, but then lets it drop.

FOSTER

Shirley? Is that you?

(No answer)

I know you still have your key.

(Pause)

Come out. I want to speak with you.

(Pause)

It's okay. It's going to be fine. I want to help you, in any way I can.

(Pause)

Just tell me what you want.

FOSTER surrenders and steps from the door.

FOSTER (Continued)

It's all right. I'll wait as long as you want me to.

After a long pause, the door opens, so slowly and quietly that FOSTER does not notice, or turn.

A WOMAN IN MASK stands in the doorway. It is the same mask the PATIENTS wore before. She wears a blood red dress.

FOSTER talks into the floor.

FOSTER (Continued)

Your father told me that you got out. That you'd try to find me. I came here, because I know it's the only place that you'd find safe. The last time we spoke, it didn't go as I wanted. I know that I was... severe. I want you know that your father has given me his word that he won't send you back to that place ever again.

THE WOMAN IN MASK eases forward, closer, closer, as he speaks.

FOSTER (Continued)

Come out. My car is downstairs. We can take the Freeway, go anywhere you want. I've got a full tank of gas and my driver has the night off. Anywhere in L.A. My treat. And then, when you've had enough, I'll take you home and we'll figure this out.

THE WOMAN IN MASK reveals that she holds a straight razor. Suddenly raising it, she lurches at FOSTER just as he turns.

Before he has a chance to move, she slashes him to death and leaves him dead on the floor.

As the lights fade, she takes off her mask. It's LILLIAN.

Blackout.

ACT II

SCENE 9

LILLIAN stands an open space.

Surrounding her, unidentifiable
FIGURES.

LILLIAN

How does it feel to be me? What a fantastic question! It feels amazing. You know, I'm just a simple California girl who was lucky to go this far in life. To have had two box office successes in a row, well I never would have imagined. Sure, my father was in the business, but I've made my own breaks. I always had to work and struggle, just like any young actress in Hollywood. You pay your dues. What's that? Well *there's* a name! I haven't heard his name spoken in a year or more. Yes, I had dinner with Dean Foster on a few occasions, but I hardly think it was serious. We weren't steadies or anything. No, I enjoyed the man's company and I like to think he enjoyed mine, despite rumors that I'm no fan of men. Men of his sort, I mean. Yes, I was sad to hear about his accident. The L.A. freeway is a danger and there are many, many twists and turns. It's like one of our own movies - you never know what's going to happen and who might end up on top. For example, that business of my father being involved somehow. Rubbish. My father liked Dean very much. Dean was known to like women and women liked Dean and I must confess that I was one of those women. He had a reputation for being a lion, but he was really ever so sweet to me, a gentle little lamb who left this life too soon. Oh! Really! You do like to pull names out of hats like little white rabbits. I haven't seen her in a very long time. Yes, I knew her socially before I was cast in her now-vacant part, but we were not close. I wish Agatha Moll all the best in the world, wherever she may be. She was the sweetest little thing.

Blackout.

ACT II

SCENE 10

The Hotel, main room.

SOUND: A loud mechanical blur.

Lights fade in on AGATHA. She is in The Hotel, surrounded by PATIENTS. She alone wears a yellow dress.

Music plays - a docile lullaby, faraway.

THE ORDERLY enters, passes through, lingers near AGATHA. As she stands there, aimless, he comes behind her and puts his hands on her, smiles.

THE ORDERLY

(Hard to hear over the sound)

I'm glad you're here to stay. I like you. I always have liked you.

THE ORDERLY smiles again and exits.

DR. FREDERICKS and NURSE KISSAM pass through, inhuman, robotic.

After a silent pause, AGATHA screams.

ALL but AGATHA fall to the ground, as if quickly melting into the floor, where they lay in piles.

AGATHA stumbles around the bodies.

A spotlight strikes the corner, where NANCY 1 and NANCY 2 stand.

Long pause.

AGATHA

(Screaming, shrill)

What is this plaaaaaaaaaaaaaceeeeeee??????????

SOUND: The blur stops.

For a long moment, the room does
not answer, until:

NANCY 1

It's-

NANCY 2

Hollywood.

Blackout.

Final Curtain.