

WITNESS TO AN ACCIDENT

A Play for Stage

By

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WITNESS TO AN ACCIDENT

(Synopsis)

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.

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 Pendarisky.

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

You don't want to know all the dirty details.

THE ORDERLY

He shuffles next to her, real close.

I've been busy, too.

LILLIAN

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.