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A MAN WITHOUT MEANS

A FULL-LENGTH COMEDY IN ONE ACT

by
Rebecca Ryland

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A MAN WITHOUT MEANS

A FULL-LENGTH COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Rebecca Ryland

Setting: *A guest room used for storage in a dilapidated London hostel*

Characters:

Doris Morton; *An American Woman on her honeymoon*

Willy Morton; *Her newlywed husband*

Fred; *The head of the construction crew working at the hostel*

Teddy; *One of the work crew*

The Young Woman/Mrs. Bishop; *Dining room kitchen help/waitress*

Leo Bishop; *A tattooed Canadian, Assistant Mgr. of the hostel*

The Woman/Ms. Townsend; *The Manager of the hostel*

ETC: *Unit set*

Playing time; Approximately 75 minutes without intermission

A MAN WITHOUT MEANS

A FULL-LENGTH PLAY IN ONE ACT

by
Rebecca Ryland

(AT RISE, a room in a rundown Victorian hotel in London on the outskirts of SoHo. DORIS, a smartly dressed woman wearing a floppy summer hat and white gloves, waits alone in the room which is more than disheveled. Bags of rubbish are piled in the corner; scraps of lumber litter the floor; faded wallpaper peels off the otherwise bare laden walls. To the right is a window masked by a tattered brocade drape running almost the full-length from the ceiling to the floor; on the left a door leading to a hallway. Aside from two sawhorses and a step stool, the room is furnished with only a tall make-shift wooden bed with old dirty sheets and a tattered blanket over a thin cotton mattress. One coverless pillow lies at the foot of the bed; one shadeless bulb hangs by a wire in the center of the room. On the floor near the door stands a leather pullman and two matching bags with shiny brass trim, as out of place in their surroundings as DORIS sitting on one of the saw horses. A key is heard in the lock and the door shortly opens as WILLY, her newly-wed husband, enters the room.)

DORIS

Well? What did you find out?

WILLY

Nothing.

DORIS

What do you mean “nothing?”

WILLY

Just that. Nothing. I put it in the machine and nothing came out.

DORIS

You mean “no money.” No money came out. The machine said something. It always says *something*. What did it say?

WILLY

It said exactly what the machine at the airport said. Funds not available at this time.

DORIS

Great. Well, isn't that something.

WILLY

What are you going to do?

DORIS

What am *I* going to do?

WILLY

What are **we** going to do?

DORIS

We are not going to do *anything*. *You* are going to do something.

WILLY

And what exactly am I supposed to do?

DORIS

I don't know but you better think of something quick. We've got an hour-and-a-half till checkout time and eight till our plane leaves.

WILLY

What do you think happened?

DORIS

I know what happened.

WILLY

Yeah?

DORIS

Yeah. That crazy brother of yours didn't pay the bill.

WILLY

Why would he?

DORIS

Because I told him to.

WILLY

And that makes a difference?

DORIS

He's dysfunctional not irresponsible.

WILLY

Who told you that?

DORIS

You.

Me? WILLY

DORIS
You said he should stay at the house while we were gone.

Yeah? WILLY

DORIS
We needed someone *responsible* to stay at the house to keep an eye on things.

Yeah? WILLY

DORIS
You suggested your brother.

What's your point? WILLY

DORIS
I assumed you thought he was a responsible human being.

He drives an Escort. WILLY

DORIS
You said he had an accident and he got the Escort to drive while he was waiting for his car to get fixed.

Yeah, well, he did—three years ago. He never got his car fixed. WILLY

Why not? DORIS

He spent the money. WILLY

On what? DORIS

Cooking school. WILLY

DORIS

Cooking school? I've been to his apartment for dinner a dozen times and he always serves the same thing *Poulet Saut Riviera*.

WILLY

That's this year. Last year he served some kind of shredded beef topped with pureed carrot and lemon sauce. He had to change the menu because his skin jaundiced.

DORIS

And you let him stay at our house?!

WILLY

He got evicted from his apartment.

DORIS

(Using the step stool, climbs onto the bed) You're driving me crazy, here. You're driving me crazy.

WILLY

All he had to do was take the mail inside and watch TV. What harm is there in that?

DORIS

I told him to check the mail for bills. I gave him my checkbook so he could pay the bills.

WILLY

What? Are you *nuts*? You gave my brother your *checkbook*?

DORIS

Like I'm to know I shouldn't? You ask your brother to stay at our house while we're out of the country and I'm to know I shouldn't trust him with my checkbook?

WILLY

He can't sell the house without my signature.

DORIS

He can't write a check without *my* signature.

WILLY

You're right. The house is gone.

DORIS

It is not. I telephoned there just before we left Paris— right after that little incident we promised not to bring up again.

WILLY

Which you just did. And you got my brother on the phone?

DORIS

I got the answering machine.

WILLY

It proves nothing. He sold the house, took the answering machine, moved to a homeless shelter and switched to beans and franks.

DORIS

He did nothing of the sort. I dialed our number.

WILLY

He assumed my identity. Why should he change the number?

DORIS

I gave him three signed checks. One for the credit card payment and two for emergencies. All he had to do was pay the bill when it arrived. How hard can that be?

WILLY

We put everything else on automatic payment. Why not the credit card?

DORIS

It was such a little thing.

WILLY

We live on that credit card.

DORIS

And whose fault is that? *I* paid for the wedding. *You* were to cover the honeymoon.

WILLY

So, I'll pay you back when we get home.

DORIS

We're not going home. Don't you get it? We're stuck here until we figure out how to pay for this room.

WILLY

We just explain to them what happened. I'm sure they'll understand.

DORIS

Sure. Sure they'll understand.

WILLY

You tell them you're sorry, that your account is temporarily closed and that you'll send them a check as soon as we get home.

I'll never forgive you for this.

DORIS

Why me?

WILLY

Because it is *your* brother's fault.

DORIS

(Climbing onto the bed) Exactly. It is not *my* fault.

WILLY

Well, it should be.

DORIS

Come on, baby. *(Lies back with head on DORIS'S lap)* It's not so bad. Just talk to the right person. Soften him with that gorgeous smile you've got hidden behind that frown. Trust, me, even those stiffies in Parliament would flip their wigs for a twitch of your lips. We'll be out of here and on that plane to New York by 3:00 P.M.

WILLY

(Touching WILLY's face) It's a good thing I love you.

DORIS

I know.

WILLY

And that you have no insurance policy.

DORIS

(There is a knock on door.)

Who is that this early?

WILLY

Shhhhh! I don't know. It's not checkout time.

DORIS

Should we answer it?

WILLY

No.

DORIS

They know we're here.

WILLY

DORIS

Maybe we're already gone.

WILLY

No we're not.

DORIS

We could be. If we're not here they'll think we're gone and that we slipped out during the night without paying our bill, which we could have, and they'll be justifiably angry and we'll be on a train to the airport.

(There is a second knock on door.)

WILLY

I'm glad you're my wife and not my tax consultant. *(Key is heard in door)* What the—

DORIS

Under the bed. Hurry, hurry!

(WILLY and DORIS slip under the bed as two men in work-clothes enter.)

FIRST MAN

(With accent) I tell you she was bloody rotten, she was. I hadn't anymore gotten me pants back on when the bloke came runnin' in with a blimey butcher knife. That's funny. I thought I left the bed upright against the wall— Oh, well. Grab the bottom there, Teddy an' help me move the bed.

TEDDY

When you going to learn, Fred, to keep yer britches snapped.

FRED

When the ladies quit servin' tea with nothin' on but the pot. Heave ho now. *(TEDDY and FRED move the bed upstage exposing DORIS and WILLY.)* What have we here, Teddy? A couple 'a rats waitin' their turn for 'a spot 'o tea?

WILLY

No, really, you see we—

TEDDY

How'd'ye get in here, mister? You and the lady there?

DORIS

We arrived last night a little after ten. We checked in at the desk, the night clerk gave us the key. *(Crawling out/confrontational)* What are you doing breaking into our room at half past seven?

FRED

They're not to have this room. We're workin' on the roof an' we use it for storage.

TEDDY

An' for me ladder. She opens up across from the stairway an' we can't make the turn without backin' the ladder in here.

DORIS

I want to see the manager. How dare you break in? Why, (*Pulling WILLY out from under the bed*)...we're on our *honeymoon!* I *should* have been *naked!* Willy, we refuse to pay for a room where we are not safe, right, Willy?

FRED

You didn't notice the bags o' rubbish? An' I know the bed was against the wall just like it is now. I left it so myself when I finished me work yesterday.

DORIS

How were we to know? Isn't this some kind of "hostel" or something? (*Picks up a bag of rubbish*) We thought perhaps hostels had rooms full of rubbish and beds turned on end. Besides, you knocked. Why would you knock if you didn't know we were here? (*Throws bag at TEDDY*)

FRED

Sometimes one of the lasses in the kitchen sneaks up here for a ciggy break, eh'? Sometimes she brings a bloke with her. She don't take well to being caught in an uncompromisin' position, if you know what I mean.

DORIS

(*Turns on FRED*) Not so unlike *other* people around here.

FRED

If you got a problem, missy, yer best to take it up with the management.

DORIS

We will, we will. Won't we, Willy?

WILLY

Why, yes, yes we—

DORIS

—yes, we will. So if the two of you would kindly exit our room so that we can get back to our own affairs, it would be very much appreciated.

FRED

It's your bed.

DORIS & WILLY

Exactly!

(FRED exits the room. DORIS and WILLY do not move. TEDDY, still holding the bag, looks about not quite sure what to do. He sets the bag down gingerly, turns and exits, closing the door behind. DORIS and WILLY look at one another a moment. A smile comes to their faces.)

WILLY

Okay, now, we have a reason why we aren't paying for the room, right?

DORIS

Of course! Why should we? Why *would* we? They put us in a workroom full of rubbish. Two frighteningly appalling men in filthy coveralls storm the room. They find us cowering in fear under the bed. We demand to see the manager. We refuse to pay. We take a walk to Picadilly Circus, browse through SoHo, smile at Big Ben and fly happily ever after back to the good old U.S. of A.

WILLY

I'll call the manager now.

DORIS

(Looking about the room) Where's the phone?

WILLY

(Searching around the bags of rubbish) I don't see one.

DORIS

Where are we?! The Hotel from Hell?!

WILLY

I'll find the manager.

(WILLY opens the door. A young woman in tight pants and wearing an apron stands outside. She has just lit a cigarette.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Oh! Excuse me, mister. *(She peers inside the door)* I didn't mean to disturb you. *(Entering; to DORIS)* Hey, I don't remember seeing you around before. You work the second floor?

DORIS

We're *guests* of the hotel.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, right. *(To WILLY)* You're kind of cute. From the States?

WILLY

Yes.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Don't let the mess bother you. It's not always like this. Only since they condemned the building.

DORIS

This building is condemned?

WILLY

I paid £68 to sleep here?

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Yeah, and I got 90 for a tip last night. *(Taking WILLY aside)* Wise up, you silly bloke, she's taking you for a ride on the Tube.

WILLY

This is my wife. This *is* our room. And we paid £68 for it!

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Wicked!

DORIS

Not now, we won't. *(Pulling WILLING away)* I refuse to pay for a room with rubbish!

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Fair enough. You might talk with the manager. I wouldn't mention seeing me, dearie. No reason to ruffle her feathers with only one day left to me job. I'm hopin to get me shift back when the hotel reopens in the spring.

DORIS

Reopens?

THE YOUNG WOMAN

The doors close today at noon.

(THE YOUNG WOMAN drops her cigarette on the floor, crushes it with her foot, bends forward in a provocative manner and picks up the butt.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN, *Continued*

(To WILLY) May I? *(Points at a rubbish bag)*

WILLY

(Gushing) Oh, yes, of course.

(WILLING scambles for the bag and holds it out to THE YOUNG WOMAN who throws in the butt.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Breaks over. *(To WILLY)* Maybe I'll see you next time.

DORIS

Not on your life. We'll be out of here in ten.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

What a shame.

(THE YOUNG WOMAN exits into hall, closing the door, but remains nearby eaves-dropping.)

DORIS

Can you believe this? Not only did they put us in a workroom but in a break room for the resident hussy. *(THE YOUNG WOMAN is visible outside the door. She mouths the word "hussy.")* I wouldn't pay for staying here even if I had the money. I told you the place was seedy. But would you listen? No, you never listen.

WILLY

What? And you think we could have gotten away with no money at the Mountbatten.

DORIS

I so wanted to attend the Theatre Royal.

WILLY

You'll be lucky to attend your own funeral.

DORIS

Oh! I could murder someone! And I could start with that little tramp! Imagine the nerve implying I'm a *working* girl! Why, I've never lifted a finger in my life. And the way she came on to you right there in front of me. Oooooo— I'd like to get my hands around her neck!

(THE YOUNG WOMAN scurries away from the door.)

WILLY

Relax, sweetie. *(Kisses her on nose)* You know what happens when you get excited. I'll talk to the manager.

(WILLY exits, closing the door behind him.)

DORIS

It isn't fair! This is my *honeymoon!* The time of my life! What was I thinking? Never marry a man without means. Never trust the brother of the man you married without means. Oh, my head. Aspirin. Is there any aspirin left? (*Searching through luggage*) Oh, yes, of course, I used the last of the aspirin in Venice. Remember Venice, Willy? You *accidentally* handed me the wrong solution for my contact lenses and I put daily cleaner in my eyes? That hurt. I couldn't see a *thing* for days. Luckily I didn't drown when I fell in that canal. Oh, Willy. I love you but you drive me crazy. 'Get your own credit card,' I say. 'Why' he asks, 'you have one.' 'I have my own liver, too,' I say, 'does that mean you don't need one?' 'A body can not, *will not* live without one,' I tell him. But no. He wants his own liver but not his own credit card. Where are his priorities? Oh, God. Oh, God! My nose! My nose! (*Blood streams from Doris' nose.*) He's going to be the death of me. 'Don't get excited,' he tells me, 'you know what happens when you get excited.' Hell! How can I help but get excited?! A towel. I need a towel! I know there's one in this bag. Where are you? Where are you!?

(*DORIS tilts her head backwards, keeping her hand over her nose as she attempts to find a towel in one of the suitcases. Thinking she has found one she grabs a sweater from her bag and covers her nose.*)

DORIS, *Continues*

There. There, now. (*She brings down her hand and realizes she has just destroyed one of her favorite sweaters.*) No. No! Willy! Damn it, Willy! My sweater! My favorite sweater. Oh, no, oh, no! (*Exposing the blood on her sweater*) You made me do this. You know my nose bleeds when I get excited. If you had your own credit card this never would have happened! I'll be lucky if there's any water in the water closet let alone any towels!

(*DORIS exits quickly, leaving the door ajar. When the door opens, the sound of a buzz saw is heard. A cat enters from the hallway most likely stalking a mouse then runs out. [If this proves too difficult, this bit may be ignored.] A few moments later the door swings further open and FRED & TEDDY back a ladder into the room. They set the ladder on the floor, place the sawhorses upstage, then lift the ladder over the bed and place it on the sawhorses. If the ladder is long enough, it can protrude into the hallway.*)

FRED

Me back is killing me, Teddy. I'm too old for this kind o' work. Get one o' the young blokes to help you get the ladder to the roof. I'm going to the kitchen for a pot of tea, an' whatever else I can find to snack on.

(*TEDDY and FRED exit. Additional sounds of construction or demolition join the buzz of the saw. A few moments later, DORIS ENTERS carrying a handful of blood stained towels. She either sees the ladder or climbs over the ladder.*)

DORIS

Good grief! Now what?! I so want to go home.

(DORIS crosses to the bag of rubbish [which, by the way, contains a “dead cat”] and throws the paper towels inside. She picks up the bloody sweater, hesitates for a moment, then also tosses it away.)

WILLY

(Entering eating a muffin) Nice touch. The ladder makes such a statement.

DORIS

Don't talk to me.

WILLY

Why?

DORIS

You don't love me.

WILLY

(Crossing to DORIS and taking her in his arms) Of course I do, Snookums. I worship the ground you rumble on.

DORIS

You have a lousy sense of humor.

WILLY

(Taking a huge bite of the muffin and speaking with his mouth full) And you have a marvelous sense of smell.

DORIS

You're eating with your mouth full.

WILLY

I usually do.

DORIS

You know what I mean. You know it drives me crazy. Why are you eating anyway?

WILLY

I'm hungry.

DORIS

So am I but I'm not eating.

WILLY

I brought you a biscuit.

DORIS

I don't want a biscuit!

WILLY

I'm sorry, I've already eaten the muffin.

DORIS

I don't want a muffin. I want to go home.

WILLY

The manager's in a meeting. We may be here a while. You might as well eat something.

DORIS

Where did you get the muffin?

WILLY

Breakfast is included in the price of the room.

DORIS

We're not paying for the room! There is no breakfast!

WILLY

There's plenty of breakfast and lots of interesting people. Come down with me to the dining room. There are runaways from every corner of the world. And I met a professor of endocrinology from Burbank and a nun from Czechoslovakia.

DORIS

I met a fool from Newark.

WILLY

New Jersey is actually a very beautiful state.

DORIS

The sole purpose of New Jersey is to support the megatropolis of New York. How many times have I told you that? It is a cesspool. Nothing more, nothing less.

WILLY

Could we be in better humor?

DORIS

Only if my period starts.

WILLY

Oh, no. You're not premenstrual, are you? Well, at least that accounts for something.

DORIS

It accounts for nothing.

WILLY

It always accounts for something.

DORIS

I am not premenstrual! I am predisposed to insanity.

WILLY

(Again, offering the biscuit) Have a bite.

DORIS

(Climbing up step stool and throwing herself onto the bed) I'd die first.

WILLY

It's only a biscuit, Doris, it's not the end of the world.

(A grizzly looking man with huge, tattooed arms appears in the doorway.)

TATTOOED MAN

Hey! You the Mortons?

(DORIS jumps up and slips behind WILLY.)

WILLY

It's all right, dear; it's only a man with a leopard tearing a gazelle to shreds tattooed on his arm.

TATTOOED MAN

(Growling) It's an antelope. I believe I asked you if you folks are the Mortons?

WILLY

I suppose that would depend on you.

TATTOOED MAN

How you figure?

WILLY

Do I need to be telling you who I am?

TATTOOED MAN

That depends on whether you value your life.

WILLY

In that case, I am Willy Morton. And you?

TATTOOED MAN

I take care of the vermin around here. You came in last night and gave us a bum credit card. You think we haven't seen your likes before? We get 'em all here.

DORIS

I'm hardly surprised.

TATTOOED MAN

What?

WILLY

Don't throw rocks at the bear, dear.

TATTOOED MAN

(Growling louder) Leopard!

DORIS

Yes, dear.

WILLY

It's very simple if you will allow us to explain

TATTOOED MAN

(Grabbing WILLY by the arm) You come with me.

WILLY

Sorry, I didn't get your name.

DORIS

(Holding WILLY by the other arm) He's not going anywhere.

TATTOOED MAN

The name's Leo and who's going to stop me?

DORIS

He is. Aren't you, honey?

WILLY

Look, Leo, we have no argument with you.

DORIS

Not per se'.

WILLY

I came down to talk to the manager about the problem but she was busy. I figured I'd catch her after breakfast and explain the whole thing.

DORIS

Explain? Don't you mean *demand* our money back?

LEO

You didn't give us any money!

DORIS

Of course not. Would you pay for this room? Look at it. This is a Rat Room! A breeding ground for the plague. You've endangered our very beings!

LEO

Yeah, so, the night clerk made a mistake. You took the room. If you didn't like it, you should have asked for another one.

DORIS

So you knew you made a mistake. And you tried to intimidate us into paying you anyway!

LEO

(Considering) I'm willing to work with you. For the room and breakfast... I'll give it to you for half price.

WILLY

Well, that's more like it.

DORIS

Willy!

WILLY

It was a good breakfast.

DORIS

I told you not to eat.

LEO

You give me the money and I'll take it to the manager and get you squared away.

DORIS

I wouldn't give you anything but fleas, which I'm more than certain you already have.

LEO

Is she always like this?

WILLY

It's our honeymoon.

LEO

Pity. Pay up!

WILLY

Well, actually, we still have one slight problem

LEO

Yeah, and what's that?

WILLY

I'd prefer to discuss it with the manager.

LEO

You got something to say you say it to me. The buck stops here!

WILLY

(*To DORIS*) This would be a good time to shine those pearly whites and explain the situation to this nice man, dear.

DORIS

No, you're doing a wonderful job, darling.

WILLY

Well, you see... It's actually very funny.

DORIS

Hilarious!

(*DORIS and WILLY begin laughing, almost hysterically.*)

WILLY

My brother's keeping an eye on the house while we're out of the States and—

DORIS

—And he didn't pay the credit card bill.

WILLY

It could happen to anyone.

LEO

It happened to you.

DORIS

If you knew his brother you'd understand completely. He drives an *Escort*.

LEO

And what is that supposed to mean?

DORIS

Well, you know. They're sort of, well, "cheap."

LEO

I drive an *Escort*.

DORIS

You wouldn't even fit in an *Escort*.

LEO

Say what?

WILLY

Don't tease the tattooed man, dear. And so the credit card company closed the account.

LEO

No worries. We accept cash.

WILLY

Now that's the real knee jerker. We don't have any cash to pay the bill. No cash at all.

DORIS

Except for train fare back to the airport.

WILLY

Actually honey buns, *I* don't have *any* money. I bought a coffee and a bagel with lox—and picked up a newspaper on the way to the bank this morning.

DORIS

(Pulling WILLY aside) Willy! You spent all your money?!

WILLY

I was hungry.

DORIS

You ate breakfast *twice!*

WILLY

Don't you have a few pounds left?

DORIS

I SPENT IT ON TAMPAX!

WILLY

I knew it.

DORIS

Willy! We have no money! Not even enough to get to the airport! *(To LEO)* I'm sorry. If you will just allow us to go down and talk to the manager I'm sure we can work something out. We're normally very responsible people. At least I know *I* am. I mean, I send in my tax return February 1st. Sometimes I send in an extra two or three hundred dollars just to be sure I haven't made any mistakes.

WILLY

She does.

DORIS

As soon as we get back to the States I promise I'll send you the money.

LEO

Yeah, like I haven't heard that a million times.

DORIS

You can trust us. You can. Really. We're all *Americans* aren't we?

LEO

I'm *Canadian*.

DORIS

We speak the same language anyway.

WILLY

Maybe if we go to the bank, maybe we can talk to someone who can straighten this out.

DORIS

Exactly. It isn't as if I'm overdrawn. I have credit. I just can't get to it at this exact moment. Haven't you ever had anything like this happen?

LEO

(Considering the situation) You give me your passports and you can go to the bank.

DORIS

Oh, no. I'm not giving my passport to anyone. I've seen "The Midnight Express."

WILLY

Maybe it's best if we cooperate with the gentleman with the tattoos, dear.

DORIS

I give up my passport and I'll never get home.

WILLY

You might never make it home, regardless.

DORIS

No thanks to you. *(To LEO)* I demand to speak to the Manager.

LEO

(Gruff; to DORIS) Whatever you say. But I'll get her. *(Shoving finger into WILLY's chest)* You don't leave the room. *(Exits)*

WILLY

That went reasonably well, wouldn't you say?

Don't talk to me. DORIS

Now what's wrong? WILLY

How did you expect to get to the airport? DORIS

Do you think they'll let us go? WILLY

I have no intention of waiting to find out. DORIS

Why, what do you have in mind? WILLY

Open the window. DORIS

I won't let you do this to yourself. WILLY

My dear, sweet, groom of my life— I am *not* going to kill myself! We have a window and a ladder. I'm getting out of here. DORIS

I love the way you think. WILLY

(WILLY pulls the curtain to one side and opens the window.)

Since when? DORIS

I married you didn't I? WILLY

We all make mistakes. DORIS

Not on this one. *(Embraces and kisses DORIS)* WILLY

You want me to forgive you for spending the train fare? DORIS

WILLY

I want you to spend your life with me.

DORIS

(Pushing him away) You spend too much time talking. Help me move this ladder.

(DORIS and WILLY pick up the ladder, and begin to move it towards the window.)

DORIS, *Continues*

If we don't get out of here, we won't have time to thumb our way to the airport.

WILLY

Hitchhike? You?!

DORIS

You got a better idea?

WILLY

Not really. *(Easing the ladder out the window)* Easy.

DORIS

That's what I thought. Watch out for that cat! *(Offstage screech; looks out window)* Sorry!

WILLY

Now what?

DORIS

Get your bags and let's go!

(DORIS and WILLY gather their things. WILLY starts down the ladder first.)

WILLY

I'll go first, in case you slip I can catch you.

DORIS

Thank you. Careful with that bag. Here. Take this. *(DORIS places the strap of a bag over WILLY's head.)* Is that okay?

WILLY

(Almost choking.) Fine. No worries.

(As WILLY descends down the ladder, DORIS starts to climb out the window carrying the two remaining shoulder bags. She stops and calls down.)

DORIS

Willy, I forgot my purse. Can you get these?

WILLY

Sure, toss them to me. (*DORIS climbs back in the window and tosses down the bags, both at the same time.*) One bag at a— Ouch! Hey, watch it!

DORIS

Shhhhh! Don't call any attention to yourself. I'll get my purse and be right down.

(As DORIS crosses to get her purse, the curtain drops back into place, covering the ladder. As she turns to go back to the window footsteps are heard in the hallway. DORIS hasn't time to get out. She runs behind the bed, pulls off the blanket and falls to the floor, throwing the blanket over top of herself just as FRED and THE YOUNG WOMAN enter.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN

They're gone, all right, dearie. I could get meself in trouble fer taking another break so soon.

FRED

(Bolting the lock on the door) An me wife could tear yer eyes out o' their sockets if she had a mind to. But she hasn't an ounce o' time to worry 'bout me doings anymore than she has time to worry 'bout yours. They're lucky the roof hasn't collapsed on any o' these folks 'fore now.

(FRED drops the bed down from against the wall covering DORIS in the making. DORIS emits a muffled scream as if the roof has indeed caved in.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN

What was that?

FRED

Just an old Tom cat, eh'? They prowl the halls lookin' for rats.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

I found me a big one.

FRED

Big and bad.

(FRED throws THE YOUNG WOMAN onto the bed. She starts to remove clothing, although nothing that reveals too much bare skin.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Pity the other bloke had to leave so soon.

FRED

What bloke? *(Removing shoes and socks)*

THE YOUNG WOMAN

You know. The one that was staying in this room.

FRED

The bloke on his honeymoon? (*Pulls pants down revealing boxer shorts*)

THE YOUNG WOMAN

His honeymoon, you say? I wouldn't give a rat's tail for that marriage. Why he came down to the kitchen not five minutes after he seen me. No hubby of mine would have left me alone on me honeymoon at that time o' the morning. He's a rovin' eye, he has.

FRED

An' me a rovin' hand.

DORIS

(*Sticking her head out from beneath the blanket*) I beg your pardon?!

FRED

(*Mistaking DORIS's voice for THE YOUNG WOMAN, jumps onto the bed*) You'll be beggin' for more than that 'fore yer breaks over, eh'? (*Knock on door*) Now what? (*Calling*) Yeah?!

TEDDY (OFF)

Open up. I need the ladder.

FRED

There's no ladder in here.

TEDDY

Got to be. Open the door.

FRED

I got eyes. The room's no bigger than a hatbox.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, let him in. There's room for three.

FRED

Oh, hell. (*FRED rises and crosses to door, unlocking latch. TEDDY enters carrying a circular saw.*) This better be important.

TEDDY

(*Closing the door behind him then urgently but quietly*) Management's on its way up.

FRED

Up here?!

THE YOUNG WOMAN

What is it?

FRED

(To THE YOUNG WOMAN; throwing a piece of her clothing at her) Break's over. Get out.

TEDDY

No time. They're on their way.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

(Scrambling to put on clothes) Someone ratted on me? I knew it! I'll lose me job for sure!

FRED

You'll lose more than that if she catches you with me.

TEDDY

We'll all lose our jobs.

FRED

Not me. She can't fire me.

TEDDY

No, she'll just kill you.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

What are you talking about? Who will kill you?

FRED

Nobody.

TEDDY

Remember what happened the last time.

FRED

No worries. We'll say she's with you.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

Say to who?

TEDDY

The Manager.

THE MANAGER/MS. TOWNSEND (OFF)

(Knocking on the door) Manager!

FRED

My wife!

THE YOUNG WOMAN

The Manager's your wife? Thanks fer letting me in on yer little secret.

FRED

The hotel's closing. My work here'll be done by the time it reopens. I'd never see you again. Why complicate the matter?

LEO (OFF)

(Knocking harder) Open up. We know you're in there.

THE YOUNG WOMAN

My husband!

FRED

You're husband?!

THE YOUNG WOMAN/MRS. BISHOP

It's my last day.

TEDDY

Yeah, for all of us.

LEO (OFF)

I got a key.

THE MANAGER (OFF)

Open it up.

FRED

Quick! Under the bed, eh'?!

THE YOUNG WOMAN & TEDDY

Bloody right!

(TEDDY, FRED & THE YOUNG WOMAN disappear under the bed just as THE MANAGER & LEO enter. DORIS, under her blanket, remains unnoticed.)

LEO

They're gone. I don't believe it.

THE MANAGER

Are you sure? Perhaps they're down the hall.

LEO

No. Their bags are gone.

THE MANAGER

It's the least of my worries.

LEO

(Pouting) You never have time for me anymore.

THE MANAGER

(Comforting) I know. I've neglected you miserably. *(Drops her skirt)* But with the closing of the hotel—I've been preoccupied with more important matters.

LEO

More important than your little sugar lump?

THE MANAGER

I forget sometimes how sensitive you are.

(THE MANAGER removes her blouse. She is now in a slip and camisole.)

LEO

You made such a fuss over your *husband* when you caught him with that other woman.

(LEO and THE MANAGER make their way towards the bed. LEO lifts THE MANAGER onto the bed and then crawls on behind her. Their movements on the bed should appear awkward as they try to maneuver into position. Meanwhile, DORIS, crawls out from under the blanket and slithers out the door.)

THE MANAGER

I had no choice. I wouldn't want him to think I don't care. I'm paying his men *half* what it would cost me with any reputable construction company in London.

FRED

(From under the bed) I'll break yer bloody neck! *(Starts out from under the bed)*

TEDDY

(Pulling FRED back under the bed) **Half?!** You bloody thief!

(TEDDY and FRED begin to tussle under the bed.)

THE YOUNG WOMAN (UNDER THE BED)

(To TEDDY and FRED) Shut the bloody hell up!

THE MANAGER

Besides. What about you? Ranting and raving over that little nothing of a kitchen utensil.

(TEDDY and FRED continue to tussle in the confines of the underside of the bed as THE YOUNG WOMAN attempts to break them up.)

LEO

(Standing on bed, violently beating his chest) That is **my** kitchen utensil! She brings the leopard out in me. I will kill her and any man caught beating his batter with her! *(TEDDY, FRED and THE YOUNG WOMAN instantly freeze.)* But you, my brave huntress, you bring out the antelope in me. *(THE TATTOED MAN drops to his knees)* I toss my tail in the air and leap to your side. I nuzzle your nookie. *(Nuzzles her neck)* My hooves paw at your chest. *(Paws at her check)* I grow a twelve-point prize rack for you. *(Lies back onto the bed)* Pounce on me. Attack me! Devour me!

(THE MANAGER falls onto LEO. As they huff and puff and tumble about the bed, TEDDY, FRED and THE YOUNG WOMAN can be seen with faces in awe. In the next instance, WILLY appears at the top of the ladder, pulling aside the curtain over the window.)

WILLY

Doris? Doris? What's taking so— What the heck? Doris! Hey, what's going on here?

(LEO tries to raise himself up and points at WILLY.)

LEO

That's him, Ms. Townsend. The man without means.

MS. TOWNSEND

Yes, I see, I see.

LEO

Trying to slip out without paying.

WILLY

Where's my wife? Where's Doris?

LEO

Acting like he's done nothing wrong.

MS. TOWNSEND

I see, I see. Skulking like Polonius behind the curtain. Lucky for you Mr. Bishop didn't run a dagger through your heart.

WILLY

Where's Doris?

LEO

If there's any questions to be answered I'll be the one to answer them.

MS. TOWNSEND

(Correcting him) "Ask" them.

LEO

Ask them.

WILLY

Look, she came back up here to get her purse.

LEO

So you *were* trying to escape. (*To MS. TOWNSEND*) And his wife accuses me of being “cheap.” He brings her to the cheapest lodging in London for his honeymoon no less and he still can’t pay the note.

MS. TOWNSEND

I assure you we have not seen nor heard from your wife.

WILLY

(*Entering*) How could you in your position?

MS. TOWNSEND

My position is not in question. (*Pushing LEO aside and attempting to exit the bed*) I am the Manager and Mr. Bishop alerted me to the situation at hand.

WILLY

I saw for myself how he “alerted” you.

LEO

Why, you...(*Jumping up and after WILLY*)

MS. TOWNSEND

Enough, Mr. Bishop. Think Antelope. (*LEO responds immediately; stops*) Mr. Bishop advised me I had two guests who refused to pay for their bed and breakfast.

WILLY

Only one breakfast.

MS. TOWNSEND

Two are included in the price of the room.

WILLY

Try and explain that to my wife.

LEO

Try to explain anything to your wife. She is utmost disagreeable. I am surprised someone hasn’t done away with her by now.

WILLY

What kind of hotel is this, anyway?

LEO

We serve excellent food despite the proliferation of rodents.

WILLY

Rodents?!

LEO

It's a sewage problem. It has nothing to do with the kitchen.

MS. TOWNSEND

You *would* defend the kitchen.

WILLY

How can I rephrase my question? Where is my wife?

MS. TOWNSEND

I can only surmise that she has left you holding the bag.

(MS. TOWNSEND lifts up the bag of rubbish that contains the "dead" cat and the bloody rags and dumps it on the floor. LEO reaches down and picks up the "dead" cat.)

LEO

As you can see we have ways of eliminating the vermin in this building.

MS. TOWNSEND

(Examining the debris that has fallen from the bag) What is this? Blood-soaked towels?
(Addressing LEO) What happened here?

LEO

(Picking up the blood-stained sweater; looks at THE MANAGER) Ms. Townsend?

WILLY

(Grabbing the sweater) My wife's sweater!

MS. TOWNSEND

Mr. Morton, it appears, the cat is out of the bag.

WILLY

She'll never forgive me for this.

LEO

Ah-ha! A confession already. I admit, I expected more of a fight.

WILLY

A fight? A fight?! You murder my wife and I'm supposed to put up a fight? Well, yes, actually. I would put up a fight. I *do* put up a fight! Doris, darling, love of my life, what have they done to you?!

MS. TOWNSEND

Stifle yourself, Mr. Morton, foul play is expected. There is an investigation in progress.

WILLY

What kind of an investigation?

MS. TOWNSEND

You said it yourself. Murder. A murder investigation, of course. Save your laments for Scotland Yard.

WILLY

I had no reason to kill my wife. I love my wife.

LEO

You threatened her in front of me. She refused to hand over her passport. She said she was afraid she would never get home. 'You might never make it home regardless,' you said. She was afraid for her life, she was. And she tried to tell me. I didn't listen. Oh, Ms. Townsend, it's all my fault. I could have stopped it, had I only heeded her cry for help. Why did you do it, Willy? Why? (*He sobs*)

MS. TOWNSEND

(*Comforting LEO*) There, there, now. How could you have known?

WILLY

You! You said you couldn't believe someone hadn't done away with her by now. I heard you. You said that.

LEO

Mrs. Morton was most disagreeable. Had she been my wife I'd have killed her.

WILLY

Did you hear that? Did you hear it?

LEO

She wasn't my wife. If I'm to kill any man's wife I shall murder my own.

(*THE YOUNG WOMAN, still hidden beneath the bed, is visibly shaken.*)

WILLY

You are a freak.

MS. TOWNSEND

Bite your tongue, Mr. Morton! You have no reason to speak unkindly. We shall be fair in our judgment.

WILLY

Your judgment?!

MS. TOWNSEND

Now, tell us, where have you hidden the body?

WILLY

I have not *hidden* the body *anywhere*.

MS. TOWNSEND

Don't you find it odd, Mr. Bishop, that Mr. Morton appears entirely unconcerned about the whereabouts of his wife's dead body?

LEO

Equally odd, Ms. Townsend, that he shows little concern about her death, in general. Not that I would, either, mind you, should I have had the grave misfortune of marrying the lady.

WILLY

I have a wonderful wife. She's just been under a little stress, that's all. Of course I'm concerned. I'm accused of *murdering* her and I don't even know if she's dead or not.

LEO

Ah-ha! A second confession! It's clear, Ms. Townsend, that Mr. Morton is indeed responsible for, at best, the torture and maiming of his dear wife. Left for dead at the very least.

WILLY

I thought you didn't like my wife.

LEO

The drama plays better if the murder victim is a sympathetic character. Otherwise Ms. Townsend and I might be compelled to acquit you on a plea of justifiable homicide. I prefer to argue the death penalty.

WILLY

Before who?

MS. TOWNSEND

Whom.

MR BISHOP

Before Judge Townsend, of course.

MS. TOWNSEND

(Crawling back onto the bed) You remembered.

LEO

Of course, Ms. Townsend. *(Joining her)* When you appeared before the court wearing nothing but your gavel, you brought a new meaning to the phrase, 'All rise.'

MS. TOWNSEND

You're making me blush, Mr. Bishop.

WILLY

Is this a hotel or an insane asylum?

LEO

(Leaps off bed for the attack) Watch your tongue or I'll bite it off.

WILLY

Antelope.

MS. TOWNSEND

(Calming LEO) I do need you to produce a body, Mr. Bishop, before I can proceed with sentencing.

LEO

Of course, your honor. All right. *(To WILLY, slowly turning back into the leopard)* Enough of your games. Where is it? I know it's in here somewhere. The bag, Willy? In this bag? Did you cut your wife into teeny little pieces and stuff the dripping remains into one of these rubbish bags? How little were the pieces, Willy? How small are they?

WILLY

I did not cut my wife to pieces and stuff her in a bag.

LEO

Then where is she, Willy? Where is she?

MS. TOWNSEND

Try the bed, Mr. Bishop.

LEO

(Immediately softening into the Antelope) Oh, how you make my pounding heart soar.

MS. TOWNSEND

Under the bed, Mr. Bishop.

LEO

(Lifting MS. TOWNSEND off the bed) Oh, but my sweetfeed, there's so little room.

WILLY

I think she is referring to the body, you idiot!

(LEO, again the leopard turns on WILLY, growling, chasing him about the room and over the bed.)

LEO

I'll get you! I'll tear you to shreds!

WILLY

The bed! Under the bed! The body— look under the bed!

(LEO suddenly stops. He turns toward the bed and with one great roar lifts the bed on end, exposing the terrified souls cowering beneath. For a moment the stage is silent.)

MRS. BISHOP

I can explain.

WILLY

This doesn't look good.

MRS. BISHOP

(As LEO begins to circle and back her about the room) Purrrrrrr. Meow. Nice kitty, kitty, kitty.

LEO

ROAR!

MS. TOWNSEND

There's no getting that cat back in the bag.

FRED

(To MS. TOWNSEND) You! I can't turn me back on you for half a minute!

TEDDY

(To FRED) No, but you can pay me half the wages I *deserve!*

MS. TOWNSEND

Take a long, deep, cleansing breath, Fred. Relax. Relax. You know how unbecoming it is for a gentleman to unravel in public.

FRED

About as unbecoming as me wife unravelin' her undies in public.

LEO

(To MRS. BISHOP) I'll take care of you later. *(Turning on THE MEN)* Which of you soon to be gutless dustbags laid his filthy palms on my creampuff? *(Grabs WILLY)*

WILLY

Hey, leave me out of this. I'm only here because I murdered my wife.

FRED

(To his wife, MS. TOWNSEND; warning) There's plenty more in the kitchen where that *(Referring to MRS. BISHOP)* came from.

WILLY

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

LEO

(Pushing WILLY aside and grabbing both FRED and TED around their necks) I'm going to hammer your heads together until you ain't gonna be able to tell whose half brain is whose.

MS. TOWNSEND

'Aren't,' Mr. Bishop. Ain't is not proper English. And, Mr. Bishop, that sentence structure was entirely inappropriate.

WILLY

I think his language is the least of our concerns, wouldn't you say?

FRED

It's her Pygmalion Complex. She's got this obsession about transforming ruffians into proper English gentleman. She gave up on me years ago but it's a warm bed and she's good for business, eh'? And, hell, I have to admit; I'm rather fond of the lady.

WILLY

Well, that accounts for something, but not wanting to appear judgmental or anything, I think she has a few screws loose in her Makita.

FRED

Don't go trying to get chummy with me. I may be a bloody cheat but I'm no wife killer.

LEO

(To FRED) So it was you! You rotten chunk of knotty pine. I'm going to splinter you into particleboard. I'm going to tear you into so many pieces they'll be finding your carrion in the bellies of seagulls north of Wales.

MS. TOWNSEND

That's much better, Mr. Bishop. Excellent superlatives.

LEO

O' vengeance! I should have fatted all the region kites with this slave's offal.

MS. TOWNSEND

Bravo! Bravo! *(To WILLY)* That's Shakespeare.

WILLY

I think we're missing the big picture here.

LEO

Yeah, and what's that?

WILLY

WHERE IS MY WIFE?!

MS. TOWNSEND, LEO ET AL

Dead.

WILLY

Doris? Is she really dead? Can it be? Oh, sweetheart. I know this hasn't turned out to be the kind of honeymoon you expected but I never thought it would end like this.

LEO

Save it.

FRED

Wife beater.

WILLY

I didn't beat my wife!

LEO

No, you just cut her to pieces.

WILLY

You should talk.

FRED

String him up!

MRS. BISHOP

I say we string up every man here who has or who might have the inclination to cause severe and unreparable harm to his beloved.

LEO

You trying to get rid of me?

MS. TOWNSEND

It appears as if new evidence has come to light. Where were you, Mrs. Bishop when Mrs. Morton disappeared?

MRS. BISHOP

In bed with your husband, I believe.

LEO

Roooooar!

MS. TOWNSEND

Not now, love. I surmise there might be something between Mrs. Bishop and Mr. Morton.

WILLY

Where did that come from?

MS. TOWNSEND

Your wife is missing, presumably dead. Mrs. Bishop has suggested we hang her husband. Ergo it appears that Mr. Morton and Mrs. Bishop are having an affair. Have you anything to say for yourself, Mrs. Bishop? *(No response.)* Mrs. Bishop? Cat got your tongue?

MRS. BISHOP

Not if I can help it.

FRED

She did say it was a shame he had to leave so soon.

LEO

And I distinctly remember as I approached the open door to the room that Mr. Morton was trying to force his wife to take a bite of biscuit and she said she'd 'die first.'

MS. TOWNSEND

A poisoned biscuit, no doubt. Where did you get the biscuit, Mr. Morton?

WILLY

This is insane.

MS. TOWNSEND

No doubt. Answer the question.

WILLY

I got the biscuit from the kitchen.

LEO

(Threateningly) Nibble, nibble, little mouse, who's that nibbling at my house?

WILLY

I'm glad you're so versed in the classics but this has gotten entirely out of hand. I barely know the woman.

MS. TOWNSEND

But you admit you've seen her before.

WILLY

She came to my room.

LEO

Rrrrrrr!

WILLY

On her break. My wife was here. It was nothing.

FRED

You took your ciggy break with the Yank?

MS. TOWNSEND

Then you followed her back to the kitchen and the two of you devised a plan to do away with Mrs. Morton with a poisoned biscuit so the two of you could be together.

WILLY

I went to the kitchen because I was hungry.

MS. TOWNSEND

You returned with the biscuit on the presumption of hunger.

FRED

(To MRS. BISHOP) You took a ciggy break with the Yank and then one with me?

LEO

RRRRRRRRRR!

MS. TOWNSEND

Obviously a ploy to divert attention. Gentleman, we have a motive, a method and a means.

WILLY

I have no means. My wife can attest to that.

MS. TOWNSEND

Due to her untimely death, Mrs. Morton is unavailable for comment.

LEO

He planned it all along. I'm sure of it now. The credit card scheme was just a means to get *his* wife to this hotel so you could kill her and run away with mine.

WILLY

I never met your wife before today. I am on my honeymoon!

LEO

But you forget I've met your wife and I think we can all agree I made a better choice.

FRED

I can vouch for that.

LEO

Grrrrrrrr!

TEDDY

Me, too.

LEO

GRRRRRRRRRRRR!

MS. TOWNSEND

Then the jury unanimously agrees. (*Looking directly at MRS. BISHOP*) I find both defendants guilty as charged.

MRS. BISHOP

Wait a minute, I'm not on trial here. Don't you see? This is just a plot to get rid of me. Fred. Help me! Your flippin' wife wants me bloody husband! Do something!

FRED

I think she's jealous of us. It's rather cute. What can I say? The verdict is in. Hang 'em.

LEO

Tear him to shreds!

TEDDY

Throw the bloke out the window!

WILLY

(*To TEDDY*) What'd I ever do to you?

TEDDY

You took me ladder.

(*MS. TOWNSEND picks up the circular saw.*)

MS. TOWNSEND

Off with her head!

(*MRS. TOWNSEND moves menacingly towards MRS. BISHOP.*)

MRS. BISHOP

Get away from me! Help! Stop her!

WILLY

Queen to Bishop. Hello. Hello. Anyone home? Order in the court! **Order in the court!**

MS. TOWNSEND

You have no authority to say that. I'm the judge!

WILLY

You're the flake.

MS. TOWNSEND

And you are in contempt of court! Arrest that man!

LEO

You've already sentenced him to death.

MS. TOWNSEND

Then what are you waiting for, Leopard? Pounce! Attack! **Devour!**

(MS. TOWNSEND flips the switch to 'on' and amidst the roars of the saw and the raging LEO, the chaos begins. LEO goes for WILLY; FRED grabs the nearest 2 x 4 and goes after his wife who is after THE YOUNG WOMAN. TEDDY brandishes a makita and chases FRED. WILLY picks up the pillow to defend himself. Up and over and under the bed and in and out the door. As if the situation were not grim enough, a very loud rumble is suddenly heard. All eyes turn upward. The light hanging in the center of the room flickers and the STAGE GOES BLACK. There is a long loud explosion with sounds of a collapsing building as the ceiling crashes to the floor. Silence. Miraculously the light, swinging by its wire still attached to the ceiling, flickers once again and LIGHT IS RESTORED. As the smoke clears, two lone figures remain standing, the others scattered about dead: FRED hanging halfway out the window; TEDDY at his feet; MRS. BISHOP across the bed; LEO on the floor near WILLY. WILLY and MRS. BISHOP, amazed but relatively unscathed, turn to one another. They run to each other. He strokes her hair; she cleaves to his chest.)

MRS. BISHOP

I was so frightened!

WILLY

I know, I know. But it's over now. And you're okay. Oh, my good lord... *I'm* okay! I'm alive! I'm alive!

(WILLY dances excitedly in circles. Then he lifts MRS. BISHOP high into the air and swings her about. As he sets her back down, WILLY looks deep into her eyes; then he kisses her passionately on the lips.)

MRS. BISHOP

(Still in the embrace) Oh, my.

WILLY

Yes.

MRS. BISHOP

(Assuming WILLY killed his wife) What did you do with the body?

Nothing.

WILLY

What do you mean “nothing?”

MRS. BISHOP

Just that. Nothing.

WILLY

You must have done something.

MRS. BISHOP

No, nothing. I saw the bloody sweater. I assumed you killed her.

WILLY

Not me.

MRS. BISHOP

Not you?

WILLY

Not me.

MRS. BISHOP

Then where in God’s name is Doris?

WILLY

(As if on cue, DORIS sticks her head through the curtain at the open window.)

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes