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# One Particularly Bad Day for Jonathan Blake

by  
**Jim Inman**

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# One Particularly Bad Day for Jonathan Blake

by Jim Inman

## TIME

**SCENE 1:** 12:30 A.M. Sunday morning; early summer; of late before cell phones.

**SCENE 2:** Approximately Ten Hours Later

**SCENE 3:** Continuing

## PLACE

Jonathan Blake's 27th Floor Apartment in a Large City on the West Coast

## CHARACTERS

JONATHAN BLAKE: *a successful ghost writer*

EILEEN PERRY: *his attractive young neighbor, 29*

MARGO: *Eileen's Aunt, an elegant 60's*

AMBER\*: *another neighbor, lookin' for lovin', 30ish*

MEG\*: *a Private Investigator*

SAMANTHA GEORGE\*: *a 'Yes Woman' to Madame Cebayla Weyhee Alphonse*

CHARLES: *the terribly refined elderly doorman; (V.O.)*

**\*AMBER, MEG & SAMANTHA GEORGE are all played by the same actor**

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# One Particularly Bad Day for Jonathan Blake

By Jim Inman

## SCENE 1

*(AT RISE: JONATHAN BLAKE'S 27<sup>th</sup>- floor apartment; 12:30 a.m. early summer. The apartment suggests wealth, but is far from ostentatious. Rather, its stunning simplicity betrays the enormous expense of creating it. JONATHAN is not responsible for its taste, nor style; it is a designer's handiwork. But he is responsible for its order. Nothing is allowed out of place; not an objet d'art; not a paper clip; nothing. Among the usual requisites are the perfectly stocked wet bar, shelves crammed with books, mostly autobiographies, mostly written by JONATHAN, and two corridors; one leading to a den and JONATHAN'S bedroom, the other to the dining/ kitchen area. An elaborate office, in which is discreetly installed a state-of-the-art computer system, is one-half level above the living room. French doors open onto a large perfectly landscaped and manicured terrace. Below, beyond, and around are spectacular views of the city. SOFT JAZZ is coming from no discernible source. SOUNDS OF ELECTRONICALLY KEYED LOCKS being opened punctuate the music. In a moment, JONATHAN and EILEEN enter. JONATHAN is a tall, trim, striking man of 68, who appears to be a good decade younger. EILEEN is an attractive and mature 29. She is wearing Country/Western attire. JONATHAN has attempted the look with a Cowboy Hat, a Bandana around his neck, a vest and Jeans but no boots. He touches a panel on the wall. Soft, seductive lighting illuminates the room.)*

EILEEN

*(Attempting a heavy Texas accent as she looks about the room)* Why, I think this is jest about the cutest dang place I ever did see!

JONATHAN

I thank ya', ma'am.

EILEEN

But I'd bet the bedroom's even cuter, idn't it?

JONATHAN

What?!

EILEEN

Bedroom, honey! Bedroom!

JONATHAN

Well, now, you don't waste much time, do ya'?

EILEEN

That adorable Whatzername wouldn't waste any time now would she

JONATHAN

*(Interrupting)* ‘Amber...’

EILEEN

Whatever! That girl wouldn’t be wastin’ time, I can promise you that! *(Smiling; sincere)*  
Though, I cain’t blame her. You truly are one hot dude, Dude!

JONATHAN

*(Laughing)* Why don’t you just shut up and kiss me. *(Starts for her)*

EILEEN

*(Dropping accent and stopping him)* Excuse me. I thought I was here for a nightcap.

JONATHAN

*(Laughing)* Damn! I hoped you’d forgotten that. What’ll it be?

EILEEN

Just a little wine, I think. White, if you have it.

JONATHAN

I do.

*(JONATHAN goes to the bar, begins to prepare the drinks. EILEEN moves to the sofa, sits, notices a large book on the coffee table, picks it up, and begins to thumb through it.)*

EILEEN

What’s this?

JONATHAN

Aww, you don’t want to look at that.

EILEEN

Why?

JONATHAN

It’s boring. Teeming with old people.

*(EILEEN has already opened it.)*

EILEEN

Why, it is not! They’re young. And cute!

JONATHAN

Okayokay! My Senior High School Directory. 50th reunion.

50th!!

EILEEN

So I'm older than I look.

JONATHAN

I like older men.

EILEEN

I gathered. I'm glad.

JONATHAN

When...?

EILEEN

When, what...?

JONATHAN

...is your reunion? Are you going?

EILEEN

JONATHAN

I'm afraid I'd be a little late. It began today; one looong weekend of reminiscing. Most of which, distorted by time, and ego, will be seriously delusive.

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* You obviously don't think much of reunions.

JONATHAN

I try not to think anything of reunions.

EILEEN

That's too bad. I think they'd be fun.

JONATHAN

Not if you'd gone to my high school.

EILEEN

*(Studying him)* I still can't believe you're as old as you'd have to be to...

JONATHAN

*(Interrupting)* I graduated from high school when I was 18. Figure it out.

EILEEN

*(Calculating)* You couldn't be!

JONATHAN

But I am, and I thank you. How old are you?

EILEEN

Didn't your mother tell you never to ask a woman a question like that?

JONATHAN

I didn't have a mother.

EILEEN

I'm sorry.

JONATHAN

But my father did.

EILEEN

Told you things...?

JONATHAN

Lots of things I ignored.

EILEEN

Like...?

JONATHAN

Like honoring a woman's virtue until marriage.

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* And then ravaging her!

JONATHAN

He never got beyond the virgin part.

EILEEN

But you did, I'd bet.

JONATHAN

As did he. And that's all you get for tonight.

EILEEN

*(Playfully)* Doesn't matter. I've been warned.

JONATHAN

*(Shocked)* Warned...?



EILEEN

But I do have good taste.

JONATHAN

Thank you.

EILEEN

You're welcome.

JONATHAN

*(Bringing her a glass of wine)* Your wine.

EILEEN

Thank you. *(As she continues to flip through the Directory, she comes across his senior picture.)* Ooohh, Jonathan! Look at you! You were adorable!

JONATHAN

I was not adorable! I was 18, for Christ's sake! I was hormonal!

EILEEN

I can believe that.

JONATHAN

*(Reaching for the Directory)* Okay, now. That's enough. Give me that

EILEEN

*(Clinging to it)* Not just yet. Let me see just one more picture. Please. Just one.

JONATHAN

Okay, but just one, and then we stash it.

EILEEN

Stash it? *(Turns the page and reads the name over the photograph)* 'Michael MacAllister.'  
*(Looks up at JONATHAN, then back at the photograph)* Wait a minute. This isn't you...?  
*(Looks back at him)* It could be though. ? . *(Looks back at the photograph)* Amazing. *(Turns a page; searches for him)* So where are you?

JONATHAN

Okay, if you have to know... *(Flips back to the preceding page)* There! Little Mikey!

EILEEN

Then it is you! (*Beat*) You were called Little Mikey? But that's not your name...

JONATHAN

It was then. 'Michael MacAllister.'

EILEEN

And 'Mikey.' I can't imagine you as a 'Mikey.'

JONATHAN

My loving grandmother's idea.

EILEEN

Then you really are 'Michael.'

JONATHAN

Yep. I was.

EILEEN

'Michael MacAllister.' That's nice. Why'd you change it?

JONATHAN

I liked 'Jonathan Blake' better. Sounds more like a writer. A novelist. A bad one.

EILEEN

Stop it! (*Back to the Directory*) "Mikey MacAllister. Athlete. Writer. Leader. Lover." Oh, my!

JONATHAN

(*Bragging*) Like I said... 'hormonal.'

EILEEN

So Corky was right!

JONATHAN

I'm kidding! I'm kidding!

EILEEN

(*Looking at Directory again; reading*) "Most likely to succeed...at something..." Hummm...  
(*Looking around at the tasteful surrounding*) Well, you certainly seem to have done that.

JONATHAN

That's history. Can we just put the book away and move on to something else? This is embarrassing!

EILEEN

*(Ignoring him)* Oh, there you are, again! You're very photogenic, you know that? Who's the girl?

JONATHAN

Nobody.

EILEEN

Well, then, for your information, she's 'Amy Grundig.' Oh, that poor girl! What a horrible name! *(Continuing to read)* "King and Queen of the Senior Prom." And she was 'nobody?'

JONATHAN

It wasn't that big a deal.

EILEEN

She's very pretty.

JONATHAN

Not really. The camera loved her, as they say.

EILEEN

Regardless, you're a handsome pair. Were you in love with her?

JONATHAN

You're kidding!

EILEEN

Would that be so unusual? Where I come from, the King and Queen are always in love. It seemed to be a prerequisite. I'll bet she was a cheerleader, too.

JONATHAN

No, but she was Senior Class President; President of the Student Body; and President of the 'teddibly elite' all-girl social club, inappropriately called, the Charmettes.

EILEEN

Hummm. Quite a package.

JONATHAN

She was also the original Ice Queen. Stacked, but unapproachable; saving herself for Prince Charming; that sort of thing.

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* Which is to say she got you guys nuts!

JONATHAN

Exactly. And not one of us ever got to first base.

EILEEN

*(Teasing)* Second base?

JONATHAN

No hits. No runs. Lots of errors! The girl was a prick tease. Oops! Sorry...

EILEEN

*(Innocently)* That's perfectly all right. I have no idea what you're talking about...

JONATHAN

*(Laughing)* Sure you don't!

EILEEN

You truly were a handsome pair, though. Where is she now?

JONATHAN

Don't know.

EILEEN

Did she ever get married?

JONATHAN

Don't have the slightest idea. Now, how about giving that up. *(Reaches for the Directory)*

EILEEN

No, no, no, please.

JONATHAN

Eileen, you promised. . .

EILEEN

But I love looking at old pictures; seeing how people looked when they were young; when they still had hopes and dreams. There's something so sweet about that. And sad.

JONATHAN

*(Amused)* Excuse me. Even us old guys have hopes and dreams, you know?

EILEEN

Oh, God! Jonathan, I'm sorry! I didn't mean that!

JONATHAN

*(Laughing as interrupts her)* I know you didn't. I'm putting you on.

EILEEN

*(Turning to another page)* Awwww! Look at you! Basketball? And cute as bug in those little silk shorts.

JONATHAN

*(Feigning embarrassment)* Eileen, please...

EILEEN

*(Playing with him)* And your legs! Oh, my goodness!!

JONATHAN

I still have them, too. Both of them!

*(The laugh together and then find themselves simply looking at each other. JONATHAN leans forward, as if to kiss her, but EILEEN becomes flustered and looks back at the Directory.)*

EILEEN

Are there any more of you? Track? Swimming team? Ooooo! I'd luuuuvy to see you in one of those teeny tight trunks...

JONATHAN

You're working me up you know...

EILEEN

*(Flipping a page and changing the subject)* Aht! "The Firebird!" *(Becoming more excited)* Amazing! Who is she? The pose, the arabesque, even the headpiece! She could be Maria Tallchief!

JONATHAN

Not quite. An Ice Queen. Ironic name for a Firebird, huh? How do you know about Maria Tallchief?

EILEEN

I'm mad for ballet. All the way back to Pavlova. The Ice Queen?

JONATHAN

Your new best friend. Amy Grundig.

EILEEN

She must have been wonderful!

JONATHAN

She was no Tallchief, I can tell you that.

EILEEN

But she clearly was very good. And so accomplished in so many things!

JONATHAN

Yep.

EILEEN

What a pity the two of you didn't get together. Your children would have been extraordinary.

JONATHAN

Fortunately for them they were spared both of us. May I put that thing away now?

EILEEN

Well; . . . if you must. . . *(Hands the Directory to Jonathan)*

JONATHAN

And then, how about talking about something else? Like maybe you.

*(JONATHAN places the Directory on the far side of the coffee table.)*

EILEEN

Well... I met you tonight at the Saddle Tramp. I thought you were attractive...

JONATHAN

I though you were a knockout.

EILEEN

I loved the way you danced.

JONATHAN

Ditto.

EILEEN

You invited me home for a nightcap...

JONATHAN

And here we are.

EILEEN

And here we are.

*(A moment; he moves in on her, again.)*

EILEEN, *Continues*

*(Putting up a protective hand)* But...only a nightcap. . .

JONATHAN

Got it.

EILEEN

Your turn.

JONATHAN

That was about tonight. I was there, remember? What about yesterday, last week, last month? Your life?

EILEEN

*(Beat; stalling)* Uh...do you have cheese and crackers?

JONATHAN

No, but you're stalling.

EILEEN

And you're avoiding.

JONATHAN

Why would I be doing that?

EILEEN

The book upsets you.

JONATHAN

Why would it upset me?

EILEEN

I don't know.

JONATHAN

*(Realizing she is not going to let him off the hook)* Okay. So it does. The whole damned thing's about numbers. Facts. And I don't give a damn about any of 'em. They have nothing to do with people. Not real people. You want to know about boring? There were 237 kids in my graduating class. According to the Cover Letter, 129 might show up for the celebration. 78 have vanished from the face of the earth. Until today, I thought I was one of them. I wanted no more of that adolescent crap. None of it. And now, 50 years later, I get that thing, busting its gut with facts: 40 of us are dead. 40! One in every six of us is dead. Thoughtful of them to pass that information along, don't you think?

EILEEN

*(Sensing his discomfort)* Jonathan...

JONATHAN

*(Continuing over her)* We thought we'd live forever! Of the 129 who responded, 115 are or have been married. God knows how many kids they've brought into this overpopulated world, but that's their business. I left all that behind. I wanted to keep it there.

EILEEN

*(Carefully)* Do...you...have children?

JONATHAN

*(Glibly)* Well, you never can tell. You know guys. We get around. *(Beat. Seriously, again)* I'm sorry. No. No, I don't.

*(They sit silently, EILEEN studying him.)*

EILEEN

I am sorry, too.

JONATHAN

*(Smiling)* That I'm childless...?

EILEEN

No. I've upset you...

JONATHAN

No... No, it's all right... I...uh... I was just caught a little off guard. Some uh...some things came up that I'd...uh... What I mean is—it's...uh... It kinda' threw me, that's all...

EILEEN

You're a sensitive man, aren't you?

JONATHAN

I should have burned the goddamned thing!

EILEEN

I'm glad you didn't.

JONATHAN

Why?

EILEEN

Because... Forgive me if I'm wrong about this, but...what just happened... It makes me feel like... I'm sorry. I shouldn't...

JONATHAN

No. Please. What were you going to say?

EILEEN

You don't let people get close to you, do you?

JONATHAN

*(The "Texas accent" again)* Now, idn't that jest like a woman! I jest meet her and she's already readin' my beads!

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* My father would have said that!

JONATHAN

Oh, m'God!

EILEEN

No, no, no! I mean... He was silly, too. He... *(He has broken her up.)* Never mind! Where were we!

*(JONATHAN is becoming increasingly enchanted with this woman. There is a quiet moment, JONATHAN just looking at her and smiling.)*

JONATHAN

Jesus, you're nice.

*(EILEEN doesn't break the gaze this time. JONATHAN, becoming ill-at-ease, does.)*

JONATHAN, *Continues*

But you were about to say something; about what just happened. It made you feel like...what...?

EILEEN

It made me feel like maybe you could trust me.

JONATHAN

*(Studying her)* Can I?

EILEEN

I would hope so.

JONATHAN

But you're not sure.

EILEEN

I'm sure.

JONATHAN

Ohhh, how I'd like that for a change. (*Kisses her passionately*) God I'm glad I met you tonight.

EILEEN

So am I. (*He tries to kiss her, again, but...*) If you hadn't...would you have brought Amber here...?

JONATHAN

No. Amber would have brought herself here! You saved me from a fate worse than death!

EILEEN

Still, she is cute. A little pushy, but cute...

JONATHAN

A little pushy! Ha! (*Reaches for her glass*) More...?

EILEEN

Oh, no thank you. I think I've had enough. (*Goes to him, puts arms around his shoulders*) I've had such a nice time being with you tonight. And thank you for bringing me home.

JONATHAN

You're not leaving...?

EILEEN

I think I should...

JONATHAN

You just got here.

EILEEN

I know, but...

JONATHAN

And despite my lothario-otic reputation, I...

EILEEN

Your what?!

JONATHAN

I don't know. I just made it up. Despite that, I promise not to touch you. (*Beat, then quickly*) Unless you want me to!

EILEEN

(*Laughing*) You're crazy. And I love it. And I'm not afraid of you. And I can take care of myself. And I'm going because whether you know it or not, you need to be alone.

I do? Why?

JONATHAN

Memories.

EILEEN

Forget memories.

JONATHAN

And feelings.

EILEEN

Eileen...

JONATHAN

And whether you want me to or not, I have no intention of not seeing you again.

EILEEN

God, you're too much! *(Taking her shoulders gently; an unusually unguarded moment)*  
Eileen... please stay with me for little while. Let me hold you...just hold you. Just for a little while...

JONATHAN

Most definitely not.

EILEEN

This is not about sex.

JONATHAN

I know. But some other time. For sure. *(Goes to the front door)* One thing about living in a big city, you often discover the most delightful neighbors. *(They look at each other for a moment.)*  
Well, here's to Terpsichore.

EILEEN

*(She pecks him on a cheek.)*

Somehow I doubt that Terpsichore would approve of the Two-Step.

JONATHAN

EILEEN

So do I. But she would have adored "The Firebird." Besides, it seemed like a good exit line.

JONATHAN

It was. I'll take you down. What floor?

*(The DOORBELL SOUNDS, startling them.)*

Jesus! Who is that!

AMBER (O.S.)

*(With a heavy Texas accent)* Well, If you'd jest open the door, you'd find out, sugah!

*(JONATHAN and EILEEN look at each other, nonplussed. He opens the door. AMBER is beaming on the other side.)*

JONATHAN

What are you doing here...?

AMBER

Why, I come to see you! *(Noticing EILEEN)* Oh, my mercy, I didn't know...!

JONATHAN

Well, you do now. We're just leaving.

AMBER

I am so embarrassed!

JONATHAN

It's all right.

AMBER

So embarrassed! I'll jest go on then.

JONATHAN

Yes, do that.

AMBER

*(To EILEEN)* Oh, by the way, I'm AMBER.

*(She extends a hand to EILEEN, who takes it tentatively.)*

EILEEN

I know.

AMBER

And who are you, if I may be so bold?

EILEEN

*(Glaring at JONATHAN) I'm not so sure, anymore.*

AMBER

All right, then. Byebye.

*(AMBER turns abruptly and leaves. JONATHAN is stunned.)*

JONATHAN

I swear to God, I had no idea she was coming. How'd she know where I lived?

EILEEN

I can't imagine. Unless you told her.

JONATHAN

I didn't! I swear I didn't!

EILEEN

You're some guy... And at 68. I presume you don't require Viagra. Good night.

JONATHAN

Eileen, please...

EILEEN

Good night.

*(EILEEN closes the door and is gone. Mad with frustration, he kicks it.)*

JONATHAN

Goddamnit!

*(Having hurt his foot, he hobbles about the apartment, straightening it, working off steam. In a few moments, DOORBELL RINGS. As he hurries to door...)*

Eileen...!

*(He flings the door open. AMBER is beaming on the other side.)*

AMBER

*(Whispering)* Is she gone?

JONATHAN

Will you get the hell out of here!

*(But AMBER slips inside, checks the hallway behind her, and closes the door carefully.)*

AMBER

Nobody saw me enter.

JONATHAN

That's not the issue. Out!!

AMBER

*(Blocking the door and trying to be seductive)* Oh, Jonathan, don't be mean. We danced so well together and your body felt so strong and hard when you pushed it against mine; if you get my meanin'. Let me stay, Jonathan, please. Just for one quick fuck.

JONATHAN

That's gutter talk! Clean it up!

AMBER

Call it anything you like, honey. Let's just do it!

JONATHAN

Jesus! How the hell did you get in this building?

AMBER

Why, Sugah, I just sashayed in.

JONATHAN

Charles would have stopped you.

AMBER

Well, he didn't.

JONATHAN

That sonofabitch! *(Starts toward the intercom)*

AMBER

Now, Jonathan, don't be cruel. He's an old man. When was the last time you got a tight squeeze and a wet kiss from a pretty young theng?

JONATHAN

I'm not going to dignify that with an answer.

AMBER

*(Teasing him)* That long, huh?

*(INTERCOM BUZZES. JONATHAN goes to it.)*

JONATHAN

*(Gruffly)* Yes, Charles

CHARLES (V.O.)

Mr. Blake, this is Charles. I've done a terrible thing, sir. A young woman is on her way up...

JONATHAN

*(More kindly)* I know, Charles. It's all right. Please, just don't let it happen again.

CHARLES (V.O.)

Oh, no, sir. I won't. Thank you, sir! No! I won't!

*(JONATHAN hits the disconnect button.)*

JONATHAN

I want you out of here.

AMBER

And if I don't go? Whatcha' gonna' do? Call the po-lice?

JONATHAN

Of course not.

AMBER

Then I suppose you'll jest throw me out! Manhandle me! You'd like to manhandle me, wouldn't you!

JONATHAN

I don't manhandle women.

AMBER!

No! You just crush 'em in other ways. ? .

*(This stops him. He stares at her, collects himself.)*

JONATHAN

Is there supposed to be some hidden meaning in that?

AMBER

Not to us. You know what I'm talkin' about.

JONATHAN

I've never seen you before in my life! You're weird as hell, and I want you out of this apartment!  
Now!

*(He goes to door, but before he can open it...)*

AMBER

*(A 'whimpering' plea)* Oh, Mikey, please don't make me go.

JONATHAN

*(Startled)* What? What did you call me...?

AMBER

'Mikey.' I said, "Oh, Mikey..."

JONATHAN

*(Interrupting)* Why did you call me that?

AMBER

Isn't that your name? Or...wadn't it...? I think so!

JONATHAN

*(Cautiously)* Maybe...

AMBER

It was. Until you left them grassy greens of the old alma mater... Remember them 'grassy greens," Mikey?

JONATHAN

No!

AMBER

...and abandoned them sweet young thengs—ever one of 'em danged sure you loved 'em.

JONATHAN

I did not do that!

AMBER

Well, maybe I overstated a teeny bit. Mayhap...my information is wrong, altogether!

JONATHAN

*(Cautiously)* Who the devil are you...?

AMBER

Now, don't go gettin' your dander up. I'm a PI. I track people, that's all. And I just love my work. I do it good, too. Of course, the part of what makes me do it so good is I shoulda' been an actress? But I wadn't willn' to give up my charmin' way of speakin,' so I jest track people, instead? You'd be amazed how much human drama there is out there though. Why, ever case offers an opportunity of some kind or other to emote rill big. Like in your case? I git to be rill, rill indignant. *(Hands on hips, emoting)* "And you, Mr. MacAllister, you are one royal, chicken hearted sonuvabitch!" *(Back to her charmin' ol' self)* There! Now I've done that, I can relax and enjoy myself, so if you'd still like to fuck me—Ooops! Sorry!—I'd be more than obliged and then I'll just hurry on off. *(JONATHAN is nonplussed.)* You seem upset, Honey. Why don't you fix yourself a li'l ol' drinkypoo? I'd want one, too, but I like to be all of a piece when I'm gettin' it. I enjoy it so much more that way. But you go right ahead.

JONATHAN

*(Head spinning)* Thank you. Thank you, very much.

*(He makes his way to the bar and makes his drink; AMBER wanders around the apartment, checking things out.)*

AMBER

My, oh, my, oh, my! You got so meny purty thangs! You must be very rich. What do you do?

JONATHAN

I should think you'd know.

AMBER

Oh, I do. You write. I jest don't know what. But whatever it is, you shore must make lots a' money doin' it. *(JONATHAN doesn't respond.)* Do you?

JONATHAN

I don't want to be rude, but that's none of your damn business. And as for your staying 'all of a piece,' please don't do it on my account. I'm not interested.

AMBER

*(A jolly laugh)* Well, the word that's out is somewhat different from that!

JONATHAN

Right. You've been talking to Corky.

AMBER

Who's Corky?

JONATHAN

Forget it.

AMBER

Very well, but back to you not bein' interested? I shore was gettin' another message when we was dancin' the Shadow back there at the Saddle Tramp? Why, the way you was pushin' up against my backside, I wouldn't a' been surprised if you hadn't just slipped into my rear end right there in front of God and everybody.

JONATHAN

Okay! That's it! You're out of here! Now, git!!

*(He grabs her arm and pulls her toward the door.)*

AMBER

*('Whining,' again)* Oh, Mikey, please don't make me go!

JONATHAN

*(Exploding)* Goddamnit! I told you not to call me that!

*(He throws her against the door violently. She slumps to the floor.)*

Oh, my God! I'm sorry! I'm sorry; I'm sorry... *(Hurries to her)* Are you all right? Jesus, I didn't mean to do that! I...

MEG (AMBER)

*(With no trace of an accent)* What the hell. People do all kinds of things when they get their buttons pushed. I should have been more careful.

JONATHAN

What buttons! I don't have the vaguest idea what you're talking about!

MEG (AMBER)

Really? Well, I happen to know somebody who thinks you do. Help me up.

*(He does.)*

JONATHAN

Wait a minute... Wait a minute, what happened to that accent?

MEG (AMBER)

Oh, I should have told you. I'm a multiple personality.

JONATHAN

Jesus H. Christ!

MEG (AMBER)

*(A warm laugh)* I'm joshin' ya', fella'. Oh, how I do love to josh! I really should have been an actress, like I said. Except I'm not very good. That 'AMBER' accent sucked.

JONATHAN

You set me up. Just to get into this apartment.

MEG (AMBER)

Sure did, honey. But I had everything I needed before I even went to that dancin' dump. I just wanted to get laid.

*(She reaches for her curly, yellow, country/western wig and pulls it off.)*

God, this thing's hot!

*(AMBER'S auburn hair drops to her shoulders. She is beautiful.)*

JONATHAN

I don't believe this...

MEG (AMBER)

Believe it, sweetheart.

*(She walks cautiously, wanting to see if she was injured.)*

Well, at least, you didn't break anything...I don't think. A girl's gotta' be grateful for that.

JONATHAN

Look, I really am sorry. If you think you need a doctor, I'll...

MEG (AMBER)

Naww. I'll live. Thank, God, I didn't break anything, though. I had a friend once. Young cutie. Had this accident. Smashed her hip. Jesus Christ, you should see what the doctors did to her! But that's another story.

JONATHAN

*(Having gone numb)* Okay. I don't know what you're up to, but you want something. What is it? Money? What?

MEG (AMBER)

Why would I want money? So you ruined a girl's life. What's that got to do with me?

JONATHAN

*(Cautiously...)* I did what...?

MEG (AMBER)

She said you did...

JONATHAN

Yeah, well, whatever you're fantasizing here you're confusing the hell out of me, so will you please just take that 'purty yellor' wig of yours and get out of here!

MEG (AMBER)

It's kinda' hard staying up on your toes when you got one squat leg, ya' know. I bet you never thought of that.

JONATHAN

What! Look lady, either you've got me mixed up with somebody else or you're nuts! I don't know what you're talking about!

MEG (AMBER)

Dreams, Mikey. I somehow can't see that Pavlov woman dancin' around on a gimpy leg.

JONATHAN

*(Correcting her)* 'Pavlova.'

MEG (AMBER)

Whatever. And by the way, sweetie, about money...?... I don't need yours. I'm being paid handsomely by my client.

JONATHAN

Who's that? Franz Kafka!

MEG (AMBER)

I don't know who that is.

JONATHAN

I'm not surprised. So what are you being paid for...?

MEG (AMBER)

I told you. I track people. And my job's done. So let's just get down to business. *(Begins to unbutton her blouse; caressed her breasts)* You like what you see? You want to change your mind about that lil' quicky?

*(JONATHAN backs away, staring at her.)*

JONATHAN

*(Almost inaudible)*...no...

MEG (AMBER)

*(Pushing against him)* Speak up, honey. I didn't hear you.

JONATHAN

*(Pushing her away)* NO!!!

MEG (AMBER)

*(Holding up hand; an admonition)* Aht! No violence.

JONATHAN

Christ!

*(Frustrated, he moves away from her.)*

MEG (AMBER)

Good boy.

*(She buttons her blouse, and begins to gather her things.)*

JONATHAN

You do have a way of getting people off balance, don't you?

MEG (AMBER)

It's a technique. Part of the business. I love what I do. Do you?

JONATHAN

Being so skilled, I'd think you'd know the answer to that, too.

MEG (AMBER)

I do. You don't. *(Beat)* Well, I have what I need. *(Extends a hand)* By the way, my name's Meg.

JONATHAN

*(Not taking it)* I'll try not to remember that.

MEG (AMBER)

*(With admiration)* I gotta' hand it to you, fella. You're one cool customer. Most guys would have pitched me out on sight.

JONATHAN

I'm a writer. On occasion my curiosity takes precedent over my survival instincts.

MEG (AMBER)

You might want to watch that. We don't want to discover any tragic flaws here, now, do we?

JONATHAN

I appreciate your concern.

MEG (AMBER)

I thought you would. *(Beat)* Oh! And by the way, my offer's still on the table if you're interested.

JONATHAN

You're beating a dead horse, Lady!

MEG (AMBER)

A dead. ? . *(Begins to laugh)* Ooohhh! So that's the reason you . . . *(Roars)*

JONATHAN

Cut the crap, Meg! Who's your client?

MEG (AMBER)

I knew you'd ask that eventually. They always do.

JONATHAN

Okay! So who is it!

MEG (AMBER)

Sworn to secrecy.

JONATHAN

All right, then, why were you hired?

MEG (AMBER)

Can't tell.

JONATHAN

Twenty questions?

MEG (AMBER)

No.

JONATHAN

Hokaaay.... *(Pointing to the Directory)* You see that Directory. Those people had no idea where I was. I'm listed as one of the 'lost' ones. Who sent it?

MEG (AMBER)

I did.

JONATHAN

Of course, you did. How'd you find me?

MEG (AMBER)

The Internet. How else?

JONATHAN

And how'd you do that?

MEG (AMBER)

There are ways, Mr. MacAllister.

JONATHAN

None of which your client is aware.

MEG (AMBER)

That's right.

JONATHAN

And so you charge her an arm and a leg to do what she could have done herself for nothing.

MEG (AMBER)

If she'd known how. Couldn't we say the same of a brain surgeon?

JONATHAN

If he was adept at slicing into brains.

MEG (AMBER)

(A *'sweet' smile*) Which I also do. In my own way. For a fee.

JONATHAN

Clever. And smug. And you've just answered question number one of the 20, smart lady. Your client's a 'she'.

MEG (AMBER)

Is that so?

JONATHAN

Number two. You located me. Why didn't you turn me in? Why'd you come all the way across the country to check me out? You're from Pennsylvania, too. Right?

MEG (AMBER)

More or less.

JONATHAN

So your client's a woman, probably named Amy Grundig, and she's in Pennsylvania. Getting warm? Why? Why'd you make the trip?

MEG (AMBER)

Simple. I thought you were cute.

JONATHAN

What gave you that idea?

MEG (AMBER)

I looked you up in the Directory. The 50-year job.

JONATHAN

Really. It's just possible I might have changed.

MEG (AMBER)

You have. For the better.

JONATHAN

So what's your point?

MEG (AMBER)

*(Looking around the apartment)* I thought I might want you for myself.

JONATHAN

You don't deserve me.

MEG (AMBER)

My goodness! You must be good!

JONATHAN

I am.

*(They are staring each other down when they hear a FAINT RAP on the DOOR.)*

EILEEN (O.S.)

*(Softly)* Jonathan...?

JONATHAN

Sweet Mother of God!

EILEEN (O.S.)

Jonathan, are you there? *(Silence)* Please let me in?

MEG (AMBER)

I'm out of here! Where's the bedroom?

JONATHAN

Through there. And don't get under the bed!

MEG (AMBER)

(Starting for bedroom.) Honey, I've been through this so many times David Copperfield couldn't find me! (*A thought; a giggle, as she hurries back for her wig.*) Oops! My wig! On occasion I do fuck up, however. Tahtah!

(*She hurries into the bedroom and closes the door.*)

EILEEN (O.S.)

Jonathan, please let me in...

JONATHAN

(*Opening the door*) Hi.

EILEEN

Hi. I...uh...I hate to interrupt, but...uh...I left my bag...

JONATHAN

Oh! I'm sorry. Come in...

EILEEN

No. Just...it may be on the coffee table. My keys are in it.

JONATHAN

To your apartment?

EILEEN

Yes.

JONATHAN

You...couldn't get into your apartment...?

EILEEN

No.

JONATHAN

(*Panicking*) You haven't been there...standing there the whole time...!

EILEEN

Oh, no. No, I was in front of my apartment. And I just stood...there. Like an idiot...

JONATHAN

GOOD! Aht! The bag. Come on in and help yourself. Where did you have it last...?

EILEEN

You're busy. If you'll just find it for me...

JONATHAN

No, I'm not. I'm really... Yes. Yes, of course I am! On the computer! Writing, but...  
(*Flustered*) I'll find it for you.

(*He hurries around the apartment, looking for the bag. EILEEN steps inside, and quickly scans the room, wondering if AMBER is still there. JONATHAN discovers the bag.*)

JONATHAN, *Continues*

Here we go!

(*EILEEN leaps back into the corridor. JONATHAN takes the bag to her.*)

I'm sorry you had to go through all that before. That crazy woman and all...

EILEEN

Yes... Well... Good night.

JONATHAN

Good night. (*EILEEN turns away.*) Eileen! (*She turns back.*) May I call you tomorrow...?

EILEEN

Of course... (*Beat*) Well, good night.

JONATHAN

Good night. Oh! I don't have your number.

EILEEN

(*A nervous little laugh*) Of course, you don't. It's 415-73... Oh, wait a minute. I'll give you one of my new cards. (*She dips into her bag and pulls out a business card.*) Here.

JONATHAN

(*Looking at the card*) 26D. That's just below me...?

EILEEN

I know. You're 36D.

JONATHAN

Looks like it.

EILEEN  
(*Beat*) Oh, dear...!

JONATHAN  
What...?

EILEEN  
That's a 13!

JONATHAN  
A what?

EILEEN  
Numerology.

JONATHAN  
36D is 36D.

EILEEN  
No. Three plus six is nine. And D is the fourth letter of the alphabet.

JONATHAN  
So?

EILEEN  
Nine and four are 13.

JONATHAN  
You're superstitious.

EILEEN  
No. Just foolish, probably. G'night. (*Starts away; turns*) But if you do get spooked or anything?  
Good luck. (*Laughs*) G'night, again.

JONATHAN  
(*Closing the door*) Damn! She is somethin' else!

(*Then he remembers MEG, hurries to the bedroom, opens door. No MEG.*)

Amber...? (*Beat.*) Meg...? (*Beat*) Where the hell are you?

MEG  
(*Entering from bedroom*) Keep your skivvies on. Where'd you think I'd be? (*Beat*) Now, then, where were we...? (*Starting for the front door*) Aht! Silly ol' me! I was just leaving. . .

JONATHAN

*(Blocking the door)* Oh, no you don't. Not til' you tell me what you want!

MEG

I told you.

JONATHAN

What?

MEG

You.

JONATHAN

Forget it. How much?

MEG

Not to tell her where you are?

JONATHAN

Right.

MEG

Well... She gave me 10 to find you.

JONATHAN

Thousand?

MEG

Thousand.

JONATHAN

What do you want from me?

MEG

Twenty. And expenses.

JONATHAN

Is she paying expenses?

MEG

Of course.

JONATHAN

Then you're covered. Forget it.

MEG

Okay. Twenty. Clean.

JONATHAN

And if I give it to you, I have your word you won't tell her you found me?

MEG

My word.

JONATHAN

Which is worth about as much as a condom in a nunnery.

MEG

Now, that hurt.

JONATHAN

Sure it did. And if I don't get sucked into your little extortion scheme?

MEG

I'll tell her where you are.

JONATHAN

Amy?

MEG

Right.

JONATHAN

Grundig?

MEG

Right.

JONATHAN

I knew.

MEG

I knew you knew. \$20,000?

JONATHAN

Zip! That's zero to you, young lady. Amy Grundig was paranoid then, and if she's paying you that kind of money to find me, she psychotic now and she can go to hell.

MEG

I'll be sure to convey your message.

JONATHAN

And while you're at it, you can also convey that she's pissing me off and to stay the hell out of my life! Now get out of here!

MEG

*(A good sport)* Okay, big guy. But you'll be sorry.

JONATHAN

I'm already sorry about a lot of things.

MEG

I'll bet you are! *(Looking him up and down)* But God, you are cute! *(A deep growl; beat)* Oh, well. See ya', fella'.

*(She starts for the door.)*

JONATHAN

I hope not.

MEG

Whatever you say. *(Stopping and turning to him)* Oh, by the way, have I been disturbing you?

JONATHAN

Have you been disturbing me! Of course you've been disturbing me!

MEG

*(Laughing)* No, no, no, I don't mean that! I just moved in. Furniture arriving, boxes crashing. You know, that sort of thing...

JONATHAN

What are you talking about...?

MEG

I told you. I just moved in.

JONATHAN

Where??

MEG

Upstairs.

JONATHAN

In this building!

MEG

Uh huh. Just above you.

JONATHAN

When???

MEG

Yesterday. (*'Sweetly.'*) I will try to be quiet, though, I promise. Okay? (*JONATHAN can't respond.*) Well, tahtah!

JONATHAN

(*Amused...perhaps?*) I...think...I might be losing my mind...?

(*BLACKOUT.*)

## END OF SCENE 1

## SCENE 2

(*AT RISE: JONATHAN'S apartment; the next morning. JONATHAN is at his computer desk wearing a casual Cardigan sweater. PHONE RINGS.*)

JONATHAN

(*Answering*) Hello...? Oh! Eileen! G'mornin'. Hey. Nice way to start a day! How are you? (*Beat*) No, no, I'm fine, I just didn't sleep very well last night, that's all... (*Beat*) Come on, we all have an off day once in a while; it'll pass. What the hell, I'm a writer, I'm moody. (*Beat; laughs*) I'm puttin' you on, but I am looking forward to seeing you. You could lift any man's spirits. (*Beat*) No! I mean it! (*Beat*) What? (*Beat*) Oh, I'm waiting for an appointment. Strange lady, but I think I'm about to be offered another book deal. And it shouldn't take long. The lady's aggressively efficient. Ten minutes even could do it. I'll call you soon as she's gone. (*Beat*) What...? (*Beat*) Okay, try this on for size. A bike ride at the beach, and a picnic? (*Beat, as he looks out the French doors.*) No, I don't think so. It's just overcast, but if it rains there're shelters around. Or what the hell, we can throw the bikes on top and eat in the car. Okay? (*INTERCOM BUZZES.*) Hold on a minute, I think that's my lady. (*Punches the intercom button*) Yes, Charles...

CHARLES (*V.O.*)

A Ms. Samantha George is here to see you, sir.

JONATHAN

Great. Send her up. Thanks, Charles. (*Signs off; connects with EILEEN, again*) She's on her way up. I'll give you a call soon as she's gone.

*(JONATHAN hangs up, hurries down the hallway leading to the kitchen and reappears with a tray on which are a silver coffee pot, cups, sugar and cream. He's putting them on top of the bar as the DOORBELL RINGS. He goes to the door and opens it. MS. SAMANTHA GEORGE has arrived. Plump with thick glasses and a stern mouth, she wears a severely tailored, one-size-too-small business suit and Doc Martens. She carries a prepossessing attaché case, which she never opens.)*

JONATHAN

Ms. George! I'm Jonathan Blake. *(Extends his hand; she doesn't take it.)* Uhhh...do come in...

*(MS. GEORGE enters, spots the sofa, and goes directly to it and...)*

Won't you have a ... *(She sits.)* Yes, well... *(Awkward beat)* I appreciate your coming here. I would have been happy to...

MS. GEORGE

I prefer meeting clients in their natural habitats.

JONATHAN

I see. Tells you a lot about the man.

MS. GEORGE

Or woman.

JONATHAN

Of course. Uh...would you like coffee? Freshly ground French Roast...

*(He heads enthusiastically for the coffee.)*

MS. GEORGE

I don't allow poisons to enter my body.

JONATHAN

Oh. Well...uh...water...?

MS. GEORGE

I'm here to negotiate.

JONATHAN

If you don't mind, I'd like to be informed as to exactly what it is we're negotiating.

MS. GEORGE

You are Jonathan Blake?

JONATHAN

I am.

MS. GEORGE

Then you should know. Please. Shall we not waste time? I am to commission you to write a book.

JONATHAN

That much I do know. For whom? Who's your boss?

MS. GEORGE

I am my own boss. I make my own rules.

JONATHAN

*(Under his breath)* I suspected that.

MS. GEORGE

What?

JONATHAN

Nothing. Who, then, uh...sent you...?

MS. GEORGE

Madame Cebayla Wayhee Alphonse.

JONATHAN

AHHH! The Madam Alphonse!

MS. GEORGE

‘Madame.’

JONATHAN

Of course. She wants her story told?

MS. GEORGE

Precisely.

JONATHAN

Why? It couldn't be for the money. And the book will sell. Like sows, the public thrives on slop.

MS. GEORGE

Your opinion of Madame will be of no interest to her. She has nothing to hide.

*(PHONE RINGS.)*

JONATHAN

Never mind. The Voice Mail'll pick it up.

EILEEN (V.O)

Sorry to bother you, Jonathan, but I have to run to the market. If you call, just leave a message, okay? Bye.

*(The machine clicks off.)*

JONATHAN

I'm sorry about that. I thought I'd turned the thing off.

MS. GEORGE

That would have been advisable.

JONATHAN

Wouldn't it! *(Beat. This woman is beginning to irritate him.)* You were saying...

MS. GEORGE

Madame has nothing to hide.

JONATHAN

Then she intends to tell the truth?!?

MS. GEORGE

Please, Mr. Blake. Why do you suppose she's chosen you?

JONATHAN

AhHa! Then she doesn't intend to tell the truth.

MS. GEORGE

Correct.

JONATHAN

I am definitely her man.

MS. GEORGE

...except...in certain areas. They shall be quite...how shall I put it...revealing...?

JONATHAN

Good. 'Revealing' sells.

MS. GEORGE

And liberating.

Ah! To whom?

JONATHAN

Herself.

MS. GEORGE

Hummm. *(Beat)* Interesting... *(Beat)* Very interesting... *(Beat)* I'll do it. My fee is...

MS. GEORGE

*(Interrupting)* I know your fee. It is acceptable.

JONATHAN

Six months maximum, including interviews...

MS. GEORGE

There will be no interviews.

JONATHAN

This may come as a shock to you, Samantha, but...

MS. GEORGE

*(Correcting him)* Ms. George.

JONATHAN

Of course. Ms. George. This may come as a shock to you...Ms. George...but I'm not psychic.

MS. GEORGE

Immaterial. As to the way you will work...

JONATHAN

I have my own way of working.

MS. GEORGE

*(As if he hasn't spoken)* ...you will interview no one.

JONATHAN

Other than the madam.

MS. GEORGE

'Madame!'

JONATHAN

Madame, sorry!

MS. GEORGE

Nor will you interview her.

JONATHAN

This one could be a bitch, Sammy! Carry on.

MS. GEORGE

*(Flinches, but continues)* You will send facsimiles of your questions to Madame to which she will or will not respond. Disks will be delivered to you on a regular basis onto which she will record her story.

JONATHAN

Let me help you guys out here. All that girl needs is a typist, not a writer.

MS. GEORGE

Madame would not agree. *(Beginning to rhapsodize)* You will edit, rework, redo. You will jiggle her words, juggle her syntax; a pinch from here, a parcel from there. You will create a life! A Whole Life! You will...

JONATHAN

*(Stopping him)* Cut the crap. I'm to cut and paste.

MS. GEORGE

In a word.

JONATHAN

You're beautiful, Sam. But I'm afraid I'm not the man for the job. However, do thank the old broad for thinking of me.

MS. GEORGE

Three Hundred Thousand.

JONATHAN

You've just doubled my fee!

MS. GEORGE

I have.

JONATHAN

No, thanks.

MS. GEORGE

Half-a-million.

JONATHAN  
Why?

MS. GEORGE  
She wants you.

JONATHAN  
Why?

MS. GEORGE  
She believes you're the best.

JONATHAN  
(*Amused*) For a ghost writer, I have quite a reputation.

MS. GEORGE  
Doubtless.  
(*Beat.*)

JONATHAN  
All right, then, if you're serious...

MS. GEORGE  
Deadly.

JONATHAN  
(*Beat*) Then I'll want "As Told To" credit; on the cover.

MS. GEORGE  
I'll have to clear that with Madame.

JONATHAN  
Forget it. I'm out.

MS. GEORGE  
Accepted. "As Told To" credit.

JONATHAN  
On the jacket. Front of.

MS. GEORGE  
Front of the jacket.

JONATHAN

I'll need that in writing.

MS. GEORGE

Posthaste.

JONATHAN

*(Amused)* By all means. Posthaste. *(Beat)* Well then, I have nothing to add. Have you?

MS. GEORGE

Nothing.

JONATHAN

Then, good day, Ms. George.

MS. GEORGE

Good day, sir. *(Starts for the door; stops)* Oh, yes! There is one more thing. You will not attempt to bed Madame.

JONATHAN

To bed...? What...? Where the devil did that come from!

MS. GEORGE

It is common knowledge that you bed all you clients.

JONATHAN

Bullshit! I am not a stud! Get it! I never have been, I never will be! *(To the Cosmos)*  
Why does this keep coming up!

MS. GEORGE

*(Glancing at his crotch)* You might ask it, Mr. Blake.

JONATHAN

For God's sake!

MS. GEORGE

*(Extending a hand)* So then! Welcome aboard.

*(He doesn't take it.)*

JONATHAN

'So then,' my ass! I'm sorry, George, but you just sank your ship. I've changed my mind. I don't like you, and I have a strong suspicion I won't like your Madam person. So let's just... [forget the whole thing...]

MS. GEORGE

*(Interrupting)* Have you ever really liked...any...woman, Mr. Blake?

JONATHAN

OUT!

MS. GEORGE

*(Doesn't budge)* One-half of one million dollars. "As told to" credit. On the cover. All of which would be a first for you, if I'm not mistaken. You're going to give all that up?

JONATHAN

Way up!

MS. GEORGE

You're sure?

JONATHAN

What does it take to get something through to you!

MS. GEORGE

Very well, then... *(Beat)* Going once... *(Beat)* Going twice... *(Beat)* Going... [three times...]

JONATHAN

*(Sweating)* Allrightallrightallright! Send it! Send the fuckin' thing!

MS. GEORGE

Better.

*(Reaching into her bag and bringing out a CD.)*

Start with this.

*(She jams it into his hand. Stupefied, he takes it.)*

JONATHAN

And don't come back!

*(JONATHAN flings the door open but as she approaches it, she finds herself face-to-face with a striking woman of an indeterminate age, though well on the far side of 40. The woman, impeccably dressed and having the demeanor of royalty, is holding a small piece of paper in her hand.)*

MARGO

*(Startled)* Oh! I'm terribly sorry. I was about to ring...

MS. GEORGE

So now you won't have to!

*(She brushes the woman aside, and is gone.)*

MARGO

*(Looking after her)* Well... I hardly know what to say...

JONATHAN

You could start by saying she's an imperious bitch!

*(Flustered, he jams the cassette into a pocket.)*

Oh, excuse me. May I help you?

MARGO

Yes, please. Might I find an Eileen Perry here?

JONATHAN

I'm sorry, no. Ms. Perry lives one flight down. Just below me.

MARGO

I know. *(Glancing at the note in her hand)* The note on her door said I might find her here.

JONATHAN

Well, you can in a few minutes. She just went out, but she'll be back soon.

MARGO

*(Pondering)* Oh, dear...what to do...? *(Beat)* Might I use your phone?

JONATHAN

Of course. Come in. *(Pointing)* Right over there.

MARGO

Thank you so much.

*(Her entrance is startling. This elegant, exquisitely dressed woman is severely crippled. On her right foot is a monstrous shoe, the result of a thick lift having been built into it.)*

Oh, I should mention! I'm Eileen's Aunt Margo. Great aunt, actually. My sister's daughter was her mother. Or something like that! *(A charming throwaway)* Oh, the hell with it! *(Pointing to the phone)* Over there? *(Looking around)* What a lovely place you have!

JONATHAN

Thank you.

MARGO

*(Looking at the note; dials)* When I called Eileen said if she wasn't going to be home, she would leave a key.

JONATHAN

*(Laughing, goes to his desk and puts the disc in a drawer)* Eileen seems to have a thing about keys.

MARGO

Yes. *(Into phone)* Ah! Hello, dear. This is your Aunt Margo. I'm in the apartment of your lovely friend upstairs. Will you please come and spare the man the pleasure of my company just as soon as you get this! Thank you, dear. *(To JONATHAN as hangs up)* Would it be a terrible inconvenience if I waited here for a few moments? I won't be a bother...

JONATHAN

Of course, not. May I get you something to drink? Hot, coffee? French Roast!

*(He enthusiastically starts for the wet bar and the fresh coffee.)*

MARGO

I think not, thank you.

*(Making herself comfortable as she notices the Directory on the coffee table, picks it up and reads from the cover.)*

"Bentonville High School, 50th Anniversary Senior Class Directory." How charming! *(Looking up at JONATHAN)* This surely couldn't be yours!

JONATHAN

I'm afraid it is, and it's dreadfully boring. Are you sure you wouldn't like some coffee? Or maybe a drink? Juice...?

MARGO

*(Beat)* Pardon me...is something wrong...?

JONATHAN

Oh, no! No, not at all. Uh...no...uh... *(Quickly changing the subject)* Eileen just didn't tell me she was expecting you!

MARGO

*(A warm laugh)* And, therefore, you couldn't possibly have been. I'm so sorry. That is so Eileen! I understand you just met.

*(MARGO casually puts the Directory back on the coffee table.)*

JONATHAN

Last night. Yes.

MARGO

You apparently made quite an impression.

JONATHAN

She's told you about me?

MARGO

Oh, yes!

JONATHAN

Hummm. I like that. I think...

MARGO

You are somewhat older than I expected, however.

JONATHAN

I'm somewhat older than I expected. I never thought I'd make it this far.

MARGO

You're darling! And I may be talking out of school, but Eileen rarely takes to anyone right off. She's usually more – how shall I say it? – circumspect? And wisely so, I should think. After all, she's such a pretty young thing, and there are so many men out there willing to – Ha! Wanting to – take advantage of young women.

JONATHAN

Oh, I'd bet Eileen can take care of herself.

MARGO

I'm relieved to hear that. In any event, her circumspection appears to have waned a bit in your case.

JONATHAN

Well, she's circumspect; I'm guarded. I guess you'd have to say both of us 'waned.' A bit. . .

MARGO

It would appear so!

JONATHAN

Yes...

*(There is a momentary standoff. Then seemingly from nowhere...)*

MARGO

Eileen tells me you...I believe she said...write?...

JONATHAN

Yes.

MARGO

How marvelous! I was in love with a writer once. I have no idea how good he was. But at that age, who knows? And when you're in love, who cares? Ah! The follies of youth!

JONATHAN

*(Laughing)* You're delightful.

MARGO

As are you! Perhaps we'll get to know each other while I'm here.

JONATHAN

I'd like that. Very much. Will you be here long?

MARGO

That depends on so many things. *(Looking at her watch)* Now where could that little scamp be?

*(The front door bursts open. It is EILEEN, carrying a bag of picnic supplies.)*

EILEEN

Aunt Margo!! I'm so glaaad to see you!

*(She drops the groceries on the bar and runs to her. They embrace.)*

MARGO

And you, dear!

EILEEN

*(To JONATHAN)* I'm sorry to have crashed in like that, but the door was ajar. You should be more careful, Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Or the Boogie Man might get me?

EILEEN

Not if I have anything to do with it! *(To MARGO)* Have you been here long?

MARGO

Mere moments.

EILEEN

(To JONATHAN) I hope you didn't mind.

JONATHAN

How could I? Your aunt's delightful.

MARGO

Aren't you sweet. Now if you'll just give me the key, I'll leave the two of you alone...

JONATHAN

You don't have to do that...

MARGO

I want to. (*Indicating the groceries*) Shall I take those down?

EILEEN

Oh, no. We're going on a picnic. I can just leave them here. Except when I came in it was beginning to rain...

JONATHAN

Then I'm grateful we didn't bet on it.

MARGO

I'd hope you're not going to let a little rain spoil your day!

EILEEN

The sky's ominous, Aunt Margo . . .

MARGO

Then spread out on the floor, for heaven's sake! Get sand in your hair! Smell the salt in the air... Create what you want; exactly what you want for yourselves... Like in life!

JONATHAN

(*Bemused*) People do that...?

MARGO

I do. Try it. You'll like it. Byebye, dears. Enjoy yourselves wherever! (To EILEEN)  
The key...?

EILEEN

Oh! (*Digs into her jeans; pulls out key*) Here you are. I'll slip down later.

MARGO

Anytime. Well, I'm off for a soak and a nice, long nap. (*Shaking JONATHAN'S hand*)  
It is so good to know you, Mr. Blake.

JONATHAN

Jonathan.

MARGO

And I'm Margo. Just Margo, if you please. For some reasons, 'Aunt' makes one seem so decrepit. Don't you agree? Bye, now!

*(JONATHAN beats her to the door, and opens it for her. She's gone in a flash.)*

JONATHAN

Wow! That lady's a whirlwind!

EILEEN

Isn't she wonderful? She's always been my favorite.

JONATHAN

I can see why. So lovely, and... to be so disabled... How in God's name did it happen?

EILEEN

I'm not sure. It was an accident of some kind, I think, but Aunt Margo won't talk about it. She won't even acknowledge there's anything wrong with her. I admire her for that.

JONATHAN

*(Beat)* So what brings her out here? Other than her sexy young niece?

*(He pulls her to him and kisses her gently. She quickly eases away.)*

EILEEN

You behave yourself. Haven't you learned yet that anticipation is the most fun?

JONATHAN

Anticipation...? That sounds encouraging.

EILEEN

You're incorrigible! But I like that about you. Incorrigible! I've never been incorrigible. *(Pause)* But I have been thinking. About last night. In fact. All night...and I think...I'm about to be... Yes! I am! I want to be! Incorrigible!

*(Suddenly words are spilling out of her mouth in one breath as if they were racing against each other.)*

EILEEN, *Continued*

I don't want to frighten you, Michael, and I'm aware that I don't really know you, nor you me, and I've never done anything like this before but do you believe in love at first sight? *(A deep breath of relief)* There! I've said it! Do you...?

JONATHAN

Ohoh! I'm gonna' have trouble with this one. . . *(Beat)* You see, I...uh...try not to think about love. At all...

EILEEN

Neither did I. Ever! Until now. I'm old enough to know better, but do you?!

JONATHAN

*(Very uncomfortable)* Wait a minute. I thought you moved slowly. Your aunt told me you move slowly.

EILEEN

I always have. But... But you... I'm so comfortable with you, Michael. I feel so...safe...  
*(Quickly)* I'm not a virgin, though...

JONATHAN

*(Completely thrown)* Yeah . . . Well, that's okay...?

EILEEN

Okay?

JONATHAN

Well, yes, but...

EILEEN

And I want you to make love to me.

JONATHAN

*(Stupefied)* Well, good! That's great!

EILEEN

Now!

JONATHAN

Now? Right now!

EILEEN

I know it's insane, but. . . Yes...?

JONATHAN

Hey, hey wait a minute. Wait a minute. Slow down. Look... Look, I haven't been with a woman for...a long time. I mean, I do have trouble letting anyone get near me, like you said. But... Jesus, this is hard! No! This is different. Why the devil did you have to say that!

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* You're not afraid of me, are you!

JONATHAN

God, no. But... Despite what you've heard, I am not a womanizer!

EILEEN

According to your friend Corky you are.

JONATHAN

All right, I was. I was a long time ago. Not now. Okay, so sometimes I slip. Corkey really gets off on that. But... Come on! We've got this 'guy' thing going, lying about the women we've had. Guys do that! And, frankly, I think the poor guy's impotent. But... Sex, just as sex, doesn't work for me, anymore. I guess it never has really...

EILEEN

*(Simply)* I want you to make love to me, Jonathan. I want to make love to you. I'm not talking about sex...

JONATHAN

*(Taking the 'bull by the horns)* Okay, then. I am afraid. You're right. You've thrown me. You're different and... But together they're dangerous. Love and sex are dangerous! Together... *(Beat, almost to himself)* Oh, God. I've been looking for someone like you all my life! But...

EILEEN

*(Moving to him)* Oh, Jonathan. !.

JONATHAN

Wait. Listen to me. I'm feeling things for you that, if I've ever felt them, I don't remember them. They're strange, and they're...wonderful...but they...don't feel real, and I don't know what to do about them, and... Okay, so I'm sounding like a schoolboy, but...

EILEEN

That's part of your charm. A handsome, talented, very sexy schoolboy.

JONATHAN

Sex has always ruined it for me, Eileen. I try not to take anything seriously, but...sex?—It changes—things. I don't want to spoil what may, what just may be starting to happen here. I want us to take our time, because... Christ, Eileen. You're 29! We just met!

EILEEN

*(Simply)* I love you, Jonathan.

JONATHAN

*(Taking her in his arms) Oh, God...!*

*(They kiss passionately; he breaks and takes her hand.)*

JONATHAN, *Continued*

Come on, let's go!

*(He takes her hand and starts for the bedroom.)*

EILEEN

*(Holding back) No. No, I don't mind waiting. I really don't. If you want us to, I really don't.*

JONATHAN

I don't want to wait!

EILEEN

You do! You said you did! You're right, Jonathan. We shouldn't rush this. I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have brought it up.

JONATHAN

God! Women!

EILEEN

What would you do without us!

*(She pulls away from him, goes to the bar and reaches for the bag of groceries.)*

EILEEN

I'd better get these things in the fridge. *(Pointing to a hallway)* That way?

JONATHAN

By all means. It goes to the bedroom.

EILEEN

*(Quickly changing her course) Oooooops!*

JONATHAN

*(Laughing as he takes the bag) I'll do it.*

*(JONATHAN takes the groceries and exits down the second hallway. For a moment EILEEN is at a loss as to what to do, but soon she moves up the steps and into JONATHAN'S office, notices the shelves lined with books and begins to peruse them. They are autobiographies. All of them. JONATHAN returns, looks around.)*

JONATHAN

Eileen...?

EILEEN

I'm up here. What a wonderful work space!

JONATHAN

And that's exactly what it's for, so get out of there. Come on and have a drink with me. Bloody Mary?

EILEEN

Virgin.

JONATHAN

Virgin? No vodka?

EILEEN

Uh huh.

JONATHAN

Not even a shot? One short shot?

EILEEN

Never before sundown.

JONATHAN

*(Going to the bar to prepare the drinks)* Hummm... Good for you!

*(LIGHTNING FLASHES in the distance; gentle THUNDER rolls; RAIN begins to FALL. The approaching STORM INTENSIFIES throughout the scene.)*

EILEEN

This is probably none of my business, but...do you only read autobiographies?

JONATHAN

You found them.

EILEEN

It wasn't difficult.

JONATHAN

*(Lightly)* Not for a prying woman. Which, God knows, allll of you are!

EILEEN

I was not prying! And allll of us are not!

JONATHAN

You're cute when you get worked up.

EILEEN

And I'm not worked up!

JONATHAN

Whatever you are, I like it.

EILEEN

*(Smiling)* You devil.

JONATHAN

So! Have you read any of those?

EILEEN

I don't read autobiographies. In fact, I'm ashamed to admit it, but I don't read much of anything. You must like to read.

JONATHAN

The truth?

EILEEN

Yes.

JONATHAN

No.

EILEEN

*(Indicating his library)* Then why do you have so many books?

JONATHAN

I write them.

EILEEN

You write...autobiographies...?

JONATHAN

Yes.

EILEEN

*(Beginning to understand)* You wrote those?

JONATHAN

Yes.

EILEEN

You know all those people?

JONATHAN

If you can call what I did for them getting to 'know' them.

EILEEN

But they're autobiographies.

JONATHAN

And I wrote them.

EILEEN

Then you're a ghost writer.

JONATHAN

Yep!

*(He takes a Virgin Mary to her.)*

EILEEN

*(Taking it)* Thank you. But now that I know the truth, aren't you a little afraid I might tell?

JONATHAN

That I've written them? No one would care. Not really. Besides, you said I could trust you.

EILEEN

*(Teasing)* But what if you can't...?

JONATHAN

*(Playfully)* I'd have to throw you off the terrace.

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* Oops! You can. That's a promise!

*(She goes to him, puts her arms affectionately around him.)*

I'm very proud of you.

JONATHAN

*(Disarmed and ashamed)* Don't be. It's all a sham. I write for celebrities: sports icons, political figures, rock stars, movie stars. Or for simple nobodies who think they have something interesting to say about themselves. The celebs and the nobodies get to bask in the glory of their newly found... 'literary prowess' while I take huge chunks of their money and engorge my back accounts.

EILEEN

Ooooo... I don't think you like them very much.

JONATHAN

I don't. I'm paid to lie, Eileen. To take what they tell me – most of which already is not true – manipulate it in such a way as to lionize them far beyond their worth, then inject them with colors suggesting mysterious, delectable dark sides. I round them out, you see. Fill in their blanks. Reinvent them as dazzling creatures wrapped, of course, in humility. They are sooo impressed when I 'capture' their 'voices.' They don't have voices. They have egos. Those I capture and they don't even know it. In other words, my job is to turn pure, unadulterated bullshit into pure, unadulterated commercial crap! *(Beat)* I tell lies, Eileen. I do it well.

EILEEN

That makes me sad.

JONATHAN

Oh, don't feel sorry for them!

EILEEN

Not them.

JONATHAN

No?

EILEEN

You.

JONATHAN

Why me?

EILEEN

I don't know. You do the work; they get the credit. And you must be good or they wouldn't ask for you.

JONATHAN

I'm not interested in credit. Truth be told...and there's a little irony here in using that word, but, truth be told, I want to live well and do good work. Whether it's writing a book or flipping burgers, I have to do it well.

EILEEN

That's admirable.

JONATHAN

*(Smiling)* I'm an admirable man.

EILEEN

Then you really don't mind? Doing all the work and getting none of the credit?

JONATHAN

Like I said, I am paid well for my silence.

EILEEN

And that makes it worth it?

JONATHAN

Sure. Besides, I don't have to limit myself to that stuff. That's just the way I make a living. Some guys drive cabs; wait tables. I write.

EILEEN

Then you write other things, too.

JONATHAN

*(Wishing she hadn't brought that up)* Well...no... But I could. What do you do?

EILEEN

I'm not through with you yet.

JONATHAN

Ohoh!

EILEEN

So there's no credit, no fame, no bio, apparently no satisfaction, but lots of money.

JONATHAN

That's right.

EILEEN

And you're happy.

JONATHAN

*(Matter-of-factly)* No. Who is?

EILEEN

I am. Most of the time.

JONATHAN

You're fortunate.

EILEEN

But you're a good writer, Jonathan, I would imagine... Why don't you write what you want to write?

JONATHAN

Good question.

EILEEN

Okay. If you did, what would it be?

JONATHAN

*(Beat)* I don't know.

EILEEN

Come on. Play with me. Make something up. What would you like to write?

JONATHAN

*(Thoughtfully to himself)* What would I like to write...? *(Then, simply)* Something... extraordinary... *(Beat)* A, uh...a novel...perhaps...

EILEEN

About...?

JONATHAN

About...? *(Beat)* About people having the guts to do what they want to do, despite blocks, despite barriers, despite... *(Beat, pulling back...)* Hey! This is beginning to sound pretty good!

EILEEN

Yes, it is. And I think you mean it.

JONATHAN

Nahhh... Strictly top o' the head!

EILEEN

Stay with me.

JONATHAN

You're beginning to make me uncomfortable, young lady...

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* I'm not making you uncomfortable. You're telling the truth. That makes everybody uncomfortable!

JONATHAN

So you tell me the truth about you!

EILEEN

I'll tell you about me in a minute. What would you like to be?

JONATHAN

*(Long pause; very quietly) ...worthwhile...*

*(He has hit a cord; tears come up; he looks away. EILEEN lets him have his moment.)*

Eileen...

EILEEN

Yes.

JONATHAN

I have to tell you something.

EILEEN

All right.

JONATHAN

I've just made a deal. More money than I ever dreamed of making on a book; a book of any kind. I told you I tell lies. I just told you one. I said I didn't want credit for what I do. I do want credit. I've always wanted credit. And, I'm about to get it. The client is important; infamous, but important, and my name will be on the cover of the book. My name, on the cover. Not my real name, of course. My ghost name. 'Jonathan Blake.' On the cover! I should be excited about that. I'm not. In truth, the woman's abhorrent. But I'll lie for her. And be credited. And probably praised for my 'literary prowess.' I am good... But no, I'm not pleased. Not at all. No, I feel like a bloody whore! I am a whore! I've always been a whore! *(Slapping his head in disbelief)* Why in God's name did I have to say all that!

EILEEN

*(Gently)* I guess you needed to.

JONATHAN

*(Beat)* Yeah... Maybe...

EILEEN

In a way...I'm a bit of a whore, myself.

JONATHAN

You? How...?

EILEEN

Oh...

*(There is a blinding FLASH of LIGHTNING; a ferocious CRASH of THUNDER. LIGHTS DIM, and then GO OUT.)*

Jonathan...! Jonathan!

JONATHAN

It's okay. I'm right here.

*(He takes her by the hand.)*

EILEEN

It's so dark! Poor Aunt Margo'll be terrified. I'd better go check on her.

JONATHAN

Check on Margo! I'm sure she can handle a little blackout.

EILEEN

Please don't ever let her know I told you this, but she is almost phobic about lightning. I'll be right back.

*(She begins to cross the room, carefully.)*

JONATHAN

I'll go with you.

EILEEN

No, please don't. She'd be mortified if she thought you knew.

JONATHAN

I'll get you a flashlight, then...

EILEEN

I don't need one. Really. Thanks. See you in a minute.

*(EILEEN exits. JONATHAN works his way up the two steps to his office, goes to his desk, brings out a flashlight and flips it on. The STORM continues to RAGE. He then goes to a cabinet, takes out a couple of candles, sets them up and lights them. An eerie flickering glow fills the space. Settling into his desk chair, he attempts to turn his computer on.)*

JONATHAN

Damn this storm! Dammit!!!

*(Suddenly there is a FLASH of LIGHTNING; a reverberating CLAP of THUNDER. JONATHAN leaps from his chair as the LIGHTS in the apartment BLINK ON. He sinks back into the chair. From this moment, the STORM SUBSIDES. Quickly, he opens a drawer and takes out the disc given to him by MS. GEORGE, starts his computer and inserts the disc. With trepidation, he sits back to listen. The voice is deep, rich and heavily accented. The ACCENT IS MID-EUROPEAN BOGUS.)*

MADAME ALPHONSE (V.O.)

Mr. Blake? Madame Cebayla Wayhee Alphonse. I understand you are to record my Life. Let us then begin. Not at my birth. No. We begin where my destiny began. We begin with the story of a man. A man who betrayed me; a man I shall never forgive; though whom I shall forever love. His name was Michael. But for me, he shall always be... *(A private thought)* It is such a foolish name for such a worldly man... *(Beat)* For me, he shall always be... 'My Mikey...'

*(Stunned, JONATHAN stops the CD.)*

JONATHAN

*(Barely audible as he stares at the computer in horror.)* What...? What!?!

*(After long moments, he remember to breathe, and takes a number of slow, breaths: in through the nose, out through the mouth. Feeling in control again, he hits the 'Play' key, again. There is no sound.)*

What the fuck. . . .

*(He backs the CD up, and it picks up again, with...)*

MADAME (V.O.)

"...shall always be... 'My Mikey.'"

*(SFX: HUGE CLAP OF THUNDER/LIGHTENING BOLT then BLACKOUT.)*

**END SCENE 2**

**INTERMISSION**

### **SCENE 3**

*(AT RISE: Same. SFX: CLAP OF THUNDER and LIGHTENING BOLT as the disc continues to run. The remainder is blank.)*

JONATHAN

To hell with this shit! Somebody's trying to gaslight me!

*(There is a sudden FLASH of LIGHTING; a reverberating CLAP of THUNDER, and the LIGHTS in the apartment BLINK ON. From this moment, the STORM SUBSIDES. JONATHAN ejects the disc and stares at it blankly. Then he notices a telephone number on it, picks up the phone and dials the number.)*

JONATHAN

*(Attempting to control his voice)* Hello. Jonathan Blake here. Samantha George, please. *(Beat)* Oh? When are you expecting her? *(Beat)* Yes, yes, the voice mail's fine. Just fine... *(Beat)* Ms. George. This is Jonathan Blake. I've decided against writing that book. Do not send the agreement; do not come for the CD. I've destroyed it.

*(JONATHAN hangs up, looks at the disc for a long moment then drags his fingernails across it, destroying it. He is staring into space, trying to ascertain what in hell is happening when the DOOR BELL RINGS.)*

JONATHAN

*(Startled)* Who is it?!

MS. GEORGE (O.S.)

Samantha George. Open up.

JONATHAN

You just left!

MS. GEORGE (O.S.)

Open!

JONATHAN

What do you want?

MS. GEORGE (O.S.)

I have your agreement. Madame wants it signed. Today.

JONATHAN

*(Panicked)* I'm...I'm busy! Forget it!

MS. GEORGE (O.S.)

You're becoming a bore, Blake. It's a fill-in-the-blanks form letter, for Christ's sake. It doesn't take an independent counsel to figure it out. Open the bloody door.

JONATHAN

Go back where you came from, lady. Check your messages. I'm not 'on board' anymore.

MS. GEORGE (O.S.)

*(Ignoring his comments)* I'm slipping it under the door. I'll be sending Charles for it in 30 minutes. Have it ready.

JONATHAN

Who the hell is Charles?

MS. GEORGE (O.S.)

Our doorman? Where've you been?

JONATHAN

Our doorman!

MS. GEORGE

You're a real piece of work, you know that? Ours. I live in this building. Two floors up. Your line. *(With smug sarcasm)* That okay with you?

*(The letter agreement is slipped under the door. JONATHAN stares at it as if it is a coiled rattler, then goes to it, picks it up and carries it cautiously into his office, breathing deeply and rhythmically en route, trying to gain control that he fears he's losing. At his desk, he rips it to pieces violently and pitches it into a wastebasket. DOORBELL RINGS. JONATHAN leaps as if he'd been gouged with an electric prod.)*

JONATHAN

Get the hell away from there! You got that!! Leave me alone!

EILEEN (O.S.)

Jonathan...? Are you all right...?

*(JONATHAN hurries to the door; flings it open.)*

JONATHAN

Eileen! Jesus, I'm sorry. Come in. Please.

EILEEN

What is it? What's wrong...?

JONATHAN

Everything. I have to talk...

EILEEN

All right. But Aunt Margo has an awful headache and...

JONATHAN

*(Paying no attention as he continues)* Sit down. Can I get you something? Coffee? Anything...?

*(EILEEN sits, never taking her eyes off JONATHAN.)*

EILEEN

No. No, I'm fine. But you're not.

JONATHAN

No. I'm being gaslighted.

EILEEN

You're what?

JONATHAN

Amber isn't Amber, and Samantha George lives over Amber, and Amber lives over me... except she's Meg . . . *(Pointing)* Up there! Right over me!

EILEEN

Jonathan, please... Slow down...?

JONATHAN

I'm on a roll. I can't slow down! I don't let people get close, remember? I'm letting you get close. I have to...

EILEEN

I'm...I'm close, then...

JONATHAN

Okay! I'm about to say things I know I'll be sorry for, but I've got to say them. Now! You sure you don't want something to drink? Wine...?

EILEEN

No, but please, you have something...

JONATHAN

Good idea! Very good idea!

*(He pours himself a tumbler of wine; takes a couple of gulps, shakes his head, takes a deep breath, and goes to sit by EILEEN.)*

JONATHAN, *Continued*

*(More contained now)* I've slowed down. I'm...I'm...sorry about that. It was a lifetime of... It was... Anyway... *(A little nervous laugh)* I...uh...I'm usually a bit more...controlled than this... Usually... I'm sorry...

EILEEN

*(Soothingly)* It's all right. Really. Just take your time...

JONATHAN

Yeah. *(Takes another swig; begins)* I've never said, or done, anything in my life that might even suggest a weakness; not if I knew it; not if I could help it...

EILEEN

*(Perplexed)* Like what...?

JONATHAN

Fear. Like fear. A man shouldn't be afraid...

EILEEN

Whoever told you that?

JONATHAN

All right, then. I should be afraid. A man should be afraid. He has that right. I'm a man, and I'm afraid, okay?

EILEEN

*(Concerned)* ...okay...? *(Beat)* Of what?

JONATHAN

God, Eileen, I can't believe I'm doing this. But... When you were here earlier; when you wanted to make love... I haven't made love for decades. Sex. Lots of sex. Proving something or other. Who knows? But you wanted to make love! And I want to make love, too. With you! But your – your ingenuousness, your spirit, your...your spontaneity – they're new to me. I pretend. You're real. That frightens me.

EILEEN

Don't be afraid of loving me if that's what you're talking about... Please!

JONATHAN

What...? Oh...Well, it's...it's more than that...

EILEEN

I'm sure it is, and I want to hear everything, but first...Aunt Margo's head's killing her.

JONATHAN

*(On another roll)* Aunt Margo's head! What about my head! And my heart? What about that! It's bursting. I'm so in love with you I'm...I don't know what it is, but whatever it is, it's happening! You're 29. I'm 68. So how could it work, for God's sake?

EILEEN

It's happening with me, too, Jonathan. We'll let it work; we'll make it work!

JONATHAN

*(Continuing through her words as he snaps his fingers)* Just like that! Since last night, the magic, the excitement, the...the hope that maybe I am capable of loving somebody, and trusting her and... . But I...I just can't believe...I just can't believe it's...

EILEEN

*(Cutting in)* It's happening? It is, Jonathan. To me, too. It is!

JONATHAN

But... But that Directory. It's...it's fucking up everything. I shouldn't have opened it, Eileen. It's a fucking Pandora's Box. Excuse me, but it is. Things flew out... Ugly. Things! *(Pulling her to him tightly)* Please, Eileen, don't let me drive you away. I was so... together...when we came here last night. My life was suddenly perfect! But today, I'm... I'm... My God! I'm morphing into Woody Allen!

EILEEN

*(Laughing)* You're just frightened, that's all. Of loving. Who isn't?

JONATHAN

That's for damned sure. But the other; the 'things.' I'm off balance, I'm ...I'm discombobulated! Yeah. Bloody discombobulated!

EILEEN

That's all right... Really, it's all right...

JONATHAN

You love me. You said you did...

EILEEN

I love you...

JONATHAN

Okay, then. Here goes. My life. In one short paragraph.

*(A beat; a sigh.)*

EILEEN

Darling, I do want to hear everything, but Aunt Margo's having one of her terrible migraines and I have to go for a prescription.

JONATHAN

*(Not listening, charges on)* A long time ago, I ran away from something I should have faced. But I couldn't. I wouldn't. I had my life planned and I wasn't about to let...anything...change it. I was confused and angry and...and, yeah, afraid. Big man here! I was afraid then, too, and...and I ran. It was wrong. It was cruel. And I've always regretted it. But I've never had the courage to go back. I, uh...disappeared... *(Looks around the room, his domain)* ...into this: the money, the meaningless sex, the lies I tell for other people. I ran, and I hid and I... *(Beat)* I never wrote that novel... That... extraordinary...novel I was so sure I could write. *(Beat; attempting to 'lighten up')* I think that was more than a paragraph. It probably needs editing.

*(EILEEN is deeply touched.)*

EILEEN

Not at all. *(Pause)* Will it help if you tell me who she was?

JONATHAN

She...?

EILEEN

You are talking about Amy Grundig, aren't you...?

*(JONATHAN, nonplussed, sits in silence for few moments. The TELEPHONE RINGS. He doesn't move. It RINGS, again.)*

Would you like me to get that?

JONATHAN

No. The machine'll pick it up

JONATHAN (V.O.)

*(From the Voice Mail)* "This is Jonathan Blake. Leave a message."

MARGO (V.O.)

*(Agonized)* Darlings, if anyone can hear me, please pick up! Please!

JONATHAN

What in the world...!

EILEEN

I know! I'll get it! (*Hurries to the phone; picks up*) Aunt Margo, it's Eileen. I'm so sorry. I was delayed, but I'll hurry; it won't take long. 'Bye. (*Hanging up*) I have to have a prescription filled.

JONATHAN

For what! What's going on???

EILEEN

Aunt Margo's migraines. She carries prescriptions with her. For all kinds of things just in case...

JONATHAN

She carries prescriptions with her!

EILEEN

Has for years. Be right back!

JONATHAN

No, hell, no. I'll go!

EILEEN

Don't worry. It's just around the corner. I'll be right back. (*Gives him a quick peck on the cheek*) I love you.

(*EILEEN exits.*)

JONATHAN

Love you, too...

(*She is gone. JONATHAN is alone, and for a moment feels lost, abandoned, but soon he become aware of what has just happened.*)

JONATHAN, *Continues*

(*A whisper*) She loves me...

(*He starts toward the sofa as if in a trance. In front of it is the coffee table on which is the open Directory.*)

She loves me...! (*Becoming excited*) Wait a minute! Wait one damn minute!! She loves me!! (*Turns and flies up the stairs into his work space; flips on the computer*) Oh, Muse, be with me now!

(*JONATHAN waits, thinking, recalling, imagining...and then he begins to type, speaking the words as he does.*)

ONE...SPECTACULAR...DAY...IN THE LIFE OF...JONATHAN... BLAKE!

*(He stops typing. Beat.)*

God, that's awful!!! Clumsy... Clumsy...!

*(Trying again)* ONE...PARTICULARLY...GOOD...DAY...FOR...JONATHAN...BLAKE.

*(Beat)* No. Bad. Too bland. *(Beat)* Aah! ONE PARTICULARLY...BAD...DAY FOR JONATHAN BLAKE. *(Beat)* Yeah... Yeah, I like that. *(Beat)* Provocative. Yeah, it's good!

*(Reading the title)* "ONE PARTICULARLY BAD DAY FOR JONATHAN BLAKE"...

*(Beat; typing again)* by Jonathan... *(He stops typing, again; Beat.)*

JONATHAN, *Continues*

No... *(Mumbling the title to himself)* "ONE PARTICULARLY BAD DAY FOR JONATHAN BLAKE"... *(Having another idea and typing again.)* ...a Novel...! ...byyyyyy...Jonathan . . .

*(Beat)* No! A novel by ...Michael...MacAllister...! *(Stops typing)* YES!!! Yes, yes, yes, yes, YES!!! The endorphins are runnin' tonight!

*(Beat; scratching his head in wonderment; he begins to chuckle.)*

Now all I have to do is figure out what in hell it's about...

*(There is a sudden POUNDING ON THE DOOR.)*

MARGO *(O.S.)*

Jonathan! Please let me in! Is Eileen there?

JONATHAN

My God in heaven...! *(Hurrying to the door and throwing it open)* Margo. What's the trouble?

MARGO

*(Writhing in pain)* My head, Jonathan! I can't stand this! Has she gone yet? Please say she has...

JONATHAN

She has, yes. She's gone.

MARGO

*(The headache vanishes)* Good. *(Sitting on the sofa and patting the seat beside her)* Sit, dear. We haven't much time.

JONATHAN

What?!? What...what...?!?

MARGO

I have to talk to you. Privately.

JONATHAN

What the devil's going on here!

MARGO

Forgive me, dear. Please. I so dislike having to do this, but for Eileen's sake I must. You do understand...

JONATHAN

For Eileen's sake! No! No I don't understand anything!

MARGO

Well, you must. I'm Eileen's only living relative and I love her very much. I like you very much. You might even say I approve of the two of you together, but the truth is, we don't really know you.

JONATHAN

You don't have to know me, Margo. Eileen does. And she doesn't need your help!

MARGO

Then let me turn that around. Do you know Eileen?

JONATHAN

No, actually, I don't. But I will . . .

MARGO

*(Suddenly becoming serious)* No. No, as a matter of fact, you don't. And there's the rub...  
*(Long pause; as if to herself)* Dear God, how I dread this...

JONATHAN

*(Not having heard)* ...What...?

MARGO

*(Pause; a deep breath)* It's clear that you love Eileen. You passed my test with flying colors!

JONATHAN

You're making me uncomfortable, Margo.

MARGO

Forgive me, dear. That is not my intention. But... Jonathan, Eileen truly believes that she's fallen in love with you. And, quite honestly, it's more than possible that she has. I can well understand that. But...

JONATHAN

*(Becoming increasingly agitated)* Excuse me, but I'm under a little pressure right now and I'd really appreciate it if you didn't get into Eileen at the moment.

MARGO

But you don't know what I'm going to say.

JONATHAN

And I don't want to know! I'm afraid it might be something I won't like. And I do like Eileen. Anything I might not want to hear about her, I'd rather find out on my own. From her. She'll learn plenty about me. And we'll either work things out, or we won't. But that's the route I prefer to take.

MARGO

*(Sardonically)* Ah! Young love! How tragic!

JONATHAN

I'm 68-years old, for God's sake!

MARGO

As am I! *(Quickly)* Oh, dear! That was a slip! Fifty-eight! Soon! I'll soon be fifty-eight!

JONATHAN

*(With an edge)* Happy Birthday.

MARGO

You're angry with me. Please don't be, dear. I only want to help.

JONATHAN

That remark has always scared the hell out of me.

MARGO

I'm sorry, Jonathan, but I love my niece.

JONATHAN

You've said that.

MARGO

And I'm concerned about her well-being. If you love her, too, you'll listen!

JONATHAN

Don't, Margo...

MARGO

Did she ask you if you believe in love at first sight?

JONATHAN

*(Tensing; long pause, then quietly)* And what if she did. ? .

MARGO

That's the trigger! Did she!

JONATHAN

Yes!

MARGO

Dear God! I was so afraid of that!

JONATHAN

Of what?! What in blazes are you talking about!

MARGO

Jonathan. Eileen is a very sick young woman. She only thinks she's in love with you. But when she 'loves,' she loves deeply, passionately, obsessively. And unfortunately, immediately! You should know that! But once she has a man, she has to possess him. Completely. I don't think any man should have to carry that burden. You say you will work things out between you? Together. I love my niece. . .

JONATHAN

Don't say that again!

MARGO

. . . and I want the very best for her, but you will not be able to work things out with her. She isn't capable of that! She'll drive you away like all the others. It's part of a plan she doesn't even know. She drives them away and then . . . and . . .

*(She stops. She is unable to continue.)*

JONATHAN

*(With dread)* And then...?

MARGO

*(Reaching for control)* Eileen is suicidal, Jonathan. She's attempted suicide more than once. And she will try again.

JONATHAN

What in God's name are you trying to do!

MARGO

*(Quietly)* Save you. Both of you. *(Beat)* Please don't let her love you, Jonathan. Please.

JONATHAN

*(Pause, and then, very quietly)* Don't let her love me. *(Pause)* Do you have any idea what you have just said to a man who's never allowed himself to be loved? And now he may—No!—he is allowing it and you say, "Don't let it happen?" *(Beat)* Well, I'm sorry, Margo, but I'm afraid you're a little late. She does love me and I love her and despite your admonition, I'm going to cling to that.

MARGO

She will change, Jonathan

JONATHAN

Not this time.

MARGO

She will change. She's sick. You'll flee and... And she will try again. And one day, she will succeed in killing herself. It saddens me to say, but a love affair, especially with a man more than twice her age, would be devastating. Not 'could' be. 'Would' be! And I will not allow it!

JONATHAN

*(Seething, yet with remarkable control)* Really? And how do you intend to stop it?

MARGO

I have means.

JONATHAN

Such as...?

MARGO

*(Lightly)* Ah! That would be telling!

JONATHAN

You're bluffing...

MARGO

Perhaps...

*(MARGO glances away, notices the open Directory on the coffee table, leans forward and begins to scrutinize a particular photograph; the one of AMY GRUNDIG as 'The Firebird.')*

MARGO, *Continued*

Oh, how lovely! Who is the girl?

JONATHAN

*(Preoccupied)* What...? Who...?

MARGO

It couldn't be Tallchief...? (*Studying the photograph*) No, of course, not. The features are wrong. But the pose, the attitude, even the headdress...

(*Looking at the photograph of JONATHAN in his basketball uniform.*)

And that adorable boy... Is that you?

JONATHAN

(*Looking at the photograph*) Please, I'd rather you wouldn't look at that...

MARGO

I'm terribly sorry. It was presumptuous of me. (*As she closes the book*) But I must say you were cute as a bug in those little silk shorts. And those legs, Mikey! Oh, my goodness!

(*JONATHAN tenses. There is another chilling silence as he stares at her.*)

JONATHAN

What. What did you call me?

MARGO

Pardon...?

JONATHAN

You called me 'Mikey.'

MARGO

I did? I can't imagine why...

JONATHAN

You called me 'Mikey.' Who are you!

MARGO

Why, I'm Eileen's Aunt Margo, of course...

JONATHAN

No! You called me 'Mikey!'

MARGO

Oh, you sly puss! You caught me! Eileen told me you were once Michael MacAllister. That you'd changed your name. But I'm not supposed to know that.

JONATHAN

Eileen seems to have told you a lot of things.

MARGO

The darling. She doesn't intend to. I draaagg them out of her! But Michael MacAllister is such a lovely name! I can't imagine why you changed it.

JONATHAN

You can't.

MARGO

No. Should I...try...?

JONATHAN

*(Pause)* I'm beginning to think that's not necessary...

MARGO

Not necessary?

JONATHAN

That's right, Amy. Not necessary.

MARGO

AMY! Ah! At last! Oh, my dear boy I thought you'd never guess! *(Striking a pose)* How do I look?

JONATHAN

Different...

MARGO

Well, of course I do! The years, not to mention the nips and tucks, oh, and the new nose... Well, at one time it was new. Remember that sweeping proboscis? This one's so much more appealing, don't you think?

JONATHAN

*(Coldly)* What do you want, Amy?

MARGO

Why, you, darling, of course. It's taken me 50 years to find you; you surely don't think I'm here on a whim.

JONATHAN

I think if you've been looking for me for 50 years your pathological disposition is decidedly more serious than I ever imagined.

MARGO

Oh, my, what a delightfully monumental ego! No, I have not been looking for you for 50 years, Michael. I have thought a great deal about you, yes, but... No, you might say that the gods brought me here. What do you think of that?

JONATHAN

I'm trying not to think anything about any of this.

MARGO

Same old Michael. Head in the sand. Ass in the air. Hasn't it ever occurred to you how terribly vulnerable that makes you. Not to mention how shallow...

JONATHAN

Agreed on all counts. If you're through...

MARGO

Oh, no. We have, as they say, a 'score' to settle. You have fallen in love with my niece, haven't you?

JONATHAN

You know I have.

MARGO

More quickly, even, than you fell in love with me.

JONATHAN

I was never in love with you.

MARGO

And, oh, how I wish I'd known! (*Beat*) But... regarding Eileen. I knew you would. Fall in love. She has that effect on men. But poor thing. She's had such a difficult time of it. I thought the change would be good for her. Coming West. Living in a charming city. Making new friends. (*Beat*) Falling in love...

JONATHAN

(*A chilling realization*) You sent her...!

MARGO

Oh, yes.

JONATHAN

To find me...

MARGO

Well, no, not actually. Ms. Meg had already done that. Six months ago, actually. You see, I'm Chairperson of the Reunion Committee. I must admit, I uh...did campaign for the job. And I can be ferocious! But I had the time, the drive, the wherewithal. Why not? You'd be amazed how many of us I dug up! (*Beat*) Pardon me, that was an unfortunate reference... We've lost 40, you know...

JONATHAN

Get on with it, Amy.

MARGO

I will admit, however, you were at the top of my list of the 'missing', so you can imagine how overjoyed I was when Ms. Meg told me she'd found you! But, oh my, you simply can't envision how difficult it was to wait until now to contact you.

JONATHAN

Really? Then why did you wait?

MARGO

Yes, why... Well, there was to be a Reunion, but Mohammed was concerned that Mikey wouldn't come, so Mohammed brought the Reunion to Mikey... so to speak. Happy 50th, Michael.

JONATHAN

And Eileen. What's she got to do with your little charade?

MARGO

Oh, everything. Eileen was sent to...complicate ...matters for you, shall we say.

JONATHAN

For me?

MARGO

Who else? And the poor dear's done it brilliantly, wouldn't you agree? Having no idea that I was behind it, of course. But knowing Eileen, I was certain she would meet you eventually. Your being neighbors and all.

JONATHAN

How could you be so sure we'd be neighbors?

MARGO

(*A smug little laugh*) Very simply. I bought the building and moved her in.

JONATHAN

This building!

MARGO

Yes. I paid too much for it, but I wanted it. Sometimes one has to do such things.

JONATHAN

You're monstrous! You bought this building so you could use your own niece!

MARGO

*(A simple statement)* No. I bought it so I could play out my little game. With you.

JONATHAN

My God... You're frightening...

MARGO

I can afford to be.

*(Time stops; then suddenly there is a sharp knock on the door and EILEEN bursts into the room.)*

EILEEN

Jonathan! Aunt Margo's not in the apartment! Have you seen her!

JONATHAN

I'm afraid so...

MARGO

It's all right, darling. I'm right here.

EILEEN

Thank God! I'm sorry I took so long, but I have your pills. I'll get you some water...

MARGO

I don't need them! Miracle of miracles! It vanished. In a flash. My headache. Can you imagine? I came to our dear friend to plead for an aspirin, anything to stop the pain and... well, the dear boy's a healer! Absolutely! Just a few soothing words and, whisssh!, it was gone!

EILEEN

Vanished? Your migraine?

MARGO

Yes! And I'm famished. I hope you're still planning your make-believe picnic here on the...beach...as it were. *(To JONATHAN)* Eileen insisted I join you.

JONATHAN

Really?

MARGO

I hope you don't mind.

EILEEN

Hungry, darling?

JONATHAN

...no...

EILEEN

Well, you will be. I got us a delicious pate. Wild rabbit. We'll start with that. It'll whet your appetite.

JONATHAN

I'll help you.

MARGO

No, Jonathan. Let Eileen do it.

JONATHAN

I don't want to let Eileen do it!

EILEEN

Please, darling. I have to start getting used to where things are, don't I? I won't be long.

*(EILEEN hurries down the corridor. During the long, cold silence, JONATHAN'S eyes burn into MARGO as he ponders...)*

JONATHAN

*(Calculating)* About your...niece...? Amy...

MARGO

Eileen? Great niece, actually.

JONATHAN

Your sister's daughter was her mother, I believe you said.

MARGO

How foolish of me! I've never been able to keep track of such things!

JONATHAN

You don't have a sister.

MARGO

*(An embarrassed giggle)* I know! What could I have been thinking??

JONATHAN  
I wonder.

MARGO  
Truth be told...

JONATHAN  
I'd appreciate that.

MARGO  
Yes. Truth be told, I...well, actually, I adopted the girl.

JONATHAN  
How does one go about that?

MARGO  
It's quite simple, really. Eileen's mother was one of my dearest friends, and she, her mother, was killed, you see. An auto accident. Terrible thing. And I...

JONATHAN  
(*Interrupting*) A rose is a rose is a rose, Margo.

MARGO  
Meaning...?

JONATHAN  
A niece is a niece is a niece. Who is she?

MARGO  
Eileen...?

JONATHAN  
Eileen.

MARGO  
Well...

JONATHAN  
Never mind. I'll ask her!

MARGO  
I don't think you want to do that.

JONATHAN  
I think I do. (*Calling*) Eileen!

MARGO

Very well... *(Calling; attempting to cover her anxiety)* Will you join us for a moment, dear? Jonathan has a question for you.

*(In a moment, EILEEN appears.)*

EILEEN

Yes?

JONATHAN

*(Pause, then simply)* Who are you?

*(EILEEN glances nervously at MARGO.)*

MARGO

It's all right, dear. He knows.

EILEEN

*(Haltingly; childlike)* About...?

MARGO

*(Quickly)* Your mother!

EILEEN

*(Confused)* My mother...?

MARGO

*(Leading her)* Who was killed in the accident...? My good friend...

EILEEN

Oh...? Of course! That came so out of the blue I hardly...

JONATHAN

That's enough, Amy! You're leading her!

EILEEN

Amy...?

MARGO

Yes, dear, I'll explain later.

JONATHAN

No, I'll explain now. But I want you out of here. I'm going to talk to your 'niece' alone.

MARGO

Oh, I don't think that would be a very good idea...

*(JONATHAN moves to her slowly, menacingly.)*

JONATHAN

Out. Now!

MARGO

*(Wilting)* Of course... Whatever you say... *(To EILEEN)* Don't let him frighten you, dear. His bark's worse than his bite. I'll be just outside.

*(She leaves. Long pause as JONATHAN just looks at EILEEN.)*

JONATHAN

You're part of this charade, aren't you?

EILEEN

*(Beat)* ...yes...

JONATHAN

You've known from the beginning who she was.

EILEEN

...Yes...But I didn't know what would happen between us! Oh, Jonathan, I'm so sorry . . .

JONATHAN

Then you are part of it.

EILEEN

...yes...

JONATHAN

And you're not her niece, adopted or otherwise.

EILEEN

No.

JONATHAN

Then who the fuck ARE you!

EILEEN

I'm a whore, like I said.

JONATHAN

*(Crushed)* I can believe that.

EILEEN

I don't sell my body. I sell my talent. I'm an actress; a good one.

JONATHAN

And you were paid to 'fall in love' with me!

EILEEN

To make you think I had, yes...

JONATHAN

Why!

EILEEN

I don't know. She said it was...a game...

JONATHAN

*(To himself)* She got that right!

EILEEN

The problem is...I did... I fell in love with you.

JONATHAN

Yeah, sure!

EILEEN

But I did!

JONATHAN

Cut it! How much?

EILEEN

What?

JONATHAN

How much do people like you get paid for your talent?

EILEEN

Twenty thousand dollars. Ten up front...

JONATHAN

And expenses. Picnic supplies included!

EILEEN

*(Near tears)* Jonathan, don't...

JONATHAN

*(Demanding)* And expenses!

EILEEN

Yes.

*(JONATHAN stares at her in disbelief, then begins to laugh.)*

JONATHAN

Poor ol' Meg! She got hers up the ol' gazoo!

EILEEN

What...?

JONATHAN

*(Still laughing)* Meg only got 10! *(Suddenly breaking; his heart broken)* God, how could you have done this!

EILEEN

*(Breaking)* Oh, Jonathan, I'm so ashamed!

JONATHAN

*(Bitterly)* By God, you are good! I almost believed that!

EILEEN

Don't do this, please!

JONATHAN

*(With sarcasm)* Oooo, I'm so sorry. I seem to have bruised your delicate sensibilities.

EILEEN

I fell in love with you! I didn't mean to! I never had; not with anyone before, but... Oh, God, why did you have to be you! I know you can't love me, now, but...please, please, at least, forgive me. Please!

*(She turns away, sobbing. JONATHAN tries desperately to resist her, but can't.)*

JONATHAN

Goddamn!! *(Gently, as he opens his arms to her...)* Come here.

*(EILEEN looks at him in disbelief.)*

EILEEN

Oh...? Oh, thank you! Thank you!

*(She hurries to him. He enfolds her in his arms, and pulls her close as she sobs quietly.)*

JONATHAN

Holy shit, what do we do now???

EILEEN

*(Lost)* I don't know...

*(The front door bursts open. It is MARGO.)*

MARGO

Well, then, while you're pondering, I'll just use your phone.

JONATHAN

*(Starting toward her)* You'll just get the hell out of here!

*(MARGO suddenly produces a pistol; identical to the one MEG used earlier.)*

MARGO

I think not.

EILEEN

Jonathan!

JONATHAN

It's all right. It's a toy.

MARGO

A toy? I see...

*(She points the gun toward the ceiling and fires. BAM! Plaster falls.)*

Oh, dear, that'll cost me!

*(Dialing as she addresses JONATHAN and EILEEN.)*

Sit.

*(They do.)*

MARGO, *Continues*

*(Into phone)* Ah! Samantha, dear. I'm terribly sorry to bother you, but will you hurry down to Mr. Blake's apartment for a moment, please? And bring a recorder, if you will. *(Beat)* Thank you, dear. *(Hangs up)* She's a prince.

JONATHAN

*(Fearing the worst)* Samantha...?

MARGO

Yes. Samantha George. And don't try to seduce her. She's a dyke. But a divine assistant. I couldn't live without her.

JONATHAN

*(Almost unable to speak)* My God! You're Madame...

MARGO

*(Interrupting)* Cebayla Wayhee Alphonse! Heavens no! The woman's a horror! Why, if I saw that creature coming toward me on the boulevard, I'd cross to the other side!

JONATHAN

But...that disc?

MARGO

*(Laughing)* My, oh, my! You surely didn't believe that anyone could actually sound like that! No. No, Samantha put me up to it! We thought it would be fun!

JONATHAN

Your idea of fun escapes me.

MARGO

Oh, you are so stuffy! *(Beat)* Tell me, how is your writing coming along?

JONATHAN

For God's sake, Amy, stick to the point.

MARGO

*(Lightly)* You're hardly in a position to be giving orders, Michael.

JONATHAN

*(Losing it')* Fuck you!

MARGO

As I recall, you did.

EILEEN

What...? Jonathan...?

JONATHAN

She's nuts. The woman's nuts...

MARGO

Really? You don't remember? That warm, spring night by the lake? Harrington, I believe it was? The night of the Graduation Prom? The moon was full. The...

JONATHAN

*(Shakily)* No...I don't...

MARGO

*(Continuing as if he hadn't spoken)* The standard line in those days, I believe, was "I'll pull out in time...?" *(Beat, a 'chuckle')* As it happened, your concept of time was seriously skewed!

*(JONATHAN can't look at her. He moves away. Silence.)*

Aren't you going to ask about our little girl? After all, she's the entire purpose of my visit.

*(Beat; JONATHAN refuses to respond.)*

It was a little girl, you know...?

JONATHAN

*(Agonized)* It was 50 years ago, Amy! What do you want me to say?!

MARGO

Ah! Then you do remember! Lovely! *(A charming little laugh)* Oh, we were such a cliché, dear. We were "A Place in the Sun" and I was that poor little Miss Winters. *(To JONATHAN)* Thank God, you never got me into a boat!

EILEEN

*(Beginning to tremble)* You're frightening me. Both of you. You're frightening me!

MARGO

Oh, you mustn't be afraid of him. He's not going to hurt you. I am.

EILEEN

What...? But...but I haven't done anything to you!

MARGO

You betrayed me. You fell in love with him.

EILEEN

But I...I didn't mean to!

MARGO

Is that so? My husband didn't mean to drop dead. Thank God he did, however. He was rich!

JONATHAN

Get on with it, Amy. What do you want?

MARGO

The truth.

JONATHAN

All right! We made love! Once! You wanted me to!

MARGO

I was in love with you.

JONATHAN

I know it!

MARGO

You took advantage of me.

JONATHAN

*(Viciously)* You! Wanted! It!

MARGO

*(Quietly)* Oh, so very much. And I wanted the child so very much. *(To EILEEN)* My father ran a filling station. His ran the town. The somebody's versus the nobody's. The ones who 'generously' offer money for abortions versus the ones who'll sacrifice everything, every cent they ever had to save the life of a daughter who wanted to die! I wanted to die, Mikey!

JONATHAN

*(Stunned)* You...tried to... [kill yourself?]

MARGO

*(Coldly, completing his thought)* Kill myself? Yes! And our child. She won. I lost. And in return... *(She lifts her crippled leg)* ...I got this. I call her 'Maria.' As in 'Tallchief.'

JONATHAN

*(Quietly)* Amy, I never knew any of this. I swear. I thought you were going to have an abortion. I thought...

MARGO

How could you have known? Michael MacAllister ran; he vanished; it was as if he'd never existed. If your father knew anything of you, at all, he certainly never shared it with me. *(Sweetly)* But Michael's back now, isn't he? I feel confident he'll want to make amends.

JONATHAN

I'll...I'll do whatever I can...

MARGO

*(Her cruelty emerging)* Good... *(Beat)* Send Eileen away. Agree never to see her again.

EILEEN

*(Panicking)* Jonathan...! No...!

JONATHAN

*(To EILEEN)* It's all right. *(To MARGO)* You know I can't do that.

MARGO

I insist.

JONATHAN

You really hate me so much...?

MARGO

More. *(Beat)* If only I could have stopped loving you, Michael...my hatred might never have... blossomed...into this. *(To herself)* Love and hate. Where does one end and the other begin? *(Beat)* Somewhere beyond...trust...I would imagine.

*(Silence; then... DOORBELL RINGS.)*

MARGO, *Continues*

*(Indicating door with gun)* Open it.

*(JONATHAN is numbed. He doesn't move.)*

MARGO, *Continues*

Open it!

*(JONATHAN goes to the door. It is MEG.)*

MEG

Hi!

*(JONATHAN stares at her blankly as she sweeps into the room, laughing.)*

MEG, *Continues*

You're not confused, are you cutie? 'Amber?' 'Samantha'?' 'Meg' might help. How ya' doin', stud?

JONATHAN

*(Numbly)* ...Meg...

MARGO

Come in, dear. *(Lapsing into her Mid-European accent)* Tank you forrr cuming so quickly.

*(JONATHAN is dumbstruck.)*

JONATHAN

Jesus! You are Alphonse!

MARGO

*(Laughing and becoming 'herself' again)* Alphonse! No, no, no, no, no! I told you no! But, at least, your gullibility speaks well of you. It suggests a certain willingness to...trust...? An admirable quality, wouldn't you agree? I had it. Once...! But you know that. *(To MEG)* You have the recorder?

MEG

Yes, Ma'm.

MARGO

And cassette?

MEG

Yes, Ma'm.

MARGO

Good. We shall begin? *(Gestures to MEG; MEG flips the 'Record' button, then, sweetly...)*  
Ready?

JONATHAN

Ready for what...?

MARGO

The truth! Recorded for Posterity!

JONATHAN

My God, how sick can you be!

MARGO

Are! You! Ready!

JONATHAN

Ready! Readyreadyready, for God's sake!!!

MARGO

Very well. You were such a popular young man back then. So bright. So forceful. A jock, a leader. A...

JONATHAN

—Lover. Go ahead, say it. This whole charade is about that, isn't it? Sex. Disgusting, distorted lies about me, and sex.

MARGO

*(A chilling threat)* I won't be interrupted again, Michael. *(Beat)* And yet, for all your glowing attributes, you became one of the vilest, cruelest, most contemptible human beings ever to walk the face of the earth.

JONATHAN

Don't listen to her, Eileen. Pay no attention to anything she says. Just know that...I love you...and when all of this is over, we will...

MARGO

*(Pointing the pistol at his crotch; clearly going over the edge)* When all this is over you'll be minus one very nice 'toy' if you don't shut up! *(Silence)* Now then, if I may continue...? *(JONATHAN only glowers at her.)* This will hurt you, Eileen. But you must remember that we were very young; it was a very long time ago.

EILEEN

*(Throwing a hand to her forehead)* No! No, please! I don't want to hear it!

MARGO

For God's sake! Settle down! *(To JONATHAN)* She's an actress, you know. They're all like that!

EILEEN

No... No... I'm...I'm all right now. I am...

MARGO

We're grateful, dear. *(Beat)* Now, as I was saying...or trying to... On the night of the prom; our Graduation Prom; the night we were crowned King and Queen; the happiest night of my life... *(A momentary sweet memory)* I...made love...to Michael... *(Beat)* Michael had sex with me...

EILEEN

*(Becoming increasingly confused and frightened)* Michael...? Jonathan...? Who...? Who is she talking about!?!

MARGO

*(Continuing as if EILEEN hadn't spoken)* And you won your wager. How much was it, Michael? \$80.00? \$90.00? *(Pondering the question)* Let me see...there were eight of you. At \$10.00 each, that would have been...

JONATHAN

Seventy! Goddamnit, seventy!

MARGO

Ah, yes!

EILEEN

I don't know what you're talking about! What are you talking about!

MARGO

Why don't you tell her, Michael?

JONATHAN

Stop this! Please, Amy, stop it! *(To EILEEN)* Eileen, don't listen to her!

EILEEN

Yes, stop it! Please, stop what?

MARGO

If you'll shut up I'll tell you!! *(Beat)* The jocks, the studs, the big men on the campus had a wager. *(Quickly changing course)* Just a minute... I don't believe you fellas were called 'jocks' back then. It would have been considered crude, don't you think, Michael?

JONATHAN

*(Breaking)* All right, Goddamnit! You want crude! You got it! *(To EILEEN)* She was a virgin. She was stacked. There were eight of us. Each put ten in a pot. The first one to fuck her got the haul. I won. I got 70 bucks; not 80; not 90. I got 70 bucks! Did I leave anything out!

MARGO

*(Simply)* Only what I got was pregnant.

*(A ghastly pause.)*

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