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**Product Code A0534-FC**

# West Palm Gig

A Full-length Comedy by  
**Susan Surman**

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# West Palm Gig

by Susan Surman

## Character Breakdown

5 females; 7 males

- VALESKA BERNHART: *Hollywood film star makes a last stab at a movie role at an open casting call before retiring to West Palm Acres where she learns talent doesn't have an expiration date. 70 (on a good day).*
- GLICK GLICKMAN: *Fast talking, multi-faceted theatre impresario, hoping to revive the dead Broadway theatre with his Revue before retiring to West Palm Acres where he learns artists never retire. With his many face lifts, he passes for 60 rather than his more advanced years.*
- JON SULLIVAN: *Out-of-work New York actor hired to remind the residents at West Palm Acres to take their medication. In the process, he discovers who he really wants to be. 30.*
- HARRY GOLDBERG: *Know-it-all resident at West Palm Acres. Mad about the movies and movie stars. Shares an apartment with Oscar. About 70.*
- OSCAR SHAPIRO: *Star-struck resident at West Palm Acres. About 70.*
- TARA BOMBECK: *Multi-pierced and tattooed independent filmmaker casting her first, low-budget film. 20-something.*
- JANE SMITH: *Plain, clumsy assistant to Glick Glickman, secretly in love with him, until a telegram reveals her true identity. 25-30.*
- ROCKY RAGE: *Fat and funny actor. Always hungry. In love with Ruby. A member of Glick's theatrical Company. 20-30.*
- INKY KRABB: *Skinny, nervous, funny actress. In love with Rocky. A member of Glick's theatrical Company. 20-30.*
- RUBY VALK: *Glamorous leading lady. In love with Enzo. A member of Glick's theatrical Company. 30-ish.*
- ENZO BORDELLO: *Handsome leading man. In love with himself. A member of Glick's theatrical Company. 30-ish.*
- FAT CAT: *A sleazy ex-con brought in at the final hour as a potential backer for Glick's Revue. Origins unknown.*

## **Scene Breakdown**

### **ACT ONE**

*A Few Years Ago*

*Scene 1 – Rehearsal Studio in Hollywood*

*Scene 2 – Rehearsal Studio in Manhattan*

*Scene 3 – Same as scene 2, later that evening*

### **ACT TWO**

*Scene 1 – Valeska’s apartment, West Palm Acres, the present*

*Scene 2 – West Palm Acres Theatre, a few months later*

*Scene 3 – Valeska’s apartment, later that same afternoon*

## West Palm Gig

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### ACT ONE: SCENE 1

*SETTING:* A bare rehearsal studio in Hollywood. A table for a desk and two chairs suffice. Photographs on the table and a copy of the shooting script.

*TIME:* A few years ago. Afternoon.

*AT RISE:* TARA BOMBECK sits at her table studying head shots. She wears tight jeans, boots, a mottled leather jacket covering most of, but not all of, her tattoos and piercings.

TARA

(Calls towards the door) NEXT! (No one appears) For Chrissakes, shift it! I haven't got all day.

*VALESKA BERNHART ENTERS, posing in the doorway. Here to audition for a film role way out of her age range, she wears a smart tailored suit and high heels; hair is coiffed to perfection.*

VALESKA

(Glances around the premises) What a dump!

*Getting no reaction to her imitation of Bette Davis, she makes her way over to the table. Without looking up, TARA waves the auditionee into the seat in front of the table and holds out her hand, expecting a head shot, but gets nothing.*

TARA

(Looks up) Oh, my God! Oh, my God, you're—

VALESKA

(Cuts her off) Dead? Very much alive. Expiration date hasn't come up yet.

TARA

I was going to say Valeska Bernhart. You're her!

She.

VALESKA

*VALENSKA takes this as her cue to sit, crossing her legs in a way to show off her once famous limbs.*

TARA

Not that it isn't a pleasure, but I'm running an open casting call right now. Have to keep going. *(Her cell phone vibrates; she checks it and answers.)* Ma, I said I would call you back later...No, cousin Cindy is not right for the part...Ma, listen, I can do the casting myself. You just worry about the costumes. Keep hemming. *(Ends call: surprised to see VALESKA still sitting there)* You are still here because?

VALESKA

*Murder in Key West*, of course. Your film, dear. Directed and written by Tara Bombeck. Congratulations. *(Mock clapping)* Well, here I am. Alive and kicking and ready to play the Harvard professor. Did you know they used to refer to me by *Valeska*?

TARA

I saw that. There was a marathon of yesteryear stars on Turner classics about a month ago. A bunch of you. You were good.

VALESKA

I was great.

TARA

The Harvard professor is thirty. *(Stands and gestures towards the door)* Please.

VALESKA

*(Ignores the not so subtle hint)* Synopsis: A Harvard Business School professor is in Key West for spring break. She swims naked in the ocean at midnight, meets a shark, ends up in the hospital, falls in love with her male nurse and if she lives, they plan to marry, after first eliminating his pregnant wife. Brilliant. A film noir like the old days in black and white.

TARA

We're shooting in color.

VALESKA

When I splashed onto the screen, you know what they wrote in *Variety*? Quote. Valeska Bernhart is in Technicolor even when she's in black and white. Unquote.

*TARA reluctantly sits; afraid of giving the wrong message but the boots are killing her.*

TARA

How can I put this? Miss Bernhart, it isn't a question of whether or not you can act. Like there will be close-ups and like a nude scene. The role is written for a younger actress. Like much younger.

VALESKA

*(Picking up the speech pattern of her nemesis)* Like she's in bandages in a hospital bed for half the movie. Like put Vaseline on the lens.

TARA

We do it with a nylon stocking now.

VALESKA

*(Snatches up the script from the table top)* Is this the script? *(Flips through the pages pretending she can see without her glasses)* Mmm-hmm. Mmm-hmm.

TARA

*(Attempts to take the script out of VALESKA's hands)* I've seen three hundred actresses in three days. I have a schedule. Really, there's nothing.

VALESKA

Here you have the legendary, thought to be retired or expired, Valeska Bernhart, seventy-er ...fifty-seven, give or take, insisting she can play a forty year old, give or take. Now isn't that a kick in the pants? See how light I've kept my voice? If this was radio, listeners would have taken me for a teenager. I could be the end of your search. *(Doesn't move. Clutches the script)*

TARA

Miss Bernhart, I'm sorry you've wasted your time coming down here. *(Calls out to the reception area)* NEXT!

VALESKA

*(Doesn't budge)* A great idea. I'll play myself. A cameo. Problem solved.

TARA

Problem not solved. The script is frozen. No new characters. I need actors in their twenties and thirties. And I'm looking for an unknown to play the lead. I know it's crazy, but we think it will be great publicity. *(Cell vibrates. Checks it and answers)* What Rob? I'm in the middle of a meeting. *(Listens before going berserk)* Are you shitting me? We shoot in six days. *(She stands, she sits, she paces)* Every wannabee in Los Angeles is sitting in the reception area with a resume of high school plays and a snapshot of their graduation. Finding a fresh new face in Hollywood is like...I don't know what it's like. And now you have the nerve to tell me you're bailing 'cause you got offered a blockbuster? I brought you in as a favor, you little shit. You're no Max Factor. Hello? Hello? Don't you hang up on me! *(Slams the phone on the table)* Friggin' pansy. *(Collapses in her chair)*

VALESKA

*(Has heard everything, gets an idea. Her opportunity to begin the schmooze)* The whole thing is a brilliant concept. I see your film as a kind of *Jaws* meets *General Hospital*.

TARA

Jesus! You're still here. I'm going to have to call security.

VALESKA

Come on, Miss Bombeck, the only person among the sea of denim hopefuls out there is the ninety-four pound receptionist. Security?

TARA

I'm asking you nicely to leave. *(Holds her hand out)* The script. Please.

VALESKA

Miss Bombeck, everyone knows I played a twenty-eight year old on Broadway when I was fifty–er–forty. Tennessee was astounded. He wrote the part for me.

TARA

Maybe you can fool them on stage, but on film, your face is in their face. Every pore is a crevice. It must be real.

*Despite being worn out, TARA is fascinated by this living legend.*

VALESKA

Quite the contrary, young lady. The stage is reality. You can't lie. Every breath must be the truth. You know what it feels like out there on stage every night plus two matinees? It's like being eaten alive. With film, if you make a mistake, you can stop. In front of a live audience, that's not an option. You have to keep going. You have to get out of your own mistake. Believe me, kiddo, that's the test of a true actor. With film the camera does the work. And now, computers have changed everything. If they can put a gorilla on the Empire State Building, think what you could do with my minor flaws. *(Throws back her head and turns her face upwards to the left, displaying her better profile)* It's a director's medium, darling. You could win an Oscar.

TARA

You don't want me. You want Houdini.

VALESKA

*(Ignores the crack)* We can bill it as my great comeback. You, an unknown, will become a household name. Of course, with the triumph, the men will swarm around you. But it's only a crush on your talent. It's easy to believe the adoration is real. A very heady experience. That's how I ended up with three, maybe four, I don't remember, lousy husbands, one who claimed to be Count somebody who drained me dry, bank account-wise. You go dancing with that type. You don't marry them.



TARA

I'll say one thing for you. You've got chutzpah which in this business is the key to the kingdom. But not this time. How did you even hear about this open casting?

VALESKA

How? Like everyone else. On the Internet. And believe me when I tell you technology is not on the list of my special skills. I read a rough outline, a character list. I also read between the lines.

TARA

Who's your agent?

VALESKA

Darling, I've outlived three agents and two managers. There aren't that many roles for actresses of a certain age. I owe it to my public, to the fans, to keep going. How about the surgeon in the hospital. Change it to a woman. What is it? Two lines. Let people know I'm still here.

TARA

What about family? I think I once read you have a daughter?

VALESKA

My advice? Never have children. My daughter married a nothing. They bought a Sushi restaurant near Miami Beach. She grew up surrounded by servants. She spoke French when she was nine. She could have been a great pianist. Instead, she makes a way of life out of seaweed and rice.

TARA

Sushi is very popular.

VALESKA

Raw fish in all that heat? Feh! (*Rising*) When I wanted Japanese food, my manager made arrangements for me to tour Japan. That's stardom, Miss Bombeck. We wore chiffon and lace, and the diamonds weren't on loan. They sent Rolls-Royces and Bentleys, not these stretch limousines today they think are glamorous. (*She knows when to pause, when to raise and lower her voice, when to look at her audience of one, when to look away*) You know what my daughter has on her wall in the restaurant? A telegram from Noel Coward. December 16. I forget the year. We had a small catered gathering at the house in honor of Noel's and my mutual birthdays. Different years. All of a sudden, my daughter brings out a surprise from the kitchen. Surprise? I was flabbergasted. She had cooked a pot roast. I don't know how she knew how to do that. We used to hire people to change light bulbs, never mind do the cooking. Anyway, she serves it to Noel and being a gentleman, he eats a decent amount. The next day, a telegram arrived for my daughter. 'Darling, Anna. The pot roast was a hit! Love, Noel Coward.' That telegram is hanging on the wall of that Sushi restaurant near Miami Beach. Imagine that!

TARA

I'm—I'm picturing it on the wall. When was the last time you saw your daughter?

VALESKA

*(Feels faint and sits down)* Who knows? Maybe 1998, '99. When they opened the restaurant. My granddaughter was a baby. Now she's getting married in six weeks. I don't know anything about the boy. I don't know what kind of family he comes from. I don't know anything. I got an invitation in the mail. Like a stranger.

TARA

So you have a wedding to go to. That's great.

VALESKA

You think I'm going? I have a set of twelve silver fruit knives that belonged to my mother. They'll get those for a present, not my presence. I would prefer not to lie to my family when I tell them I can't come to the wedding because I'm *(Spells it)* w o r k i n g. That's where you come in, Toots.

TARA

Tara. I understand you want a job. But this isn't it. I need a lead. I need a make-up person. That sonofabitch was my last choice.

VALESKA

The work can dry up sometimes. It could happen to anyone. It could happen to you. Look at Sylvester Stallone. He had a hundred bucks in his pocket. He wrote and starred in *Rocky*. And the rest is history.

TARA

Yes, we all know what happened. Things have changed. This isn't that kind of situation.

VALESKA

I made money for people. Past tense. You get to a certain age in Tinsel Town and you become invisible. *(Not easy to admit her desperation)* I have a small apartment in West Hollywood. I would like to stay there.

TARA

Film school wasn't like this.

VALESKA

I never had to beg for a part before. Never. They came to me. Get Valeska. They sent scripts to my home. I never had to audition. Get Valeska. Miss Bombeck, a walk-on. A cameo. There are bills. The rent.

TARA

Have you thought of doing commercials?

VALESKA

Dentures? Depends? Cat food? I hate cats. And I wear neither Depends nor dentures. (*Opens her mouth wide and flashes a mouthful of teeth and gums in Tara's face*) All my own, baby.

TARA

Yes, yes, they're lovely. You'll have to give me the name of your dentist. I just mean it's another avenue for work. It isn't a stigma any more. They all do it. Lauren Bacall, June Allyson. Even Bobby DeNiro.

VALESKA

Television commercials yet!

TARA

It isn't just about being in front of the camera. Look at how many stars work both ends of the camera. Bob Redford and Clint and Goldie and Joanne Woodward. Great on the bio.

VALESKA

Yes, yes, but directing isn't my thing.

TARA

It isn't just about the director and the actors. So much goes into making a movie. The costume designers, the cinematographers, art directors, sound, make-up artists. You must have known them all. Make-up artists, I mean. (*Desperate*) You don't know anyone? For make-up?

VALESKA

Wally Westmore. William Tuttle. Ben Nye. I learned all the tricks from them. Sometimes I did my own. I'm that talented. Who knows what would have happened to dear Judith Anderson. A great stage actress, but she never would have passed on screen without Guy Pearce slapping the pancake on her in *Laura*. (*Lies*) Of course, they wanted me for the role, but I was unavailable. I think it was rigged. The inside info was that Gene Tierney didn't want the competition in the looks department.

TARA

Valeska Bernhart, you have given me an idea.

VALESKA

(*Playing the innocent*) I have?

TARA

You have solved my problem. Well, one of my problems.

VALESKA

I have?

TARA

It's a long shot, but here it is. You need work. I need a make-up person. I'm offering you the job, no, the *role* of Make-up Artist on *Murder in Key West*.

VALESKA

(*She set the bait and TARA took it*) I don't know...I...

TARA

Your cozy little place in West Hollywood.

VALESKA

Home sweet home.

TARA

Home sweet home.

VALESKA

A big shift.

TARA

Better than shifting into a room over someone's garage in Bakersfield.

VALESKA

God forbid!

TARA

So you'll do it?

VALESKA

I can think of a million reasons why I shouldn't and only one why I should.

TARA

I take that as a yes.

VALESKA

We'll be on location in Key West?

TARA

Low budget. (*Gushes*) We're shooting the whole picture right here in Los Angeles. You can sleep in your own bed every night. Isn't that super?

VALESKA

Save it, sister. It isn't an Academy Award. I'll need a script.

TARA

Of course. I'll get one out to you with a cast list – as soon as I get a cast.

VALESKA

And a contract. I'm between agents now, but I can do it myself.

TARA

More actors should be independent like you.

VALESKA

I don't come cheap.

TARA

Budget. My mother's doing the costumes.

VALESKA

Your mother?

TARA

Gwen Germaine.

VALESKA

Gwen Germaine is your mother? We all thought she, you know, checked out.

TARA

Completely cured.

VALESKA

And working again.

TARA

So we're all set then.

VALESKA

Good for Gwen Germaine. You know, Miss Bombeck, I learned something today. You don't have to love *what* you do as long as you love *why* you do it.

TARA

Meaning?

VALESKA

You have to be careful what you ask for.

TARA

*(Doesn't get it. Doesn't care)* It will be a pleasure... an honor... working with you, Vales... Miss Bernhart. Valeska. Welcome aboard.

*TARA Stands and holds out her right hand to shake.*

VALESKA

I don't shake.

TARA

*(Withdraws her hand)* Understood.

VALESKA

You'll send a car?

TARA

Budget again, Valeska. Not even for the actors.

VALESKA

Understood.

TARA

Leave your address with the receptionist.

VALESKA

I'll look forward to seeing your mother again.

TARA

I'm excited about this. I can get three thousand actors to play one role, but if you can do make-up, we in the business bow down to you!

VALESKA

Don't knock yourself out. I already said I'll do it. The trade-off.

TARA

Trade-off?

VALESKA

We both got something. Even if it wasn't exactly our first choice.

TARA

Got it. I think.

VALESKA

All I prayed for this morning was a job. God isn't that bright. In the future, I'll have to specify.

TARA

Rehearsals begin in three days. Only for a couple of days, then we shoot. *(Calls out to the waiting room)* NEXT! *(Ignores VALESKA now. She has other fish to fry)*

VALESKA

My cue to exit. Camera, lights, action. Ready for your close-up, Miss Bernhart. This is Hollywood. Hidden cameras could be anywhere. The *paparazzi* might be lurking.

*VALESKA heads for the door with a big smile and the trademark walk she invented years ago for one of her films. EXITS*

*BLACKOUT*

*LIGHTS UP ON VALESKA DOWNSTAGE.*

VALESKA

*(To audience)* The career was over. I knew it. I was what they call a has-been. Didn't you use to be.....? To finally admit there weren't going to be enough film offers, *any* film offers, hit me hard. To finally admit I couldn't afford to live alone anymore was a gut wrenching scene. And to finally admit I couldn't drive anymore due to several shall we say mishaps on the road... Well, you get the picture... The days of chauffeurs were long gone. And when I looked in the mirror, despite the 8-watt pink light bulbs, I was old and too broke and too scared to go under the knife.

It became evident I could no longer live two thousand miles away from family. Living with my daughter had been suggested. No thank you. And so it was off to West Palm Acres in West Palm Beach, Florida. It hadn't been an easy decision to leave Hollywood, but what was my choice? The monthly social security checks were not enough. Anna came through when it mattered and had agreed to subsidize my retirement, but only if I moved to Florida.

Anna and husband are waiting for me to die so they can get their hands on the diamond rings, the emerald bracelets, the sapphire and diamond necklace, the diamond pins. I have never actually shown the jewels to them. It is simply assumed they are in a safety deposit box at the bank. Fortunately, none of the husbands knew about those pieces. They'd taken everything else. But that is history. As a matter of fact, so are the jewels. When the work dried up, I was forced to sell it all. I lived on the proceeds as long as I could.

I have never understood my daughter's life choices with all the advantages she had. How I, *the* Valeska Bernhart could have given birth to an alien like Anna. Then I remembered the father. My second husband. The shoe salesman in the fancy boutique in Beverly Hills. Just goes to show how you can be fooled by a handsome man in a good suit kneeling at your feet. If I had taken as much time over marriage decisions that I take over deciding what dressing to order for my salad in a restaurant, I wouldn't have had four husbands.

In the race with time, time always wins. It comes to everyone. How I hate to be like everyone.

END OF SCENE 1

## ACT ONE: SCENE 2

*SETTING:* Rehearsal Studio in Manhattan. An old couch with a mint stuffed in the cushions and a table suffice. Stools and props (candy, potato chips, toy gun, a newspaper) are off and brought in gradually during the scene by assistant JANE.

*TIME:* A few years ago. Morning.

*AT RISE:* ROCKY lounges on the threadbare prop couch reading the funnies in a newspaper and anticipating the candy bar he is about to chomp into. He casually drops the wrapper on the floor.

*JANE ENTERS* carrying a bag nearly as large as she is containing her tools of the trade: two copies of the manuscript, a legal pad, several pencils with erasers, an address book, cell phone, box of Kleenex, and personal items. She wears large framed eyeglasses. Her outfit is practical rather than stylish. Her stringy hair is attempting to be a pony tail. She races over to the candy wrapper on the floor and picks it up.

JANE

Please don't eat the props, Mr. Rage.

ROCKY

Good morning, Jane. I like your hair. It's... uncomplicated.

JANE

My fuses blew.

*ROCKY continues to eat and read. INKY ENTERS cheerfully. She carries a large bag which contains her script and personal items.*

INKY

Morning everybody! Ah, everybody isn't here. I like your hair, Jane. It's... uncomplicated.

JANE

My fuses blew. (*Exits*)



INKY

I love mornings, don't you? I think it's something to do with waking up. I love nuts and raisins. Doesn't mean I eat fruitcake. I like strawberries. Doesn't mean I like strawberry ice-cream. *(All this to get a reaction from her secret love ROCKY)* Howdy, Rocky Rage, so ya wanna be on the stage. There's one leaving in twenty minutes. Ha! Ha! I woke up this morning, checked it off my list, threw a four leaf clover over my shoulder and here I am. What's your story? *(Totally deflated at his lack of interest)* How's your candy bar?

*JANE ENTERS with a bag of potato chips and candy bars, placing them on the set. EXITS.*

*ROCKY grabs the bag of potato chips, tears open the bag and eats.*

ROCKY

*(Notices INKY for the first time)* Oh, hi. When I was a kid, we had a dog that could rip open a bag of potato chips.

INKY

*(Delighted she has his attention)* You had a dog that ate potato chips?

ROCKY

Naw. He got bored after he opened the bag. I ate the potato chips. The bag, too.

*JANE ENTERS with a stool and a prop gun.*

INKY

You ate the bag?

ROCKY

So my mother wouldn't know.

INKY

I did that with lollipops.

JANE

Lollipops didn't come in a bag.

INKY

With the sticks. And excuse me, missy, this is a private conversation, not a ménage a trois.

ROCKY

You ate the sticks?

INKY

No, I hid them under the bed. She worked in my father's deli so she never cleaned. Then we moved and she found out.

*JANE EXITS.*

*ROCKY is now more interested in the mint he has found in between the old cushions on the sofa.*

INKY (continued)

Where is everybody? You'd think they'd be so happy to be working again that they'd get here on time. I'm gonna complain.

ROCKY

Who to? You can't tell the producer because the producer is the director and the director is the playwright. Let's face it, without Glick Glickman, we haven't got a thing.

INKY

We got us. He may have thought up the idea, but without us, those characters are just black letters on a page.

ROCKY

For the past six years, I've been slinging hash in a cheap diner.

INKY

You did commercials.

ROCKY

Two. Paint and acne cream. Didn't exactly make me a household name. Or rich.

INKY

I was a singing waitress in an Italian restaurant.

ROCKY

I'd leave that off the resume. Point is if Glick Glickman can get this show off the ground, and it looks like we're there, we're back in business. The business is back in business.

INKY

I was on my way. I really was.

ROCKY

We all were. But that was before Broadway went out of business. No more shows, no more audience. Tickets were too expensive. The casts got bigger and bigger but when the cast on stage outnumbers the audience, the next step is down and out. Legit theatre was in crisis mode. Finale.

INKY

Do you really think *The Revue* – stupid title – with four actors is going to make it?

ROCKY

Why not? We're terrific. It's a good title. Simple. Says what it is. More room on the marquee for our names. Okay, I admit the script needs a few changes, but nothing big. It's our great hope for the return of Broadway. Not just our hope, but every actor who ever walked the boards. You have to think positive.

*JANE ENTERS carrying a stool.*

INKY

You're right, but I'm still worried. For the past two weeks, we've sat around talking, discussing motivation. We haven't seen a second act. Is there a second act? We open in a week and where is our director/playwright/producer?

ROCKY

Probably working on the second act. Why don't we run our opening sketch?

INKY

I can't rehearse without our director. With her (*Meaning JANE*) hovering.

JANE

I'm supposed to watch. I'm the assistant. When Mr. Glickman isn't here, I'm in charge.

ROCKY

Okay, Jane, you hold the script. I know my lines, but just in case, keep an eye on it.

*JANE pulls the script out of her bag. Finds the sketch.*

ROCKY

(*In character to INKY*) Okay, lady, put 'em up. This ain't no water pistol.

JANE

You need the gun. (*Rushes over to ROCKY with the gun*) A little more menacing.

*INKY and ROCKY give her a 'look'.*

JANE (continued)

What? (*Points to the script*) The directions say menacing. It's right here.

*ROCKY jabs the gun in INKY'S back.*

INKY

Ouch. That hurts.

ROCKY

(*As himself*) Stay in character. (*In character*) Quit stallin' lady.

INKY

*(In character)* I'll give you anything. Take my Pierre Cardin gold and emerald bangle. Take my Cartier's ruby and opal ring. Take my mink-lined trench coat. Take anything. Take me!

*INKY throws her arms around ROCKY and shoves him to the floor.*

JANE

*(Scrambling through the script)* That isn't in the script.

INKY

*(In character)* But don't take my American Express card.

ROCKY

*(Trying to free himself)* American Express gives you more than just a card.

JANE

What? *(Scrambles through the script)* That business isn't in the script.

INKY

It is now.

*RUBY VALK ENTERS. Glamorous from head to toe in a mohair pretending to be cashmere cape, the love of ROCKY's life. He pulls himself up off the floor, leaving INKY down. RUBY was hoping to arrive last making a spectacular grand entrance solely for the love of her life, ENZO, who isn't there. She drops the pose. JANE rushes over to her.*

JANE

*(Takes her wrap)* You look stunning as always, Miss Valk.

RUBY

Your hair. It's... uncomplicated.

JANE

My fuses blew. *(Not sure what to do with the cape)*

RUBY

Oh hang it, dear. Just hang it.

*JANE drapes it over the sofa.*

ROCKY

Good morning, Ruby. Did you have a nice evening?

RUBY

A dedicated actress spends her evenings at home with her script.

INKY

*(Still on the floor)* For the past several years, I understand you were spending your evenings somewhere else.

RUBY

We all had to earn a living, Miss Krapp.

INKY

*(Irate)* It's been legally changed to Krabb. *(Gets up off the floor)*

RUBY

A rose by any other name... I'm glad to see you two were rehearsing. The show needs all the help it can get.

JANE

It isn't a show. It's a Revue in words and movement based on a play based on an original short story by Glick Glickman.

ROCKY

You haven't anything to worry about, Ruby. You're Ruby Valk!

RUBY

You're sweet, Rocky. But, and this is for your own good, you are overweight. I suppose it isn't entirely your fault. These past few years, you've had to make a way of life out of hashed brown potatoes.

ROCKY

Yes, I needed the work. Thank you for understanding. I know you wouldn't hurt a fly.

INKY

Did you hear about the girl who was afraid of flies until she opened one?

RUBY

Was she a biologist?

INKY

Oh, the pain of it.

RUBY

Pain is what drives me on. Creativity is its name.

INKY

Why do you always have to make such a drama out of everything?

RUBY

Drama is my business.

ROCKY

If I can make people laugh, then I'm happy.

INKY

Where is our director, I'd like to know? He's been late every day this week. I hate waiting.

*INKY takes her hand mirror out of her bag and studies her face.*

ROCKY

I'm sure nothing's wrong. Just a delay.

INKY

Something's wrong with this mirror. I look terrible.

JANE

Aren't you feeling well, Miss Krabb?

INKY

How should I know how I feel? I'm an actress. A figment of someone else's mind. Do I exist at all?

*THE SOUND of a tapping cane is heard OFF, getting louder as it gets closer. THEY all listen. ENZO BORDELLO ENTERS with a fancy walking stick. He wears a cape. He carries an expensive looking bag containing his script, personal items, a mini recorder. His entrance is made even grander with his excerpted recitation of Edgar Allen Poe's, The Raven.*

ENZO

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten love, so on and so forth, when suddenly there came a tapping, rapping at my chamber door, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera.

*A pause before mild applause from his audience. ENZO nods in appreciation.*

ROCKY

I'd love to do Shakespeare one day.

RUBY

It was Edgar Allen Poe. *The Raven*. I'm right, aren't I, Enzo? Beautiful, just beautiful.

INKY

Personally, for me, a little weird. But if I don't understand something, I know it must be good.

ENZO

An actor must constantly strive to reach beyond. Well, now, is everyone splendid today?  
(*Looks at everyone*) Ah, Jane. Dear, sweet Jane. So uncomplicated.

ROCKY, INKY, RUBY

Her fuses blew.

ENZO

I see our impresario isn't here. Perhaps just stepped out?

ROCKY, INKY, RUBY

Hasn't arrived.

ENZO

No matter. Just a slight delay, I'm sure. I have high hopes for our comeback. Glick Glickman has been around a long time. He isn't a fool. This will be a success. He's clever. He kept the cast to four. One easy standing set. Four stools, a table, a sofa, few props. Wait and watch, my hungry thespians. The theatre will soar once again under Glick Glickman. It can't miss. Look who he has for a cast. Wait and watch.

*ROCKY returns to his place on the couch,  
where he sniffs Ruby's cape.*

INKY

Maybe it won't do anything for the theatre. Maybe it's just a one shot deal, and we're back demonstrating cheese dip in grocery stores.

RUBY

Speak for yourself, Betty Crocker. I don't have good feelings about this. I can't believe I came back from the coast for this fiasco. At least in Hollywood when you're out of work, you can work on your tan.

ENZO

People, people, you must learn the basic rule. Believe in the inevitability of your talent.

INKY

More Edgar Allen Schmoe?

ENZO

Charles Laughton to Shelley Winters at a party. I read it in her biography.

RUBY

I loathe shoddiness.

ENZO

Never Glick Glickman's style, my dear.

INKY

He's over an hour late. What do you call that? Chic?

ENZO

Psychology.

*THEY all look at him for an explanation.*

He's done his job. It's up to us now. *The Revue* depends on the four of us breathing as one. His absence has created a kind of mutiny in us. Us against him. He's a genius. We are a close knit unit. That's his intention.

RUBY

I know close. This isn't close.

ENZO

Flip the coin, my dear. One side fear; the other side faith.

RUBY

Psycho-babble. When he is here, he's always on the phone.

INKY

Either on his way to or coming back from a meeting. Where's his office?

ROCKY

His briefcase. I heard him on the phone the other day. Something about eyeglasses being shipped to natives in Tahiti.

INKY

They don't wear eyeglasses, do they?

ROCKY

That's the point. He gets in on the ground floor of these things. He buys the glasses for two dollars a gross and sells them for a hundred a gross. That's what I heard him say on the phone.

RUBY

He's a crook.

ENZO

He's an entrepreneur.

JANE

He's a genius.



RUBY

Our entire professional future is in the hands of a so-called businessman. You know what business does to creativity.

ENZO

You are all forgetting something major. Roger Charles.

RUBY

That name sounds familiar.

INKY

Never heard of him.

ROCKY

Me neither.

ENZO

Shame on you theatrical folk.

RUBY

Wait a minute. It's coming. Yes. My mother worked with a Roger Charles. *When Blue Skies Turn Black and Oceans Don't Wave*. Roger Charles and the late Vera Valk. I was a child. Glick Glickman is Roger Charles?

ENZO

And before that, Hymie Moscovitz. Surely, you all knew that.

INKY

From Moscovitz's Water Beds?

ENZO

The knife-throwing act extraordinaire.

ROCKY

Glick Glickman is Hymie Moscovitz? You're kidding. How come I didn't know that?

ENZO

Cross my heart. I never lie.

RUBY

It's all coming back to me. He used to come over to the house and show us his knives. I was very young. My mother served him tea. What happened? Who is Glick Glickman? More to the point, why Glick Glickman?

ENZO

That's his real name.

INKY

More to the point, where is Glick Glickman? You don't suppose he's done a midnight flit on us? Gone to Tahiti?

ENZO

Highly unlikely.

JANE

Why don't you do some improvisations to warm up until Mr. Glickman arrives?

COMPANY

Improvisations?

RUBY

A waste of time. I didn't get where I am by wondering who I am.

ROCKY

I just use my imagination and get on with it.

INKY

Me, too.

JANE

Improvisation is an exercise through which the actor can search the subconscious so the actor is free in his head.

RUBY

Oh, brother.

ENZO

I'm sure we could all do with a coffee break. Jane, dear, would you mind going out and getting our morning nutritional supplies?

JANE

You want me to go for coffee and muffins now?

INKY

Why not? You're the gofer.

JANE

Yes, but if Mr. Glickman comes in and I'm not here... I'm supposed to be here.

RUBY

I refuse to get into litigation with the hired help. Forget the coffee. I always bring my own.

*RUBY pulls out a thermos and carrots and celery from her bag*

ROCKY

Ginger Rogers always brought her own bottled water to the set and then later to whatever theatre she was playing in.

INKY

I didn't know that.

ENZO

And it's a known fact Carol Channing brought her own food to parties in a bowling bag.

RUBY

Singing, not singing. Dancing, not dancing. Sleeping, not sleeping. Eating, not eating. Drinking, not drinking. Smoking, not smoking. Loving, not loving. Such is my life these days on this island. It's a life, I suppose. Of course, it is.

ROCKY

That's beautiful, Ruby. A song without music. You'll stop the show.

RUBY

You think Glick Glickman wrote that? That's me. My soul bared.

INKY

I like my sole grilled.

RUBY

*(Ignoring Inky, she glances at her script)* Enzo, Rocky, have you read the new bit? We're in the apartment of Steve and Eunice Hubbel. I know it's a kind of spoof, but who cares about the Hubbels?

ENZO

For a start, their downstairs neighbors, Stella and Stanley. And a playwright by the name of Tennessee Williams.

RUBY

Puh-lease! No one is going to compare Glick Glickman to Tennessee Williams.

INKY

Not even to Esther Williams.

ENZO

Now there's a masterpiece for all time.

RUBY

Esther Williams wasn't that great.

ENZO

I refer, my rose petal, to that masterpiece, *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

INKY

I played Eunice on tour once. Slopped around in hair curlers and grubby slippers and a faded chenille robe for twelve weeks. I loved it.

ENZO

What actor worth his salt hasn't played in a production of *Streetcar*? I, of course, excelled as Stanley Kowalski.

RUBY

Part of basic training. I, too, played in *Streetcar*.

INKY

And what did you base your Stanley on?

RUBY

Blanche! I played Blanche Dubois!

INKY

Before your nervous breakdown or after?

RUBY

You're giving me a pain in my neck. Enzo, can I talk to you?

ENZO

Can implies whether or not you are able. You are not deaf, dumb, or blind; therefore, you are able. Ergo, it should be, may I talk to you?

RUBY

Of course. May I talk to you?

ENZO

Not now, precious gemstone. I want to study my lines. (*Buries his head in his script*)

RUBY

(*Aside*) Oh, God, I love him so. Last Sunday he came over to rehearse our scenes. Then we watched *Clockwork Orange*. Then we talked and talked and talked about the Mafia, the CIA, about guns and war and all the starvation in the world. I've never felt such peace and total harmony with another human being. (*Buries her head in her script*)

INKY

Rocky, I—

ROCKY

I'm busy now, Inky. (*Buries his head in his script*)

INKY

*(Aside)* Oh, God, I love him so. He thinks he's in love with Ruby. He doesn't hate me. He just doesn't feel anything. He hates me. Sometimes we get emotional, but it's only the work. Like yesterday. I nearly fainted after doing the sketch about Sandra's pregnancy. He brought me a glass of water and told me to unzip my jeans, but I knew it wasn't personal. *(Buries her head in her script)*

ENZO

*(Looking up from his script)* Does anyone remember that wonderful show where I made my entrance on the wings of an angel? *Rudolf of Sardinia.*

ROCKY

If I recall correctly, you made your exit two seconds later through the proscenium arch into an ambulance.

ENZO

Quite intentional. Part of the act.

INKY

It was his first break.

ROCKY

Drum roll.

INKY

Boom. Boom.

RUBY

I've wasted the entire morning. I could have had my legs waxed. I'm fuming.

*ROCKY is inspired and slips into an improvisation, hovering over RUBY. ENZO and INKY join him.*

ROCKY

Madam, we don't allow smoking during a facial.

ENZO

*(French accent)* Mon Dieu, madam, what have you done to your skin?

INKY

*(French accent)* It is necessary you must take the fluid injections.

RUBY

I have enough fluid already.

ROCKY

Madam, we do not put it in. We take it out.

JANE

(*Laughing*) See? That was excellent. That's what I mean by improvisation.

RUBY

She's impossible. Where did Glick find you?!

ENZO

Easy, Ruby. Jane, you needn't feel obligated to reveal anything. Unless you want to. It may inspire others (*meaning himself*) to reveal certain truths.

JANE

It's okay. I don't mind.

ENZO

Are you sure, Jane? You don't have to. Nobody is making you do anything. Well, except Glick Glickman who is your boss, after all.

INKY

Let her talk.

JANE

Okay, it doesn't matter. Mr. Glickman had a florist business. In the old days.

RUBY

See? Another business. Nothing to do with the theatre.

ENZO

Let her speak. Go on, Jane. We're listening.

JANE

I was a 'temp' for Benny Klingman Funerals.

RUBY

A funeral home! My God.

ROCKY

It was very successful. People were dying to get in.

ENZO

Hush. Go on, Jane.

JANE

Mr. Glickman did all the floral arrangements. For Benny Klingman. He was known for his special arrangements in black. One time he ran out of spray. He would spray white flowers black. He told me to go out and buy a can, so I did, and I paid ninety cents. When I got back, he gave me five dollars because up to that time, he was paying a dollar a can. I saved him ten cents. He made some deal with Mr. Klingman and hired me away from the funeral home. And I've worked for him ever since.

RUBY

My first real job in the theatre in six years and I'm tied up with a mortician's 'temp' and a flower boy.

INKY

Don't worry. It'll all be subtitled.

*JANE bursts into tears and runs off.*

RUBY

That girl is too high strung to be in show business. *(Bursts into tears and runs off)*

INKY

She loves someone who doesn't love her. *(Bursts into tears and runs off)*

ROCKY

I love someone who doesn't love me. Excuse me, I have low blood sugar. *(Bursts into tears and runs off)*

ENZO

Alone at last. *(Kisses his hand, pulls recorder from his bag, presses the play button and relishes the recorded applause. Bows)* Thank you, thank you, I'll be here all week.

*(To audience)* Emotions are just under the first layer of the skin with our breed. We don't always know what is fact and what is fiction. But since we're playing true confessions here this morning, I have a confession. I've always said I was named after my aunt who brought me up. Mildred Bordello. I've never told this to anyone. Her name was Mildred Clodhopper. She ran a bordello. *(Bursts into tears and runs off)*

*GLICK ENTERS, carrying a huge briefcase. Due to multiple face lifts and a toupee on his head, he appears younger than his years. He is shocked to see an empty rehearsal studio.*

GLICK

*(Shouting)* Miss Smith, where the hell are you?

*Places his briefcase on the table, sits on a prop stool at the table. Puts his head forward. A mistake. His toupee moves down. He adjusts it.*

GLICK, (continued)

Damn thing.

JANE ENTERS.

JANE

Good morning, Mr. Glickman.

GLICK

Forget the weather. You're all late.

JANE

Forgive me, but we were all here on time. I told the Company to take an early lunch since you weren't here. You told me to take charge when you weren't here. You told me that, didn't you?

GLICK

*(Studies her hair)* Your fuses again. Never mind. I got news. A man's whole life is crushed with one word. Two lousy letters, two lousy syllables. En – o. No. Some are born to defecate; others learn to defecate; and there are those who have defecation thrust upon them.

JANE

I'm not sure I know what you mean.

GLICK

The dough I had, I ain't got. Backers, schmackers. Something to do with money in a risky business.

JANE

But surely you can get the finance from other sources. You've done this a million times.

GLICK

Everything is timing. I paid a non-refundable deposit to the theatre to open one week from today. If I had one big name, maybe, just maybe I could get the backing. I had it right here in the palm of my hand. *(Begins to pace)* Don't leave me, Jane.

JANE

*(Aside)* He once said I was his co-pilot. What does it mean? Could I ever be a woman to him? The light would go out in the world if I couldn't take notes for him, type his memos, shine his shoes, sharpen his pencils, carry his Kleenex, cancel his hotel reservations, page him in restaurants to impress people, do his laundry, pick up his dry cleaning.



GLICK

Where are you, Jane?

JANE

I'm here. I'm right here. (*Paces behind him*)

GLICK

It's gone. Up in smoke. All gone.

JANE

Could you get them to rehearse without salary until you get the money?

GLICK

That's the idea. Trouble is I'm gonna have trouble raising any money with Inky Krabb. Never should have cast her. She can't sing.

JANE

It isn't a musical.

GLICK

A musical I could get the money just like that. (*Snaps his fingers*)

JANE

She's a comedienne. She doesn't have to sing well. She's funny. She makes people laugh.

GLICK

She's skinny. A chest with two raisins on an ironing board.

JANE

It doesn't matter. Everyone loves a comic. And Rocky is funny. And you've got glamour with Ruby and Enzo. You've got a hit, Mr. Glickman.

GLICK

Don't try and con a con. This is last chance saloon. If I don't get this Revue on, the business is finished for good. I thought I was doing the right thing by keeping the cast small with a low budget. Broadway was dead after that fiasco with actors flying over the audience, actors getting injured. The show lost about four million a week. Investors lost sixty million. There were law suits, injuries. It can't be big anymore. When Broadway tries to be the movies, it fails. That's why I did this, with a cast of four with a minimal setting. It can work. But without financial backing, I got nothing.

JANE

You have other businesses. Couldn't you borrow from that?

GLICK

A producer doesn't put money into his own show.

JANE

But isn't this kind of an exception?

GLICK

Yuh, sure. I got five million dollars tied up in a Hong Kong account. All I need is eighty thousand to get the show off the ground.

JANE

Instruct the bank to transfer the funds from the current account to a deposit account and the bank will lend you the eighty thousand.

GLICK

Are you nuts? Where have I got five million? Last year I got the Hong Kong flu. Sick as a dog. That's what I got from Hong Kong. Think, Glick, think. (*Fingers his upper lip*) Maybe I'll grow a mustache. Look what it did for Hitler. (*Stops pacing. So does she*) Hold the phone. Got it! Got it, got it.

JANE

What?

GLICK

Not what. Who.

JANE

Who?

GLICK

Okay. Whom.

JANE

Who? What?

GLICK

Fat Cat.

JANE

Where?

GLICK

I got a seven year old nephew doesn't ask as many questions. Unfortunately, it is illegal to employ him.

JANE

I'm scared of cats. When I was a kid, I had a book called *Fraidy Cat*. I was too afraid to read it.

GLICK

He got out of the big house about a month ago so I heard. His number's in my book. Go. Fetch.

JANE

*(Gets the book out of his briefcase. Thumbs through)* I'm in the C's. His name isn't here.

GLICK

I told you a million times, we file by first name only on account of a lot of my associates do not reveal their last names.

JANE

Why don't you keep numbers in your contacts? On your cell phone. There's a place. It says contacts. I could show you.

GLICK

Need I remind you that certain numbers for security reasons cannot be kept in this manner? *(Preoccupied now with his show)* *The Revue* is too mild. What do people want? Excitement. Violence. Sex. But I'll keep it small. I'll bring back the old act. Hymie Moscovitz, King of the Knives.

*GLICK pulls a blindfold and a stubby lethal dagger out of his briefcase. Hands the blindfold to JANE. She takes it and ties it around her eyes.*

GLICK (continued)

Not yours, dummy. Mine. I'll be lucky if I don't get a heart attack from you.

*JANE removes the blindfold and puts it around GLICK'S eyes. She waves her hand up and down in front of his face. She turns him around and around and around.*

GLICK

I can feel the old adrenalin pumping through my body. Stand over there.

JANE

Where?

GLICK

How should I know? I'm blindfolded. Tell me when you're there.

JANE

*(Finds a place)* I'm here.

*GLICK takes a deep breath, aims, and with a swift twist of the wrist hurls the weapon at JANE.*

*It misses which it is supposed to do. She drops to the floor in a near faint. He removes the blindfold and goes to Jane's body on the floor.*

GLICK

*(Nudges her)* Good. Not dead.

JANE

*(Stands up a little shaken)* You missed.

GLICK

I'll get all the backing I need. *(Hands his cell phone to Jane)* Get Fat Cat.

*JANE punches in the number and hands the phone to GLICK.*

*LIGHTS BEGIN FADE as GLICK speaks into the phone.*

GLICK (continued)

Hello Fat. Welcome back. G.G. here. Have I got a deal for you. Strictly on the up and up. Be at my rehearsal studio at seven tonight. Here's the address...

*BLACKOUT*

END OF SCENE 2

### ACT ONE: SCENE 3

*SETTING:* same as scene 2

*TIME:* Later that evening

*AT RISE:* The four members of the COMPANY, tastefully but scantily dressed are lined up. FAT CAT is seated waiting for the audition to begin. GLICK explains the plan.

GLICK

*(Holding up the blindfold and four knives)* I'll be in my old costume, see. Black flowing pants, a puffy white blouse, a red sash. Just like the old days. Sex and violence. With your dough, you'll never have to knock off another liquor store or whatever you're into now. The show could run forever. Hymie Moscovitz is back!

FAT CAT

You're gonna be the late Hymie Moscovitz if you don't stop yappin'.

*JANE ENTERS dressed in a short satin skirt and a sequined top. She still wears her glasses and her hair is still in the pony tail.*

GLICK

Enter my assistant, Miss Smith. Her hair will be – different.

*GLICK positions the COMPANY. JANE places the blindfold around his eyes. He aims, hurls one knife after another, missing every time.*

GLICK (continued)

One. Bop. Two. Bop. Three. Bop. Four. Bop. (*Removes the blindfold with great aplomb*)  
What did I tell you? A winner!

*The COMPANY is glad they are still breathing. FAT CAT jumps up off his chair.*

FAT CAT

You must take me for some kind of chump. No one pulls a fast one over Fat Cat. Four times you missed. Where would I be if I missed my targets every time I aimed? Dead. That's where I'd be.

GLICK

This is entertainment. I'm supposed to miss. That's the point. I'm blindfolded. The audience is waiting for me to hit.

FAT CAT

You got lousy aim. That's your problem. The show'll close before intermission.

GLICK

Wait a minute. Wait a sec. You'll put up the dough if instead of missing I hit?

FAT CAT

Bullseye.

GLICK

Bloodshed. That's the word I couldn't think of. Reality theatre. New title: *Aim to Kill*. Real live death on stage every night plus two matinees. A cast of millions. Actors' Equity will give me an award. No actor will ever have to take employment outside the theatre again. Fat Cat, you're a genius. Once again, in a flash, I fall with my feet in butter. And it took God *six* days!

RUBY

That man may have the cash flow, but I like my blood to flow. I'm out of here. *(Starts to pack up her belongings)*

ENZO

I'm back to the idiot box. At least on television when I get shot, they use ketchup. I'm out of here, fellow thespians. *(Starts to pack up his belongings)*

INKY

Back to La Roma Ristorante for me. At least I'll be performing in between courses. *(Vocalizes)* Me-me-me. Mah-mah-mah. Me-mah-me-mo. *(Starts to pack up her belongings)*

ROCKY

I wonder if it's too late to train to be a gourmet chef. *(Starts to pack up his belongings)*

GLICK

We got a deal, Cat?

FAT CAT

What deal? You ain't got no actors. They're vacating the premises. No deal. Ya got me here under false pretenses. No one crosses the Cat and lives.

*FAT CAT pulls a revolver from his pocket and aims at GLICK. JANE flings herself in front of GLICK. FAT CAT pulls the trigger. A loud click and nothing.*

FAT CAT (continued)

Goddamn faulty merchandise. *(Exits shouting)* You ain't seen the last of this dude!

GLICK

*(Thinks he's been shot. To JANE)* Et tu?

JANE

What are ya talkin'? I'm on your side. Besides, there weren't any bullets in the gun.

GLICK

But there might have been.

JANE

But there weren't.

GLICK

You saved me.

JANE

There weren't any bullets in the gun.

GLICK

There might have been.

*THE COMPANY breaks into a chorus of lament, as in a Greek Chorus.*

COMPANY

O, sight for all the world to see  
Most terrible,  
O suffering  
Of all mine eyes have seen most horrible  
Alas, what fury  
What evil spirits  
All for a show  
Without the dough  
Glick Glickman, Hymie Moscovitz, Roger Charles  
Woe  
Better wert thou dead  
Than living in a box  
Under a bridge

*THEY grab their bags and head for the exit.*

GLICK

Go. Who cares? I'll do a one-man show. I wrote it alone, I'll act it alone. Without me, you're has-beens. You know that old man who drags himself around Times Square with that banner? 'Eating lentils and sitting is bad for society.' That's you people without me.

*JANE takes a telegram out of her bag and waves it in the air as she rushes over and blocks the exit so they can't leave.*

JANE

Wait. Wait. Don't go. Listen to me. Please. This telegram came late this afternoon. With all the excitement, I forgot. *The Revue* can go on.

RUBY

Delusions of grandeur. I always suspected she wasn't paddling with both oars in the water.

JANE

No, this is real. I've sat back, done what I was told, but now here is something I can really do. I have the money!

GLICK

Money, the great communicator. Speak, Jane Smith.

JANE

That's just it. I'm not Jane Smith. My real name is Daphne Sockafeller.

ENZO

Daughter of Ernest Sockafeller?

JANE

Niece.

INKY

Is she for real?

GLICK

Ernest Sockafeller is your uncle? I thought I knew everything about you.

JANE

Was. He died three months ago. The executors of the estate didn't know how to get in touch with me. He left me everything. Billions. I can back *The Revue*.

GLICK

The pressure of show business. I never should've taken you out of the funeral home.

JANE

No, it's true. Uncle Ernest was appointed my legal guardian when my parents were killed in a plane crash when I was four months old. He brought me up, but as I got older, his feelings were more than an uncle for a niece. I ran away, got a job. I grew up with servants. Never had to do anything. I didn't have any skills.

RUBY

That I believe.

GLICK

To tell the truth, I've been around a long time and nothing shocks me. But this shocks me.

JANE

So, is it a deal, G.G.?

GLICK

You were a good assistant most of the time. But my hands are tied. The show must go on. I'll have my lawyer draw up the papers, unless you want your lawyer.

JANE

Minor details. Yours, mine, ours.

INKY

Just like the movies. On with the show.



RUBY

Not so fast. If Hymie Moscovitz is in, I'm out.

ROCKY

A regular salary doing what I love. A thick juicy steak with mushrooms, a baked potato with half a pound of butter and a gallon of sour cream every night. I'm in.

ENZO

All's well that ends well. We're all in. A cheer for Daphne Sockafeller.

*COMPANY breaks into a chorus of 'For She's a Jolly Good Fellow.'*

GLICK

Enough. This isn't a remake of that MGM musical, *Good News*. Go home. My partner and I got business. Be here at ten tomorrow morning. On time.

ROCKY

Congratulations, Jane and/or Daphne. (*Gathers his things*)

RUBY

Your hair looks kind of cute. Congratulations. On being Daphne, not on your hair being cute. (*Gathers her things*)

INKY

You saved me from a civilian job, kiddo. For that, I love you. (*Gathers her things*)

ENZO

Jane, dear Jane. Our benefactor. Life is like a book. You just never know what's next until you turn the page. Fellow thespians, shall we depart and refresh ourselves? (*Gathers his things*)

*ROCKY, RUBY, INKY, ENZO EXIT*

JANE

Nobody ever sang to me before.

GLICK

Take a memo, Miss Jane Smith and/or Daphne Sockafeller.

JANE

You can call me Jane or Daphne. Just call me. (*She laughs at what she thinks is an original joke*) I made a joke.

GLICK

Not new and not particularly funny. Take a memo. New subject. On account of people saying they are whom, or who, they turn out not to be, from now on, there will be a fine for any changes of names on contracts, playbills, programs, and/or handouts.

*JANE isn't taking notes. During his speech, takes off her glasses and takes the clip out of her now bone dry hair. With her fingers, she fluffs out the thick and curly locks that fall nearly to her shoulders.*

GLICK (continued)

Miss Smith-Sockefeller, you're beautiful without your notepad, pencil, pony tail, and glasses. You have green eyes. I never realized that. Green is my favorite color. Green for eyes. Green for money. (*Eyeing her*)

JANE

(*Aside*) I know that look. I've seen it in the movies a hundred times. My secret love doesn't have to be a secret anymore. My eyes, maybe my hair, and definitely my money have won him over. How more romantic can it get than that?

*GLICK indicates for her to sit beside him on the sofa.*

GLICK

Come. Sit. I feel like unburdening myself.

JANE

Yes, G.G.? (*Sitting*) I'm here. What is it? You need a Kleenex or something?

GLICK

I never told this to anyone before. I was five or six. I was in bed sleeping, but I wasn't sleeping. My mother came in after she'd been out for the evening, leaned down, and kissed me. She still had on her fur coat. There are two things I always remember: the cold fur against my cheek and her sweet smell. I found out it wasn't real fur. All those years, I thought it was because we were poor.

JANE

It was for humane reasons, not because your folks were poor. Money doesn't mean furs and leather and all that expensive stuff. And anyway, what made you tell me that now?

GLICK

Money, dear. It's a kind of aphrodisiac. I've never seen you like this. When you have billions, you can pretty much have anything you want. (*Studies her*) So! You're one of those `aresses. You're gonna be different now.

JANE

No, I won't. I grew up with money. Then I didn't have it, but I did. I just didn't know I had it. Now I have it again. And I know I have it. So it's not so different.

GLICK

You'll see. You'll see. Anyway, good chatting with you, but we got a show to fix.

JANE

No more knives and blindfolds?

GLICK

Hymie Moscovitz has left the stage.

JANE

*(Imitating Glick's voice)* The Daphne Sockefeller Revue.

GLICK

Oish. *(Lets out air through his clenched back teeth)* It doesn't exactly have a flow to it, but what the hell? Who knew the 'temp' would turn into an angel.

JANE

There's an old show business saying: He who pays the piper calls the tune.

GLICK

I know this saying.

JANE

I learned it from you.

GLICK

Look how confident you are.

JANE

With you and me, we don't need the usual legal documents, do we? A handshake? *(She puts out her hand)*

GLICK

My word is my bond. Come here. *(He holds out his arms, not his hand)*

JANE

*(Goes into his outstretched arms)* Like a bunch of bananas. Being practically a vegetarian, I love it. Whoever said money didn't buy happiness didn't have any money.

GLICK

An oldie but a goodie. You're learning fast. Broadway will have the revival of a lifetime. It isn't *how* you get there; it's that you get there. I'll take you out for a bite to eat and we can get started on the rewrites.

JANE

Why don't I fix us something at my place?

GLICK

Your landlord fixed the leak in the roof?

JANE

I did. So what do you say?

GLICK

The way I like it?

JANE

Tuna fish and turkey with cole slaw and Swiss cheese on pumpernickel with Dijon mustard, Hellmann's mayonnaise, and Heinz ketchup.

GLICK

A big juicy sour pickle?

JANE

And a big juicy sour pickle.

GLICK

Tell the truth. You didn't mind working for me? Being who you are? That's something like the Donald's daughter working in a fudge factory for four and a half dollars an hour.

JANE

It was exciting. Just to be around your energy. It was fun not knowing who you were going to be next.

GLICK

That's why my first wife left me.

JANE

Your first wife? How many have you had?

GLICK

Only one. I like saying it that way. We were from the same neighborhood in Brooklyn. You got married and went into your father-in-law's business. It's what you did in those days.

JANE

What kind of business?

GLICK

A fleet of taxicabs.

JANE

A good business.

GLICK

But not for me. We got divorced and I taxied down a different road.

JANE

I never knew that about you.

GLICK

Enough about me. We got work to do. I can't get over it. Jane Smith from the can of black spray was really Daphne Sockafeller.

JANE

See? I always had a flair for finance. *(Begins to pack up her bag)*

GLICK

*(To audience)* What Jane doesn't realize, by putting all her capital into the show, she could lose all her capital. And she will want to make it an extravaganza. Beaucoup bucks. A hit, and she owns me. I'm not set up to be number two on the hit parade. If it's a turkey, I don't want to be around to pick up the pieces. To tell the truth, my heart couldn't take another flop. Let's face it... the business has changed. Why go to the theatre? Folks can get all the entertainment they want on their computers.

*FAT CAT ENTERS in a rage. He holds up a large glass flower vase and heads for GLICK'S skull.*

FAT CAT

Glick Glickman, I'm gonna kill you!

GLICK

Again with the killing. Jane! Daphne!

JANE

We're here, G.G. *(Races over to Fat Cat)* You, an aristocrat, would kill Glick Glickman with that cheap piece of glass? At least use Steuben!

*FAT CAT is disarmed. SHE grabs the vase.*

FAT CAT

Foiled again. And by a dame.

*FAT CAT EXITS, ranting and raving, followed by JANE waving the vase.*

FAT CAT (*Off*)

I'm gonna want that vase back.

JANE (*Off*)

Keep moving.

GLICK

Glickman, you have a major decision to make.

*LIGHTS FADE ON SCENE.*

*LIGHT ON GLICK.*

GLICK

*(To audience)* There are two things money can't buy. Money can't buy back yesterday, and money can't buy class. That's why I invented Roger Charles. In the eyes of the world, Roger Charles, actor, has class. Without it, I'm just that insecure little kid waiting for my parents to come home and kiss me goodnight.

I know, I know. You're waiting to hear what happened. It was in all the papers. Quote: Glick Glickman has abandoned plans for his Broadway Revue. A misunderstanding with his backers is said to be the cause. Unquote. It wasn't really a misunderstanding. I had to do what I thought was the right thing to do. It was tough breaking the news to the Company; to her.

I had a back-up plan to do with early retirement. Not so early, if you knew the real story. I've been under the knife so many times, my face is in the back of my head. In certain circles, I'm referred to as the male Joan Rivers. For cancelling the show, next to going into the witness protection program, I had one option. West Palm Acres in Florida. According to the brochure, an upscale facility for active older adults, near the ocean, amidst palm trees, warm breezes – you get the picture. If I'd learned anything in my checkered career, it was always to have a Plan B.

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO: SCENE 1

*SETTING:* West Palm Acres, West Palm Beach, Florida.  
While most of the action is set in Valeska's bright, airy living room, the scene opens in HARRY and OSCAR's dimly lit living room.

*TIME:* The present.

*AT RISE:* LIGHTS UP on the apartment of HARRY GOLDBERG and OSCAR SHAPIRO. HARRY and OSCAR are sitting in their chairs looking at a TV with the sound off. A loud knocking OFF on the door is heard.

JON (*Knocking off*)

Mr. Goldberg, it's time to take your pill!

HARRY

Those baboons never let up. We already told them we don't want to do the day trip on the cruise ship.

JON (*Knocking off*)

Mr. Shapiro, it's time to take your pill!

OSCAR

Everyone goes so they can gamble. I get seasick at the indoor pool we got here, never mind an ocean voyage.

HARRY

It isn't a voyage. The ship stands still for five hours. I need it like I need a hernia.

*More knocking off.*

OSCAR

(*Shuffles towards the door*) I'm coming. I'm coming. You can stop the racket.

HARRY

Careful. You shouldn't hurt yourself.

*OSCAR opens the door to reveal JON SULLIVAN dressed in a clown costume and carrying a clipboard.*

OSCAR

Are you the one going up and down the corridor knocking on doors and yelling about some cockamamie pills? In a clown get-up yet. Or maybe your everyday attire?

JON

It's time to take your pill, Mr. Goldberg.

OSCAR

I'm Shapiro. The ugly one is Goldberg.

HARRY

*(Shuffling towards the duo)* We took the pill ten minutes ago. We split it in half. Saves on medical expenses. And health-wise we feel the same with or without the pill; with or without the whole or the half. *(Nodding towards OSCAR)* If he dies, he dies.

JON

Isn't it a little dark in here?

HARRY

We keep the shades drawn in the afternoon.

OSCAR

The sun puts a glare on the TV.

JON

So much for the benefits of natural vitamin D.

HARRY

*(Turns off the TV: LIGHTS UP)* So what's this business with the pill announcement? Something new in this place every day. Come in, come in. Ya got a minute?

JON

Sure. Why not. I could use a little break.

HARRY

So? What's the deal? I like to know what's going on around here. Maybe I won't stay.

OSCAR

Don't listen to him. He's been here for a hundred years.

JON

It's a new experiment here. The management hired me to go door to door, floor to floor, up and down to all the apartments in all the buildings. That way, everyone gets a nice reminder every four to five hours to take the next pill. They thought the clown outfit would add a bit of fun for the patients. I mean residents. *(In a stage voice from his lower register, he announces)* In real life, I'm an actor. My name is Jon Sullivan.



HARRY

(To OSCAR) An actor! (*Comes to life*)

OSCAR

(To HARRY) An actor! (*Comes to life*)

HARRY

I saw you on the box last night. You're very talented.

OSCAR

No, you didn't, moron. Don't listen to him, Clown Solomon. What's your real hair like?

JON

Sullivan. Jon. J-o-n. You don't need the clown part. My hair? Pretty much like the costume. Red.

HARRY

Red Skeleton red?

JON

Not exactly. In college, that's what they called me. Red. Because of my hair.

OSCAR

You married?

JON

Single.

OSCAR

Anyway, as it happens last night we attended a program on reversing arteries, so my friend here couldn't have seen you.

HARRY

How can you reverse arteries? It was the other re word. (*Attempts to snap his fingers but it doesn't happen*) Reconstructing. That's the word. (*Another failed attempt to snap his fingers*)

OSCAR

Don't listen to him. Everything's television now. We see movies now and again, but nothing like they used to be. We used to see every movie that was ever made. In a real movie theater. Big screen. Lots of seats. Down, up, a balcony.

HARRY

I remember the men's room. Well-appointed with Asian decorations. Nice colors. I always felt like I was in the Orient.

OSCAR

Back then, they had a movie, and then a live orchestra came right up out of the floor, and then a second movie.

HARRY

Remember, Oscar? Harry James. Benny Goodman. Tommy Dorsey.

OSCAR

Remember? I was there, dumbo. Fifteen cents every Saturday. It was a lot of money back then. We weren't rich, but we always found the money to go to the movies.

HARRY

Every Saturday, we were there. Twenty cents.

JON

So you guys know each other a long time?

OSCAR

Are you kidding? Over fifty years I know this *ganef*.

HARRY

Once I borrowed a button from him, so I became a crook, according to him. *Ganef* he thinks has a nice ring to it, so he uses it. We worked together in the garment district on Seventh Avenue in New York.

OSCAR

Manhattan. You know it, Clown?

HARRY

Of course he knows it. He's an actor. It was a time when clothes had really good stitching. We were tailors. (*Feels the front of JON's jacket*) Excuse me, do you mind?

JON

Be my guest.

*HARRY handles a button. He lifts up the collar and runs his finger down a seam.*

HARRY

Look at this, Oscar. Machine. Today, they don't know a hem stitch from a basting stitch. He'll be lucky if this outfit lasts a week. Three days tops.

*HARRY and OSCAR examine the stitching.*

JON

They did that because of the heat. Had to make it lightweight. It's just a costume.

OSCAR

Do you know the actress Sharon Stone? A real beauty. We saw her in that movie. What's the name of that movie? Last Friday night.

HARRY

What about Rosalind Russell? Ever meet her? She was the best. Jewish. A lot of people didn't know that.

OSCAR

They didn't know that because she wasn't Jewish.

HARRY

What are you talking about, moron? She was Jewish. Real name was Goldberg.

OSCAR

That's your name, dummy.

HARRY

We were cousins.

OSCAR

I know you fifty-three years. How come I never knew that?

HARRY

I don't tell you everything.

OSCAR

Why not?

JON

Guys, guys, I'm enjoying talking to you, but with this pill job, time is of the essence. Gotta keep on the move. (*Looks at his clipboard: Makes a check mark*) You're 1-G, so next I go across the hall to 1-H. Hank Herman.

HARRY

Too late.

JON

He doesn't take pills?

OSCAR

It wouldn't help. Dropped right into his soup. Two days ago. Just like that. Quick. Only eighty-one. A kid.

HARRY

In the dining room in the middle of lunch. Just like that. Lucky bastard.

*HARRY attempts to snap his fingers once again;  
doesn't work.*

OSCAR

The dining room is down the hall. Did you see it? We overlook a garden. They want us to eat lunch at ten-thirty in the morning.

JON

Aren't there two sittings? Eleven and twelve-thirty.

HARRY

And dinner at four-thirty. I got a joke. Wait... Okay, here it is. You know you're old when you wake up to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night and you look at the clock and it's only ten o'clock.

JON

That's very good.

HARRY

Jokes are my specialty.

OSCAR

Don't listen to him. Someone sent him a birthday card. That was the message. Dinner isn't four-thirty. It's five-thirty. He exaggerates everything. I used to eat a big lunch when I was young around one o'clock. Then dinner, only then they called it supper, was at seven, sometimes as late as eight.

HARRY

You mean when you could chew.

OSCAR

Now I don't know what I'm supposed to eat when.

HARRY

Or when to eat what. Mind you, the mashed yams yesterday weren't too bad.

OSCAR

Too dry. I'll be constipated for a month. Back home growing up, Sunday was the day we had chicken with yam potatoes.

HARRY

Yam is a potato. You don't have to say yam potato. Just yams.

OSCAR

Roast chicken for lunch, a chicken sandwich with lettuce and mayonnaise on toasted white bread for dinner while I listened on the radio to Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Amos `n Andy. On Monday, my grandmother – my mother went out to work so my grandmother did the cooking

OSCAR (continued)

– my grandmother made me a thick sliced chicken sandwich on thick white bread and Monday night, we had chicken salad with chopped celery on lettuce. And there was the wishbone ritual. The highlight. Every Sunday, my grandmother would pull it off the cooked chicken, dry it off with a paper towel, and hold it out to me. I grabbed one end in my small hand while she held the other end and we each made a wish. Then we pulled the thin bones apart. The one who got the fat end was the winner. I can't remember what I wished for.

HARRY

Probably for a more varied menu.

JON

Interesting story. (*Looks at his list*) How come there's no 1-I? It goes to 1-J.

OSCAR

No one knows why.

HARRY

No one cares. 1-J is the one that interests me.

OSCAR

That's Valeska Bernhart's apartment.

JON

Wow. You know who she is, don't you?

HARRY

Of course. We're great friends. She's like a regular person.

OSCAR

You met her?

JON

This is my first day.

OSCAR

This could be my lucky day.

HARRY

You? Oscar Shapiro? Why would she look at you? She danced with Valentino!

OSCAR

Are you crazy? That would make her six years old. Or is it the other way? Two hundred and six.

HARRY

On screen, they do special make-up to make them look younger.

OSCAR

How do you know that?

HARRY

*The Doctors.* It's a medical program on TV.

JON

Better keep going. Nice meeting you. See you in about four or five hours, fellas.

*JON EXITS followed by HARRY and OSCAR.  
LIGHTS OUT on their apartment. We hear a  
knocking OFF.*

JON (*Off*)

Miss Bernhart, it's time to take your pill!

*LIGHTS UP on VALESKA in her apartment  
looking very different than she did in Hollywood.  
Her famous legs are covered with slacks and her  
high heels have been replaced with tennis shoes.*

VALESKA

(*Shouts*) The door's open.

*HARRY and OSCAR brush past JON and  
ENTER.*

VALESKA (continued)

And to what do I owe this pleasure? Two gentlemen and a clown. Nice touch.

JON

Miss Bernhart, I'm here to remind you it's time to take your pill. My name is Jon Sullivan. It's a pleasure to meet you.

HARRY

In real life, he's an actor. Knows everybody from coast to coast.

JON

My job is to remind you to take your medication. Temporary job, I should add.

VALESKA

What time is it?

JON

Time to take your after breakfast before lunch pill.

VALESKA

I have to take the pill with food.

OSCAR

We're on our way to the dining room. Would you like to join us?

VALESKA

Is it lunch or dinner?

HARRY

What's the difference? We have to eat.

JON

I'll keep on my rounds. Take your pills, everybody.

*JON EXITS.*

OSCAR

You're settling in nicely?

VALESKA

Of course. But I still have my mansion in Beverly Hills in case this place doesn't work out for me. I was never too crazy about Florida. Servants are looking after the house. I didn't want to sub-let. They ruin the place. You know how that can be.

*Retired tailors from the garment district in New York City, HARRY and OSCAR didn't 'know how that can be,' but shake their heads in unison.*

HARRY AND OSCAR

Mmm. Mmm.

OSCAR

Very interesting.

HARRY

Tell us more.

VALESKA

You have time? You want my credits or just a little background?

HARRY

Sure. Sounds good.

OSCAR

It's all good. The one thing we got is time. But you never know. Talk fast.

## VALESKA

Valeska Bernhart, the daughter of Minnie Rich and Herman Bernhart who came to the United States from Russia to start a new life, settling in Brooklyn where I was born. From Brooklyn to Hollywood to Beverly Hills to West Hollywood to West Palm Beach. It was at 2251 North Gower Street, Hollywood 28, California, where it almost didn't begin thanks to my eccentric neighbor, Pascha Elca, nee Elizabeth Cohen, from Boston who claimed to be a scenario writer. Scenario writer? She couldn't write a note to the milkman. Almost didn't begin because the fool nearly burned down the place when she left an iron plugged in. The fire department saved the day. What else could be expected from a nut case who wrapped her money in lettuce leaves in the icebox as if a burglar wouldn't look there first. Anyway, it wasn't long before I was noticed and began working in films; not just working, starring. Then came the husbands, the houses, the daughter, the downfall. What goes up eventually must come down. Rarely does it go back up again. Maybe if you're very lucky or very smart. Or very, very young. When I splashed onto the screen, you know what they wrote in *Variety*? Quote: Valeska Bernhart is in Technicolor even when she's in black and white. Unquote.

*VALESKA grabs her cane in her hand and as THEY EXIT, VALESKA is still speaking.*

Don't get your hopes up, boys, either of you. I'm not interested in getting married again.

*BLACKOUT*

*LIGHTS UP ON JON DOWNSTAGE.*

JON

*(To audience)* Did you see anyone take their pills? My training specified knocking on the doors and shouting out instructions only. Nothing was said about actually supervising them swallowing the pills I'm not a doctor. I never even played a doctor. *(Looks at his clipboard)* Next is 1-L. Glick Glickman. If it's *the* Glick Glickman, I once auditioned for him for an off-Broadway revival of *Our Town*. I didn't get the part. He was polite, said he'd keep me in mind for the future. Blah, blah, blah. All that kind of talk that no one means and no one believes. Still, at the time, it's nice to hear. Better than a kick in the rear.

*BLACKOUT*

*KNOCKING OFF.*

JON *(off)*

*(Using his Royal Academy of Dramatic Art diction)* Mister Glick Glickman, it is time to take your pill. *(No response. Pause. In his regular voice, shouts out)* Mr. Glickman, it's time to take your pill. Mr. Glickman? *(No response)* Mr. Glickman?

GLICK *(off)*

Yuh, yuh. I heard ya the first time. Now you hear this. Beat it.



JON (*off*)

Just a reminder to take your medication, Mr. Glickman.

*LIGHTS UP* downstage on GLICK and VALESKA seated on a bench. Their first encounter.

VALESKA

Glick who? I can't recall. (*Winks at the audience*) Probably some fly by night pseudo impresario.

GLICK

You're Valeska Bernhart? Can't be. (*To audience*) She died years ago. I saw it on *Entertainment Tonight*.

VALESKA

Take another look.

GLICK

You don't recognize my voice?

VALESKA

Let's see. Maybe the late Wallace Beery mixed in with a little Walter Huston. Also late. Honey with gravel. Have we ever met? Should I know you?

GLICK

Does the name Hymie Moscovitz mean anything?

VALESKA

Hymie Moscovitz. Hymie Moscovitz. Oh, yes. That crazy act with the knives.

GLICK

What about Roger Charles?

VALESKA

Now he was a class act. Way ahead of his time. I think we may have gone out once. Where are they now?

GLICK

Hymie, Roger, Glick. At your service, m'am. How do you do? (*Tips his imaginary hat*)

VALESKA

How do I do *what*?

GLICK

(*Aside*) Fascinating creature.

VALESKA

You're *that* Glick Glickman!

GLICK

Game, set, match. How would you like to join me for dinner this evening at my table? We can talk shop; catch up on old times.

VALESKA

What old times? We just met. Besides, I'm otherwise engaged tonight.

GLICK

Tomorrow night?

VALESKA

Busy.

GLICK

Day after tomorrow? Lunch.

VALESKA

Occupied.

GLICK

Come on, Valeska. It's just lunch, not a marriage proposal.

VALESKA

You can ask me every day and one day I might say yes.

GLICK

(Aside) Little minx. I think I'm in love.

VALESKA

(*Aside*) Idiot.

*BLACKOUT*

*LIGHTS UP on JON DOWNSTAGE.  
Three and a half months later.*

JON

(*To audience*) It takes almost four hours to get around the seven buildings on the property. Two floors, elevators, thirty apartments in each building, fifteen on a floor. I like the exercise. A break and then I start the rounds again. The management figured that's the right time to remind people about their pills. There are kinks. Many of the residents might be at an activity. Arts and crafts, the musical group called Flats and Sharps, card games, aquatic sports.

JON (continued)

Even after three and a half months, still no call from my agent. Between jobs, called resting, which I never understood because you need a lot of cash on hand to rest, actors wait for that magic call about the next job. To make ends meet, lots of actors sometimes take odd jobs. Nothing could be odder than this one. I hated leaving all the action in New York, but nothing was happening and when you need work, you go where the work is, whatever it is. The job includes bed and board and a small stipend, enough to cover my rent controlled studio apartment in a pretty good neighborhood in lower Manhattan.

Being here makes me think a lot about my parents. They still live in the same house where I was born just outside Chicago. They think their son is in New York teaching a course called, “Creative Communication” at a college. The ultra-conservative Sullivans never would understand or approve of my lifestyle. Actually, I did teach an acting class one semester, so it’s more of a fib than an out and out lie. The real lie is about my name change. Duane Sullivan, Junior. Changed it to Jon, J-o-n, when I moved to the big Apple fourteen years ago. I told my family there were too many Duane Sullivans in New York in communication. Trusting souls, they never doubted my choice.

Auditioning for a Broadway show or a television role is less intensive than what I went through to get the job at West Palm Acres. I had to give them a urine sample. They had never seen copper color before and I needed to be re-tested. Turns out I had eaten about half a pound of red beets for lunch before the test. So lesson learned. Don’t eat beets before a urine specimen. If you think about it, this is kind of an acting job. I’m in costume. I’m playing a character. I had a script to memorize. Okay, one line. But I’d been given directions. Definitely an acting role.

And it’s neat hanging out with Glick Glickman who finally came out of his shell. It turns out he’s a really nice guy, very funny and full of wisdom about everything, not just theatre. And Valeska Bernhart’s stories of old Hollywood keep me riveted during my off time. I mean she’s a legend. She totally gets me taking other work in between acting jobs to survive. In the beginning, those two despised each other. She couldn’t stand him more than he couldn’t stand her. Then something happened. I don’t know exactly what. But I think they’re pretty tight.

*BLACKOUT*

*LIGHTS UP on VALESKA’S APARTMENT.*

*GLICK is visiting. His brief case is evident.  
THEY are shooting the breeze.*

VALESKA

I still can’t get over it. I knew everybody. Odd we never met in our heyday.

GLICK

It happens. People think people in the business know everybody in the business. We don’t.

VALESKA

Too busy working.

GLICK

Strange business we chose. Only people in the business know how strange.

VALESKA

You think I chose it? With a name like Valeska Bernhart, I wouldn't have fit in the typing pool.

GLICK

Your real name. I always wondered.

VALESKA

After my great grandmother on my mother's side. You know, with all the heartbreak along the way, I couldn't imagine doing anything else.

GLICK

The highs and the lows.

VALESKA

I'm glad I did what I did when I did it.

GLICK

Yup. Those were the days. Nothing like it now, not that there's anything wrong with now. But they don't make them like that anymore.

VALESKA

Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Burt Lancaster. I met them all. I was a child, of course.

GLICK

Of course. Rita Hayworth, Ava Gardner, Lana Turner. No one today comes close, present company excepted.

VALESKA

Aw, go on, Glick, you old kidder.

GLICK

You sounded just like Gracie Allen then.

VALESKA

Weren't they a team! Did you ever hear Gracie Allen's classic recipe for roast beef?

GLICK

I feel a routine coming on. Okay. What is Gracie's classic recipe for roast beef?

VALESKA

Ingredients are one large roast beef and one small roast beef.

GLICK

Why two roast beefs?

VALESKA

You take the two roasts and put them in the oven. When the little one burns, the big one is done.

GLICK

Only Gracie would think of that.

VALESKA

And their writing team.

GLICK

So... Valeska. Have you had any thoughts about what we talked about? You know, about the business of show.

VALESKA

I haven't thought about anything else.

GLICK

And?

VALESKA

After that fiasco, that humiliation with that Tara Bombeck, I can't go through it anymore. It's over. I've accepted my life as it is now.

GLICK

You got paid, your name was omitted from the credits as you requested, so what was the harm? It ended up at obscure Film Festivals. No one even remembers or will remember. You should know some of the things I did. The jobs I did.

VALESKA

Why did we do it all?

GLICK

Why? For love, doll face. That's why. For love. You're born with the entertainment gene or you're not. Simple as that. You still haven't given me a straight answer.

VALESKA

I can't, Glick. I just can't.

GLICK

Can't? Won't? That's not an answer. Even you don't believe it.

VALESKA

I think I do.

GLICK

There is no expiration date on talent, kid. We just did a little spontaneous routine together. Nothing profound. About roast beef. It was good. We fit like a glove on a hand. All about timing. For those two seconds, we weren't Valeska and Glick. Well, we were, but in other people's shoes.

VALESKA

I don't think I would have the energy to get out there again. It's been ages since I've performed on stage. No, I can't. Look, Glick—

GLICK

I'm looking.

VALESKA

Why? What possible reason would I have for getting back out there?

GLICK

You won't be out there alone. I'll be there.

VALESKA

And there's the reason.

GLICK

Look, Valeska-

VALESKA

I'm looking.

GLICK

I just happen to have the skit with me (*Pulls the script out of his brief case and hands her the pages*). I see us in matching lavender, maybe blue, velour warm-up suits. You're Dora. I'm Murray.

VALESKA

Remind me. (*Looking at her script*)

GLICK

Your daughter is married to my son. He's a big psychiatrist. We all live together in a very large house in Bel Air. We're not married, but from time to time we indulge in activities of an intimate nature befitting a couple of our age.

VALESKA

I'm not doing any nude scenes.

GLICK

No, no. It's all very innocent. I'm just giving you the back story. Let's begin.

VALESKA

And where do we perform this epic? The venue? No matter how good you are, if you don't get it out of your living room, it doesn't count.

GLICK

Right here in the West Palm Acres Theatre. Steve and Eydie made their comeback at West Palm Acres and claimed their careers were revived as a result of playing the retirement communities in Florida.

VALESKA

She's gone now. I miss them as a team.

GLICK

No sentimentality. We got a show to rehearse. Use your script. It's just a reading. (*HE sets two chairs side by side*) Sit. We're in chaise lounges at the pool.

*THEY sit side by side.*

VALESKA

This isn't right. (*Referring to the script*) We're supposed to be up.

*GLICK checks the script. Without speaking, THEY both stand.*

GLICK

And begin.

*In character, THEY bend down in an attempt to touch their toes.*

GLICK/Murray

7, 12, 40, 65, 84, 95, 98, 100.

*THEY collapse out of breath into their chairs.*

VALESKA

That's the way you're going to count, right? I mean I don't have to touch my toes literally a hundred times.

GLICK

Yes. I mean, no. It's just like I read it. It's funnier that way. Stay in character. You're Dora. I'm Murray.

VALESKA/Dora

After supper, we can run into Westwood and check it out. It's playing there.

GLICK/Murray

Save yourself the trouble. I'm telling you, Woody Allen never says, 'Play it again, Sam.' He says, 'Play it, Sam.'

VALESKA/Dora

Not the Woody Allen film. The other one with what's-her-name. Ingrid Bergman.

GLICK/Murray

*Casablanca.*

VALESKA/Dora

*Casablanca.*

GLICK/Murray

'Play it, Sam' is what she says. Or is it 'play it again, Sam?' I don't remember.

VALESKA/Dora

I think it's 'Play it, Sam.'

GLICK/Murray

I'll get my son, the doctor, to ask Ingrid. She's a patient.

VALESKA/Dora

How would she remember? She's made a million movies since then.

GLICK/Murray

At least she could tell us who to call who would know. (*As himself*) Okay, here we should get a laugh so we pause. We need a bit of business to keep up the action during the laugh. Here. Follow my lead. We'll do another physical exercise.

*HE circles his wrists and SHE follows. THEY stop.*

(*In character*) Okay, smarty pants. Who is this? Made fifty-eight films, entertained troops in three wars, belonged to eighteen golf clubs, used to ride his bicycle around the studio lot, won over two thousand trophies including a congressional medal from President Kennedy, owned Eddie Foy's dancing shoes, was on a first-name basis with eight presidents, lived around here. Who is he?

VALESKA/Dora

A workaholic.



GLICK/Murray

Guess. World famous.

VALESKA/Dora

Made fifty-eight films, entertained troops in three wars, belonged to eighteen golf clubs, used to ride his bicycle around the studio lot, won over two thousand trophies including a congressional medal from President Kennedy, owned Eddie Foy's dancing shoes, was on a first-name basis with eight presidents, lived around here. I give up.

GLICK/Murray

Come on, Dora, you know who this person is.

VALESKA/Dora

Everyone I know is dead.

GLICK/Murray

Who is it?

VALESKA/Dora

Bob Hope. That was easy. I got one for you. Famous, handsome, rich.

GLICK/Murray

George Clooney.

VALESKA/Dora

Wrong. My chauffeur.

*THEY come out of character a second.*

GLICK

That should get a laugh.

VALESKA

I don't think it's funny.

GLICK

Never mind. I can change it. Okay, so here's where we cut to the chase. Attention spans run short on the reservation.

VALESKA

Get back to the script.

GLICK/Murray

Yesterday, I ate one hundred and thirty-two prunes in one minute and fourteen seconds. Today...excuse me. (*As himself*) I say 'excuse me' and run off. They'll be wondering if it's part of the skit, or I'm really caught short. Keep going.

VALESKA/Dora

Now, that's *tsuris*.

GLICK

I re-enter. Maybe to applause. (*In character*) I heard Sleeping Beauty had halitosis.

VALESKA/Dora

Prince Charming didn't have a nose.

GLICK/Murray

Now, that's *mahzel*.

VALESKA/Dora

Poor Sleeping Beauty. Asleep for a hundred years in all that filth.

GLICK/Murray

Prince Charming finally shows up.

VALESKA/Dora

And he turns out to be a queen.

GLICK

And end scene. What do you think?

VALESKA

About the scene?

GLICK

Of course about the scene.

VALESKA

I think it'll work. Needs a few changes. But it's good.

GLICK

Is that all you can say? It's great. You're terrific by yourself. I'm terrific by myself. Together we are dynamite. We are taking this on the road, kid.

VALESKA

I'm tired, Glick.

GLICK

So am I. So we'll be a little more tired. When we're dead, we'll have plenty of time to rest.

VALESKA

I like it here at West Palm Acres. I didn't think I would. But I do. It's safe. I'm comfortable. I don't want to stir up all those emotions again. For the first time in my life, I'm at peace.

GLICK

It's the old story. He proposes. She refuses. He says yes. She says no. Reminds me of that old Sadie routine. Remember?

VALESKA

*(Laughs)* Sure. I haven't heard that one in a thousand years.

*THEY go into the routine with Yiddish accents*

GLICK

Sadie, darling, take off your nightgown.

VALESKA

No.

GLICK

Take off your nightgown.

VALESKA

Go away.

GLICK

Sadie, please.

VALESKA

Myron, please.

GLICK

Don't you want to fool around?

VALESKA

I'm hiding in the closet.

GLICK

Sadie, I'm gonna break down that closet door. One...two...

VALESKA

All of a sudden you're Mister Superman. You can't even take off my nightgown, how you gonna break down a door?

*THEY come out of character laughing*

GLICK

See? We're good together.

VALESKA

Before you used the word dynamite.

*GLICK is suddenly very attracted to her.*

VALESKA (continued)

Why are you looking at me like that?

GLICK

Like what?

VALESKA

Kind of funny.

GLICK

I am?

VALESKA

I've never seen it before. You look, I don't know, kind of like, I don't know.

GLICK

I know. Tell me, Valeska. Do you miss it?

VALESKA

As I said before... no. Don't get me wrong. The little routines we did were fun, but as a steady diet? No thank you. Couldn't do this anymore. Don't want to. Won't.

GLICK

Not this. That. It.

VALESKA

Oh. Topic A.

GLICK

Of course topic A.

VALESKA

Sometimes. Not all the time. I don't think about it so much. Not like a man does.

GLICK

Once every eleven seconds.

VALESKA

Are you making that up?

GLICK

Research.

VALESKA

It's easier for a woman. Before a certain age, the law protects her. After a certain age, nature takes care of her.

GLICK

Funny line.

VALESKA

It's true.

GLICK

Don't you wanna fool around? Not necessarily this minute. Maybe in twelve seconds.

VALESKA

Are you being Myron or Murray now or Glick?

GLICK

What's the difference? I'm a man, still breathing.

VALESKA

Come on. You're not thinking straight. I hate to say this expression, but I'm too old for you. At the same time, not too old to protect my heart.

GLICK

What's age got to do with it? *(As an afterthought and with a flourish, HE pulls off his toupee and tosses it aside)*. This is the real me, kiddo. Off-stage, sans make-up, sans camouflage. This is me now. Well, except for a few scars pulling back the extra flesh.

VALESKA

Wow. *(Covers up her possible faux-pas at seeing his bald dome)* I mean, wow, look how handsome you are. What the hell. *(Removes her wig, tosses it to land touching his)*

GLICK

Wow! Look at you. I mean, wow. I gotta tell you the truth. Something I never admitted before, not even to myself. My scalp actually feels better when air touches it. However, vanity rules. *(Reaches for his wig and puts it on)*

VALESKA

Always. *(Reaches for her wig and puts it on)*

GLICK

You know, who we see in the mirror and who we are in real life are two different images.

VALESKA

That's deep. One of your famous Glickisms?

GLICK

Got it inside a Chinese fortune cookie. In the movies, this is where they cut to a train passing through a tunnel. (*HE reaches for her hand*) You know what I mean.

*We don't know what he means because  
There is a knock on the door OFF.*

VALESKA

Saved by the bell, as they say. No offense intended. (*Calling out*) It's open.

*JON ENTERS. HE is out of his clown  
costume in normal attire now. HE carries  
a sheet of paper.*

VALESKA and GLICK

We already took the pills.

JON

Glad to hear it. But this isn't about that. I'm off duty. I'd like to talk to you both, so I'm glad you're here.

GLICK

Shoot, kid.

JON

I got a call from my agent yesterday. There's a commercial they want me to do. Maybe. An audition.

VALESKA

That's great. You don't look too sure. Not great?

GLICK

New York? The Coast?

JON

New York. Mrs. Parsons' Pepper.

GLICK

Never heard of it.

JON

It's a new product. My agent faxed the copy. It's just an audition.

GLICK

So? What's the problem?

JON

Well, that's what I want to talk to you both about.

VALESKA

Something's up. You wouldn't need a second opinion if your heart was in it.

JON

The copy sounds, well, stupid. Will I be making a fool of myself? I'd like you to hear it.

GLICK

Hit it. Cary Grant says that in *The Bishop's Wife*. To the boys' choir in the church. Hit it.

JON

*(Prepares and then reads)* A handsome stranger arrives in a remote village. He is stripped by the women of the village. His clothes are burned. He is shaved from head to toe and then bathed in a mixture of three parts rose water, two parts witch hazel, and one part ammonia. His body is then smeared with cold-pressed wheat germ oil.

Next, the women throw white sand over him and rub him down with eucalyptus leaves. After this ceremony to cleanse the outer body, the women then make small cuts in his skin and insert MRS. PARSONS' PEPPER into the wounds to drive out any evil spirits that may be lurking inside the stranger. When the pepper dissolves into the wounds, he is truly purified.

And now he is clean inside and out and is allowed to intermingle with the women of the village. If MRS. PARSONS' PEPPER can do that for a complete stranger, imagine what it will do for food you've been eating all your life.

*JON looks at his audience. VALESKA and GLICK are stunned.*

GLICK

Oy!

VALESKA

It's just an audition for a TV ad, not a feature film. I mean, it isn't major.

GLICK

It isn't exactly Ghirardelli chocolate or a well-known product. The fee is good?

JON

The money's good.

GLICK

You want my honest opinion? It's a piece of crap, but you should go up for the audition. Something else might come of it even if you don't get it. That's how it works in the business.

JON

Valeska, what do you think?

VALESKA

Depends. How badly do you want to get back to New York? How badly do you need the money? That's a given. We all need money no matter how much one has. So forget that part. Are you ready to go back to the jungle? Because once you leave and you're back in your environment up there, you won't come back here. I can guarantee that. We'd miss you, but that shouldn't influence you.

JON

It's only an audition.

VALESKA

So you keep saying.

GLICK

What's the worst thing that can happen?

JON

The worst thing? The worst thing. I won't get it. Or maybe I'll get it. Maybe that's the worst thing. I can't believe I'm saying that. All this energy going into an audition for a lousy commercial.

VALESKA

It's the way of the world now. Commercials can make an actor. What's the name of that actor? I saw it on some entertainment program. He left New York and went out to L.A. You know who I mean. He was an extra in about a hundred movies, and then he got that commercial. And he was made.

GLICK

Yes. Yes. I remember. From nothing, all of a sudden he's everywhere. On all the talk shows, the morning shows, even on radio. Can't think of his name. Or the commercial.

JON

So you're saying I should move to Hollywood?

VALESKA

We're not saying that. Are we?

GLICK

I don't think we're saying that. Jon, what do you think you should do? It's your decision.

JON

It was a fitful sleep last night. I was eight-five percent sure I was going back to New York. But now, reading the copy out loud to you, I'm ninety-nine and a half percent sure I don't want to do this anymore.



GLICK

What's the half a percent?

JON

A little word. Why. Why am I doing this?

GLICK

So there. You already know the answer. You just have never said it out loud.

VALESKA

And by 'this' you mean what? The business, the audition? Explain.

JON

You might think I'm nuts. But here goes. I don't want to go back to the nothingness waiting around to see if someone else thinks I'm good enough to play a role. New York, Hollywood. It would all be the same. I remember my first day in acting class. The teacher said: 'If there are two things in life you love to do, and one of them is acting, do the other.'

VALESKA

I don't think I ever heard that.

JON

I believe I have found the other. Mind you, I don't know the how, but I know the what.

GLICK

Intriguing. Please elaborate.

JON

I would like to work with the elderly. Sorry. With seniors. Active older adults. On a permanent basis, I mean. I really feel fulfilled here. And believe me when I say no one is more shocked than I. It's like an epiphany. I want to do meaningful work with anti-aging programs.

GLICK

Running Bingo games? Heading up the arts and crafts program? The money stinks.

JON

It isn't about the money.

VALESKA

Will you be happy out of show business? It's a big shift.

GLICK

Okay. Let's examine this. So you tell your agent you're not interested in this cockamamie commercial. Then what?

JON

I have an idea. It's been brewing for a while. Hear me out. There's no expiration date on talent. Right?

GLICK

That's my line. There's no expiration date on talent.

JON

Everything is done for the young. We need a festival of the arts for seniors. I see it as an exhibition. Their art work, their writing, their music, their dramatic talent. There is more to the elderly than shuffling from their apartments to the dining room, to doctors' appointments and back home again to plunk down in front of the television. What do you think?

VALESKA

You want to be in charge of this festival? The organizer? Is that it?

JON

I don't know exactly what to call it. Glick?

GLICK

It's such a good idea, I wish I'd thought of it. But you need a real good handle. A grabber. You'll need to raise funding. You'll have to get the people. The artists. It's no small task.

JON

I didn't think it would be easy. We can call it, Arts Festival for Seniors. It says what it is.

GLICK

Put seniors or elders in the title, you're dead before you begin. No one will come to see a bunch of *alter kockers* wearing a smock and dragging around an easel and an acrylic paintbrush, doing cartwheels on the lawn, tap dancing on the ceiling, emoting their brains out, or reading their poetry.

JON

How will people know what it is?

VALESKA

*(Thinking aloud)* The Last is Best. No, that's not it. Save the Best for Last. No. Lasting Impressions. Not bad.

JON

What about, wait for it, Spring Again.

GLICK

Spring Again.

VALESKA

Spring Again.

GLICK

Too vague. Doesn't say what it is. Wait a minute. Hold the phone. (*HE looks around for something to write on*) It's better if you see it first. (*Writes*)

*GLICK shows it to VALESKA who nods, then shows it to JON.*

JON

Genius.

GLICK

It's got class.

JON

Second Spring Festival.

VALESKA

I love it.

JON

Wait. Second Spring Festival of the Arts.

VALESKA

I love it more.

GLICK

That's the one. It says what it is without hitting them over the head.

VALESKA

Simple, yet profound.

JON

A whole weekend event.

GLICK

Whoa. It's good to think big, but let's start with one day.

JON

I'd like a lecturer in there, too, to talk about the aging process. I've been reading about it.

VALESKA

You've been reading about it and I've been living it. I can tell you, it's a hoot, especially if you've never done it before.

JON

Seriously. There have been endless reports. Research shows there are tremendous benefits to creativity. People live longer. Creativity relieves stress, lowers blood pressure and cholesterol levels in the elderly. Fewer visits to the doctor, improved immune system, improved lung function, improved moods, improved memory.

GLICK

An announcement in the monthly Retirement Guide Magazine will get it started. We can talk to the management here. We'll need funding. I'll go into town and see what I can drum up. The Chamber of Commerce. And we need to check on the title, see what other communities are doing a similar program.

VALESKA

Looks like the impresario is back in business.

GLICK

I'll give Joseph Regis a buzz. We knew each other in New York. At eighty, he is still teaching the art of black and white film at the University of Miami.

VALESKA

What about Edna King? She began sculpting at the age of sixty-nine and now nearly eighty, she does one woman shows around the world. I think she lives mostly in Palm Beach.

JON

And those are the known ones. I'd like to showcase the unsung heroes, too. No more sitting on the rocker. Our very own Josephine Stem right here at West Palm Acres. One hundred and two and you know what she told the group in the writing workshop when one of them who is eighty-five said she was too old to start writing? Jo said she didn't start to write until she was ninety-one. Her grandson put together her handwritten stories of her childhood on the computer. Those stories would be lost if they're not put down on paper for future generations.

GLICK

And for the grand finale, Miss Valeska Bernhart will perform the monologue I will write for her.

VALESKA

I will?

JON

That would be fantastic.

VALESKA

Where is all this going to take place?

GLICK

We'll launch it right here at the West Palm Acres Theatre.

VALESKA

I'll think about it.

JON

It won't be the same if you don't do it. Valeska Bernhart on stage? It'll be standing room only.

GLICK

She'll do it.

JON

You two can discuss that part. I've got some work to do. Some? A lot of work. I better get busy.

GLICK

We've got something. We really have.

VALESKA

I'm proud of you, Jon.

*JON throws her a kiss and EXITS.*

VALESKA

It's a great idea, but I don't see me out there. I can help as a consultant behind the scenes.

GLICK

*(Isn't listening to her)* I'm writing it in my head as we sit here. Listen. Here it is. I can see it. Your character has to make a decision whether or not to marry her fiancé and she goes through the decision making process. Shall I? Shan't I? Shall I? Shan't I?

VALESKA

Too complicated. No one will believe I'm getting married and wondering if I should.

GLICK

It's funnier because it's the unexpected. A thirty year old does it, it's normal. But no one expects a woman of a certain age to, well, you know. The way I write it, they'll believe it.

VALESKA

I can see it all now. A tiny blurb in *Entertainment Weekly* under Deaths following Births, Splits, and Ailing. Golden Age star passes at ninety-nine while falling flat on her face during a performance of an obscure piece written and directed by Glick Glickman.

GLICK

You're looking at the glass half empty instead of half full.

VALESKA

My Russian background.

GLICK

Nerves, my dear, just nerves.

VALESKA

That and a million other things.

GLICK

Sweetheart, you're ageless. Aren't you the actress who could play characters twenty years her junior? Van Gogh – I think it was Van Gogh – said there was no such thing as an old woman.

VALESKA

He slapped oil paint around a canvas when he wasn't cutting off parts of his anatomy. What did he know?

GLICK

I'll be with you every step of the way. We'll rehearse and rehearse and rehearse. I'll direct every line, every nuance.

VALESKA

Shall I? Shan't I? Here I go again. Just when I thought I was out of it, I get pulled back in.

*HARRY and OSCAR peek in the apartment from the doorway.*

OSCAR

We're going down for Happy Hour. We'll take you. Take my arm, Valeska. (*Holds out an arm*) The good one.

HARRY

Did you ever meet Alexis Smith? Real name Goldberg.

VALESKA

Glick?

GLICK

You go. I got work to do.

*VALESKA, OSCAR, and HARRY begin their EXIT, the men fighting over who should escort her.*

HARRY

Take my arm. Both are good. With Oscar you have to think about it.

*THEY EXIT.*

GLICK

Here I go again. No, not again. This is new. All new. Because it's now. Sullivan can do the leg work. I'm the brains, he's the brawn. This could work. This will work. It's major. Valeska will be the draw. I'll save her for the finale. That way, people will stay. Ya still got it, Glick Glickman. I'm back! I'm definitely back!

*GLICK picks up his briefcase and papers and EXITS.*

BLACKOUT

END SCENE 1

**ACT TWO: SCENE 2**

*SETTING:* West Palm Acres Theatre.

*TIME:* Afternoon, a few months later

*AT RISE:* The stage of the WPA Theatre. HARRY and OSCAR are planted in the audience as hecklers. The real theatre audience represents the audience at West Palm Acres. It is the end of the program.

*LIGHTS UP on GLICK downstage*

GLICK

*(To audience)* And there you have it. The premier of the Second Spring Arts Festival. An exciting afternoon and it isn't over yet. How does that expression go? We saved the best for last. Don't tell the other participants I said that. Performing on stage and in movies, she's made the journey from New York to Hollywood to West Palm Beach. Ladies and gentlemen, in a sketch entitled, *Jerome*, our very own Valeska Bernhart. Put your hands together for Valeska!

*APPLAUSE from the audience led by HARRY and OSCAR. VALESKA ENTERS without her cane, in a dress, and in high heels.*

GLICK (continued)

Pipe those pins, folks. Lloyds of London insured Betty Grable's legs for a million bucks. Only because they hadn't seen Valeska Bernhart's. *(Kisses her on the cheek)* Show 'em how it's done, honey.

*GLICK EXITS to the wings, from time to time,  
visible during her monologue .*

VALESKA

*(Aside)* Please God, don't let me make a fool of myself.

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